**LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE (LEPC)**

**ASSOCIATION**

**BUSINESS MEETING**

**MINUTES**

**April 12, 2024, 8:00 a.m.**

Summit Room, Egan Center

Anchorage, Alaska

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Peter Gurney Aleutian & Pribilof Islands (Unalaska)

Amanda Loach Anchorage

Deborah Jones Bristol Bay

Willard Hand Copper River

Forest Shreeve Denali Borough

Nancy Durham Fairbanks North Star Borough

Michelle Brown Juneau

Brenda Ahlberg Kenai Peninsula Borough

Frank Dorner Kodiak

Casey Cook Mat-Su Borough, Co-Chair

Tom Vaden Nome, Co-Chair

David Engel North Slope Borough

Chris Hatch Northwest Arctic Borough

Aaron Hankins Petersburg

Craig Warren Sitka

**1. CALL TO ORDER: Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) Association**

**Co-Chairs, Mr. Casey Cook and Mr. Tom Vaden**

Co-Chair Tom Vaden called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

Co-Chair Tom Vaden, Nome, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Roy English, LEPC Coordinator, confirmed that a quorum was present to conduct business.

1. **Administrative Announcement from Co-Chair**

Co-Chair Tom Vaden, Nome, made announcements about what to do in case of emergencies and other housekeeping matters.

**II. APPROVAL OF, AND CHANGES TO, THE AGENDA**

Co-Chair Tom Vaden, Nome, asked if there were any changes to the agenda.

**MOTION:** Willard Hand, Copper River, moved approve the agenda as presented. David Engel, North Slope Borough, **seconded the motion.** The motion passed unanimously.

**III. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

Co-Chair Tom Vaden, Nome, asked for a motion to approve the October 13, 2023, LEPCA meeting minutes.

**MOTION:** Michelle Brown, Juneau, moved to approve the October 13, 2023, LEPCA meeting minutes. Frank Dorner, Kodiak, **seconded the motion**. The motion passed unanimously.

**IV. OLD BUSINESS**

1. **LEPC Status Report Form**

Co-Chair Tom Vaden, Nome, said four LEPC status report forms had been received. The LEPC status report form was approved at the last meeting and sent out. The purpose of the form was to save time, as well as documenting how the LEPCs were doing over time without having to review past meeting minutes.

Michelle Brown, Juneau, said she voted in favor of the LEPC status report forms and turned them in last year, but she did not recall seeing the attachment this year.

1. **LEPC Funding Letters**

Co-Chair Tom Vaden, Nome, said several LEPC funding letters had been received. Per Director Fisher’s recommendation, we wrote a letter and copied the SERC and LEPCA, although this is not a Department of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (DHS&EM) funding issue. It is a Legislative funding issue. We are trying to educate our legislators on what the LEPC does. These volunteers do a huge amount of which, which can be overwhelming. Tier II is a huge issue in our area, but no one is paid to monitor tier II. DEC assists people on how to do it, but it still takes a lot of personal contact.

Roy English, LEPC Coordinator, said Matanuska-Susitna, Nome, and Anchorage wrote letters requesting LEPC funding. He asked to have the letters entered into the record or added as an amendment for the fall meeting. He asked everyone else to write letters requesting funding for the LEPCs.

Michelle Brown, Juneau, suggested setting a timeline for when the letters were due and then sending out reminders about a month before the due date.

Co-Chair Casey Cook, Mat-Su, said he appreciated the timeline idea, but we have talked about the LEPC funding letters several times. There needs to be some onus of responsibility on the members of the LEPCA to do what is asked of them without needing a reminder. We sent out reminders in the last six months, but those who are in support of LEPC funding should take some responsibility and write a letter.

Amanda Loach, Anchorage, said she recalled discussing having a special meeting with the members of the LEPCA to go over the research conducted by John Huffman on how to make an LEPC successful. We could add the already composed LEPC letters to that meeting and have the authors talk about the components of their letters. The point was to have a special meeting, as the Anchorage LEPC did, to discuss the project for the LEPCA to help facilitate and staff the composition of the letters and collectively put together thoughts, research, and information. She proposed holding a special meeting this quarter. John Huffman gave a great presentation to the Anchorage LEPC that was helpful and informative. Another option would be to formulate one letter from all of us. As chair of the Anchorage LEPC, I would be happy to sign the letter.

Michelle Brown, Juneau, said it was her understanding from the last meeting that suggestions on why the LEPCs needed funding was going to be compiled and there was going to be one letter signed by everyone. However, everyone should participate and send in thoughts for their areas.

Director Bryan Fisher, DHS&EM, said he was happy to set up and host a Zoom meeting for the LEPCA to share the documents and letters received. We can also talk to John Huffman to see if he is available to do his presentation. If the LEPCA decides to do a joint letter and/or individual letters, we suggest sending copies to the SERC and sharing those letters with your local legislators at the next Legislature in January. Legislators are more likely to listen to individuals than state agencies.

**V. CORRESPONDENCE/COMMUNICATIONS/PRESENTATIONS**

**(Written reports where available)**

1. **SERC Finance Committee**

Co-Chair Tom Vaden, Nome, referenced a letter from George Vakalis, Chair of the SERC Finance Committee, under Tab 2 of the binder. The letter says the LEPCs will not receive funding, and he recommends exploring other funding options.

David Engel, North Slope Borough, said he understood the Legislature was not funding this mandate. Federal and state law is clear about the requirements of having LEPCs in place. He asked if there was a way to push the issue to let them know that funding was mandated and not a suggestion.

Co-Chair Casey Cook, Mat-Su, said everyone should talk to their local representatives about funding the LEPCs. There needs to be a grassroots effort to get in front of the people making budget decisions. If you have a direct line to the Governor or political capital, use it.

