

**Baumb, Nelly**

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**From:** E Nigenda <enigenda1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 24, 2021 9:43 AM  
**To:** Council, City  
**Subject:** Re: May 24, 2021 City Council Meeting, Item 9 - Colleagues' Memo

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Dear City Council,

With all the weightier matters on Council's agenda (finances, housing, climate change, etc.) I greatly appreciate that City Council will be discussing volunteers on Monday, May 24<sup>th</sup> – most of the time we feel invisible.

As an Emergency Services Volunteer (ESV) for over 10 years, I'd like to offer my perspective on Councilmembers' Cormack and Stone suggestion. The "ambassador" job as described in the colleagues' memo strongly mirrors the job description of the current block preparedness coordinator in the ESV program. The one exception is that of identifying additional volunteers for other organizations. But, as for reaching out to other organizations and explaining our mission and how we can help each other, under the aegis of OES, Emergency Services Volunteers have established ongoing contact with Avenidas, faith-based organizations, some private schools and PAUSD, and Buena Vista. All have been warm and welcoming and happy to hear about the ESV program as prior to our outreach most had no idea how we would work together in a disaster. Much more needs to be done, obviously, and needs to be on-going.

On a block and neighborhood level, the Emergency Services Volunteer (ESV) mission is not merely to be a communication node during a disaster. During "blue-sky" days, we are tasked with building community. Some ways we accomplish this is by organizing social events, creating a block neighbor contact list, establishing a 2-way means of communication (most commonly group listservs, group texts), neighborhood watch program, sharing garden produce, looking out for our most vulnerable neighbors (running errands for them, providing them links to resources, etc.).

Even during a disaster we are not merely a substitute for 911. At the block and neighborhood level we are expected to resolve as many issues as possible with our block and neighborhood resources and only communicate to the City those issues beyond our skills and means.

That said, not every block has a block preparedness coordinator, some blocks and some neighborhoods are more organized than others and we could definitely use the City's help, as much as is possible within the City's current budgetary constraints.

But, before I mention my personal wish list for possible City help, one need identified by Council members Cormack and Stone is targeted City communications with blocks. My suggestion is to [contact the Neighborhood Preparedness Coordinator\(s\)](#) which include those blocks. This list is found in PAN's [Palo Alto Ready](#) website which I encourage you to explore further.

Personal wishlist:

1. A portal for all volunteer organizations within Palo Alto such as that hosted by [Redwood City](#).
2. Provide resources for volunteer organizations – these can be information, financial, staff time, etc.
3. City Volunteer Liaison to channel volunteer questions or feedback to the proper city department.
4. Support volunteer outreach efforts to other populations, other volunteers and other organizations
5. Recognition of Volunteer Appreciation Day (more tangible than a simple proclamation as most people never hear City proclamations).
6. Emergency Services Volunteer (ESV)- specific requests:
  - a. Help identify and do “official” outreach to all multi-unit buildings within Palo Alto. (Another demographic we need extra help and outreach with are renters. Block Preparedness Coordinators report that most renters even in single family housing are reluctant to engage).
  - b. After vetting, promotion of the Palo Alto Ready website to provide in-depth preparedness information to residents.
  - c. Create memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with businesses, faith-based and community-based organizations.

Thank you for considering my comments and for your service to our community,  
Esther Nigenda  
Emergency Services Volunteer

## Baumb, Nelly

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**From:** Annette Ross <port2103@att.net>  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 23, 2021 6:02 PM  
**To:** Council, City  
**Subject:** May 24 Agenda - Item 9

**CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Be cautious of opening attachments and clicking on links.**

As I read the colleague's memo for this item, my thoughts boiled down to this: *HUH?* Since when do neighbors need to be allowed to directly connect with each other? Also, the proposals in the memo overlap with several existing programs and organizations. One need only look at the City's website for confirmation of this.

