



STAFF REPORT – CITY COUNCIL MEETING

December 06, 2023

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Tabatha Miller, Finance Director

PREPARER: Tabatha Miller, Finance Director

DATE: November 28, 2023

TITLE: **Request for City Funding for Arcata 2024 Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Basic Training.**

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Council allocate \$3,000 to the Arcata CERT team to provide a 23-hour Basic CERT course for the Arcata community in FY 2024 from the \$15,000 budgeted for Community Support in the current fiscal year budget.

INTRODUCTION:

The Arcata Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) is requesting support to offer thirty (30) Arcata residents and community members a Basic CERT course in disaster preparedness and response in calendar year 2024. The estimated cost of the 23-hour course is \$5,600 and the Humboldt CERT Coalition, a 501(C)(3), is requesting \$3,000 from the City Council.

BACKGROUND:

What Is CERT?

CERT is a nationwide program that trains people in disaster preparedness for the hazards that may impact their community. Volunteers are certified through a 23-hour Basic CERT training course that covers areas such as disaster preparedness, small fire fighting, disaster medical operations, light search and rescue methods, disaster psychology, and team organization, as well as terrorism facts. All CERT graduates are trained to organize themselves to respond within their training and capabilities during a disaster. CERT's purpose is to offer a consistent, nationwide approach to disaster volunteer training and organization that professional responders can rely on during disaster situations, allowing them to focus on more complex and immediately necessary tasks.

Roles and Benefits of CERT in the City of Arcata

The Arcata Police Department sponsors Arcata's CERT team. The Arcata CERT team currently has eleven highly involved team members plus a pool of seven part-time team members who also participate in monthly team meetings and supplemental training sessions. All team members have been through Basic CERT training, and most have gone far beyond in developing their disaster preparedness and response knowledge and skills. When necessary, the team has been able to enlist

the help of additional, unaffiliated CERT grads from throughout the City. Arcata CERT team members are considered City volunteers and are also sworn in as Disaster Service Worker Volunteers (DSWVs). In addition to disaster response, the team has been involved in community outreach and guiding neighborhood preparedness projects. The Arcata CERT team meets monthly, with the Arcata Police Department liaison in attendance.

The City of Arcata's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) recognizes that "following a major or catastrophic incident, the City may have to rely on its own resources to be self-sustaining for an undetermined amount of time" and that "Proper prevention, protection, and mitigation actions can reduce incident-related losses..." It includes in the actions "creating a citywide culture of preparedness among residents, businesses, schools, and other local entities, as well as City support of Arcata CERT." These are the very same goals CERT grads have been trained to work toward.

DISCUSSION:

Need for CERT Basic Training

Funding for a Basic CERT course is needed to increase the membership of the Arcata CERT team and supplement the number of team members already involved in preparedness projects and community outreach. With more trained hands-on deck the current team would be able to handle more of the support roles spelled out for the CERT team in Arcata's EOP, one of which is helping with emergency shelters in the event of a serious incident. The Arcata CERT Team is currently exploring partnering with — and being cross-trained by — the local Red Cross, which is woefully understaffed. With a larger CERT team, members of both organizations could work together in the aftermath of a major disaster, helping to operate shelters for the public. The more CERT- and Red Cross-trained Arcata people we have, both on the CERT team and off, the more support they would be able to provide.

Also, bringing in additional team members would enable the TEAM to implement a year-long citywide preparedness campaign sometime within the next few years to raise public awareness.

Most importantly, increasing the number of CERT-trained Arcata residents, businesspeople, and even City staff would help to make Arcata much more resilient in the event of a major disaster by having significantly more CERT-trained volunteers already in place throughout the City in the event of a major emergency. Having more CERT-trained people spread throughout the City helps create the "citywide culture of preparedness" envisioned by Arcata's EOP. The higher the degree of preparedness before an emergency, the lower the need for emergency response afterward.

Lastly, ongoing Basic CERT training helps recruit volunteers to replace those inevitably lost to attrition.

At the completion of the training, Arcata CERT will provide the City Council with a written report.

BUDGET/FISCAL IMPACT:

The Arcata CERT Team is requesting \$3,000 to help fund a 23-hour Basic CERT course in 2024 and the use of a City facility to host the training along with insurance rider. The CERT coalition will cover the cost to provide course graduates with backpacks and basic emergency supplies, and any additional unforeseen expense.

Staff recommends the City Council provide the funds utilizing the \$15,000 that Council allocated specifically for community support in the current year's budget (account 101.10.01.52108). To date, none of the community support funding has been spent or pledged and \$15,000 remains available.