

Meeting Minutes – Resilient Neighbors Network
3:00 pm ET Friday, April 27, 2017
(Rescheduled from April 21, 2017 @ 11:00 a.m.)

Resilient Neighbors Network (RNN) is a network of professionals representing communities actively working toward adaptation and resilience from natural hazards.

RNN Mission

To increase resilience in existing and developing communities at the grass roots level by documenting and actively sharing best practices, through education, peer to peer collaboration and mentoring.

RNN Vision

RNN will be a source for a compilation of community driven hazard resilience best practices that can serve as a resource to people & communities before, during and after a disaster. RNN will also actively bring ground truth and grassroots enlightenment to policy makers, researchers, regulators, and journalists.

AGENDA:

1. Roll call
2. Approval of Minutes
3. Pilot of the RNN/Disaster Risk Reduction Curriculum in Harrisburg, PA
 - a. How did we do?
4. NHMA DRR Curriculum & Workshop Status:
 - a. Where to go with funds from FEMA with respect to the RNN and DRR Curriculum's further rollout?
5. RNN Community Membership
6. Natural Hazards Workshop/NHMA Symposium - combined event July 9-12, 2017
7. Status of Practical Community Resilience Project in South Carolina
8. Status of Island Press Interest, ABA
9. Comments/Issues/Good News

3:00 pm EDT - CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL:

1. ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: Ed Thomas (NHMA Board member); Barb Miller (Jefferson County, WV); Marcy Leach (Rockford, IL); Tracee McKenna (West Arkansas); Tim Trautman (Mecklenburg County, NC); Laura Hendrix (Tulsa, OK); Bill Robison (Tulsa, OK); Rebecca Joyce (Shenandoah Valley, WV); Eugene Henry (Hillsborough County, FL)

- 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** The floor was opened to discussion of the March 2017 Minutes. There being no comments,

A Motion was made by Tim Trautman to approve the Minutes.

The Motion was seconded by Barb Miller.

There being no discussion, **a vote was taken.**

VOTED: Unanimous approval of the Minutes.

3. PILOT OF THE RNN/DISASTER RISK REDUCTION CURRICULUM IN HARRISBURG, PA: Where Do We Go from Here, After Harrisburg?

Ed Thomas discussed the rollout of the DRR Curriculum in Harrisburg, PA, and called for feedback. He reported terrific participation from the RNN Communities in Harrisburg, and expressed tremendous appreciation to Barb Miller for being there and to Rebecca Joyce for an excellent webinar presentation.

Survey results were received by the Contractor, Wightman & Associates, and a report will be prepared on the Harrisburg rollout. Shannon Burke has agreed to help draft this along the lines of next steps for the DRR Curriculum.

Additionally, we received tremendous - and unexpected - technical support from Michael Baker International, Inc., the state contractor, in terms of logistics and polling, on-line and follow-on surveys, etc. **These will have to be built into whatever efforts we make with the Curriculum going forward.** This kind of technical effort costs money and we will have to find a way to pay for it in the future.

a. How did we do?

Rebecca Joyce and Barb Miller shared their impressions of the Harrisburg Workshop and their thoughts on where the RNN should go from here:

Barb Miller shared that the facility FEMA provided was magnificent and perfect for presenting the Curriculum rollout.

The contractors did a great job with logistical support. This should be a “lesson learned” in terms of best practices for presenting the Curriculum going forward, as Hope was there, tracking all of the questions and comments that were coming through online during the presentation and making sure that all of the IT processes were working well throughout. The entire presentation was seamless as a result.

In terms of attendance, the Workshop had more people online than present in the room. Barb estimated there were probably 40 to 50 people in the room, and understood that about 1½ times that many participated remotely. She enjoyed having both live speakers in the room and remote presentations and felt that the remote presenters received the same level of attention as those who presented live.

In terms of diversity, the Workshop drew a diverse group of people. The RNN has been asking itself the questions “Who are we marketing this to?” and “Who is our customer?” for a long time. The Curriculum rollout demonstrated the diversity of persons that this material appeals to: Everyone from students, to people who had been with FEMA for many years, and everything in between. The questions posed by these different perspectives were helpful.

Barb pointed out that, as expected, some participants were more interested in one Module than another. In terms of offering future credentials, we should expect there to be people who don’t want the whole final credential, but may just want to take one or two Modules and get credentials for something that they’re working on. We should definitely offer both options.

Rebecca Joyce shared her experience in giving a presentation remotely for the first time. It was a little different for her as she is used to reading an audience and pacing herself accordingly. She spotted a few things regarding the non-community slides in her presentation that she will change in order to be more concise. Overall, preliminary feedback indicates the RNN Communities’ Module was well-received.

Barb Miller shared that, regarding the entire Workshop, across the board there was consistent input asking for more information on different resilience issues besides just flooding. This is easily accomplished, particularly with regard to switching out Community profiles, so the entire Workshop can be tailored to its audience.

Barb Miller shared that Rebecca Joyce sent out a link with pictures taken by Barb in Harrisburg at the Workshop, which have been posted to one of the RNN’s Facebook pages and will be uploaded to the RNN website as soon as possible. **Barb or Rebecca to forward these to NHMA Admin for upload to the website and use in the Newsletter.**

b. Where Do We Go from Here?

