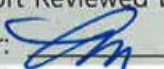


Agenda Report Reviewed by:
 City Manager: 

**CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
 CITY COUNCIL
 AGENDA ITEM**

Meeting October 18, 2022
To: Honorable Mayor and Honorable City Councilmembers
From: Fire Chief/Director of Emergency Services
Subject: Twice-Annual Informational Report on Map Your Neighborhood (MYN) and Sebastopol Neighborhood Communications Unit (SNCU) Presented by Skip Jirrels and Stan Green
Recommendation: That the Mayor and City Council Receive the Informational Report
Funding: Currently Budgeted: Yes No N/A
 Net General Fund Cost: None

Account Code/Costs authorized in City Approved Budget (if applicable) AK (verified by Administrative Services Department)

INTRODUCTION:

This item is to request City Council receive a Twice-Annual Informational Report on the Map Your Neighborhood (MYN) and the Sebastopol Neighborhood Communications Unit (SNCU) programs.

BACKGROUND:

The primary purpose of the Sebastopol MYN Program is to enhance community-level preparedness, resident self-reliance, and neighborhood resilience, resulting in a reduced impact on local demands for EOC resources during an emergency. The Sebastopol Neighborhood Communications Unit helps improve and expand community-level communication opportunities through the use of handheld radios to support self-reliance and resilience.

DISCUSSION:

The Map Your Neighborhood and Sebastopol Neighborhood Communications Unit are citizen-based groups that provide emergency preparation and planning support for our community. Both groups meet monthly, including training sessions and drills. The Map Your Neighborhood group is led by Skip Jirrels, who is under contract with the City of Sebastopol as our Public Safety Outreach Coordinator. The Sebastopol Neighborhood Communications Unit is an initiative within the MYN Program and is led by long time CERT member Stan Green. They both function under the auspices of Fire Chief Bill Braga, Sebastopol Fire Department.

GOALS:

4.2.2: Foster a Sense of Community by Providing and Encouraging Participation in Community Events, Volunteering, and working with Non-Profits to Support Local Events

PUBLIC COMMENT:

As of the writing of this staff report, the city has not received any public comment. However, if staff receives public comment from interested parties following the publication and distribution of this staff report, such comments will be provided to the City Council as supplemental materials before or at the meeting. In addition, public comments may be offered during the public comment portion of the agenda item.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

This item was noticed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and was available for public viewing and review at least 72 hours prior to schedule meeting date.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no direct fiscal impact associated with the recommended action tonight.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Mayor and City Council Receive the Presentation on the Map Your Neighborhood (MYN) and the Sebastopol Neighborhood Communications Unit (SNCU) Programs.

ATTACHMENT(S):

MYN & SNCU Informational Sheet

Neighborhood Preparedness Report – October 2022

Sebastopol Map Your Neighborhood (MYN) Program and Communication Unit (SNCU)

The primary purpose of the Sebastopol MYN Program is to enhance 'community-level' preparedness, resident self-reliance and neighborhood resilience. Resulting in a reduced impact on local demands for EOC resources during an emergency.

The MYN Program strives to:

- Improve and increase MYN Class attendance and reach
- Improve and expand MYN Leader Council attendance and effective implementation of MYN "Working Together" objectives
- Support connected areas and allied organizations to adopt and implement 'working together' objectives that fit their needs.
- Improve and expand 'community-level' communication opportunities through the use of handheld radios to support self-reliance and resilience.
 - Sebastopol Neighborhood Communication Unit (SNCU)
 - Provides training and practice options to MYN Leaders and neighborhoods on the importance of staying connected by using the SNCU communication network.
 - Establishing one communication 'hub' for each Evacuation Zone in Sebastopol.
 - Intends to expand marketing exposure to increase public awareness of MYN's Communication Unit.

The Sebastopol MYN Program works locally to adapt the program's basic preparedness steps and supporting initiatives for 'working together' to fit the needs, skills and resources of our neighbors and neighborhoods in the Sebastopol area.

