

**Chapel Neighbors convened Monday, March 24, 2025 via Zoom from 1:00-2:34 PM with the following members in attendance:**

Joan-Alice Burn, Mary Church, Gail Digate, Carol Does, Robert Does,  
Bob Haizmann, Marianne Luczak, Akko Matsuura, Barbara Matsuura,  
Ernie Strauch

Chapel Neighbors **not in attendance:** Jim Digate, David “Duke” Francisco, Brian W. Fultz, Michael Mager, Don Smith, Ellen Smith, Karen Strauch,  
Will Symonds, Bob Tusso

**Purpose of Meeting**

1. Examine and discuss public safety concerns related to periodic increased volume of visitor traffic to and from Chapel of the Holy Cross and resulting in intermittent gridlock on Chapel Road
2. In event of a wildfire or residence fire, insufficient egress for approximately 104 residences in the east Chapel neighborhoods.
3. Continue exploration of potential additional emergency evacuation routes (i.e., egress connectors) in east Chapel area.

**Introduction of new members to Chapel Neighbors**

Gail Digate welcomed new participants to Chapel Neighbors: Akio and Barbara Matsuura, 275 Fox Road.

**Overview: Identified Need for Additional Egress Routes in East Chapel Area**

Bob Haizmann provided an overview of the need for additional egress routes in east Chapel area. Reviewed recent meetings with Andy Dickey, Deputy City Manager and Ed Mezulis, Sedona Fire District Chief. Five (5) potential egress points were identified. In conversations with Andy Dickey and Ed Mezulis, (CN members Gail Digate and Bob Haizmann) indicated adding an emergency egress on the south side of Chapel Road from the intersection of Cathedral Lane and Chapel Road to the intersection of Antelope Drive and Chapel Road (approximately 300 feet) appeared to hold greatest potential; also recommended that this route be gated and used only in emergencies.

Marianne Luczak pointed out that proposed egress runs parallel to her property and is owned by USFS. She shared several concerns about this option, including: loss of sound barrier for traffic on Chapel Road and whether City has an easement on USFS land. Marianne indicated that she is willing to maintain the current walking path while she owns the adjacent property to enable residents to evacuate on foot.

Discussion ensued about the feasibility of constructing a 10 foot wide shared use path or car-sized lane parallel to Chapel Road that would connect Cathedral Lane to Antelope Drive such that residents in the east Chapel area could evacuate via Antelope Drive.

*Advantages* of this egress include:

- Could be constructed relatively quickly
- Relatively cost effective (if made from crushed stone or similar material)
- Located on public land

*Disadvantages* of this egress include:

- Inconsistent with current Sedona evacuation plan which funnels certain lower Chapel evacuees to Chapel Road via Antelope Drive. The proposed egress would direct upper or east Chapel evacuees in the opposite direction from Chapel Road to Antelope Drive.
- The proposed egress assumes that evacuation route to SR 179 via Antelope Drive (to Meadowlark or Indian Cliffs) would be less congested than Chapel Road, even though more than 200 homes in lower Chapel would evacuate via

Meadowlark or Indian Cliffs. (Note: There was some questioning of the accuracy of this assumption.)

- Proposal necessitates some relocation of utility panels and boxes.
- Traffic would flow on both sides of an existing fire hydrant which may become inaccessible.
- The land is owned by USFS which may add complexity to the proposal.
- The land involved in this proposal is adjacent to a private residence (11 Cathedral Lane) whose owner has landscaped and maintained the area providing a sound barrier from traffic on Chapel Road.

An additional egress could be created from the south end of Fox Road (behind the homes on USFS land) through to Badger or Lynx. Carol Does noted that, at this time, USFS cannot provide a timeline for required NEPA study.

Bob Haizmann and Gail Digate commented that the Sedona Fire District Chief is aware of the paucity of fire hydrants in the Chapel area and pointed out that Sedona is served by multiple water companies which create management challenges for the fire department. Sedona District Fire Chief Ed Mezulis informed CN that a new water storage facility currently under construction on SR 179 north of Chapel Road will increase water availability to hydrants located in the Chapel area. He also noted that yellow and orange hydrants have less capacity than red hydrants.