Co-Chair Tom Vaden, Nome, said they wrote to several legislators, some of which lived in Anchorage but were born and raised in Nome. He felt their letters may have been too long, but they wanted to explain SARA Title 3. The tasks of the LEPCs can be overwhelming, especially for those without a tax base. The LEPCs that have funding seem to be doing well, but the others are not. We consistently hear in the local status reports that the LEPCs are rebuilding. The best thing to do is contact your legislature and let them know all of the functions your LEPC is performing without funding. For example, we do the Hazard Mitigation Plans, which are very time consuming and very expensive events.

David Engel, North Slope Borough, said their Hazard Mitigation Plan had just been approved by the State and FEMA. We are being asked to do a lot with very little.

Willard Hand, Copper River, asked if any of the LEPCs were nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations.

Roy English, LEPC Coordinator, said there were steps you had to go through to be a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. It was his understanding that none of the LEPCs were officially nonprofit organizations. Everyone should do their own research, but his research indicates that LEPCs are not officially nonprofit organizations.

Willard Hand, Copper River, said if an organization was not reporting annually and updating their 501(c)(3) status then they were not a nonprofit organization. You must update it annually.

Co-Chair Vaden, Nome, asked if LEPCs fell under Homeland Security Grant Program funding for things like rewriting Hazard Mitigation Plans.

Director Bryan Fisher, DHS&EM, said the State Homeland Security Grant Program was utilized by municipal governments, tribal governments, and borough governments. Most of you have representatives from some municipality, borough, or tribal government on your local committees, so you can request grant funding, as a recognized tribe, to work with the LEPC on revisions to the Emergency Operations Plan, Hazard Mitigation Plans, and those types of things.

Kathy Shea, DEC, said she did not know if LEPCs could sign up as 501(c)(3) nonprofits. However, the EPA has an LEPC handbook with a chapter called Funding and Grants that has a variety of Homeland Security Grant Program grants and other type of grants. Industry can provide funding and sponsorships, and tier II facilities can sponsor activities. There are different things other LEPCs throughout the country are doing to support their activities. She recommended looking at the LEPC handbook on the EPA website as a starting point.

In response to Co-Chair Casey Cook, Mat-Su, Director Bryan Fisher, DHS&EM, said they could put together a bullet point list of options for the LEPC to pursue funding outside the State Legislature and send it out as a packet for the special meeting that Anchorage suggested. In past years, there have been letters written by committees about alternative funding sources they have used. As examples, Anchorage has a tax base and charges a fee for tier II reporting to their facilities, and the Nome LEPC has worked with Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation to work on grants from local CDQ groups. We can include those past recommendations as well as links to potential grant opportunities.

1. **Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHS&EM)**
2. **Strategic Plans and Leadership**

Director Bryan Fisher, DHS&EM, said there was an extensive report from DHS&EM in the binder. We have several staffing changes. Roy English, our LEPC Coordinator, will be moving to our Exercise Program. Jared Woody, our State Exercise Officer and Master Exercise Practitioner, has moved to the Safety and Security Department of the Anchorage School District. Tom Reilly will be our new State Exercise Officer. Bill Dennis, our Administrative Operations Manager, will be retiring in August. We have selected Tiffany Peltier as his replacement. She will be in charge of grants, administrative support, HR, accounting, logistics, and computer programming. Jenny Bond, one of our grant administrators, will move into Tiffany Peltier’s old position, and we are currently recruiting for another grant administrator. An updated organizational chart will be distributed in the near future.

He thanked everyone who participated in the conference and visited the vendors. A survey link will be sent out so participants can provide feedback to help us improve the conferences.

DHS&EM is facing significant challenges nationwide. The Department of Homeland Security’s budget was under a continuing resolution until last month. An agreement was made with Speaker Johnson and Majority Leader Schumer to fund the Department of Homeland Security for fiscal year 2024. Most grants were reduced by 9%. The Homeland Security Grant Program, the Emergency Management Performance Grant, the Safer Grant, the Assistance to Firefighters Grant, the Tribal Homeland Security Grant, and the Nonprofit Security Grant all saw a 9% reduction for 2024. As an example, the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) will receive about $300,000 fewer dollars. This grant distributes money to local jurisdictions to fund salaries for emergency management and basic emergency management capacity at the local level on a 50/50 cost share. While it does not sound like a lot of money, $300,000 funds four or five emergency managers. We are waiting for a notice of funding opportunity from FEMA and will be sending that information out as soon as we get it. It is our intent to maintain the same level of funding for local jurisdictions in the EMPG Grant, which means our office will have to take a hit at the division and state level. The National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program lost a third of its grant for 2024 because NOAA decided to reallocate $2 million out of a $6 million nationwide grant program to do some modernization between the National Tsunami Warning Center in Palmer and the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Hawaii. The more significant news is in President Biden’s proposed 2025 budget, the National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program will be eliminated in its entirety. We are working with the Governor’s Federal Relations Director, the Congressional Delegation, professional associations, and the National Emergency Management Association to lobby Congress for a couple of things. We hope to restore some funding levels for the 2024 budget this summer with a supplement from Congress, but we are not confident that will happen. We hope to restore the National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program in the 2025 budget. There will be significant challenges in the future, but we will try to absorb the reductions at the state level whenever possible. The Homeland Security Grant also took a big hit, so we will need to go back and determine how to allocate those funds. The Multi-Agency Review Committee will be providing a list of proposed projects for approval for that, and we will have to do some retooling after we find out how much money Alaska will lose out of the Homeland Security Grant Program. While this is not great news, we are trying to maintain the same level of funding when possible.

