LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE

Town Hall Chambers

75 Middle Street, Weymouth, MA

September 24, 2019, 9:00 a.m.

Minutes

**PRESENT:**  John Mulveyhill, Chairman

Charlotte Jenkins, Emergency Management

Daniel McCormack, Health Department

John Farren, Weymouth DPW

John Barker, Weymouth Central Maintenance

Keith Stark, Chief Weymouth Fire Department

Jeffrey Wall, Weymouth Fire Department

James St. Croix, Weymouth Police Department

James Mannion, MEMA

Jonathan Tose, Citizen Representative

Steve White, Citizen Representative

Brian Pomodoro, South Shore Health/EMS

Eugene Duffy, South Shore Health

Paul Milone, Weymouth Harbormaster

Mary Heinrichs, WETC

**ALSO PRESENT:** Robert Hedlund, Mayor of Weymouth

Joseph Sullivan, Mayor of Braintree

Robert Millette, Braintree Emergency Management

Ryan Brown, Braintree Emergency Management

Archie Green, Braintree Emergency Management

Robert James, Braintree Emergency Management

Dennis Girardi, Braintree Emergency Management

James Arsenault, Braintree DPW

Butch Martin, Calpine

Charles Parnell, Calpine

Jennifer Roedel, Executive Office of Public Safety

Karen Gentile, U.S. Department of Transportation

Joseph Klesin, U. S. Department of Transportation

Glenn Olsson, Chief Hingham Police Department

Marybeth McGrath, Braintree Health Department

Ally Sleiman, City of Quincy

Michael Lang, East Braintree Civic Association

Frank Singleton, Weymouth Conservation Commission

Alice Arena, FRRACS

Margaret Bellafiore, FRRACS

Patricia McDonnell, Recording Secretary

Chairman Mulveyhill called the meeting of the Local Emergency Planning Committee to order at 9:00 a.m.

**INTRODUCTIONS:**

Attendees introduced themselves and their role with the committee.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

The minutes of June 20, 2019 were reviewed.

*Motion made by Jeffrey Wall to approve the minutes of June 20, 2019. Motion seconded by Steve White and unanimously voted.*

**HAZARDOUS MATERIALS INCIDENTS:**

Daniel McCormack stated he is not aware of any hazardous materials incidents since the last meeting. Jeffrey Wall stated he is not aware of any incidents. Chair Mulveyhill asked about a recent evacuation at the Ralph Talbot School. Lt. Wall stated there was a gas leak in the area and the school was evacuated as a precaution only. The students were able to return to the building for dismissal. He stated everything went smoothly during this event.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Continued Discussion Public Safety Concerns Regarding Proposed Compressor Station:

Mayor Robert Hedlund and Mayor Joseph Sullivan addressed the Committee. Mayor Hedlund stated Algonquin Gas Transmission, LLC plans to construct a gas compressor station in North Weymouth as part of the Atlantic Bridge project. The town believes this will put residents, first responders, and the general public at risk. He stated this could cause not only physical damage, but could also severely damage regional infrastructure and transportation and cause potential catastrophic conditions within the South Shore of Massachusetts. If built it would be directly adjacent to Kings Cove parcel, a regional sewerage pump station (MWRA), and the Fore River bridge which carries 39,000 passengers a day. It would also impact the ocean, a major shipping lane and one of the busiest ports in the region.

Mayor Hedlund stated this leaves the town with many questions. What would happen to the MWRA pump station in case of catastrophic disaster? What about the Fore River bridge? Would first responders be properly equipped and trained? What would happen to residents and visitors to Weymouth? He stated the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) was in Weymouth on June 17, 2019 for a field hearing and listened to the concerns of citizens of Weymouth and the surrounding communities. He is hoping that PHMSA can report the results of that field hearing. He thanked everyone for attending this meeting and stated if Weymouth is forced to have this compressor station they must prepare for all potential disaster scenarios and health impacts.

