

MINUTES  
HARVEY COUNTY LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE (LEPC)  
EOC Meeting Room (Basement of LEC)  
120 E. 7<sup>th</sup> Street  
Newton, Kansas 67114  
February 8, 2023 @ 9:00 am

Present: Mike Anderson, Gloria Arellano, Skip Cowan, Jamie Dehler, Craig Dunlavy, Bryan Ellis, Kyle Fiedler, Randy Hague, Amy Kornahrens, Jim Leftwich, Kyle McCaskey, Jim Meier, Brian Palmer, Molly Redinger, Steve Roberson, Anthony Swartzendruber, Diana Waddell-Gilbert, Anderson Lowe

Mike Anderson – Director of Emergency Management called the meeting to order at 9:00am and introductions of all attendees was brought forth.

**1. Opening of Meeting:**

Mike Anderson asked for a motion to approve the February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023 agenda, Diana Waddell-Gilbert made the motion which was seconded by Craig Dunlavy. **Agenda approved.** Mike Anderson then requested a motion to approve the minutes from the December 14<sup>th</sup> 2022 meeting. Skip Cowman made the motion which was seconded by Brian Palmer. **Minutes approved.**

**2. Old Business**

- **2023 Meeting Dates:**

**April 12<sup>th</sup> 2023**  
**June 14<sup>th</sup> 2023**  
**August 9<sup>th</sup> 2023**  
**October 11<sup>th</sup> 2023**  
**December 13<sup>th</sup> 2023**

- **Status of Meetings moving forward:**

Mike asked if there were any suggestions at this time on how we can approve our upcoming meetings, or if anyone had any concerns or suggestions going forward. There were none offered at this time. Mike advised we can continue to open the floor in our next few meetings here out, however he would like for the committee to consider the field trip idea and allowing the LEPC members to come out to different partners and tour their facilities and learn about what the organization offers and have provide for Harvey County.

- **Integrated Preparedness Plan (IPP):**

Bryan Ellis – Assistant Director of Emergency Management asked Mike Anderson if he would like to address the IPP and its current status. Mike opened the topic with the 300-400 class scheduling. He offered that the Emergency Management Department would be scheduling a 300 class in the fall of this year and that it would be ideal if

we were able to leave a year time span between the two. Mike also added that KDEM is looking to have the 400 classes be more of a regional type meeting so for example if we offer the course next year, it would be based for this region and that at this time he would look to see if there was one already schedule for the area for this year and if so, could notify the group of those dates and times. Emergency Management will continue to look at doing the 400 class next year and keep it in this region.

Mike also advised that Emergency Management would be conducting an exercise on the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> of March that would involve an EOC activation. The event will be tornado based and effect the ESF coordinators. The hope for this exercise is to work through our current processes, get all the ESF leads on board to see if the EOC itself can handle the influx of that many personnel, if we have any areas of concerns, gaps, role clarity issues and how we can fix those potential problems before the upcoming severe weather time frame. At this point the floor was opened up to the attendees to discuss any upcoming training their organizations maybe conducting soon. There were no suggestions brought forth.

### 3. **New Business:**

- **2023 Elections: (Vice Chair)**

Mike addressed the group with New Business by asking if there were any current nominations for the open position on the board of Vice Chair. After no names were mentioned, Mike advised that there had been some interest mentioned by members who were currently unable to attend, with that being an issue he asked if there would be any interest to make a motion of moving this topic to our next meeting on April 12<sup>th</sup> 2023. Jim Meier made a motion to table this discussion till then, Diane Waddell-Gilbert seconded the motion making the topic approved for a later date leaving the position still open at this time.

The floor was then opened up to any additional new business in which Jim Leftwich with KDEM advised that as of this week the State run EOC is standing down from its COVID-19 response. This is after over 1000 days of being activated on this particular incident. The employees are trying to figure out what a normal routine now looks like, some have chosen to take a vacation while others figure out what the next steps are. He was very proud of the team and that the EOC is now back to a normal steady activation status.

Steve Roberson also took the floor to ask Mike Anderson about this upcoming, “road show” with the “Storm Fury on the Plains presentations”. Mike advised that the National Weather Service will be presenting this program to the public on March 9<sup>th</sup> at Newton High School, but that Emergency Management would be providing its own mini presentations though out Harvey County and its First Responders. The goal is to be able to reach more of our First Responders by providing the 1 hour presentation at scheduled times that would work better for the organization. The hope is that this will give the First

Responders a chance to focus more on the reporting to dispatch during the storms and help form a more expedient, accurate and safe reporting education.

- **Exercise:**

This month's exercise was given by both Mike Anderson and Chief Anderson Lowe with Halstead Fire/EMS.

Scenario: Consist of Flooding in Halstead near Alta Mills – the date and time is February 8<sup>th</sup> 2023 at 9:15am and the National Weather Service has advised Chief Lowe that 3 inches more of rain is expected within the next 48 hours in Halstead. Mike then asked Chief Lowe what precautions and steps do you take at this time.

