

SUNLAND-TUJUNGA  
NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

SPECIAL BOARD & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE  
MINUTES

Sunday, January 25, 2026, 3:00 PM

Draft

*This meeting is being held by the Sunland-Tujunga Neighborhood Council using teleconferencing pursuant to Government Code Section 54953.8(a)(2)(B).*

1. **Roll Call:**
  - a. Committee Members Present: Lydia Grant, President & Chair, Mark Seigel. Absent: Jon von Gunten, Mikal John McEnany, Dillon Dorothy.
  - b. Members of the Community: Cindy Cleghorn, Cheryl Schmidt, Karen Moran, David DeMulle (Doc)
2. **Call to Order:** Lydia Grant, 3:02pm
3. **Identification of New Members.** A brief discussion took place about who the members were for the committee (comments from Cindy, Karen and Lydia). Voted on in the General Board meeting the following were approved: Lydia Grant, President & Chair, Mark Seigel, Jon von Gunten, Mikal John McEnany, Dillon Dorothy.
4. **Motion to vote on New Committee Members.** Cheryl would like to join; this can vote on it at the next General Board Meeting.
5. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** Non agenda items. None.
6. **Purpose of Committee.** Per Lydia, the purpose of the Committee is to address the safety/dangers in our community (e.g. fire, flooding, earthquakes, etc.) and include setting up evacuation routes and other essential services/needs. A discussion ensued with comments from Lydia and Cheryl about if the Committee should be extended to Public Safety. The feeling was that the Police are already involved in our community efforts, working closely with STNC, but the Fire Department and potentially other organizations (e.g. Park Rangers) could be involved – more of a community needs approach that might even address pandemic concerns, food shortages, etc. Cheryl felt initially we should focus on Emergency Preparedness/response. It was noted that LAFD Battalion Chief Scott Hilton already indicated that he would like to be a member during the January 2026 General Board meeting. Lydia noted that if the focus was extended, a potential name could be “Preparation, Emergency, Evacuation and Public Safety” or the PEEK committee! Lydia said that animal evacuation should be included, based on previous challenges, and Cheryl commented that evacuation sites where people and pets can go should be identified. It was noted that the City has not historically been helpful in identifying specifics and it is on our community to do so. For example, Verdugo High School was identified as an evacuation locale but pets were not allowed. It may be that we need to extend our considerations to areas outside the City proper, working with the County.
7. **Evacuation Routes**

- Lydia said that we had voted to send in an evacuation plan to the Grand Jury for review, and it is in progress but there are more details to be included. A Grand Jury investigation is a request for a review of the evacuation plan by the City. Lydia noted that their recommendations have been given for other fires (Butte County, Paradise) although not always followed. Road diets, including blocking off entire lanes for bicycles, can greatly reduce egress access and be a major egress concern. With suggestions provided through the Grand Jury, we may have some advantage in pressing the City/County to support the plans. There were other lessons learned resulting from the fires in the Palisades and the Eaton fire where cars were abandoned, inadequate notices given, etc. and there was no one monitoring our area during the Eaton fire. Other problems have occurred more recently during the rains where Big Tujunga Dam water release notification was given to the community with a very short notice, and via email. There were people in the wash that managed to evacuate safely, but it could have been a disaster. Evacuating the homeless is also a concern. Cheryl said that emails are not as effective as texts for any notifications, noting that emails were sent to parents for children being evacuated from Apperson School about 8-9 years ago with only a half hour for the parents to pick up their children before they were taken. Few people are that tied into their email compared to text messages.
- David MeMulle (“Doc”), Member of the Community and Editor of the Foothills Paper, noted that he puts together an evacuation route about every two years for his area (Cougar Canyon) which is considered to be non-defensible because there is no ability for emergency vehicles (e.g. Fire Trucks) to turn around. His map shows routes where 4-wheel vehicles can access.
- Lydia said another issue is cars in the street that block access. Lydia said that Michell Vergara is no longer out NC rep from Mayor Bass’ office; Jennifer Genesis has replaced her. Lydia had the opportunity to meet with Jennifer and talk about our concerns, and drive her through the areas of particular interest. Lydia is hopeful that Jennifer is sensitized to our problems and will be supportive. Jennifer agreed it is a high fire area. Lydia pointed out the ED1 project which has been approved, noting that the approval would not be allowed at this time due to consideration of the high fire hazard, but it is not clear if the former approval means that the development will still occur or not. Residents in this apartment complex could not depend on buses to evacuate because bus service will be discontinued by Metro in the event of a fire and a major assumption is that residents will not have cars.
- Lydia noted that there is legislation that makes the City responsible for the emergency evacuation route for people in the city, but this conflicts with the fact that the County is responsible for public safety. Lydia noted that it is against the law to have an unfunded mandate, so the City cannot make a requirement if they can’t fund it. We need to go forward and be an example for other NCs. Our plans need to consider the direction of the fire (east or west) and plan accordingly. The Fire Department does not have maps for evacuations.
- Lydia noted another concern in the past - people who picked up their children at school were not allowed to re-enter the community to pick up other family members/pets once they were out of the area. A number of other lessons learned were discussed including incidents where people/students were left behind, didn’t have food, etc. We need to work with Glendale, La Crescenta and La Canada (School Districts) to identify areas where we can support each other.