*CN agreed that the lack of hydrants and water capacity are critical issues for follow up with the City and Fire Department.*

Ernie Strauch added a sixth potential egress violated federal laws that require agencies to be located across from his home on Cathedral Lane to an empty lot on Antelope Drive.

Further discussion explored the following options:

- Keep other alternatives “on the table”
- Alternatives must align with current Sedona evacuation plan or the plan will require amendments/revisions accordingly
- CN needs greater understanding of existing Sedona evacuation plan, including simulations
- Current Sedona evacuation plan needs update to include 30+ vehicles from large short term rentals in the east Chapel area as well as account for visitors to the Chapel of the Holy Cross, all of whom would evacuate from east to west on Chapel Road simultaneously
- Evacuations are managed by the Sedona Police Department which needs to be included in future discussions

## **Emerging Consensus**

CN members concurred that further exploration of the aforementioned options and concerns about public safety should be scheduled soon with the City of Sedona. It was suggested that the City declare an emergency situation in the Chapel area as it relates to evacuation in the event of a wildfire.

CN members delineated critical discussion questions for an upcoming meeting with the City Manager, Deputy City Manager, and Sedona Fire District Chief:

1. Can the City simulate evacuation for different options.

1.1. Using current evacuation plan

1.2. Different egresses and given varying circumstances (e.g., wildfire coming from north, south, east, or west)

1.3. Single residence Fire in east Chapel during both light and maximum traffic on Chapel Road

1.4. Will multiple egresses be beneficial.

1.5. Consider at least 104 homes in east Chapel area with 1.8 residents per home and possibly 2 vehicles per home as well as four (4) large short-term rentals on Eagle Lane that could add up to 38 additional vehicles

1.6. Chapel of the Holy Cross current parking capacity is 65 spaces; Mystic Trailhead parking adjacent to Chapel Road adds 10-14 vehicles — all of which will head east on Chapel Road in the event of an emergency evacuation.

2. Does USFS have guidelines for buffer zones between the National Forest and private property.

3. How will USFS respond to a fire anywhere in the Chapel area?
4. What contingencies are in place for the City evacuation plan in the event of gridlock on Chapel Road?
5. What is the evacuation plan for the Chapel of the Holy Cross?
6. In the event the City declares “Set” or “Go”, how does the Chapel of the Holy Cross plan to respond?
7. Can the City declare a state of emergency for a specific area in the City?  
(Note: There is an insufficient number of functioning fire hydrants in the Chapel area. Single egress from east Chapel to Chapel Road via Cathedral Lane. Will this situation accelerate USFS NEPA study?)
8. Can the City require water companies to increase capacity and provide more hydrants in the Chapel area?
9. What are the City’s other fire mitigation strategies?
10. Can the City mandate egress through private property in emergency situations?
11. Can the City prevent homeowners from blocking or obstructing an “emergency exit egress”?

### **Next Steps and Assignments**

1. Meet with Sedona Fire Chief Ed Mezulis to explore application of Firewise USA program to homes in the Chapel area

Assigned to Joan-Alice Burn, Gail Digate, Carole’s Dore, and Marianne Luczak (March 26, 2025 Zoom at 4:00 PM)

2. Schedule follow-up meeting with City Manager (Anette Spickard), Deputy City Manager (Andy Dickey), Sedona District Fire Chief (Ed Mezulis), and Sedona Police Chief (Stephanie Foley) to continue exploration of additional egress routes in east Chapel area

Assigned to Gail A. Digate

CN members to meet with City, Fire and Police Chiefs: Joan Alice-Burn, Gail A. Digate, Carol Dore, Bob Haizmann, and Barbara Matsuura

*Note: Confirmed Monday, May 5, 2025 at 2:00 PM - Vultee Conference Room, Sedona City Manager’s Office*

3. Poll CN members and schedule Zoom meeting to prepare for combined session with Chapel of the Holy Cross administrators, City Manager and Deputy City Manager, USFS Red Rock District Ranger, and CN representatives to review proposed improvements at the Chapel and provide feedback.

Assigned to Gail A. Digate.

*Note: Poll completed (March 26) and Zoom meeting scheduled for Friday, May 2 from 3:30 - 5:00 PM.*

*Summary prepared by Mary Church, Gail A. Digate and Carol Dore.*