

# Huntington Beach City Council Chambers

## Evacuation Plan and Security Assessment

### Overview

The Huntington Beach Police Department has been task with creating an evacuation plan for the Huntington Beach City Council Chambers in the event of a critical incident involving violence directed at the city council members. This report will identify observations and vulnerabilities currently present at the Council Chambers. This report will make suggestions and recommendations to increase the efficiency of an evacuation and to increase the security of the site.

### Evacuation Plan

#### Main Council Chambers

The Main Council Chamber area is a large, semi circle auditorium in an amphitheater setting. There is seating for 276 people.

If an emergency occurs while the council is in session, the council members should evacuate to the nearby Caucus Room and shelter in place. The Caucus Room is constructed with solid concrete walls, and steel framed, solid wood doors. The room is very secure and would make an excellent location to shelter in place during an emergency.

#### Recommendations

In order to make the Caucus Room more secure, we recommend installing solid metal dead bolt throw locks in the upper and lower corners of the steel door. (See Figure 1).



Figure 1

#### Deadbolt Style Throw Lock

These locks work in conjunction with the existing door lock and make the door extremely resistant to any type of mechanical breaching attempt.

Additionally, we recommend installing a peep hole type view piece in the door to identify first responders. (See Figure 2.)



Figure 2

Peephole Device

We recommend removing the older phone that is labeled “Emergency”. The phone simply has a dial tone and does not connect directly to police dispatch. The phone sits on the counter next to a newer style phone that connects to police dispatch when the caller dials “911”. The presence of two phones that work differently may cause delays and confusion during an emergency.

We recommend having only the newer phone. We recommend placing a prominent sign on the wall over the phone which should read, “In Case of Emergency Dial 911 for Police Dispatch”. We recommend reprogramming the caller ID of the phone to read “City Council Caucus Room”.

The Caucus Room also has a steel exit door equipped with a panic bar that opens to the south side of the building. The door leads to a small patio and then to the south lawn of City Hall. We recommend installing a peephole device on this door.

#### Alternate Evacuation

Across the hallway from the Caucus Room is an Audio Visual Room. This room houses AV and computer equipment. The north side of the room has a door that leads to a large meeting room and the meeting room leads to several exterior exit doors. This AV room could be used as a room to shelter in place, or it could be used as an alternate evacuation route.

We recommend installing peepholes and dead bolt throw locks on both north and south doors to help fortify the room. While not as secure as the Caucus Room, the AV room could still be used to shelter evacuees.

#### **The Council Seating Area**

The Council Seating Area currently has Kevlar panels installed in the vertical surfaces of the wooden desk. While these panels definitely offer ballistic protection, the material is of unknown origin and age. Additionally, the threat level of the material is unknown.

Since the ballistic panels will offer some protection, we recommend leaving the panels in place. We do not recommend sheltering under the desk as a primary response to an active shooter event. We

recommend an emergency evacuation to the predetermined areas listed above. If an active shooter suspect has mobility during the opening phases of his attack, victims that are sheltering under the desk would quickly be discovered. If possible, evacuation is a safer alternative.

### **Large Meeting Room B7**

Meeting Room B7 is located to the north of the Main Council Chambers and this is the room where the council meets during closed sessions. As mentioned previously, the AV Room located to the south of room B7 could be used as a safe room or as a route to the Caucus Room.

In order to use the AV room as an emergency escape route, the door to the AV room must be unlocked. We recommend that the council members unlock the AV room at the beginning of their meeting to facilitate the expeditious use of the room during an emergency.

## **Security Assessment**

### The Main Council Chambers

As previously stated in this report, The Main Council Chamber area is a large, semi circle auditorium in an amphitheater setting. The public seating rises to a second story balcony level. At the north and south ends of the balcony are two doors that lead to the outside of the building. These doors are for emergency evacuation. They are not used as an entrance or exit. Presently, audience members can exit the door, or prop the doors open for ease of re-entry to the seating area.

### Vulnerability

The ease of access and lack of any type of controlled access to these doors makes them a security risk. The doors are only intended as emergency exits.

We recommend installing door activation alarms on the doors, to include prominent signage on the door warning of the door alarm. This would prevent entry to the Council Chambers from the second floor and it would prevent citizens from propping the door open during the meetings.

If access to these doors is controlled, the only public entrance and exit to the chambers would be through the main entrance. This leaves only one entrance for the Sergeant At Arms to monitor.

### Critical Incident Plan

We recommend that the City Council members, the Sergeant At Arms and the Chief of Police meet with select members of the Huntington Beach Police Department's SWAT Team to discuss and implement a Critical Incident Response Plan. This plan would discuss and implement security counter measures in response to a Critical Incident, such as an active shooter event. The team members would discuss evacuation strategies, pre planned actions and post event responses to a Critical Incident.