## 8. CERT

- Comments from Lydia, Cindy, Cheryl and Mark. Lydia said that we have CERT training on-going in Spanish and Armenian and that people trained in CERT might be helpful in emergency efforts if needed. The CERT training focus is for the individual to protect their own family, but there might be some people who are willing to participate more actively if needed. CERT training includes basic skills such as first aid, learning how to carry people during role playing, etc. One issue is that when emergencies come up, you have to wait until COMMAND dictates what to do. There are some people in CERT who are trained to drive vehicles and provide general support for the Fire Department.
- We do not have, and the City cannot give us, a contact list of who has been trained. It might be that we can ask CERT trained people if they would like to be part of a response group if we can contact them through the Fire Department. Mark said that there is a contact person for each Battalion who has contact information. If the CERT trained people initiate the contact back to us, it may be no problem. Sandy Cap is our rep (Battalion 12).

## 9. Issues that have come up

- a. School Evacuations. Previously discussed.
- b. Senior Living Homes. Lydia said that only 4-5 weeks ago there was a fire at a Senior Living home with 19 people displaced and one person died in the fire. These and other facilities (e.g. Drug Rehab homes) don't necessarily have permits and the City may not be aware of their locations. We need to know where they places are so no one gets left behind. If Business Tax Registration Certificates are available, we may be able to get a better handle on where they are.
- c. Wheelchairs. In a previous fire, the NC was faster to establish locations than other organizations (e.g. Red Cross) but one lesson learned was that without wheel chairs available, people could not exit the cars they came in.
- d. Homeless. Previously discussed.
- e. Evacuating animals. Previously discussed.

## 10. Future Meeting Dates and Times.

Lydia feels that weekends might provide a better opportunity for people to support the Committee zoom meetings.

## 11. Final Comments.

- Doc asked how many districts in STNC; 4 per Lydia. Doc asked about area officers and if they had radios and knew how to handle evacuations. Lydia agreed it would be a good goal, and Mark is the resident expert on radios. Lydia noted we had (4) rollable garbage cans with emergency gear in storage, such as heavy duty gloves, flash lights, emergency vests. Lydia discussed providing door hangers where the green side indicated all was well, and red meant "need help!" New developments were discussed where egress is a challenge; the White Bird developer plans for 245 houses in the Canyon Hills project have only a single lane egress. The plan was approved 25 years ago, per Cindy, and continuation of the plan if development hasn't been started might be denied. There is a protected bee that also might challenge the development.
- Cindy noted that California Assembly Bill 747 (AB 747) provides evacuation route requirements for L.A. From google: AB 747 requires L.A. to update evacuation routes to

include detailed, risk-based evacuation route analyses for hazards like wildfires. The city must identify, analyze, and map the capacity, safety, and viability of evacuation routes, particularly in high-risk zones.

- Lydia invited a to email her with any suggestions.

12. **ADJOURN.** 4:06 pm.