TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CITY MANAGER  DEPARTMENTS: CITY MANAGER’S OFFICE
       FIRE DEPARTMENT
       POLICE DEPARTMENT

DATE: FEBRUARY 12, 2007  CMR: 144:07

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR INPUT ON KEY POLICY ISSUES RELATED TO DRAFT
          EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT/OPERATIONS PLAN, INCLUDING COUNCIL’S
          ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN AN EMERGENCY/DISASTER; COMMUNITY
          PARTNERSHIP IN EMERGENCY PLANNING AND RESPONSE; AND COUNCIL
          TRAINING.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council review and provide input on the overall outline and
scope of the City’s revised Emergency Management/Operations Plan; as well as on several draft
elements of the plan which will incorporate policy decisions of the Council. Staff also
recommends that the Council refer this item to the Policy and Services Committee for review of
the final draft plan before returning to Council for adoption.

BACKGROUND

Several sections of the Palo Alto Municipal Code outline the requirements for the preparation
and adoption of an emergency plan for the City. The Fire Department has primary responsibility
for preparation of the plan, which must be adopted by Council resolution. Local governments in
California are required to develop and maintain emergency plans that provide for the effective
mobilization of city resources to respond to declared emergencies. These plans must follow the
Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) which enhances inter-agency disaster
response coordination. The creation of this system stemmed from the Oakland Hills fires in the
early 1990s where inadequate inter-agency coordination led to undesirable outcomes.
Government Code Sections 8568 and 8607 require the City to create a SEMS-based emergency
organizational structure to ensure eligibility for state funding of emergency response-related
costs.

More recently, in February 2003, the President issued Homeland Security Presidential Directive
5, which mandated the Secretary of Homeland Security develop and administer the National
Incident Management System (NIMS). This federal system provides for a consistent nationwide
approach to disaster response at the local, state and federal levels that complements and builds
upon the current California SEMS model. All agencies within the United States are required to
comply with the NIMS guidelines in order to receive federal funding for disaster planning, training, response and recovery. Compliance with the guidelines also ensures the City’s eligibility for state disaster funds.

The City Council adopted the current Emergency Management Plan on January 11, 1999. The adoption of this plan brought the City into compliance with the SEMS model of emergency organization. The emergency plan is the official document that describes the City’s responsibilities and the processes used to carry out emergency operations. Since 1999, the City has updated its plan to reflect both local and national disasters. In 2000, the Severe Winter Storm and Earthquake annexes were added to the plan. Following the 2001 terrorist attacks, the City completed a Terrorism Annex to the plan. The creation of the new National Response Plan (NRP) and the NIMS federal emergency organization model has created the need to update the City’s emergency plan again. The federal government created guidelines for local government compliance with the NIMS requirements in December 2005. Since then, City staff have been working to update the emergency plan.

**DISCUSSION**

Attachment A to this report provides the Council with a high level overview of the City’s revised emergency management plan. This outline follows state and federal guidelines for plan organization and content. Most elements of the final plan will be standardized in nature and are consistent with other local government plans. However, there are certain elements of the plan that the City has expanded upon or modified to address the unique circumstances present in Palo Alto or specific community interests. These include: Council’s role as representatives of the City to the citizens, media and other agencies during a disaster; community alert/notification procedures; and community partnerships. Staff has included drafts of two of these elements with this report for Council review and comment (Attachments B and C). These documents are still in draft form. Staff would like to receive Council input on these items before final adoption of the plan. All of these elements are discussed in more detail below.

**Council’s Roles and Responsibilities:** One of the specific concerns staff has heard previously from the Council is the lack of clarity on the Council’s roles and responsibilities in a disaster. Attachment B provides draft protocols and procedures for the Council that will be incorporated into the final emergency plan. These protocols identify the key roles for the Council and the implementation steps for both the Council and staff. As identified in the plan, the Council will be the “face” of the City organization with the media, community members and visiting dignitaries during a disaster. The Council also provides policy oversight, including declaration of the emergency and suspension of certain City rules, for the Emergency Services Director in the execution of the City’s emergency operations. These responsibilities are vital to the success of the City’s disaster response and recovery efforts. Additionally, the Council plays an on-going role in supporting disaster preparedness and response through provision of funding and support for City programs, e.g., funding for new response equipment and PANDA programs.

In developing the Council protocols, staff discussed the issue of increased training opportunities for the Council. This is a key discussion point for the Council. Staff would like to receive input as to what types of training would be the most beneficial for the City Council. Some suggestions
include: 1) drills and exercises utilizing the activation procedures/protocols; 2) tailored emergency communications training; 3) IS 700 NIMS training (either online or in a classroom setting); and 4) participation in inter-agency exercises or training.