Neighborhood Preparedness Report - October 2022

MYN - Program modifications & initiatives

Name change

From generic to local emphasis

Leader Council Virtual Map

Active MYN neighborhoods and boundaries

GHAC and MYN

Spanish MYN Class(es)

SNCU - Implementing radio use

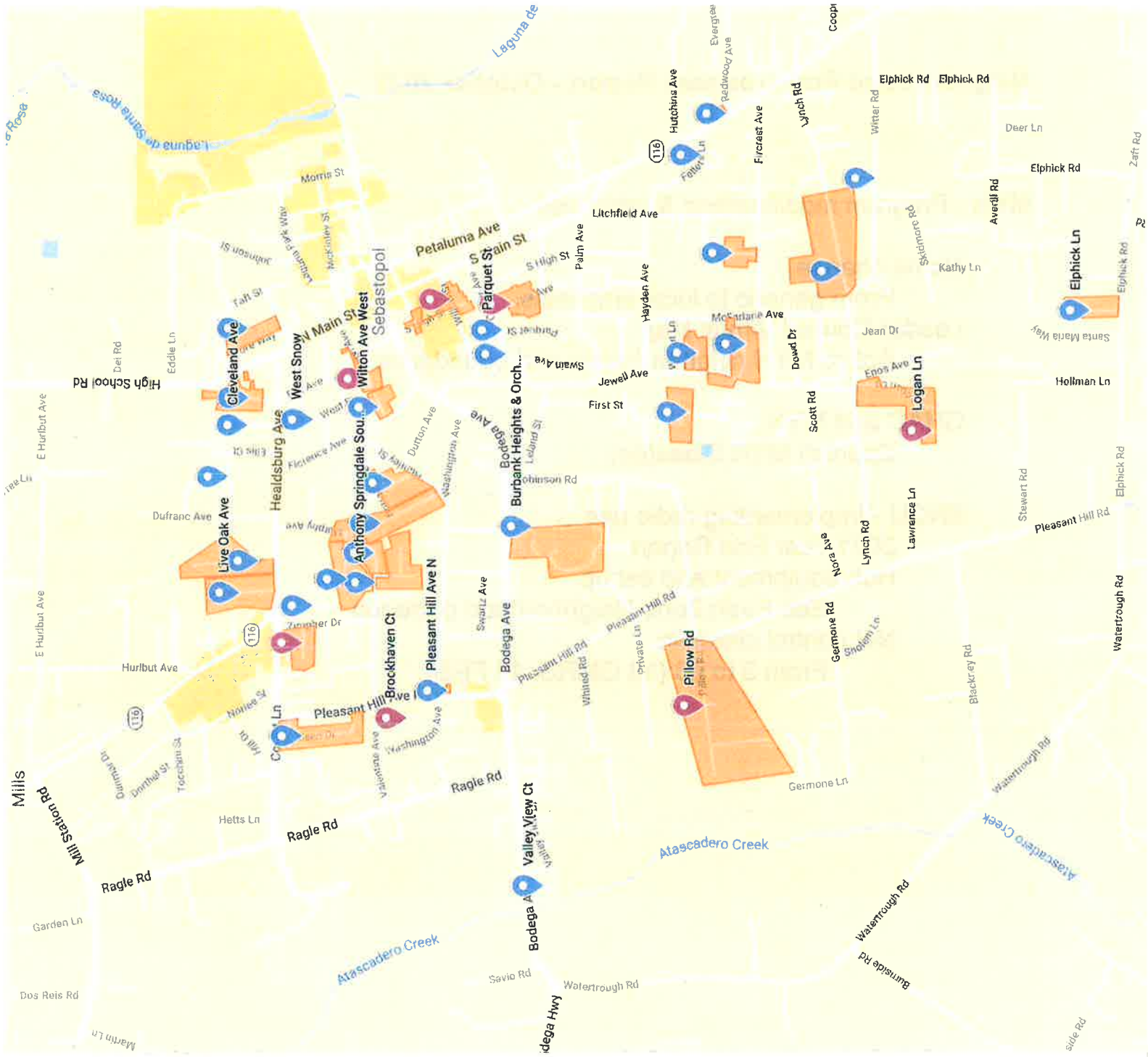
2021 Year End Report

Hub equipment and set up

Seb Evan Zone Neighborhood outreach

Net control check-in

From 3 to 28 (18 GMRS, 10 FRS)