Mayor Sullivan stated he, along with Dan Koch, Mayor of Quincy, are committed to seeing this compressor station not be built. There are concerns that remain with building a compressor station. Although the plant may physically be located in North Weymouth the entire region is affected by this potential project. He stated he hopes they do not have to do emergency planning around the compressor station as it should not be built. They are disappointed with the decisions made by the DEP in terms of the air quality analysis. He thanked all the citizens who have been so engaged and active in this process, as their voice is being heard. He stated that everyone who has looked at this proposal is in agreement that it does not make any sense. They are going to remain focused on this. Marybeth McGrath from Braintree’s Health Department has been working on this proposal, as well as their assistant town solicitor and DPW Director James Arsenault. He stated the region needs to remain focused and diligent to ensure this project does not get built. They understand this is a federal project, but unfortunately they also have to work against the state to have recognition by the state that this should not be built. He stressed that this pipeline and compressor station does not benefit anyone on the South Shore. It will enhance communities north of us and outside the United States, and opposition needs to remain strong.

Chair Mulveyhill stated Braintree, Quincy, Weymouth and Hingham are in this together and will be creating a joint emergency plan.

Daniel McCormack, Health Director, stated Matt Brennan has been working tirelessly on this project over the last four years. He submitted a four page letter outlining many concerns to Karen Gentile of PHMSA. They also have put together three ring binders outlining and summarizing the concerns they have which they would like to provide to PHMSA today. He stated the Health Department has many concerns about exacerbation of health impacts, as Weymouth and surrounding communities already have higher rates than the state average. He reviewed the potential health impacts. The compressor station will emit carcinogens, such as benzene and formaldehyde. There will be noise impacts from the compressor station which will cause negative health impacts. They feel this location is already overburdened with industrial discharges from Quincy, Braintree, and Weymouth with all the other facilities currently in this location. The proposed air and monitoring stations are not adequate for such an expansive operation. There are also emergency related concerns with fire and police and how to adequately address an incident if this were to be built at this location.

Keith Stark, Chief Weymouth Fire, stated as member of the LEPC they are tasked with planning for worst case scenarios. This is another high risk that is going to be placed into their communities and firefighters will have to respond. He stated he has concern with the close proximity to the bridge, to the National Grid distribution system, and the MWRA plant. He has to ensure the safety of citizens and firefighters and responding to an incident of this nature would require more personnel, more training, more equipment, and more apparatus. He asked if there would be assistance from Enbridge in supplying these things. He asked Enbridge if this is built would they have emergency incident action plans to assist them in how to fight a fire. Would they work with the local fire department to create an SOP and provide training with their department. He stated breathing apparatus, bunker gear, proximity suits and other equipment would be needed.

James St. Croix, Weymouth Police, stated they are concerned with the safety and security of the community. He stated in a worst case scenario the traffic flow would impact many different communities and they will have to work on that. He stated there are also manpower issues that go along with this.

Chair Mulveyhill stated all injuries and casualties will end up at the hospital and asked EMS to comment. Brian Pomodoro, South Shore Health/EMS, stated they are generally in a defensive posture with this type of incident. They have to assess what the threat is and allocate their resources. If this goes forward they would have to completely reanalyze their response posture in the community. This might mean more assets, but will definitely mean more training. They have a great relationship now with Weymouth Fire and Weymouth Police and would have to alter their service zone plan to accommodate any threat of this type.

Eugene Duffy, South Shore Health, stated he would echo what Mr. McCormack stated from a public health perspective, as all these pathologies would end up in their health system and there would be large impacts.

Karen Gentile, U.S. Department of Transportation Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, stated their primary mission is safety. They hear the community’s concerns today and from previous meetings and correspondence. They do not have the authority to permit or approve pipeline projects. They do continue to monitor this project and if approved and constructed they will continue to perform checks to ensure the pipeline operator is operating in compliance with the federal pipeline safety regulations. The pipeline operator must keep the pipeline facility safe and ensure the product stays in the pipeline.