Under the OES you will read that "OES develops structures to link non-governmental organizations (NGOs), residents, and businesses to the Incident Command System (ICS). Elements of this include the restructured Emergency Services Volunteers (ESV) program (a unified structure that includes ARES/RACES Amateur (ham) Radio, Block Preparedness Coordinators (BPCs), and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers)."

There are also numerous neighborhood associations, Cool Blocks, PAN, Next Door, and Town Square. I agree there is a communication problem, but think the authors of the memo have the solution backwards. Residents do just fine; what's lacking is adequate and timely communication from City Hall. And this worsened when police communications were encrypted.

I also have a question about bullet #6 under "What the city could provide": *Gloves and garbage bags and an extra pick-up for park maintenance.* What does this mean? Are the volunteers expected to do park maintenance? Clean-up days can be a good community event, but routine maintenance should be handled by the appropriate city department and the budget should provide for this.

I will be listening with interest to the discussion of this agenda item. I hope it is short because there are many significant matters requiring Council attention.

Annette Ross  
Resident

## Baumb, Nelly

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**From:** Jo Ann Mandinach <joann@needtoknow.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 23, 2021 1:24 PM  
**To:** Council, City; Cormack, Alison; Kou, Lydia; Burt, Patrick; DuBois, Tom; Tanaka, Greg; Stone, Greer; Filseth, Eric (Internal)  
**Subject:** Item #9 Allowing Neighbors to Directly Connect With Each Other ???

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COLLEAGUES' MEMO REQUESTING COUNCIL REFER A PROPOSED PROGRAM ALLOWING NEIGHBORS TO DIRECTLY CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER AND A POTENTIAL VOLUNTEER NETWORK FOR THE CITY TO THE POLICY AND SERVICES COMMITTEE

Dear Mayor, Vice Mayor and City Council Members,

Those of us who **ALREADY** communicate directly with friends and neighbors **WITHOUT** City Permission were amazed at this agenda item and wonder what it's trying to accomplish. We're aghast that the City Council is wasting its -- and OUR -- time with this nonsense.

It maybe have escaped Ms. Cormack's notice that not only do we have NextDoor and Palo Alto Weekly's Town Square as local communication channels but A) We **already** have **strong neighborhood associations** and B) We **already** have **strong volunteer networks** with which Ms. Cormack has been reportedly unfamiliar when talking to **REAL** volunteers **WEARING** their emergency **volunteer** vests at the annual AdobeMeadow picnic. Sadly she was unable to name the various neighborhood associations -- PAN, CTRA. CPNA, etc. or the event at which she was campaigning.

Why duplicate what already exists and waste the City Council's time? This proposal sounds like two things:

1) An attempt to limit direct communications with city officials by funneling communications through hand-picked volunteers at a time when we clearly need more direct communications to address the myriad issues now underlying city government and enumerated on Town Square and Next Door including the city's poor performance in the RPP program and solar permits.

Perhaps the City Counsel could focus on issues like the above about which neighbors are already communicating albeit with official permission.

2) A repeat of the unnecessary CoolBlocks proposal designed to fund and channel consulting contracts to buddies at a time when we're facing a budget crunch and have already been threatened with cuts to **EXISTING** programs and services.

Thank you and please encourage MORE direct communications with the city and MORE fiscal responsibility.

Most sincerely,  
Jo Ann Mandinach

A member of PAN, CPNA and a subscriber to NextDoor and Palo Alto Online

## Baumb, Nelly

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**From:** Hamilton Hitchings <hitchingsh@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, May 22, 2021 5:54 PM  
**To:** Council, City  
**Cc:** Shikada, Ed  
**Subject:** Please do not approve the Colleagues Memo for Block Ambassadors

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Dear City Council,

Please do not approve the colleagues memo listed in agenda item 9 for Monday proposing the city run a Block Ambassadors program (May 24th's City Council agenda). Any funding for this program will come at the direct expense of previously funded programs that have not yet been restored and there are still many well liked and popular programs that need to be restored.

The staff report says: "The primary focus of this program is to help foster closer community connections and provide a channel for two-way, non-emergency information between the city and residents.

