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## Should Disaster Occur... It *COULD* Happen!

By TOM BURNETT  
*Of The Star*

What happens if?

A dozen or so chlorine gas-filled tanker cars derail near John Brown Elementary School, spewing potentially lethal fumes throughout the area. A huge fire erupts at the scene, fueled by hundreds of gallons of diesel fuel from the upended locomotive.

Concerned parents, hearing – or seeing – the disaster begin arriving at the school in pursuit of their children. A huge, multi-vehicle traffic accident ensues with multiple injuries.

What happens? How is the public protected?

During a three-hour session last week at Rathdrum City Hall, police, fire, public works employees, administrators and emergency crews gathered to hear Kootenai County Emergency Management Resource and Preparedness Specialist Doug Fredericks outline just such a scenario – an unlikely, but possible series of events.

“In a nutshell,” explained City Administrator Brett Boyer, “we discussed planning for a large scale incident that would unlikely or would never happen. But,” he admitted, “you never know...”



BOYER

The scope of “who does what” in the event of a major disaster was the focus of the meeting, he said. And, added Mayor Vic Holmes, “It is our responsibility to protect our citizens; be able to inform them of what’s going on and how to best deal with any situation.”

The “unbelievably involved” chain of events begins with the mayor being advised of the situation, its size and potential dangers and what emergency personnel and equipment need to be

alerted.

The mayor alone is the only one empowered to declare a situation an “emergency.” If such a designation is declared, local efforts though state and federal agencies move into action, depending on the size of the event.



HOLMES

The scenario, as Fredericks outlined, opened with a “sunny afternoon in mid-October at about 2:30 in the afternoon.

“At John Brown Elementary and Lakeland Junior High, school buses are lined up. Parents are milling around enjoying the warm sunshine while awaiting school to be dismissed.

“At 2:37, a horrifying screeching sound suddenly fills the air, followed by the heavy ground shaking sounds of something gone terrible wrong.”

A train has derailed with several tanker cars off the tracks and spilling an unknown chemical. A dozen calls come into the police and school offices from parents and others aware of the pending disaster, according to the scenario.

Police and fire units respond in an effort to determine the extent of the situation and try to assess what equipment and manpower need be deployed.

An “incident command” center is established, staffed by the police and fire chiefs or their next in command. A public information base is set up, employing the county’s recently developed reverse 9-1-1 system, which – in theory – keeps the public informed of the situation through emergency broadcasting channels as well as information sent to “all registered” cell phones.

Meanwhile, both schools have engaged in “lockdown” procedures, meaning school doors are locked as a precau-

tionary measure.

It’s now determined, one of the derailed tanker cars is spilling a chemical, identified as liquid chlorine.

The school principals are told “of the precarious situation. Evacuation of the schools may pose too great a risk while keeping the children in place may be just as risky,” Fredericks reported.

Incident commanders determine the spilled chlorine “is a real concern due to its producing highly toxic fumes.” It’s also learned there is no fire at the present or fume-carrying winds – but that a weather forecast indicates the elements could change.

Meanwhile, however, the liquid chlorine has made its way to a nearby manhole creating a concern the city’s water and sewer systems could quickly become contaminated.

Schools are told to shut down all heating and air conditioning equipment so as to keep any contaminated air away from the students. Some 45 minutes later, it’s determined safe for the children to be dismissed and that school buses are available to drive them south to a predetermined location for parental pickup.

Meanwhile, city officials, police and firemen not on the scene are instructed to begin evacuating the downtown and adjoining areas which requires roadblocks and predetermined detour routes. An alternate escape route is predetermined due to two over-reacting motorists becoming involved in a rollover accident at a major intersection.

Back at the incident scene, it’s been learned heavy equipment will be required to remove the damaged rail cars and that the rail yards in Spokane have the necessary equipment at the ready.

While not an element of public safety, Fredericks cautioned that, throughout the efforts to mitigate the dangerous situation, costs of the

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Bid of \$10,200 buys the 100-plus-year old Rathdrum United Methodist Church.

## Church Building Sells to High Bid of \$10,200

By TOM BURNETT  
*Of The Star*

It’s sold!

The Rathdrum Community Methodist Church building at McCartney and Post Streets now belongs to Bob and Jeannette Delauter of Post Falls. It was their high bid of \$10,200 that took ownership of the 100-plus year old building, once the pride and joy of Methodists from points throughout the Inland Empire.