She stated PHMSA has begun looking at the pipeline operator for their preliminary designs, however, at this juncture nothing has been finalized. If they obtain the necessary permits to move forward with construction they will continue to inspect from construction through the design, operation, and maintenance of that pipeline. They encourage all pipeline operators to maintain liaisons with emergency response officials to make sure that the officials have the information they need to properly plan in advance of a pipeline emergency. They want to ensure the operators are adhering to those regulatory requirements and providing emergency response officials with the proper information so they can prepare their plans in advance.

Becky Haugh, Town Council, stated they have been fighting this compressor station for nearly five years. They have dug deep on soil contamination and air pollution. Digging deep into the permitting is all about design and construction of compressor stations. Although PHMSA says they do not have any oversight in siting compressor stations, a lot of what is proposed for North Weymouth goes against this particular code. She stated there needs to be two exits out of a compressor station and there literally cannot be one on this peninsula, if something happens everyone in the public park or MWRA would be trapped.

Ms. Haugh stated when this was first proposed in she did a tour inside the Oxford compressor station and drove all along the entire Algonquin route. She encouraged others to tour a facility to see the gravity of the situation between current compressor stations versus this proposal. She stated usually approximately 10 acres are completely fenced off with high security. Additionally, about 40 acres out or more is a secondary fence that is locked after hours. She stated to be blunt about it the Weymouth siting is ridiculous. She urged PHMSA to look into this siting in more depth.

Ally Sleiman, Quincy Emergency Management, stated he would like to echo what Mayors Hedlund and Sullivan stated. This is not the place for a compressor station and they stand in alliance with the rest of the South Shore.

Glenn Olsson, Chief Hingham Police, stated there will be a lot of emergency planning required and they are committed to working with Weymouth and all public safety personnel to ensure they have proper plans in place. Chair Mulveyhill stated they will be reaching out to Hingham, Quincy, and Braintree to get a group together to work on plans for a complete unified command setup.

James Mannion, MEMA, stated they will be here no matter what happens. He stated their role is to ensure safety plans are in place for existing hazards. He applauded this committee for existing, as there are not many emergency planning committees in the state that regularly meet and review plans consistently. Chair Mulveyhill asked if there are avenues for funding for drills or equipment on a regional level. Mr. Mannion stated MEMA has their regular grants and they will be available for years to come and he would be able to assist with this.

Jonathan Tose stated coming from an emergency response background he wanted to reiterate what Ms. Haugh stated about this being on a peninsula. With the station being situated where it is it would affect access to the MWRA and the gas metering station. If they were to have an incident, plans would require the MWRA to shut down or go into a lower capacity. They need to consider how this will be affected by an incident. The bridge is also nearby and there is only one way in and one way out. He stated this is not the right site for this compressor station.

Michael Lang, East Braintree Civic Association, stated he has been addressing environmental issues in the basin for 40 years. He indicated that no one has been looking at the hub line metering station, which is actually part of the project. He was an intervener on the bridge project and when they did the environmental assessment they stated there is no gas pipeline anywhere near the infrastructure of the bridge itself. However, there is a yellow pipe sticking up right beside the supports for the bridge itself. There is also an oil pipeline that runs from Sprague to the power plant. This is also the location of the future Access Northeast, which is a larger pipeline.

Mr. Lang contacted PHMSA and they stated this is not a safety issue but a siting issue and he should contact FERC. He contacted FERC and they said this is not a siting issue it is a safety issue contact PHMSA. PHMSA send him an email stating they should not have placed the bridge near the gas pipeline. The bridge has been there for over 100 years. He stated he contacted Secretary Pollack at DOT and she refused to meet with them. State Senators and Mayor Sullivan have requested meetings and she also refused. He stated Weymouth needs to look at the metering station. It has a gas vent and blows gas onto the bridge where there are commuters. He stated this is a major safety concern. He provided a written report to the Chairman.