- MYN locations**
- Individual styles
 - Anthony Springdale South
 - Barnett Valley-Kennedy Ols...
 - Bonnardel and Fore Way
 - Brookhaven Ct
 - Brookside Springdale North
 - Burbank Heights & Orchards
 - Burnside Goldridge
 - Calder Ave
 - Champs de Elysees
 - Cleveland Ave
 - Eileen Dr
 - Elphick Ln
 - Falstaff Rd
 - First Street Upper
 - Gravenstein Hwy South (900...
 - Harrison Grade
 - Harrison St
 - Henon Dr
 - Jesse St South
 - Juanita Ct.
 - Kennedy Road East
 - Live Oak Ave
 - Logan Ln
 - Lower Bones Road
 - Lyding Ln
 - Maytum Ave
 - Mid Lynch Rd
 - Midpine Way
 - Murphy Ave
 - Orchard - Valentine
 - Parquet St
 - Pillow Rd
 - Pleasant Hill Ave N
 - Redwood Grove Apartments
 - Ross Station Rd (9300-9500)
 - Shaun Ct
 - Valley View Ct
 - Vine Ave North
 - Vine Hill-Sequoia Circle
 - Wagon Rd



Sebastopol Neighborhood Communications Unit 2021 Year-End Report

Contributors: Stan Green, Skip Jirrels, Marian McDonald, Bob Dozor, Rod Helvey, Janie Frigault and Mary Dandridge. Edited by Jennifer Iscol.

The Sebastopol Neighborhood Communications Unit (SNCU)

SNCU is a volunteer-led initiative within the Sebastopol Fire Department's Meet Your Neighbor (MYN) community preparedness program. The goal of SNCU is to develop and implement a radio communications system to support Sebastopol and surrounding West Sonoma County MYN groups in an emergency.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Overview	2
Sebastopol Fire Department's Perspective	3
Individual Reports	4
Sonoma County Radio Amateurs	4
Hub Set-Up	5
Training	6
Scribes	7
Newsletter	8
Definitions	9

Executive Summary

The City of Sebastopol is deeply engaged in neighborhood preparedness, primarily within city limits but also including surrounding areas of West Sonoma County. The Sebastopol Fire Department provides ongoing leadership and support for residents volunteering their time and skills to lead, develop and participate in the Sebastopol Neighborhood Communications Unit (SNCU) and Meet Your Neighbor (MYN) initiatives.

In 2021, SNCU had an increase in active members and expanded distribution of leadership responsibilities. Ongoing adaptation to pandemic circumstances included virtual meetings and classes, while some classes resumed in person before the end of the year. SNCU leaders

improved their technical skills and increased the organization's administrative use of Google Drive.

SNCU observed increased community interest in two-way radio purchases and training. Teaching Sebastopol and West County residents to use simple two-way radios is an important focus for the organization. Recruiting and training scribes to document messages at communications hubs in a disaster is also essential. For both these types of training classes in 2021, SNCU recruited instructors and support team members, developed curriculum, made equipment recommendations, and improved scheduling, calendar entries and class sign-up procedures on the SebastopolReady.org website.

As part of its core mission, SNCU continued to develop a radio network to support neighborhood communications and safety during emergencies. SNCU members, sometimes in collaboration with Sonoma County Radio Amateurs (SCRA) and the Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS), continued to explore and understand radio coverage issues and opportunities in the area through field tests. Importantly, SNCU made good progress in developing, staffing and drilling neighborhood communication hubs that would relay messages between MYN groups and the fire department or emergency operations center (EOC) that is opened during a widespread disaster.