Yet, most of the work of ambassadors is already covered by the PTAs, Neighborhood Associations, Nextdoor, ESV (Block Preparedness Program) and Cool Blocks.

In terms of "a channel for two-way, non-emergency information between the city and residents." I would strongly request that the city continue to directly communicate information to each resident rather than start routing information through a middleman. This is the 21st century (not 1940) and we are already using the many forms of communication to achieve this effectively without distortion of that information through a biased middleman with a personal agenda. Conversely, the city already has systems in place to collect direct feedback through community outreach meetings, website feedback (e.g. goals & budgets), city council public comments and email etc... I know on our block there is a diverse set of views and it would be a misrepresentation for one of us to pretend to speak for all of us. Interestingly much of the feedback on city programs is based more on political orientation (e.g. defund the police, speed of densification) and not on which block they live on.

This proposal would reallocate funds that could be used to restore popular recently cut programs, better support existing programs and create information distortion by inserting a middleman who did not actually truly represent the block. It is not only unnecessary but actually detrimental. Please do not approve it.

Hamilton Hitchings

## Baumb, Nelly

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**From:** Annette Glanckopf <annette\_g@att.net>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 20, 2021 9:06 AM  
**To:** Council, City; Clerk, City; City Mgr  
**Subject:** May 24 Colleague Memo - Ambassadors  
**Attachments:** acouncil letter on new program of ambassadors.docx

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Dear Council Members,  
Attached find my detailed comments on the colleague memo. Wrong time - wrong concept.  
In summary.

**I strongly recommend that the council **deny** sending this proposal to Policy and Services for the following reasons:**

- What is the problem?
- Suggested Program duplicates other established programs
- Costs – Staff time and materials

Annette

To: Palo Alto City Council

From: Annette Glanckopf

Re: COLLEAGUES' MEMO REQUESTING COUNCIL REFER A PROPOSED PROGRAM ALLOWING NEIGHBORS TO DIRECTLY CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER AND A POTENTIAL VOLUNTEER NETWORK FOR THE CITY TO THE POLICY AND SERVICES COMMITTEE

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**I strongly recommend that the council **deny** sending this proposal to Policy and Services for the following reasons:**

- What is the problem?
- Suggested Program duplicates other established programs
- Costs – Staff time and materials

I have worked on the issue of communicating and connecting Palo Altans to build community since the mid-1990s. I agree with the memo objective to make sure that all residents and property owners be informed. I also strongly believe that duplicate functions need to be combined, and that timely communication is critical. With limited city resources, let's have a laser focus on rewarding and encouraging our current volunteers across all volunteer programs, and not build new programs that dilute these ongoing programs.

### **IS THERE A PROBLEM?**

Currently there is a myriad of ways that anyone can get real time information about Palo Alto happenings. Many residents have busy lives consumed with school, jobs, child care, their church, their health etc, That is their universe. Many don't have time to keep in touch with city issues, except those that immediately effect them -- such as a power outages. Channels for communication include:

- City (manager's office) Weekly report that reaches over 50,000
- Neighborhood Association emails/Google groups and newsletters – reaches approximately 30,000
- Distributions to neighbors from Emergency Service Volunteers (ESV) – BPCs and CERTs – and Cool Block leaders
- Nextdoor
- Facebook
- Palo Alto Weekly / Palo Alto Online
- Palo Alto Daily Post
- Twitter, Nixle

### **DUPLICATION OF EXISTING PROGRAMS**

The first stated benefit in the colleague memo (below) for the ambassaador role **is the key objective of the ESV program**, especially the Block Preparedness Coordinator (BPC) role, and also (to the best of my knowledge) that of Cool Block as well.

*Connect immediate neighbors to each other and the city, to help take care of themselves*

The Block Preparedness Coordinator (BPC) program was built on the neighborhood watch concept. Examining the list of proposed things ambassadors could do, there is a total overlap with the first six suggestions and the core goals of the BPC program.