Chair Mulveyhill asked the harbormaster to address the shipping lanes and potential impacts. Paul Milone, Harbormaster, stated the Fore River is a major area for ships, large tankers, and cruise boats. There is only one way in and one way out. He is concerned with safety and if what is proposed is not safe he does not want it. If this should happen and there is a fire or interruption in that area there is only one way out and Braintree would be blocked off. Ship traffic would be diverted away from the bridge. He stated these ships never stop, they go night and day all year round. He stressed concern with the ability to evacuate. He stated these are large ships carrying oil and diesel fuel, and there is a chemical plant in Quincy and a power plant in this location.

Frank Singleton, Weymouth Conservation Commission, showed a photograph of the bridge, metering station, pump station, and the proposed location just to show how close everything is in that area. He pointed out the clouds stating there is a lot of thermal inversion. He stated the Michigan explosion six months ago was caused by thermal inversion, they vented the station because the computer detected something wrong and it flared out. There is an elderly housing complex in German Town and when FERC got the application they claimed it was rural because they only took the delineation of the property and excluded everything that was adjacent, no building, no bridge, nothing nearby.

Alice Arena, Fore River Residents Against the Compressor Station, stated she has the utmost respect for fire, police and emergency personnel, but training and equipment will do precious little good. She cited recent explosions in other states. She stated with the explosions in other communities, the only thing they could do is cordon off a quarter mile radius and let it burn. They have to shut off the gas on both ends and burn off what is in the pipes. The heat is so intense you cannot get within a quarter mile of this and it takes out anything that is close by. In terms of the bridge and pumping station it will take out the computer systems for both operations. In the case of the pumping station raw sewerage will be dumped into the bay, 60 million gallons a day. The bridge will not be able to go up and down. The Citgo plant supplies diesel fuel to a good portion of New England and will not be able to get diesel fuel if the bridge is not operational.

Ms. Arena stated Enbridge has already had in the past 2.5 years multiple incidents of corrosion in the pipes that are already there. There is a machine that cleans the pipes which got stuck and she does not know the outcome. They have corrosion there now. They have divers in the area and are digging up pipelines. They potentially have to replace the pipe, but also have to replace the electric anodes that help control the corrosion. The pipes have been in place for almost 20 years in a corrosive salt water and arsenic environment. The plan is to up pressure in these pipes. They have been running between 450 and 750 PSI for the past twenty years and they plan on expanding that to a maximum of 1440 PSI. The problem is not just the compressor station, but also the corrosion of the pipes, which could cause an explosion directly under the bridge.

Chair Mulveyill asked Ms. Gentile if PHMSA provides regional training funding. Ms. Gentile stated PHMSA does not provide funding, however, there are grant opportunities which are not necessarily specific to training or equipment, but she can provide a link for the grants that they do offer. She stated the pipeline operator sends out public awareness information as required and in the materials that Enbridge sends out they talk about their safety community grant program. She stated she will provide that information if needed.

Margaret Bellafiore, Fore River Residents Against the Compressor Station, reminded the committee there is a podcast produced by WGBH called Fire in the Valley and you can hear emergency responders at the time of the emergency in Lawrence and North Andover. She stated this was not a compressor station but is similar in that they were dealing with a gas corporation, Columbia, that had an arrogant view of public safety. She stated the Mayor of Lawrence commented when they finally got Columbia Gas to respond they told them to evacuate the city, but provided no help, and there was no plan. She provided Chair Mulveyhill with information on accessing the podcast.

Chair Mulveyhill stated they are here to begin a planning process so should an event happen in Weymouth and the surrounding towns they will have a plan. He stated he would like to put together a taskforce with representatives from Weymouth, Braintree, Quincy, and Hingham, as well as the Coast Guard, so they can put together a good unified command plan. He stated James Mannion from MEMA has already agreed to help with this and they will bring PHMSA in as well at some point. He stated although they prefer that this does not exist, the Weymouth LEPC has determined that it is time to start the planning process just in case. This will be a four town joint effort so it is prudent to begin the planning process. He stated a catastrophic incident at that site would be worse than Lawrence. There is a lot they need to look at and plan for and he will be in touch with each of the communities through their emergency management directors to get this project moving.