Besides typical natural disasters and emergency preparedness work, we continue to get more information, intelligence, and communications from the federal government about nation state threats, particularly from China. The president of China has suggested that he wants to take Taiwan back in 2027. There is a significant amount of work going on in the homeland defense space that will affect us all. We are really going back to the old civil defense days. When you are looking at your Emergency Operations Plans and other plans in your communities, keep this in mind. If we have a scenario where we go back into a kinetic war, we would be on the front lines because we are the closest neighbors to China and Russia. General Sakes and I will talk a little bit more about this at the SERC meeting this afternoon. We continue to work on disaster response and recovery with about 50 open disasters.

Co-Chair Casey Cook, Mat-Su, asked where the 9% budget cut would be reallocated in the federal budget.

Deputy Bryan Fisher, DHS&EM, said it was their understanding that all grants were being reduced by 9% to pay for the Department of Homeland Security’s Sheltering Services Program, which is a program that goes out to the state that are doing migrant sheltering. Alaska does not do migrant sheltering, so that money will not benefit us.

1. **Operations**

Mark Roberts, Chief of Operations for the Division, said there was an update in the packet under Tab 4. Utilities have been an issue recently with several mechanical failures, building collapses, and structure fires. He reviewed the after action brief following the Wrangell landslide. It was a tremendous tragedy, and six people were killed. On the other side, the whole state came together to support the community. The Emergency Operations Center received notification that several houses in Wrangell had been covered by a landslide. We assumed some responsibility to do some state coordination for the Coast Guard and the Alaska State Troopers to get stuff rolling. At that point, we guessed there would be about 50 possible fatalities, but it turned out to be much less. We implemented the mass casualty and mass fatality stuff. Within 12 hours, we had people on the ground. The DOT, Coast Guard, Alaska State Troopers, and other entities arrived within 24 hours. DOT arrived with an engineer to help with slope stability and launched a drone to do aerial mapping. There was an ongoing storm, which was an aggravating factor in the landslide recovery work. A lot of equipment was deployed by various organizations. We found out later that Prince of Wales and Craig also had some infrastructure damage. There was so much going on, we ended up pushing out a second Division Supervisor so we would have one in the field and one in the city. The Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys provided an assessment, and help also came from Mass Care, the Salvation Army, the Red Cross, and the tribes. It was a real community response with local businesses offering transportation, food, and lodging at no charge. The volunteer fire department worked for about a month straight recovering remains and starting the grieving process. One young person still has not been recovered. We were also able to supply stress dogs that ended up being in the fire station, the school, the senior center, and the community meetings. It was an honor to be part of this. Many of your jurisdictions assisted with information, equipment, personnel, and other things.

Co-Chair Casey Cook, Mat-Su, said he saw coverage of the Wrangell landslide on the news, and it was reassuring to know you guys are there when people are in need. He asked if DHS&EM was implementing assistance to smaller communities due to the power outage incidents.

Director Bryan Fisher, DHS&EM, said they were working directly with the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Division of Water, the Village Safe Water Program, and the Alaska Energy Authority, and we deal with power outages every year. We have challenges with aging infrastructure, workforce development, adequate operation and maintenance on electrical and water/wastewater utilities, all of which are a challenge. We have seen a number of electrical utility failures that resulted from a lack of maintenance and cascades right into water/wastewater systems. We had a number of frozen water/wastewater systems around the state this year. We see this every year as it is a systemic problem. We are concerned about the money from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The Department of Environmental Conservation is looking at plumbing the Alaskan communities that do not have water and wastewater. There are some things that can be done on the prevention side, and there is always work to be done on the response, planning, and response and recovery sides. Many of these utility disruptions are not tied to a storm, although they may be tied to snow and cold weather. A lot of the infrastructure in these communities is old and needs capital replacement, but there is not sufficient funding to do that everywhere. So we need to utilize better technology to monitor and maintain these systems, and improved workforce development and training in association with our partners. There are also significant threats and vulnerabilities in operational technology and information technology side of these utilities. Chinese actors are in our infrastructure systems today and are posing a persistent threat. They are in our water/wastewater systems and electrical systems, and they can do very bad things. Not only are they able to steal data and do ransomware, but they can also break our infrastructure systems. We are working with the Regulatory Commission of Alaska based on guidance from the White House to produce a plan to mitigate cyber threats and eradicate those advanced persistent threat actors from our water systems.

David Engel, North Slope Borough, asked if there was talk about bad actors endangering natural gas pipelines or things of that nature. With a hostile threat, it could be possible for them to isolate an entire village or community, leading to significant loss of life. He questioned what options were available to strengthen that particular infrastructure.

Director Bryan Fisher, DHS&EM, said they were working on those types of issues. Tom Koloski from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency is in the audience. The Department of Homeland Security, CISA, our office, and others are looking at all sectors including natural gas on the North Slope as well as in Southcentral Alaska. The Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, the EPA, the DEC, regulators, owner/operators, state response agencies, and the federal government are looking at these issues. We are prioritizing critical infrastructure facilities and assets. We are doing a lot of work on the State and DHS side as well. However, everything costs money, and that is the challenge. We regulate utilities at the state and federal level for certain things, but there is not a lot of funding available. We will be having a conference called Secure Our Alaska on June 5 at the Egan Center with the Cybersecurity Infrastructure Security Agency and others to talk about cybersecurity. There are very simple things owner/operators can do for cybersecurity such as changing passwords and cyber hygiene for employees. For the most part, big compromises across the country have been the result of poor cybersecurity practices that are inexpensive to mitigate and remediate.