Chief Lowe took the floor and advised that he would of course start watching the rain gauges which they normally do based on the time of year. For example Labor Day weekend they kept an eye clearly on the gauges due to incoming rain and the chance that if they needed to close the gates they were looking at potential evacuations of campers in the area for the holiday, so that would be an added stressor on his group. Chief then explained a bit of trivia information that the Halstead gauge marked on the map is actually located on HWY 50 and if the reading is above level at that point, those waters won't actually make it to Halstead sometime for three days, so even though they keep an eye on the numbers there are considerations he has to take into account. Another example he offered was that if the levels are getting close to a point in which they would normally close the gates, but in fact it was beginning to recede then they make the judgement call at that point if they should worry about the gate closures or not. Normal levels he advised for the gate closure or where they consider "flooded" is 15 ft. At that point he feels comfortable in seeing those gates closed.

Chief Lowe went back to the scenario presented and explained his steps and process for what comes next would be as followed:

1. Take to the Emergency Management Department and see what help or support he can get from them.
2. Talk with other outside Fire Departments such as Chief Roberson and Chief Buller, to give them a heads up for equipment he may be requesting. His example for this was the boat, because often he has citizens who, even though they were asked to evacuate, stayed and will now need to be, "plucked" out of the area.
3. Notify Road and Bridge of their need for barricades, road block, sandbags and how they can get everything to the area through what route and means in case the highways have already been closed.
4. Keep an eye on KDOT status so the city is made aware of any highway closings, Chief Lowe advised that KDOT is notorious for closing 81 as soon as there is water on the white line of the roadway, so he needs to know how his units can get in and out and if needed he would need to

- hire an additional EMS crew to sit on a unit in Sedgwick to be able to work any emergency situation that needed medical.
5. Notify BSNF if needed so they have enough time to switch tracks or re-route any incoming trains. He advised that they normally need several hours noticed if not days to pre-plan but he thought it was normally no later than 3pm that actual day of travel if possible.
  6. If gate closure is imminent he will then reach out for pumps to be brought over because if the gates are closed the water will have to then be pumped out and over the levy.
  7. Begin requesting Sandbags, which each gate takes about 500 bags and those will need to be readily available to go.

Chief Lowe at this point gave a “kudos” to Jim Meier and said that during the last flooding incident when he reached out to his office for help they were prepared enough that Jim’s crew were able to bring out all the barricades and stage them strategically throughout Halstead. This made it easier for them to just move those onto the road ways quickly without hesitation. Chief Lowe also advised that his hope is soon we can have sandbags that do not deteriorate over time and that it wouldn’t be necessary to keep putting together, but instead they can be used from incident to incident. Chief Lowe ended the presentation by saying that most of the hard part of this type of even is the prep work, they are constantly maintaining the readings because every flood is different, every amount of water moves different so even though they have a threshold of things to do when and if numbers are reached, it is judgement calls. His last example was of the 2007 flood where is barely rained in Halstead but they had to close all 3 of the gates because of the way the waters travel down to the city from areas up north that got a lot more storm then we did here.

Mike Anderson then addressed that at this point we have activated the EOC and would provide an EM to remain behind the gates for support to work with Halstead as well has the EOC running full staff and preparing for sheltering, resource request and allocations.

Mike Anderson asked if there were any questions about the scenario and Steve Roberson then asked the Chief Lowe, how long does it take to shut the gates? Chief Lowe responded with the answer of 20 minutes.

Jim Leftwich asked Chief Lowe if he could go over the placement of the gates again there in Halstead on the presentational map so he could get a clearer idea of the scenario. Chief Lowe proceeded to show the three gates again. Jim asked if Chief Lowe had the pumps on hand there in Halstead and he was advised that they did in fact have them available.

With no other questions or concerns Mike Anderson asked if there were any other miscellaneous items that needed to be addressed during the New Business portion of the meeting. With no response he then advised that the Emergency Management Department is currently working on processes and refining them so once those are put in place he would be sharing that information for awareness purposes with the group and would ask

for any feedback they might have to make these type of incidents go more smoothly in the future. Mike gave an example of the Severe Winter Weather we just recently had in December, that he had activated the EOC in case it was needed but was the only one manning the center at the time. Mike asked the group if they would want to be notified of an situation in the future of the EOC being activated and that his hope for the process clarification is that in the future we are able to reach out to those how want to be notified and given inform them of a way to communicate with us over our conference line with codes to access that. He hopes to send out all of these processes soon once we get our bearings about us in the department.

Diana Waddell-Gilbert with Pretty Prairie advised that she felt this last round of storms her group was not prepared for merely the cold conditions. That they did close for outpatient clinics, did telehealth of course, which I learn to use during COVID, but still fell short on a few issues. Those caused potential problems that could have ended very badly for both the staff and patients. If she had to give them a grade on their plans for that storm it would be an “F” but they were able to take a lot of valuable information and are moving forward to put better plans in place.

At this point in the meeting Mike asked if there were any other forms of New Business, with no suggestions brought forth a motion was made by Skip Cowan to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Amy Kornahrens. **Meeting adjourned at 9:32am**

**Next Meeting April 12<sup>th</sup> 2023 at 9:00am**

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