Michael Lang provided the committee with information on pipeline safety community grants.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

Chair Mulveyhill stated they were approached by Mass Maritime Academy to do another tabletop exercise this year. Due to the fact that so many students are now taking emergency management they have an influx of students and not enough communities to run the tabletop. He has agreed and they will be putting together a training subcommittee to work with the students. This will take place during April vacation. They will start putting this together as early as next week and he will be contacting those who will serve on the subcommittee. It will be a Hazmat drill of some kind involving a school and the school department has already expressed interest.

Chair Mulveyhill asked if there was anyone present from the Undersecretary’s office. Jennifer Roedel, Executive Office of Public Safety, stated she has no comments at this time, she is just taking notes to bring back to the Undersecretary.

Jonathan Tose asked if the new public library is another site that could be used for a backup EOC. Chair Mulveyhill stated the library is a designated disaster field office so it is being set up for that and could be used as an alternate EOC if necessary.

James Mannion stated September is preparedness month. There are a lot of good materials on the MEMA and FEMA website. He stated people should think about emergency preparedness at work and at home. It is hurricane season and this is a season with risk. He announced they are doing training courses in this area. They have an ICS300 course in Hanson October 22 and 24 and they are finalizing an EOC operations course in Hingham on November 4. The emergency management performance grant is due by the end of the week as well as a pre-disaster mitigation plan grant and flood mitigation assistance grants due by October 11. Charlotte Jenkins reminded people to check on their elderly neighbors.

Mayor Hedlund stated since they have someone from the Secretary of Public Safety’s Office present at this meeting it is important to remind them that Governor Baker promised a safety analysis of the project, which came at the same time he ordered the health impact assessment. After ordering this study the secretary left and the staffer assigned the task of doing this work also left. A meeting was then organized by Congressman Lynch and attended by himself, Mayor Sullivan, Mayor Koch, and Governor Baker. At this meeting he had the opportunity to remind the Governor that the safety analysis was never completed. The Governor then ordered subsequent staff from the Secretary of Public Safety’s office to pick up on that study. He stated he does not know if this committee has heard anything as a result of that, but he has not, and he would like to send the message back to the Secretary’s office that this was a promise made by the Governor but they still have not seen anything. Chair Mulveyhill stated his office has not seen or heard anything, nor had anyone else present.

Jennifer Roedel, Executive Office of Public Safety, stated she did hear the Mayor’s concerns and will take these concerns back to the Undersecretary’s office. She stated they are aware of the meetings that have happened with the Governor’s office and they will respond in writing. Chair Mulveyhill stated last year they were promised a study and asked if the study is being worked on. She stated she will bring this back to the Secretary’s office. They have completed some meetings and will be involved in emergency management plans going forward. Mayor Hedlund stated he would like to see something before this compressor station is built. Dan McCormack provided updated data for her to take back to the Undersecretary.

Alice Arena thanked the Mayor for raising the issue of the safety report that was promised. She stated the Governor had promised the safety report in July 2017 and Undersecretary McMurray was here in October 2018 so they have waited two full years. She indicated if the committee has no safety report and the Mayor has no safety report there probably is not one. She reported that in the public involvement plan Algonguin has stated that they will begin construction on November 1. They still do not have the wetlands permit, waterways permit, or coastal zone management signoff.

Chair Mulveyhill stated the LEPC will keep pressure on the Undersecretary’s office.

Frank Singleton stated one other promise that was made to the Mayor was a vulnerability study looking at that site from the point of view of hurricanes. Chair Mulveyhill asked if anything has made its way to the Conservation Commission thus far. Mr. Singleton stated they had a superseding order of conditions and the Conservation Commission voted against it. The state overruled them and they have been notified but not involved legally. A second issue is that Calpine never identified that there is an oil line adjacent to the gas lines and they have not heard from Calpine.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

*Motion made by Daniel McCormack to adjourn at 10:08 a.m. Motion second by Steve White and unanimously voted.*

Patricia McDonnell

Recording Secretary

Approved by:

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John Mulveyhill, Chairman

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_