1. **Preparedness**

Jeff Lafferty, Preparedness Program Manager for DHS&EM, said he oversaw three sections: exercise, training, and outreach. A report was provided in the packet under Tab 5. We continue to work with local communities to develop exercises, as well as state and federal agencies, nonprofits, and for-profit businesses to conduct exercises throughout the state to test our plans and ensure that they work or to improve them. A few years ago, Alaska Shield became AlaskaEx. In March, we conducted a full-scale exercise with the National Guard using their vigilant guard exercise on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER). We will be doing a rehearsal of the concept exercise next week at the Dena’ina Center where we are going to be testing the Distribution Management Plan for the state. That plan is not fully complete, but the exercise will tell us what parts of it works and what we need to improve. We will be doing another Rock next spring in March or April of 2025. Outreach, under the auspice of Michelle Torres, has been very busy.

Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) has been in the forefront of her efforts. In the last few years, CERT has reemerged as something that a lot of communities and organizations are very interested in. There are a lot of activities going on in CERT, so please read the report in the packet. We hired a new outreach person, Mike Lucio, in December. We are also looking for long-term, non-permanent employee to help with outreach through the summer months. Michelle Torres has a robust Outreach Plan going on this summer, and we will be in Kodiak, Fairbanks, Valdez, and many other areas. Outreach has promoted the Youth Council in the state. It has been successful engaging the young in both large and small communities. If you want more information about the Youth Council, please contact Michelle Torres.

Training is ongoing. It can be difficult to get national training partners to come to Alaska, but Jeff McKenzie and Jonathan Nichols have brought us some really great courses. NEMAA has a course going on in Fairbanks that is almost done. We also have an IEMC course getting ready to start, and some other great courses. We have made great strides in using the Acadis Training Management System with people involved in emergency management training. Within the division, we had our employees develop individual training plans with Acadis. Director Fisher already talked about the upcoming cyber summit. We encourage you to sign up because there will be a lot of good information. There are also a lot of new courses by various training partners related to cyber. Unfortunately, cyber issues is something that touches every aspect of our lives, and training and exercising will be increasing.

1. **Planning**

Richard Hildreth, Program Manager for the Planning Section of DHS&EM, reviewed the written report that was provided. We manage three teams within the Planning Section. The Community Planning Team is led by David Reilly. They just completed a rewrite of the State Emergency Operations Plan that was promulgated by Governor Dunleavy in January. We plan to rewrite our Coop template and Coop Plan. The Local Emergency Planning Committee is led by Roy English, although we will need to replace him as he is moving on. EMPG is led by David Reilly, and they just received a 9% budget cut. The Threat Hazard Identification Risk Assessment (THIRA) team is led by Todd Russell. After feedback from the field, we moved to quarterly surveys, which you have received. Your feedback helps us make things easier for you to report your activities, the gaps, and your concerns. Both Director Fisher and Jeff Lafferty mentioned the Distribution Management Plan which will be tested next week in Anchorage. David Reilly sent out surveys for local staging areas and c-pods, and we anticipate great feedback on that. The All-Hazards Resilience Team is led by Ben Shultz. They conduct rural resilience workshops with one recently held in Barrow with support from the North Slope Borough where we discuss emergency management principles. We also utilize guest speakers to address specific concerns. We are looking forward to working with the YK Delta region next. The Small Community Emergency Response Plans is led by Dave Lee. Those are small quick-flip chart guides for local emergency managers, planners, and key leaders within a community to work through the first 72 to 96 hours of a disaster. The Alaska Partnership for Infrastructure Protection (APIP) is led by Ben Hartleb. This is a partnership between private and public industry to manage points of contact and maintain standing relationships to ensure that we have key people ready in case there is a large disaster. They will be participating in the Rock Drill next week and a tour of the Port of Alaska in May. There will be a pause for the summer break, and then we will restart the APIP in September for the 2024/2025 season. If you have any ideas for topics for the next season, please reach out to Ben Hartleb. The Geohazards Team is led by Anthony Picasso. They focus on volcanos, earthquakes, and tsunamis. They recently held the Seward Tsunami Operations Workshop last week in Seward. The Hazard Mitigation Team is led by Garrett Brooks, the State Hazard Mitigation Officer.

We run several programs. The Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities grant program through FEMA is led by Rai Simpliciano. They just completed the 2023 BRIC applications. Skagway submitted a BRIC application that is in the process of working through the nationally competitive program for some bank stabilization support for the community of Skagway. There are a number of active BRIC cycles in the works. The Local Hazard Mitigation Planning is led by John Andrews. That is a huge task to try to ensure that every community and tribe has a local Hedge Mitigation Plan, which allows them eligibility to apply for support through BRIC or HMGP grant programming. We are working on a new strategy to do as many regional plans as possible, attempting to incorporate as many cities and tribes in jurisdictions and unincorporated boroughs based on common threats and hazards. The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program is led by Kim Barenburg. There are 15 open disasters that the program is managing, as well as 75 various applications for projects in various stages of approval.

Aaron Hankins, Petersburg, asked for more information on the Hazard Mitigation Plan development and if 2022 has been awarded or if those funds were available.

Richard Hildreth, DHS&EM, said the Hazard Mitigation Plan was tied up with RFIs with FEMA. We do block grant funding through FEMA for planning activities, and FEMA demands quite a bit of information. For more information, you can contact Rai Simpliciano.

Amanda Loach, Anchorage, asked what significant changes had been made on the Comprehensive Preparedness Guide since the last update.

Richard Hildreth, DHS&EM, said there were revisions to the tables on how we execute operational activities. Mark Roberts provided some great insight from the Operations team, and we revised the way the command structures are organized and how we respond to disasters. It is a completely new plan.