When we built the ESV program in 2008, we combined three city volunteer positions (Neighborhood Watch, VIPS, CERT) that were competitive and not coordinated. As former mayor Judy Kleinberg was fond of saying "program planning was in silos." My goal is to have all similar programs coordinated under one management. Do we want to step backward and create another program that largely duplicates what is currently in place?

The colleague memo description of the ESV program states "*Its <the ESV program> primary function is to provide information during an emergency that disrupts communication lines to our public safety*



*professionals*" is **absolutely not correct**. This statement diminishes the value our current volunteers & is a disincentive to them and their role.

As stated above, the BPC program embodies all of the neighborhood watch program functions. There is a role for emergencies (for sure), but there is also a long list of things BPC/CERTs should do in "peace" time. Action items include the first 6 items mentioned in memo, as well as a critical role to know where neighbors are who have disabilities or any special needs. A key role is to support these individuals in "peace" time and help them in emergencies/disasters.

From the memo:

*Maximizing engagement and communications at the neighborhood level through pilot ambassadors by:*

*Engage/utilize existing community networks, community groups and community non-profits such as neighborhood associations, Cool Block neighborhood blocks, Emergency Service Volunteers*

Isn't this another layer of duplication? It is confusing enough for neighbors to have a BPC, a cool block, and a zero waste person on the block.

### **COSTS/STAFF TIME**

Council has to make some tough decisions with the budget for the next fiscal year. Is this the best time to create a new city program requiring a budget, staff, materials, frequent updates (per the colleagues memo). Questions I would ask:

- Where will this program report in the city?
- How will the city staff this, especially with 2019/2020 past staff reductions?
- How many hours are planned for this effort? What are the salary and material costs?
- For each item, who is going to create and staff it? (Examples from the memo)
  - Localized information – outages, street repair -- who is going to coordinate this between departments (BTW, ALERTSCC could be used)
  - Maps of volunteer locations (not a trivial task)
  - Monthly meetings and monthly newsletter
  - Focus groups
  - City trainings
  - Online surveys

### **SUGGESTIONS**

Keeping residents informed and connected sounds like easy task - on paper. After years of working on this, I can testify that it takes a considerable amount of time to develop training, teach classes, write informative emails and newsletters, prepare agendas for meetings, hold meetings, prepare recruiting materials, keep volunteers informed, active and incented more.

Rather than add a new program, I recommend that city council support/encourage volunteers for current programs especially Neighborhood Associations, ESV program, Cool Block, etc. Support should include:

- Financial support for neighborhood associations
- Advocacy -- acknowledge the value of neighborhood associations and encourage volunteerism
- Inclusion -- provide a seat at the table for any discussions/projects affecting their neighborhoods
- Respect the effort put in to research issues, write letters and speak at Council and Commissions

Additionally the city should have ONE PORTAL for all volunteer intake and be an advocate to encourage current volunteer programs in the city – including Boards, Commissions, Task Forces, and Neighborhood Associations, ESV Program, Cool Blocks, Friends of Libraries, Parks, Magic Playground, Canopy etc.

**These are strong reasons to enhance what we have and not refer this proposed new program to Policy and Services.**

Thank you in advance,

Annette Glanckopf

## Baumb, Nelly

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**From:** Kaloma Smith <pastor@universityamez.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 24, 2021 2:11 PM  
**To:** Council, City  
**Subject:** Support for Colleagues Memo on creating program for Neighborhood Ambassadors

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Dear City Council,

I am writing this letter to support the colleague's memo for allowing neighbors to connect with each other directly and the city. I believe council member Stone and council member Cormack have identified a significant opportunity to deepen the feeling of community and belonging in our city.

As we move into a new routine after COVID, community and belonging will become more critical than ever before. The program's actively using existing volunteer networks and equipping them to be a conduit of information is a real strength. I believe it creates an opportunity for people to participate in meaningful ways in their community. Whether it is just reaching out to get information or being an ambassador, these interactions over time will build relationships and deepen community.

Thank you so much for considering this memo and your continued desire to make our city better.



**Kaloma A. Smith**  
**Pastor**  
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