Overview

By Stan Green – SNCU Unit Leader

The year 2021 was devoted to infrastructure building. As the number of active SNCU members grew, so did our organization. I intentionally worked to expand, empower, and develop the leadership team by transferring areas of organizational operations for which I previously had responsibility to others. With few disappointments, the efforts have been positive.

Our computer and Zoom skills were enhanced by Lauren Summers, our in-house tech guru. This included a recording of an in-person Family Radio Service (FRS) radio training program, with messages from Sebastopol Fire Chief Bill Braga and Meet Your Neighbor (MYN) leader Skip Jirrels, who is the City of Sebastopol Public Safety Outreach Coordinator.

- We established our first Communications Hub complete with monthly radio check-ins.
- We finalized our scribe message form and the instructions for proper use.
- Preparation of the monthly newsletter transitioned from one person to a team.
- The newsletter contents were expanded and emergency critical information presented in each issue.

- A drill early in the year conflated the goals of the Sonoma County Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS) and SNCU and led to a clear delineation of SNCU mission and scope of activities.
- The number of hubs was determined to include one hub per evacuation zone, and additional hubs for Spanish-only speakers and nearby residents outside Sebastopol city limits, was placed on the future “to do” list.
- In-person FRS radio training resumed in the final months of the year.
- The SNCU calendar and class sign-up procedures were fine-tuned on the SebastopolReady.org website.
- Internal communication was facilitated by use of Google Docs and Google Drive.

Goals for 2022 include commitment and publication of monthly radio and scribe training dates, focused monthly meetings for scribes and hub/GMRS operators. I look forward to four fully functional Communications Hubs, three-deep in the Net Control position, and two-deep in the hub positions. SNCU will plan several full scale drills, with expansion of In-Hood Events and check-ins. I am hopeful that we will finalize our method of Network activation. If invited, we will likely participate in the Emergency Expo in Cloverdale, and consider participating in the Apple Blossom Parade.

Sebastopol Fire Department’s Perspective

By Skip Jirrels – Public Safety Outreach Coordinator, City of Sebastopol

The all-volunteer Sebastopol Neighborhood Communications Unit (SNCU) continued in 2021 to explore and understand radio coverage issues and opportunities in and around Sebastopol. The ongoing development of a radio network to support neighborhood communication during emergencies has, quite logically, been framed by the number of people stepping forward to volunteer with SNCU. And by the number of Meet Your Neighbor (MYN) groups seeking radio use training and guidance in purchasing the right equipment for those neighborhoods.

Over the next year, the hub and radio network will continue to expand both in coverage and in testing and drilling of the network. Monthly user testing through a well-run radio Net Control for ham, GMRS and FRS users provides an opportunity for all user types to check in and practice within the radio communication protocols. This is vitally important as novice radio users need to practice and become familiar with the equipment and protocols to better understand and prepare for communicating during an emergency. Additionally, neighborhood-wide radio practice sessions known as “in-hood drills” are being planned and test neighborhoods are being sought for 2022. The in-hood drills are an exciting way for SNCU to work directly with MYN

leaders and their neighborhoods, and a great way for other MYN leaders to watch and learn how radio use might benefit their neighborhood.

The difficult tasks of planning and creating a viable radio network have evolved to the place of identifying the hub equipment best suited for Sebastopol. Through funds provided by the Sebastopol Fire Department, SNCU will receive radio equipment in 2022 for hub operations for each of the four Evacuation Zones in Sebastopol. This will be a major step forward for SNCU and the MYN program leaders who seek to stay connected during emergencies. SNCU Executive Team members and the other volunteers supporting this effort continue to enact their Communication Plan and have taken significant steps forward in 2021.

