

Damascus Emergency Preparedness Team Meeting of 30 August

There were many regrets given before this meeting on the next to last day of summer, and only 14 people attended.

Chair reported that meeting places had finally been booked for all meeting dates requested by Bill Delaney for CERT training and asked permission to confirm these dates and begin the process of contacting those who had previously expressed a desire to take the training and sign up those who could attend these dates. This was agreed.

The Communications Committee reported continued frustration at the inability to make contact with the Montgomery County RACES organization... that calls went unanswered and that messages left went unanswered. Chair was directed to contact Catherine Matthews of the Upcounty Services Center for follow up. Cooperation has been established with ARES (Amateur Radio Emergency Services). An example of a community communications network using ARES can be found at <http://ci.mercer-island.wa.us/Page.asp?NavID=347>. Doug Noble has identified 51 ham operators in Damascus and continues to contact them to sign them up as volunteers.

The Environmental Committee reports that the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has an Emergency Response Program under which all communities have a right to know of the presence of all and any hazardous materials and chemicals in their communities. The EPA will be contacted for a follow up report.

The meeting with the Montgomery County Red Cross is scheduled for Wednesday, 1 September, and at their request that our community put a suggested form of cooperation in writing, the Good Heart Program has been prepared and circulated for comment. Consensus was unanimous that we proceed with it. Chair reported positive support from Saint Paul's Parrish. Chair reported a meeting with Rev. Walt Edmonds of the Damascus United Methodist Church at which the Good Heart Program was embraced and Chair was invited to give a presentation to a council meeting of Methodist ministers on 3 September. Rev. Edmonds has volunteered to call and convene a meeting of Damascus area ministers during September at which the Good Heart program will be presented as a model of community organization.

Damascus Help has begun conversations with the Damascus United Methodist Church about relocation of their food storage facility into a proposed building at that church. As this is still far in the future, plans will proceed for the Damascus Lions Club to provide a back up generator for their present facility, and this will be discussed at a Damascus Help board meeting on 13 September.

A final version of the amended DEPT mission statement was presented by George Moy with the suggestion that this can now be made available to the entire distribution list.

Tim Hyatt, operator of the Damascus Maryland web site, has been contacted and has graciously allowed us to use the web site to post our minutes and other emergency preparedness information for the community. This can be found at <http://www.mindspring.com/~thyatt/damascus/>.

Discussion ensued concerning the best ways to raise community awareness of the need for emergency preparedness and how to best make the appropriate information available to the community. A copy of the Carroll County Gazette devoted to emergency preparedness was passed around, and it was suggested that perhaps an arrangement could be made for an insert to be included in the Damascus Gazette that would include the best info from DEPT, FEMA, and the Red Cross. Fred Schroeder will pursue this.

There was a suggestion that other types and sources of training for the community be explored and that the FEMA training facility in Emmitsburg be contacted. Someone reported that a job vacancy for a grant writer for that facility had recently been posted and that perhaps the possibility of community grants should be investigated. Chair was tasked to contact them and make report.

Arrangements have been made for our participation in the Damascus Community Fair (10-12 Sep) and at Damascus Health and Safety Day (11 Sep). The need for signage was discussed, and Ray Gustin offered to pay for an appropriate banner for DEPT. It was agreed to man tables at both venues and volunteers present were then scheduled for the manning of the two locations over the weekend. DEPT has reserved a table for the Red Cross and they have offered to make volunteers and material available for the Health and Safety Day event.

The Damascus library is unavailable for the next meeting date, so the next meeting will be held in the dayroom of the Damascus Volunteer Fire Department on Monday, 13 September, at 7:30 PM.