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Cc: [Jackie Rose](#) [REDACTED]
Subject: Request for Capital Improvement Budget allocation for town Emergency Communications
Date: Monday, March 20, 2023 12:43:36 PM
Attachments: [LG Town Emergency Preparedness Capital Budget Request FY24-26 \(rev 4\).xlsx](#)
[Town of Los Gatos Capital Budget Request.docx](#)

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

The attached are for consideration during deliberation of item 13 on tomorrow evening's town council meeting.

Peter

Town of Los Gatos
Town Council Meeting – March 21, 2023

Dear Town Council Members,

In recent town council meetings, Patrick Dirks and I outlined Emergency Communications needs that the town's emergency communications volunteers have recognized need to be funded. That funding is needed as soon as possible to reach the level of preparedness called for in responding to the most likely emergencies we expect to face: fire, earthquakes, and major storms. Yes, there are other emergencies we train for, but these three require substantial mobilization and coordination of efforts where normal communications facilities are likely to be disrupted.

We have identified five areas in need of modernization and strengthening:

1. The Civilian Emergency Radio System
2. The neighborhood Incident Command Posts (ICPs)
3. The Emergency Operations Center
4. The CERT Trailer
5. Messaging between the EOC, ICPs, and the CERT Trailer

Civilian Emergency Radio System

Just as the nation's first responders adopted a modern digital radio network (P25 system) beginning a decade ago as recommended nationally by the 911 Commission (because of interoperability needs, efficiency, and reliability), the same justification applies for CERT, DART, town staff and council to move to a digital radio system. That system is DMR (Digital Mobil Radio) and is second only to the P25 system for providing the benefits of digital radio technology. DMR is being adopted by the private sector, as well as ham radio. It has become the civilian alternative to P25, and has the advantage of more suppliers and lower costs. Finally, DMR provides dedicated radio frequencies that the FCC assigns exclusively to each license holder (such as the town of Los Gatos) without the general public having shared access that would interfere with use during emergencies.

The CERT world adopted GMRS radio-based communications decades ago (before digital radio was available). GMRS suffers from scarce, shared, radio channels that are used by the general public for routine chatting, resulting in congested channels frequently unavailable in emergencies. In addition, there is a need for other groups in town, such as DART and the town staff to use a common radio system because of cooperating activities.

In the January heavy rains, the Frontier land-lines and the Verizon cellular network were down in certain locations of town for significant amounts of time causing loss of these facilities for coordination of civilian activity. While we would like to have GMRS be the backup communication system, that can be problematic due to the reasons noted above. We are fortunate that DMR overcomes the limitations of GMRS radio.

We have chosen to adopt repeater radio technology that provides both GMRS and DMR capability so that DMR can be phased in without obsoleting the investment in GMRS radios.

Civilian Incident Command Posts

Los Gatos has just over 12,000 households. The CERT organization divides the town into 12 CERT “neighborhoods” serving the needs of about 1,000 households each. The objective is to provide an Incident Command Post (ICP) for each neighborhood as an emergency supplies depot, a command center, and organizing location. The town, through the Police Department, has built and fully equipped six such ICPs (Civic Center, Almond Grove, Los Gatos Almaden, North Santa Cruz/Daves Ave, Belwood, and Vasona/JCC). These are growing and thriving. However, the other half of Los Gatos is not yet being well-served by the CERT organization. Of the six other neighborhoods, three have no ICP (or CERT organization: Kennedy East, Blossom Hill/Shannon, Santa Rosa/Hicks), and three have temporary ICPs, two located in backyards (Vista Del Monte, and Rinconada), and the Kennedy North/Shannon Fire Station temporary ICP.

Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

The emergency radio communications area of the EOC has been in need of structural improvement in order to provide a noise-free, good working area for radio communications. The County EOC, San Jose’s EOC and several other city EOCs, and hospital EOCs provide a separate room for their emergency radio operations for the same reasons as motivating our request in Los Gatos. The solution could be a separate room within the Police Operations Center, or structural changes to the back area of the EOC.

CERT Trailer

The town Police and DART each have mobile command posts, built into trailers. Last year, the Police Department put new emphasis on the use of the CERT trailer for operational purposes during emergencies, and began equipping the trailer with modern equipment, supplies and work areas. It is very close to being completed.

Messaging between the EOC, ICPs, and the CERT Trailer

Voice communication is ideal for immediate, short, urgent information. However, during emergencies, digital (TCP/IP) messaging provides much greater message accuracy and seven times the throughput of voice messaging. The County and the City of San Jose have both adopted digital technology for messaging during emergencies. Fortunately, our town manager’s office funded the equipment that provides for Los Gatos to have digital connectivity between our EOC and the County (along with the City of San Jose) in an emergency.

However, we all have seen the transition from telephone voice calls to text messaging, email, and other forms of digital messaging. We are fortunate that our residents have at least one mobile messaging platform: their smartphone, tablet, and/or notebook. But, there is currently no use of these modern, universal devices, in our Civilian emergency communication activities. That is easily remedied by using any one of the emerging low-cost Satellite internet providers to go between the field and the EOC. We plan to pilot such use starting this summer to understand how best to integrate this technology, long ago adopted by our first responders.

Attached is a spreadsheet with a summary of these Capital Budget items, programmed for implementation in FY24, 25, and 26. We request these funds be provided for use by the Town Manager's office and the Police Department.

Respectfully,

Peter Hertan
Town Emergencies Volunteer

Capital Improvements - Essential Emergency Communications	FY24	FY25	FY26
CERT Comms Upgrade: GMRS/UHF repeater(s), antennas, & filters	\$10K	\$10K	\$10K
GMRS/UHF portable radios for CERT, DART, Town Staff & Council	\$20K	\$15K	\$15K
ICPs (12): new (3), refurbish (3), & resupply (6)	\$46K	\$10K	\$10K
CERT Trailer buildout	\$ 5K		
EOC improvements (radio room, radios, antennas, filters, roof tower)	\$35K		
Satellite TCP/IP access between the EOC, ICPs & CERT Trailer	\$15K	\$10K	\$10K
Contingency	\$ 9K	\$ 5K	\$ 5K
	<u>\$140K</u>	<u>\$50K</u>	<u>\$50K</u>

Operating Expenses Supplement - Emergency Preparedness	FY24	FY25	FY26
Outreach for new CERTs	\$25K	\$20K	\$15K

(rev 5)