Amanda Loach, Anchorage, discussed the new tool of surveys for risk analysis, which replaced the community information forum that was held annually. In regard to planning for a three-year rotation for the information instead of a one-year rotation, it would be helpful for local responders if there was a three-year calendar schedule with the topics to be covered.

David Reilly, DHS&EM, said they had a couple of things planned, and they could include a three-year calendar. The surveys are also available in PDF form.

Willard Hand, Copper River, suggested that anyone who had tribal governments in their region might have success working with the BIA’s Climate Resilience Grant. They helped us develop some mitigation work, an evacuation plan, and other plans.

*Break from 9:15 a.m. to 9:29 a.m.*

1. **Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Spill Prevention and Response (SPAR)**
2. **ADEC All-Hazards LEPC Update**

Kathy Shea, DEC, said there was a written update in the binder under Tab 7. Staffing changes were reviewed. Teresa Melville is our new Acting Director. Graham Wood returned as our Prevention, Preparedness, and Response Program Manager. Ytamar Rodriguez is our new Interagency Coordination Unit Manager. Erin Leaders is our Disaster Coordinator for the department. We also have several new team leader positions in our Spill Prevention and Response Program in the southcentral and northern regions.

Our exercise season is kicking off. In the Spill Prevention and Response Program, we have broad oversight responsibilities for environmental protection. Part of that is evaluating the oil spill response capabilities of our industry partners. By statute, we have the responsibility and legal authority to evaluate industry oil spill response capabilities and preparedness. The tool we use for that is an approved Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan, as well as streamlined plans for regulated facilities to ensure that facility owners are able to respond to spills if they occur. Our exercise program plays a vital role in our mission to ensure the preparedness and response capabilities of the regulated community. We do this by reviewing plans and engaging in oil spill response exercises, such as the one we have next week with Hilcorp.

Our inspection season has begun. We have inspections planning in Kodiak, Seward, Homer, Valdez, Anchorage, Sand Point, King Cove, Cold Bay, Saint Paul, and a few others still to be confirmed.

Co-Chair Casey Cook, Mat-Su, asked who the resource at DEC would be to ask about LEPC funding.

Kathy Shea, DEC, said she was the coordinator for DEC for funding, tier II questions, and other issues. Erin Leaders will also be supporting our SERC and LEPC activities.

Amanda Loach, Anchorage, said DEC had upcoming planning meetings in Anchorage. She wondered if there were specific recommendations for participating in those meetings.

Kathy Shea, DEC, said area committee meetings are announced on their website, and they usually include the agenda. Our committee meetings are great if you have any concerns or special requests about hazardous materials planning and response.

Co-Chair Casey Cook, Mat-Su, said he thought the question was it might be helpful for DEC to reach out to the Emergency Manager or LEPC Chair if they were doing something in a local jurisdiction and let them know the details of the meeting.

Kathy Shea, DEC, said she could convey that request to their teams. She recommended that people attend the committee meetings because they are a good place to provide input into oil spill and hazmat planning.

**VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Tom Mattice, Emergency Program Manager for the City and Borough of Juneau thanked Michelle Brown for all her work. She will be retiring in July. She has been on the committee for 16 years and with the City of Juneau for over 17 years working on emergency programs. She was instrumental in building seven mobile hospitals in Southeast Alaska, coordinating mass casualty working groups, and maintaining one of the biggest LEPCs in the state.

**VII. NEW BUSINESS**

1. **CHEMLOCK Presentation – Brett DiManno**

Brett DiManno said he was with the Security, Cybersecurity, and Infrastructure Security Agency. He discussed the CHEMLOCK Program, which is a free and voluntary program that provides facilities with dangerous chemicals with the tools to help them better understand the risks that they face and improve their chemical security posture in a way that works best for their business model. Why chemical security? We face a persistent and evolving threat related to chemical security. A successful attack on a chemical facility could cause a significant number of deaths and injuries. Certain chemical facilities possess materials that can be stolen, diverted, and used for terrorist activities. Highly visible and significant chemical release incidents at other facilities have demonstrated the possible results that terrorists could achieve by releasing chemicals for harmful purposes. Under the Chemical Facilities Anti-Terrorism Standards Program (CFATS), there were 3,200 facilities that were considered high risk and were required to have a site security plan. There were 35,000 facilities that were required to report the holdings and quantities that triggered this CFATS Program but were not considered high risk. There is an unknown number of facilities with chemicals that were not required to be reported including facilities possessing below threshold quantities of chemicals, as well as excluded facilities include water, wastewater, and agricultural production facilities. There are a number of chemicals that we are concerned with, and not just the chemical sector itself. The CHEMLOCK Program is open to all facilities. We are especially interested in working with small and medium sized businesses and enterprises that may not have in-house security expertise or resources to devote to a dedicated security staff. Our intent is to work with the private sector, owners and operators of facilities who have chemicals, or potentially associations that converse with those facilities.

We offer onsite assessments and assistance, which can be done virtually or on-site. We offer resources, basically guidance templates, that will help you develop a security plan and fact sheets to simplify the security process and how to protect chemicals of concern. We can also do exercises, drills, and facilitate tabletop exercises. There are online training courses as well. We offer special access to CISA services for things like active shooter preparedness and a cybersecurity evaluation tool that helps you figure out vulnerabilities. You can sign up by visiting www.CISA.gov/CHEMLOCK.