Delauter’s bid was one of

## E-Cigarettes Issue Sparks Concern from Council

The recent craze involving the sale of E-cigarettes to minors hit a smoky future last Tuesday evening as the Rathdrum City Council agreed the practice is unhealthy and should be ruled illegal.

Akin to the issue of banning cellphone use/texting while driving, the council agreed enforcement of E-cigarette use would present a nightmare.

That was after Linda Harder of Panhandle Health

two in front of the Kootenai County Commissioners last Tuesday for their consideration. The second bid – \$10.

“To get this building for \$10,200...wow, what a deal!” Delauter said following the bid opening. “I just couldn’t pass it up!”

Delauter said he attended the Sept. 12 tax sale when the building was offered for sale at \$12,500, the amount owed in unpaid property taxes. The building, however, did not sell. At that point, the county

had little recourse but to put the property for sale to the highest bidder. While it was reported a “steady stream” of potential buyers looked at the building, only two bids were submitted to the commissioners.

“What are our plans for the building? Darn good question! Right now,” he said, “nothing! Our only ambition at this point is to stop any further deterioration of the building. This, actually, is the first time we’ve been inside,” he said from his spot in one of the beautifully, probably hand-hewn wooden church pews.

“The doors have been locked...”

“So we bought this building pretty much sight unseen...”

“But to answer the question a lot of people are asking; we do not intend destroying this old building, but keeping it intact. We’d like to return it to its former status as a church. Maybe rent it to one of these smaller congregations that may be looking for a Sunday meeting place.”

One potential drawback

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## Council Member D. Holmes Faces Challenge From Write-In Newton

A new face appeared on Rathdrum’s political front last week as 45-year-old Len Newton filed as a write-in candidate for Position 4 on the City Council, challenging incumbent Debbie Holmes.

“Serving my community has long been a goal of mine, something I’ve wanted to do ever since I moved here and bought a house here 10 years ago,” said the likeable Newton, just home from his deployment in Iraq with the Idaho National Guard, U.S. Army division.

“I would have filed earlier so my name would have ap-

peared on the ballot, but I was with the war effort and unable to meet the deadline for filing.”

“My reason for running for city office is simply to become involved in many

areas... For instance, how the city spends the property tax dollars it collects. Does the city get the best value for the money it spends? I want to know.

“At last week’s meeting of the City Council, I heard how the city saved some \$60,000 by using in-house employees to complete a study of its impact fee schedule. Other cities spent thousands for

something we were able to do with our own people. This is great!

“I want to know if there aren’t other money-saving instances like this one...”

“These days, people don’t have extra money. If we can save here and there, I’m in favor of it!”

Another area interesting to Newton is starting a small business in Rathdrum, a process he said “has been known to raise a red flag with the city. I want to check into this and see if the process can be simplified or made easier.

“Again, I want to become involved. To see how things can be made better...”

“And, I want it known, I have nothing against Ms.

Holmes. I just think I can serve the people of Rathdrum. I’ve proven myself in the military, having earned the rank of sergeant and been a truck commander of a convoy unit.”

Meanwhile, Holmes brought forward her accomplishments of the last four years along with her desire to continue her work with the Council.

“Initially, I take great pride in the fact I study all upcoming issues, ask questions and arrive at Council meetings prepared for the evening’s agenda.

“I’ve maintained member-

ships in the Rathdrum Area Chamber of Commerce, the Rathdrum Lions Club and the Association of Idaho Cities,” she said.

Further, said the incumbent councilmember whose

last name is the same as Mayor Vic Holmes – but no connection – “I feel I’m sensitive to the tough economic times we all are experiencing. I’ve helped balance the city’s budget while being able to save the city dollars by using

in-house talent as opposed to going outside for the projects.

“We’ve worked to keep taxes as low as possible yet be able to provide essential

services to our residents and businesses.

“And, most importantly, we’ve been able to accomplish this without having to add new employees.”

“Also of note, during my time on the council, we’ve approved the KTEC which, when finished, will provide a much needed opportunity for our children to perfect a skill for today’s demanding jobs.

“We’ve started work on our showpiece of the future, our 12-acre Majestic Park, along with improvements to Pinegrove Cemetery that include paved roads, a sprinkler system and a new, attractive fence along the highway.”

Next week, a look at the two candidates for mayor.



NEWTON



D. HOLMES