Community Alert/Notification Procedures: Staff is still preparing the draft of this section, which will focus on the mechanisms that allow the City to notify residents and businesses of disaster situations. Staff will be soliciting support from the Palo Alto/Stanford Red Ribbon Task Force (RRTF) in this effort. This section will also provide technical details on dispatch center responsibilities; Public Information Officer (PIO) duties, both in the Emergency Operations Center and in the field; and internal staff warnings and notifications. The key element of this plan will be the development of the City’s high-speed community alerting and emergency notification system. The system will have the ability to perform automatic and simultaneous notifications to members of the public, City staff, and emergency first responders on a 24/7 basis. It will also be able to make tens of thousands of instantaneous and simultaneous notifications based on non-geographic requirements, as well as use an interactive interface to the City’s geographic information system (GIS). The cities of Menlo Park and East Palo Alto intend to partner with Palo Alto on its vendor selection. Vendor proposals for this system are due back to the City at the end of February and staff anticipates awarding a contract by mid-March. Given this timeline, staff will be able to incorporate details of the system into the section on community alert/notification procedures, along with input from the RRTF. This will greatly bolster this section’s relevance for the community at large and will enhance a section currently focused largely on internal and inter-agency staff notification procedures. Staff anticipates completing this section before bringing the plan back to Policy and Services in April as recommended.

Community Partnerships: Attachment C outlines the Community Partnerships section of the plan, which will ultimately become an annex to the plan. This section is the most unique to Palo Alto, although it draws upon best practices researched in other communities. The City is fortunate to have an engaged and active citizenry that desires to participate in disaster planning and response efforts. The City also has numerous institutional assets and would be well-served by fostering and leveraging partnerships with these groups. The intent of the Community Partnerships section is to outline existing partnerships and to identify opportunities for additional coordination and communication. The section also provides information on the role volunteers play in disaster preparedness, response and recovery. Staff’s participation on the RRTF and the recommendations coming from that body will be critical to complete this annex.

To date, emergency planning has primarily focused on strengthening internal staff resources and government agency partnerships. These plans are very effective but are missing a key component. The City has certain basic responsibilities during a disaster and its resources will be completely consumed with these responsibilities. As staff has worked to clarify the City’s basic level of response, the type and extent of the partnerships necessary has become clearer. The recent efforts around pandemic planning have highlighted the benefits of partnering with community groups and agencies. It is important to further build upon and add to these relationships.

One of the key action items for future discussion is the role of the Citizen Corps Council (CCC). The current Citizens Corps Council is structured on an information-sharing model, with
scheduled speakers and discussion among members, none of whom have any obligation to attend on a regular basis. The Red Ribbon Task Force will be discussing the potential future role of the CCC as part of its work effort.

**NEXT STEPS**

Staff has worked on the revisions to the emergency plan through a good portion of the 2006 calendar year. A preliminary draft was initially provided to the Executive Staff members in July 2006. This initial review resulted in the identification of the need to expand upon the state guidelines for emergency plans in order to address some of Palo Alto’s unique interests and issues. There has been significant work towards this end, resulting in the drafts presented as part of this report. This work effort, along with the work effort related to preparing the pandemic influenza plan and related community outreach, slowed staff’s progress in completing the emergency plan update by the end of 2006.

Understanding the importance of completing the update to the plan, staff is proposing the following timeline to have the plan adopted by May 2007:

- **Preliminary Council review of plan**  
  February 12, 2007

- **Staff revisions and finalization of plan**  
  February 13 – March 16, 2007

- **Executive Staff review of final plan**  
  March 19 – 30, 2007

- **Policy and Services Committee review**  
  April 10, 2007

- **Final revisions and preparation of plan**  
  April/May 2007

- **Presentation of final plan to Council for adoption**  
  No later than May 21, 2007

- **Training on plan**  
  Summer/Fall 2007

**RESOURCE IMPACT**

While staff believes that the interdepartmental Steering Committee for emergency preparedness is still the most effective approach to emergency and disaster planning, it has become clear in the past year that resources are stretched to achieve what is required in this area with current staffing. The temporary addition of contract staffing in the Police Department and City Manager’s Office has been helpful. However, the Police Department staff work has focused primarily on homeland security and the contract in the Manager’s Office is very limited in scope and duration. Staff will be evaluating the adequacy of resources in this area during the 2007-09 budget process.

Staff is working with School District staff on plans for an alternate Emergency Operations Center (EOC). As discussions progress, staff may identify infrastructure and equipment needs for outfitting this alternate EOC. Staff is also investigating the cost and space requirements for
storing emergency food and water supplies for employees during a disaster of varying lengths. Staff received a preliminary report before the holidays on these issues from a specialized consultant and will be analyzing the options for proceeding with this type of emergency supply procurement.

The City must also update its plan every four years in accordance with State guidelines. The update process requires a significant staff time commitment from numerous departments. This process can also identify areas where disaster planning or training is deficient, leading to requests for additional resources. The final plan will contain a section that outlines the multi-year planning and budget strategy to address plan needs.

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

This report is consistent with existing City policies and with the Council’s designation of emergency preparedness/planning as a top priority for 2006 and 2007.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

This is not a project requiring environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Attachment A: Draft Emergency Operations Plan outline
Attachment B: Draft Council emergency protocols
Attachment C: Draft Community Partnerships section

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