

CITY OF OCONTO
MINUTES OF THE EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE
City Hall Council Chambers, 1210 Main St, Oconto, WI 54153
TUESDAY, MAY 3, 2022 - 8:30 AM

Draft for Approval

Meeting called to order at 8:30 am by Mayor John Panetti

Roll Call –

Present: Mayor John Panetti, Jeremy Wusterbarth, Police Chief Mike Rehberg, Fire Chief Josh Bostedt, John Reed, and John Wittkopf

Also present: City Administrator Brittney Bickel and as recording secretary

Approval of Agenda –

MOTION: Wusterbarth / Rehberg

Motion to approve the agenda as presented for Emergency Government held on May 3, 2022. Voice Vote: 6 ayes - MOTION CARRIED

Approval of Minutes –

MOTION: Wusterbarth / Rehberg

Motion to approve the minutes as presented for Emergency Government held on October 5, 2021. Voice Vote: 6 ayes - MOTION CARRIED

Correspondence/Public Input – none

Discussion/Recommendation/Update on –

- a. Tornado Sirens: The annual maintenance cost was higher than normal. We are using a different company than we have in the past, one that is state certified. It is also higher, because the tornado sirens are very old and require more maintenance and repairs. There is also a known issue with the siren at the WWTP, it trips the breaker. The amounts that have been spent already in 2022 are more than the amount that has been budgeted for Emergency Government. With the budget being extra tight, a budget adjustment will need to be done to take that money from another line item somewhere else in the budget. The 2 oldest tornado sirens are 45 years old; the life expectancy is 30 years. Oconto County has 9 tornado sirens, the City of Oconto holds 4 of those 9 sirens. There are no state or federal laws requiring a municipality to have or maintain tornado sirens. Not all municipalities have them, in fact many do not. The purpose of a tornado siren is an outdoor warning signal, it is not meant to be heard indoors. With everyone receiving phone text or call alerts, radio alerts, and television alerts in severe weather, are they necessary? Questions were raised about the elderly not having a cell phone. Phone call alerts go to landlines as well. The safety of our citizens is our number one priority. Do the sirens add to that safety, or are they a thing of the past? Many municipalities are phasing them out. The purchase and installation of two new sirens to replace the two oldest sirens was quoted at \$27,700 in October 2021. Because all 4 sirens have had their annual maintenance in 2022, they are covered for the year unless one breaks down or requires additional maintenance. It was discovered in the annual maintenance that the Copper Culture siren (the newest siren) had a recall in 2015 that was never updated. They

installed the update (a gear part) with the labor and part being at no cost under the warranty. The WWTP siren is very unreliable in tests whether it will work or not and is currently being investigated. Other municipalities that have phased out their sirens let the sirens remain in use until they are no longer functional and/or safe and educate their residents on how to receive alerts in a severe weather event. NOAA weather radios, local television, internet, and phone alerts via systems such as Code Red. It was questioned how the City got to have 4 sirens: a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Oconto County and the City of Oconto in December of 2011 regarding the purchase and ownership of all tornado sirens from the County to the City. At the time, before the advancement of technology, tornado sirens were a necessity. The decision could possibly go on referendum. Unless the County would possibly want them back? If the sirens are going to be phased out, it will not be immediately. Code Red is a wonderful system that is County-wide that sends High Importance Alerts to every phone that is signed up to receive them. Alerts sent out by the officers, such as tornados, flooding, snowstorms, safety concerns, or missing persons in Oconto County. It would be important for the officers to physically go to schools, nursing homes, etc. and register individuals for Code Red to keep them informed. It works on all phones: smartphones, flip-phones, and landlines. A plan would be implemented to make a really strong effort to educate the residents and assist in registration for Code Red, starting immediately.

MOTION: Reed / Wusterbarth

Motion to implement a Code Red program. Voice Vote: 6 ayes - MOTION CARRIED

- b. Other Emergency Government Activities: There will be a free 4-hour training offered at the County regarding Emergency Management that is required for the acquisition of FEMA grants and/or reimbursement of funds. Chief Josh Bostedt, Mayor Panetti, Administrator Brittney Bickel, Alderperson John Reed, and Superintendent of Public Works Jeremy Wusterbarth will be attending.

Adjournment –

MOTION: Wittkopf / Reed

Motion to adjourn at 9:24 am. Voice Vote: 6 ayes - MOTION CARRIED