Individual Reports

Sonoma County Radio Amateurs

By Bob Dozor, Liaison to Sonoma County Radio Amateurs (SCRA)

SUMMARY: SNCU's liaison to [Sonoma County Radio Amateurs \(SCRA\)](#) reported further development of emergency communications systems in Sonoma County, including ham, GMRS and FRS radio operators' participation, and the embrace of GMRS radio usage by Sonoma County Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS), which helped conduct field tests.

Background: As the chair of the Neighborhood Communication Committee of Sonoma County Radio Amateurs (SCRA), I am the liaison between SCRA and local disaster preparedness groups, including SNCU, the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), and others.

The year 2021 brought further development of emergency communication systems in Sonoma County, with greater interest and participation in particular by ham, GMRS and FRS operators.

The most significant development was the embrace of GMRS operators by Sonoma County Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS). The ranks of Sonoma County ACS volunteers swelled dramatically this year (including me). There were two field tests by the Russian River West County Unit of ACS interfacing ham operators at Incident Command Posts (ICPs) and Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) with GMRS operators both in the field and at command posts. "This is a Test" messages from the Coastal Hills Radio Group, from Graton Fire, and others made it to

the EOC in Santa Rosa. Sitting at the Graton Fire Department I heard messages on GMRS from Oakmont to Freestone to Timber Cove! Kevin Dwan manned the Sebastopol ACS ham station and had GMRS capability, too. Of course, I heard Rod Helvey pounding in!

GMRS infrastructure grew dramatically in 2021, and the rate of growth is only picking up. Neighborhood groups such as Meet Your Neighbor (MYN) and Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) are engaged with GMRS as well as FRS radios. Clearly SNCU leads the county in FRS implementation. SCRA's Neighborhood Communication Committee gives presentations on GMRS and FRS radio regularly (by Zoom), as well as providing technical advice to ham operators and non-hams alike.

Implementing Winlink, which provides email service over radio, is ACS's top priority for 2022. Several major GMRS repeaters, including a game changer – Siri Tower, high above the Russian River near Guerneville – will be completed. Similarly, Schellenger Road repeater near Cloverdale is eagerly awaited in North County. Opportunities to activate in the field and develop emergency communications skills are offered by SCRA Public Service Events. At these events, typically long bicycle or foot races, communication is crucial for maintaining the safety of the participants. I've found these events very educational and a lot of fun, too!

Hub Set-Up

By Rod Helvey, Team Leader for Hub Set-Up

SUMMARY: The SNCU Hub Set-Up team ran a monthly GMRS/FRS radio check-in for all within radio distance, and plans to continue outreach to spread this safety net over the community.

Background: Sebastopol has four hubs within the City of Sebastopol limits that will be the conduit for emergency information to flow from Meet Your Neighbor groups to the Sebastopol Fire Department or to the Emergency Operations Center if one is established for a widespread disaster. To keep equipment ready, participants engaged and skills fresh, Rod Helvey runs a brief monthly check-in at a designated day and time for operators to turn on their radios and check in to the Net Control.

- Hub check-in for GMRS and FRS radios was reduced from twice per month to once per month due to level of participation. Participation began to increase near the end of 2021.
- New hubs are anticipated and equipment to outfit four hubs is also anticipated early in 2022. Energy and participation in neighborhoods for drills and practice is increasing and events are being planned.

Training

By Janie Frigault, SNCU Co-Leader and Team Leader for Training

SUMMARY: SNCU began offering FRS radio training in 2021 and plans to add GMRS radio training and scribe training in 2022. Sonoma County Radio Amateurs (SCRA) offers periodic classes for ham technician-level licensing.

Background:

The training team was begun in 2021 and has been led by Janie Frigault and Marian McDonald. Our goals were to develop the SNCU training outreach program, create standardized curriculum, and make the class accessible for as many people as possible. While the Covid-19 pandemic created some scheduling conflicts and student access challenges, overall we were successful at getting this program off the ground and running smoothly.

Accomplishments in 2021:

We started with expanding FRS training by having a set schedule of classes posted on the SebastopolReady.org website and announced through the MYN newsletter and Leadership Council. Then we organized reliable instructors and support team members.