Tom Kolski said he was with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. Mr. DiManno is part of our Chemical Security Inspection Team. CISA is organized much like FEMA in 10 regions. CISA Region 10 is Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Alaska. Our chemical security inspectors support the region. We have four permanent members of CISA who reside in Alaska. I am a Protective Security Advisor. I do security assessments, training for de-escalation and active shooter incidents, and other things. Bruce Richter is our Emergency Communications Coordinator, and he can help organizations, businesses, and agencies with their emergency communications planning. We have two cyber security experts in Alaska, Mark Breunig and Troy Lofven. Secure Our Alaska is a cybersecurity summit happening in June. If you have concerns about cybersecurity, this is a free workshop in the Egan Center on June 5, 2024. We have heard concerns about cybersecurity for critical infrastructure. In a normal year, our CSIs have a regulatory capability for the CFATS Program. However, Congress did not renew their authorization to do those regulatory inspections. Once that is reinstated, they will be doing regulatory inspections for businesses that store large amounts of dangerous chemicals. What we do on the cybersecurity side is non-regulatory. It is all advisory and voluntary, so we can offer our services to the public sector. We have done security assessments for entities who have concerns about their cybersecurity, and we encourage everyone to take advantage of this offer. Mark Breunig runs a group called Alaska Cyber Group, which is an informal organization of computer geeks to share information on the type of cyber attacks happening throughout the state. It is an incredible network for early warning, and it is voluntary and anonymous. When an organization or municipality starts getting hit or seeing certain exploits, they immediate share it with their cybersecurity brethren and everyone can start ramping up their defenses. We have identified some major vulnerabilities in Alaska through this group.

Williard Hand, Copper River, asked if assessment applications had been received from any tribal governments.

Director Bryan Fisher, DHS&EM, said there were two cybersecurity grant programs, a State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program and a Tribal Cybersecurity Grant Program. The State grant allows tribal governments to apply for the program as well. If there is funding in the tribal program, it makes sense to go that route and free up money for state and local programs. This is a four-year program, and the amount of funding varies from year to year.

**VIII. LEPS VERBAL STATUS REPORTS**

**Peter Gurney, Aleutian & Pribilof Island (Unalaska).** Our LEPC was officially restarted in late June. We have 30 members, so there is a lot of interest in the community. We recently added members from Saint Paul, Atka, and Adak. At the last LEPC meeting in Anchorage, I learned about the Ready, Set, Go Program. Brenda Ahlberg was helpful in sharing information, and we created a program tailored to our area. It is designed to be a one-stop shop for emergency preparedness in our district. We are holding a logo contest, and the winner will be on the website when we unveil it. Kathy Shea has been very helpful with our tier II reporting, and I signed up as an authorizing authority on ePlan to see all the businesses who have submitted applications. We identified an information coordinator/project manager for our LEPC and worked together on outreach to businesses who may need to submit applications. We received a decent increase in tier II reports this year as a result. We met with local school administration to look over their emergency plan and gave them some advice. We helped them submit a grant through the SHSP Grant Program for the elementary and high school. We also helped the City of Unalaska apply for a grant for security at City Hall. We have been working with Tsunami Ready and Storm Ready. Our Tsunami Ready status expired, and we are working to get that revalidated. We have done a lot of work, all without any funding. We contacted a local business with a raffle permit, and we are doing a $10,000 raffle with 500 tickets at $20 each to raise money to accomplish some of our goals. We also want to do a house numbering project to make it easier for emergency responders to identify homes during emergencies.

**Amanda Loach, Anchorage.** The Anchorage LEPC met in December and March. Our quarterly work plan is on track. We are still building support locally for participation, adding voting members, and working to welcome the required participation from the hazmat facilities in our community. Our new voting members were Fire Marshall Dean from the Anchorage Fire Department, and Captain Brian Wilson from the Anchorage Police Department. Milestones that were accomplished from the Work Plan were reviewed. We did presentations on our Hazard Mitigation Plan, reviewed it, and opened it up for advisement. In the first quarter, we shared our Integrated Preparedness Planning process. They had the opportunity to review the plan and advise us is they felt there should be changes. We had 417 reports submitted through ePlan’s Community Right to Know reports, 270 of which were paid and will receive certifications of compliance from our jurisdiction. New milestones were reviewed. Since we are replacing the Annual Whole Community Information Forum, we are removing that from our Annual Work Plan and adding in an opportunity for the LEPC to look at our Office of Emergency Management Strategic Plan. We also updated our Bylaws.

**Deborah Jones, Bristol Bay.** Had nothing to report.

**Williard Hand, Copper River.** Our LEPC is not having meetings or functioning as an LEPC. I did host a meeting two weeks ago in Glennallen to get ready for our third year of flooding. This is the third year of record snowfall in the region, especially in Kenny Lake, McCarthy, Valdez, and Glennallen. Glennallen recorded 91 inches and the average is 35 to 40 inches. We are preparing for significant flooding. We have two locations set up for filling sandbags. We are going to start sandbagging some businesses in Glennallen and homes that are in the flood zones. DOT installed some new culverts, although we are concerned that this will just move the flooded area to the other side of the Glenn Highway. Glennallen is unincorporated and does not have any building codes or regulations, so we will probably have another flooding situation. We’ve lost our Glennallen Fire Station due to flooding in the last two years, so we are down to a substation. They are expecting about 1.5 million visitors in the Copper River region this summer. We have one responding ambulance and no clinics or after-hour medical care available, so every medical 911 call requires a medevac, which is good for the medevac companies but not the region. We are looking to garnish support for after-hour triage centers to be developed in the region. I am also an administrator for a large tribe. We just finished an emergency shelter that can house 400 people. Throughout strategic planning process with the tribe, we are in the design phase of a Tribal Emergency Operations Center, and we hope to have that built within the next two years. We just submitted some Community Wildland Fire Protection Plans and Emergency Evacuation Plans with funding through BIA. We do not have a lot of infrastructure, and we hope to see that change as it is an area that a lot of Alaskans use for recreation.

