

TORRANCE COUNTY LEPC

GENERAL MEETING NOTES

July 23, 2024

Commission Room

205 S. 9th Street, Estancia, NM

1. Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Stephen Garrett at 9:03am.
2. Pledge of Allegiance led by Mr. Garrett
3. Welcome and Introductions – Those in attendance in person and on the Zoom platform introduced themselves.
4. Approval of Agenda – Agenda could not be approved due to lack of quorum. Instead of a regular meeting, today's gathering will be a work session.
5. Approval of Minutes – Minutes from the June 25, 2024 meeting could not be approved due to lack of quorum.
6. Membership Applications – Torrance County Emergency Manager Samantha O'Dell encouraged people in attendance to complete and submit membership applications if they have not already done so. Individuals can attend the meetings in person or via the Zoom platform.
7. Discussion and possible approval of creating a nonprofit, to include adding a Treasurer position to the LEPC (to include responsibilities), amend LEPC bylaws and create payment disbursement policy, as recommended by LEPC Executive Committee. – Ms. . O'Dell said that the group could not act on this item due to lack of quorum. She advised attendees that the Executive Committee have discussed creating a non-profit to accept donations and funds for the LEPC. This would be separate from the county. To do so, we would need to have a treasurer and would need to amend bylaws. She said it would be best that the treasurer be someone other than a county employee. Mr. Garrett said that, as of June 30, 2024, the end of the state fiscal year, Torrance County lost a significant grant in the amount of \$225,000, because the county was not prepared to accept the money, and the LEPC did not have a separate fund to accept the funds. The funding could have been used for many things, including "go bags", vehicles, and steps to prevent loss of life and property. Ms. O'Dell said she has put off looking into the development of a website because we do not yet have a non-profit, and she cannot use county funds to pay for it. Mr. Garrett said that, once the non-profit is in place, we will request more funds, although we need more community involvement in the process. He said it is also important that more people in the community subscribe to the Code Red Emergency Alert

System. Ms. O'Dell advised that the LEPC as a group would have to determine how the money is spent.

Ms. O'Dell said the bylaws indicate that the LEPC should have equal representation from various sectors in the community, including law enforcement, county/city government, management, fire departments, transportation, health, media, community groups, utilities and residents. It is important to have feedback and representation from everyone.

8. Event Updates

a. County Fair (August 6-9) – Ms. O'Dell said the Torrance County Office of Emergency Management will have a booth at the county fair. They will provide preparedness bags and can include other safety materials from other local agencies. Deanna Lopez, Torrance County DWI Coordinator, said the program needs prizes for the county fair bingo events that will be held on August 7, 2024 and August 8, 2024.

Roy Hubbard (Town of Estancia) said there will be a block party on Main Street on Friday, July 26, 2024, as part of the weekend's Old Timers Day activities.

Vice-chairman Todd Brogowski reminded attendees that the Mountainair Sunflower Festival will be held on Saturday, August 24, 2024.

9. Agency Updates

a. Torrance County Fire Rescue – Torrance County Fire Chief Winham was unable to attend the meeting. Ms. O'Dell said multiple agencies have updates for this meeting. She said that Superior Ambulance is no longer providing service to Torrance County and that the Torrance County Fire Department has had to take over medical response for the county. This is also putting more stress on other agencies. The fire department has hired more staff and is continuing to interview to fill vacancies. They are working to get more ambulances running.

Matt Holmes provided an update on the Enterprise Products Tank Farm off NM State Road 41 north of Moriarty. He will soon be reaching out to local emergency partners. The company expects to be open 24 hours/day soon and drivers will load themselves. The facility will be manned 24 hours/day.

Roy Hubbard with the Town of Estancia said the town is reviewing the wells that serve the town. There are two major leaks on Well 8 and Well 3 that maintenance is currently working on. They will soon be pulling a new well permit. Ms. O'Dell said she has been in communication with Estancia Mayor Nathan Dial. If necessary, the county will assist the town in obtaining bottled water, as well as water storage tanks. Mr. Hubbard said he has spoken with East Torrance Soil and Water Conservation to determine if funding is available for low flow toilets for residents to use to conserve water. Ms. O'Dell said the Office of Emergency Management has looked at the possibility of obtaining water buffaloes to help when there are water issues, but she is not sure if that would be a good idea.

Arlene Perea with the National Forest Service said the state is currently at a low-moderate fire risk and that local crews have been taking out-of-state assignments.

10. Agency Presentation

a. Mountainair Fire/EMS – Chief Josh Archuleta discussed weather problems and flooding the town experienced. On June 19, 2024, there was six inches of rain and a foot of hail on portions of NM State Road 542. The road was shut down for four hours until it was safe for vehicles to travel through. On June 29, 2024, there was a second weather event in which two people on all terrain vehicles were swept away. They were located and placed in the town's brush truck, but ended up having to walk out because the brush truck was stuck. During this incident, the town's backhoe and blade also became stuck. It took approximately five hours to get all vehicles out of the mud. There was so much rain that day on U. S. Highway 60 that the water was only two feet from the top of the eight-foot culverts. Chief Archuleta said the county has been working nonstop to take care of the roads.

Ms. O'Dell said there was severe flooding on NM State Road 42 outside Willard. In some areas there were eight-foot-high piles of hail. She also mentioned that Torrance County does not have anyone who is certified in swift water rescue and that there are only a few people in the state who hold that certification.

11. Agency Presentation Sign Up Sheet – Ms. O'Dell said there is a sign-up sheet in the back of the room for any agency that would like to provide a presentation to the LEPC. Mr. Garrett said he would like the Central New Mexico Electric Cooperative to do a presentation and that we also need more citizen involvement. Ms. O'Dell said citizens need to be prepared.

12. Public Forum - Willard Mayor David Dean said that Mountainair gets water from Willard and that they need a backup system.

Ms. O'Dell said the Community Wildfire Protection Program (CWPP) should be done sometime in August. There could be some funding for mitigation, as well as training for the fire department. The Hazard Mitigation Plan for the county is out for RFP (Request for Proposals) right now and the contract should be awarded at the August 28, 2024 commission meeting. It is important to get feedback from all jurisdictions.

13. Meeting was adjourned by Mr. Garrett at 10:01 am.