Class outlines, handouts and student review sheets were developed and approved by the leadership team. A 12-student limit was established. Clear signage for class location was created and printed and included in the instructor packet located at the Sebastopol Fire Department. A full inventory of SNCU supplies located at the Fire Department was made.

Our current challenges are to streamline the registration process and to make it easy for instructors to see who is enrolled for the class so they can plan accordingly. At this time, instructor access to student enrollment is limited and not effective.

Plans for 2022:

- Schedule 10 FRS classes at the Fire Department
- Add GMRS and scribe training
- Streamline the registration process
- Make instructor access to class roster easy
- Recruit more instructors and support team members

Scribes

Mary Dandridge, Team Leader for Scribe Work Group

SUMMARY: Mary Dandridge acquired the Scribe Work Group from Leaf Roberts in March 2021, and Leaf has since retired from SNCU. The team continued to meet by Zoom in 2021. We worked diligently on the scribe form and instructions to come up with satisfactory ones that will meet our needs. We continue to look for new scribes to join us with the idea to have a scribe at each of our four hubs with additional ones as needed to relieve the first scribe arriving at the hubs.

Background: A scribe's role in SNCU is to be stationed at the neighborhood hub in the event of an emergency and convert radio messages to written language on a designated message form. They are responsible for getting received messages from either GMRS or FRS operators in the Meet Your Neighbor group to the hub ham radio operator, making sure outgoing messages are sent and that requests for assistance receive a response.

The Scribe Work Group was designated an integral part of SNCU on July 1, 2020. Since the pandemic "shelter in place" orders were already in effect, our meetings were held on Zoom.

Accomplishments in 2021:

- The scribe form continued to go through changes and was finalized on Aug 17, 2021.
- Had a city wide drill in June 2021 and worked with the Helvey Hub to take messages.
- Gained two new scribes - Nancy Dougherty and Judith Gilbert - for a total of four scribes.
- Developed a training plan and started training our new scribes.

Plans for 2022:

- Recruit more scribes to join our group.
- Streamline our message taking by jotting the important information from a message on a notepad to be later transcribed onto the form.
- Continue to meet by Zoom monthly.
- Continue to participate and learn from upcoming Neighborhood drills.

Newsletter

By Marian McDonald, Co-Leader

SUMMARY: The SNCU Newsletter is published on the first Tuesday of every month, distributed to SNCU and MYN email lists, and archived. Ongoing development of informative content has been a focus.

Background: The SNCU Newsletter is the primary tool for internal communication within the Sebastopol Neighborhood Communications Unit. It was originated by Stan Green in 2019 at the time SNCU was initiated, then delegated to Marian McDonald and Lauren Summers in late 2020. Lauren created Google folders for working documents and archives at that time.

Accomplishments in 2021:

- Monthly publication has been maintained with distribution the first Tuesday of the month, a week before the monthly SNCU meeting.
- Past issues are archived via Google Drive.
- Lauren has taught Marian many tech skills and they have worked collaboratively to assemble and distribute the newsletter.
- The newsletter has been found to be interesting, informative and colorful.
- SNCU distribution list is currently at 142 names.
- Skip Jirrels, lead of the Meet Your Neighbor program, has distributed the newsletter to that email list in addition to the SNCU list.

Plans for 2022:

- Continue routine timely distribution
- Bring in a new person to collaborate with Marian since Lauren will be leaving for college.
- Keep the newsletter interesting and timely and add more photos.
- Add articles specific to Meet Your Neighbor interest to support development of radio skills in neighborhoods

Definitions

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT): [CERT](#) is a national program that educates volunteers about disaster preparedness for the hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills. Sebastopol began to transition from CERT to the Map Your Neighborhood program in 2013, but CERT programs continue in other areas of Sonoma County.