**Forest Shreeve, Denali Borough.** We had our first LEPC meeting two weeks ago with a bunch of community members. Nine people volunteered to be part of the LEPC, and I am gathering their information for SERC approval. We are planning our next meeting for May. I worked with Kathy Shea to access Tier II and ePlan, and we are ready to get that going. With our Community Wildfire Protection Plan funding, we hired a contractor to help us write plans for communities within our borough. We will make sure to fill out our LEPC status reports in the future.

**Nancy Durhan, Fairbanks.** We are slowly getting back up and running. We had a meeting, and we are trying to meet quarterly. We are working on scheduling speakers and getting member applications for SERC approval. We are updating our Bylaws. We are finalizing the funding to update our CWPP. We are also working on obtaining funding or updating our other plans.

**Michelle Brown, Juneau.** Last year and into this year, we experienced one of our biggest local disasters. Our outburst flooding is anticipated to continue to get worse. Professional studies were done. We lost a couple of houses and part of a condominium project. We learned to apply for mitigation funding and the rules surrounding the funding. Changing the mapping for flooding, avalanches, and disaster areas also have ramifications because then people cannot get insurance on their homes. There have been a lot of challenges to overcome, and our legal department is weighing in on everything. Be aware that when you apply for funding, make sure that you understand who will take on the responsibility and has the capability to do that. If you have condominiums that are affected, the owners of the condominiums do not qualify for a lot of the funding to help, yet their association charges them escalated fees to do the mitigation work, which creates another issue of figuring out how to keep them housed so they are not paying two mortgages. We have an active LEPC that meets monthly with 25 to 35 regular attendees. We also have a distribution list of about 100 people who continue to be engaged with reading the meeting minutes and keeping up with what is going on, so we have a wide variety of resources in the community with knowledge of what is going on and what needs to be done. I will be leaving the LEPC, but not the community. I plan to be actively engaged and involved in the community. It has been a privilege to work with all of you. She thanked Kathy Shea and the other LEPC members for their assistance in keeping them informed on upcoming opportunities.

**Brenda Ahlberg, Kenai.** Ron Rogalsky continues to be our chairman. Vinnie Catalano is our new vice chair. He is with the Cook Inlet Area Response Council. She thanked the Department of Health for funding additional training that was supported by LEPC. There were significant tabletop exercises that allowed interagency understanding and participation. A hazmat response tabletop was co-hosted by DEC and the borough. We had 75 participants with half attending virtually. We learned how, when, and who passes the baton during a hazmat response, and the importance of understanding the responsible party’s role from beginning to end. She thanked Jade Gable for her partnership in developing this exercise, which DEC is hoping to model for other boroughs. In February, we had an interagency wildfire evacuation tabletop with 39 participants that were in-person. The exercise created a foundation of readiness for the upcoming wildfire season, and we intend to do this annually. The exercise included federal, state, and local partners, as well as agency administrators who would be delegating the objectives FHIR. It also helped our local responders understand the difference between FHIR, IMT, and the borough’s role in EOC. Our LEPC will be voting on its revised Bylaws at the April 17th meeting. She thanked Amanda Loach and Michelle Brown for providing content for the revisions, including what we hope will be an approve tribal seat. We are revising our website to align with what is current required under Tier II reporting, which will be rolled out in May. We are also working on our Ready, Set, Go Program. Know Your Zone is where fire jurisdictions will be broken into response zones that inform the public when they may or may not be in evacuated areas and when it is safe to reenter those areas. Our Hazard Mitigation Plan will kick off with a public meeting next week, and we hope to present the plan to the State for review in August or September. We replaced 14 sirens in our coastal communities through our Siren Program. We also added two additional sirens in Homer and Anchor Point, as well as updates to the system. She thanked the Division of Homeland Security and NOAA for providing funding for the project.

**Frank Dorner, Kodiak.** We have an inactive LEPC, but we are starting to get some interest. We are getting ready to put an advertisement in the paper for applications. We hope to have the LEPC active by the next report. We submitted a written report.

**Casey Cook, Mat-Su Borough.** A written report was submitted.

**Tom Vaden, Nome.** The situation in Nome is becoming critical. Next week, the city gives up the Ambulance Department to the hospital. Their plan is to have two medical responders on 12-hour shifts, two weeks on/two weeks off. That means we have no backup. In the Police Department, most of the officers are two weeks on/two weeks off, so you have the staff that are working and then everyone else is out of town. We did an triannual airport exercise in October. We had 12 responders, seven of which were ambulance with three certified and five firemen showed up for 60 casualties. The hospital chose not to participate, so we did not have a CME. We are concerned about medical backup in the event of a fire that could last a couple of days. We have some challenging issues to work through trying to sort out what we are going to do with this whole mess.

**David Engel, North Slope Borough.** Last year, we reached out to our senior leadership to approve our LEPC before going to the SERC for approval. We have six members, and we are hoping to increase that number. Our Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan is complete thanks to our State partners, AECOM, and our tribal partners. The State and FEMA have approved the plan. We joined NFIP as part of a funding source for the Army Corps of Engineers’ retaining wall in Utqiagvik. We are assisting communities with their Community Emergency Response Plans on the local level, as well as putting them in contact with our State partners. Kathy Shea allowed us to become an ePlan authorizer so we can see our Tier II reports and we are working through that. On January 25, a shipping and receiving building in Utqiagvik caught fire and burned to the ground. That building contained many of our departments, shipping and receiving, our fixed assets management, our risk management, our Office of Emergency Management, and our EOC. As a result of that, we lost major borough functions. We are currently being housed in Public Works, so we are working out of a virtual and paper EOC at this time. We are ready to advertise for more applications for the LEPC.