EOC: An Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is the physical location for the coordination of information and resources to support incident management during emergencies. They are equipped with numerous communication systems. The [Sonoma County Operational Area Emergency Operations Center](#) is used daily as a computer training center and in emergencies is converted into a full operating EOC. Cities in Sonoma County can activate their own EOCs as needed; Sebastopol's EOC is located at the Police Department. The county EOC oversees the city EOCs and unincorporated areas of the county.

FRS radios: The FCC authorizes the [Family Radio Service \(FRS\)](#) as a private, two-way, short-distance voice and data communications service for facilitating family and group activities. FRS radios are small hand-held devices similar to walkie-talkies. There is no fee, exam, or license required. Transmission power on FRS handsets is limited to 2 watts.

GMRS radios: The FCC also authorizes the [General Mobile Radio Service \(GMRS\)](#) channels, which is for short-distance, two-way voice communications using hand-held radios, mobile radios and repeater systems, and it also allows text messaging and GPS location information. A GMRS family license requires a \$35 application fee but no exam. GMRS handsets generally transmit at 5 watts. Transmission power up to 50 watts is permitted on some GMRS frequencies. FRS and GMRS radios can communicate with one another on a range of frequency channels.

Hub: A neighborhood hub is a communication station set up by Meet Your Neighbor (MYN) and SNCU volunteers for a drill or emergency. It facilitates communication between two or more nearby Map Your Neighborhood groups and forwards and receives messages to and from the Net Control at the Sebastopol Fire Department.

Ham radio: Amateur radio, also known as ham radio, is the use of radio frequencies for non-commercial exchange of messages, including emergency communication, domestically, internationally and to the International Space Station. In the United States, ham radio operation requires passage of an FCC-authorized exam to receive a license, to ensure operators understand key concepts of electronics, equipment, radio propagation, safety and regulation. Three licensing levels allow progressively wider access to the Amateur Radio spectrum of frequencies.

Meet Your Neighbor (MYN): The Meet Your Neighbor program guides groups of neighbors through simple steps to prepare for emergencies and quickly and safely take actions to minimize damage and protect lives. A MYN group generally includes up to 15-20 homes and has a leader or co-leaders. It teaches neighbors to rely on each other during the hours or days before fire, medical, police or utility responders arrive. The MYN program in Sebastopol and surrounding areas is based on a program called Map Your Neighborhood that was developed in Washington State and is used in many communities. In 2022, the local program was renamed "Meet Your Neighbor." It is the Sebastopol Fire Department's primary community preparedness effort. The City of Sebastopol's Public Safety Outreach Coordinator, Skip Jirrels, supports the development and training of MYN groups. He also moderates the MYN Leader Council, a monthly gathering of active and experienced MYN leaders in Sebastopol, which is currently conducted on Zoom.

Net Control: An amateur radio net, or ham net, is an "on-the-air" gathering of amateur radio operators. They may meet for a particular purpose, such as to check in or converse, or to conduct tests or a drill. In this report, Net Control is a ham station set up at the Sebastopol Fire Department for a drill or emergency to communicate with ham radio operators located at the four neighborhood hubs in Sebastopol and relay messages to and from a ham operator at the EOC at the Sebastopol Police Station during an emergency.

Repeaters: A repeater is an automatic radio-relay station, usually located on a mountaintop, tall building or radio tower. It allows communication between two or more bases or mobile stations that are unable to communicate directly with each other due to distance or obstructions between them.

Scribe: During drills and emergencies, a trained scribe is stationed at every neighborhood hub and at Net Control to write down received messages on an approved message form and relay them. The purpose is to document communications, make sure requests and responses are conveyed and allow the ham operator to focus on radio communication. It is an essential function and requires training.

Sebastopol Neighborhood Communications Unit (SNCU): SNCU is an initiative within the MYN Program to develop and implement a radio communications system to support neighborhoods in an emergency.

Sonoma County Radio Amateurs (SCRA): [Sonoma County Radio Amateurs](#) is a club that promotes interest in amateur radio, maintains repeaters, offers regular nets, meetings, classes, support to individuals, and assists in public events and disasters. It is open to everyone interested in amateur radio.