**Chris Hatch, Northwest Arctic Borough.** The LEPC has been inactive for several years. The borough and the LEPC got together this year to combine functions at some level within the borough’s Public Safety Commission. We are advertising for LEPC and Public Safety Commission members. We have a meeting scheduled in June.

**Aaron Hankins, Petersburg.** We have 18 LEPC members, and we try to meet quarterly. There funding opportunities for LEPCs if you are creative. On our behalf, the borough applied for the Healthy and Equitable Communities Grant which paid $28,000 for sheltering equipment. We shared Mass Sheltering cash with Wrangell. One of the things that we learned during COVID is that if both communities need it, he who has gets. We discovered that we needed to have our own, so we have up to 100 costs and all the supportive things to support that, including food. We have also received funds from the AARP Community Challenge Grant, which pays out $20,000 to $30,000 under the guise of community emergency preparedness. We have access to ePlan and are working on getting the information tied into Peterburg’s Dispatch Center for Petersburg. If there is an incident at a facility, it will automatically populate in the CAD dispatch for emergency responders, so they know what chemicals and amounts are in a facility. Some LEPC members are working on public outreach. We have restarted a radio program with the local radio station on building your emergency kits. We are also working with the data and flyers we received from Brenda Ahlberg, and we are updating that information for Petersburg. Landslides continue to be a major concern. The Sitka Sound Science Center invited us to attend a conference in Sitka. They are trying to create a regional working group with the purpose to pulling funding and resources for landslide identification and response. Unfortunately, some of the big players that needed to be there were not invited, and it was not known until we showed up that the State would not be at the conference. Several members who represent LEPCs pointed out that the State should be part of that conversation because they are a significant resource. We have adopted a regular testing schedule for our sirens. Along with that, we have an advertising campaign that explains the different alarms and what they mean. We just had our three-year airport disaster drill, which was run concurrently with a mass casualty event with our hospital. Midway through the exercise, they had a bunch of patients show up at the ER and had to drop out, but they still received some good feedback.

**Craig Warren, Sitka.** The City of Sitka was hacked about four months ago and group emails being sent are locked out of the system. We have missed funding opportunities and other information. We are working through the issue. The Sitka Sound Science Center began working on a scientific concern regarding landslides after our 2015 landslide. Working with the National Weather Service, they created a dashboard to identify atmospheric rivers that can create situations that cause landslides. At the conference, we had some of the major players and communities from Haines, Skagway, Juneau, Kake, Petersburg, Ketchikan, and all the way down to Metlakatla. We also had DDGS, the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida, and the National Weather Service. We are not sure why DHS&EM was not invited, but we made sure to tell the Science Center to include them at the next one. It was a great opportunity to network and come up with ideas for risk identification, as well as to start thinking about the warning, recovery, and response aspects. Our LEPC is continuing to clean up our plans. Some of them are from 2014 and still identify two hospitals, one of which we lost seven years ago.

**Forest Shreeve, Denali, asked to add to his report.** Isabel Brown, a high schooler from the McKinely Village area in the Denali Borough, is a part of the FEMA Youth Preparedness Council. She has a podcast call the Crisis Zone. We hope to use her as an example to encourage other youth to get involved in emergency management. It has also created a discussion in our school for potential internships. Chris Noel, one of our former LEPC members, recently become the borough mayor, which is great for emergency management in our borough because he supports the LEPC.

**Michelle Brown, Junau, asked to add to her report.** She thanked Mike Pearson and the Coast Guard. Mike Pearson always attends our meetings and brings a lot of resources and knowledge. We also appreciate having tribal communities as part of our LEPC. They are a great partner. They want to help, share, and learn. LEPCs should also encourage the National Weather Service to become a member of your LEPC because they can provide weather updates and lots of helpful information.

**IX. MEMBERS CLOSING COMMENTS**

Willard Hand, Copper River, said he serves on a national tribal committee for climate change. If there are concerns coming out of Alaska, he can take those back to President Biden and the people in Washington, D.C. We are based in a giant lake bed that no longer has permafrost, so we have an unstable liquification situation. That is probably happening all around the state with the landslides. As you are driving to Valdez on the Richardson Highway and go through Glennallen, you will see most of the big hills have all slipped 30 to 40 feet down and all the trees are pointing towards the bottom of the hills. I believe that will be the big disaster we will be facing in the future.

David Engel, North Slope Borough, said they had a lot of permafrost and coastal erosion issues. He asked if that was what Williard Hand was talking about.

Willard Hand, Copper River, said he discussed erosion and permafrost issues in Washington, D.C., on a regular basis to remind them of Alaska’s needs. I do not hear from a lot of your communities, because this is a tribe-based position, but it affects everyone in the state.

David Reilly, DHS&EM, thanked Roy English for his four years of service to the LEPCA. I will be your LEPC point of contact until Mr. English is replaced. We sent an email out internally to fill the position with a deadline of next week. We hope to have an internal candidate, but we may have to go outside of the organization to fill the position.

Co-Chair Casey Cook, Mat-Su, said he and Tom Vaden’s term as co-chair was about to expire. Anyone interested in serving as chair or co-chair should contact David Reilly. The next meeting will be Friday, October 11, 2024, in Anchorage.

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** David Engel, North Slope Borough, moved to adjourn the meeting. Nancy Durham, Fairbanks North Star Borough, **seconded the motion.** The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 10:48 a.m.

**NEXT MEETING**

**Friday, October 11, 2024, in Anchorage**