Ed Thomas announced that we are getting ready for another session along the lines of Harrisburg with some new Modules (to be held sometime before October 1st). He explained that we also want to go forward with some of the Modules that have been developed but not presented in Harrisburg, and we want to do some webinars.

Ed urged input from everyone/anyone on eliminating redundancies in the Module materials. He shared that there were a lot of complaints from the folks in Harrisburg about the amount of repetition. **We need to solve the issue of redundancy, and hopefully will get a contractor to help us with that.**

DISCUSSION regarding Direction:

The questions were asked: What else do we want to do? Do we want to put together an actual work plan for RNN? Do we need contractor support for something like that?

Barb Miller responded and agreed that a work plan is always a good idea.

The topic changed to Roadmap to Resilience (see page 4).

4. NHMA DRR CURRICULUM & WORKSHOP STATUS:

a. Where to go with funds from FEMA with respect to the RNN and DRR Curriculum's further rollout?

Ed Thomas opened the floor for discussion on where does the RNN want to go in terms of the remaining FEMA funds for this year, and what do the RNN Communities want to say about what they want from FEMA in terms of funding for next year?

With regard to completing the Community Module: Should the completion of these profiles be put into a contract, or can the Communities do these on their own with some help from Roger Faris?

DISCUSSION on Community Profiles:

Rebecca Joyce explained that Wightman & Associates sent out a questionnaire for the RNN Modules asking people to fill it in and send it back with pictures. This strategy could be followed by the RNN members themselves doing this going forward. Slides could be put on the website to highlight each community, and would make it easy to interchange them for the Modules depending on what is needed for each presentation. Rebecca will see if she can find the sheets that Veronica sent out and which were sent to everybody so the Communities can produce the profiles going forward.

The one-page community profiles done several years ago were mentioned. A lot of time and effort went into producing them and it was suggested that the information for the slides could be taken from them instead of using the questionnaire.

Rebecca Joyce responded that the questionnaire was specifically designed and used for the presentations, so it is different from the profile pages done before. Also, new RNN members will not have done a page, and some members of the RNN that have dropped away will not be updating their page, so it would be good to follow the new format for the slides going forward that Veronica provided.

Ed Thomas recommended that profiles going forward need to include difficulties that each community has faced and overcome, or are facing and working to overcome, along with achievements to reflect real-world experience that will resonate with grass-roots practitioners trying to use this Curriculum.

DISCUSSION on keeping the Curriculum moving forward:

Barb Miller shared that she would like to see Module 4 completed and each of the RNN Communities contribute something about themselves to be used in this Module. Each Module could be interchanged depending upon where the Module is presented and who it is presented to. A good start has been made, but the RNN Communities have to follow through

Barb Miller shared that she is anxious to keep going forward in getting the rest of the Modules done.

Ed Thomas stated that he had the sense then, that the RNN Communities want to proceed forward with the Curriculum as part of what they do with the money already granted by FEMA; also, that we need to hire a contractor. Ed asked for confirmation of this, and that this is what the RNN Communities want to do - that they are finding the Curriculum is worth further development.

Gene Henry responded and confirmed that it is, indicating that he thought that **all on the call were following Ed and agreed with him** that this is what the RNN Communities want to do, and that they are finding the Curriculum worthy of further development.

DISCUSSION with regard to contractor support in future:

Ed Thomas particularly sought feedback as to what areas really need contractor support to leverage the efforts of the RNN Community.

With regard to the Curriculum, Ed pointed out that we would not have gotten as far as we've gotten with the profiles – especially in updating the profiles for the communities - without contractor support. So, **anything like that we require help on in the future needs to be built into the contract.**

Gene Henry suggested using case study materials already gathered by FEMA during the course of its long-term recovery support for communities across the country. These would be helpful to incorporate into the Curriculum as they contain bullet points and such information as we are seeking. Gene suggested that this would be one of the cornerstones of the Curriculum, especially as FEMA works with these different communities and is paying a lot of money to have these communities consider how to build back in a stronger way. If FEMA already has a menu – or listing or portfolio for communities to take from – of ways to build back with some aspects of the planning process and the CRS or ISO from good land use, we would benefit both FEMA and our Curriculum by incorporating them. **Ed Thomas to add this as one of the things we put into the next contract going forward, that the contractor assembles the FEMA case studies/profiles and start putting them on the RNN or the NHMA website.**

DISCUSSION of the Leadership Module and Modules going forward:

Barb Miller noted that there's been a lot of discussion on the Leadership Module, and agreed that it needs to be done sooner rather than later and get plugged into the Curriculum.

Ed Thomas shared regarding the Leadership Module being the biggest priority Module, and the need for the RNN to concentrate on it. This Module needs input from the RNN communities with regard to coming up with chunks of material talking about the community, successes, challenges, best practices, and to expand on what has already gotten done from Harrisburg and the long-ago community profile.

Ed stated that he is not seeing other people explain how it is that Tulsa did what Tulsa did; that Charlotte-Mecklenburg did what it did, that Hillsborough County is doing what it is doing, how West Virginia is overcoming the challenges they face on an ongoing basis in coming up with best practices, approaches, and dealing with real-world issues.

Ed described how some of these issues seem to be well articulated in a book he is reviewing for the Recovery Diva blog by Claire Rubin called *The Ostrich Paradox*, and how we can perhaps start figuring out how to verbalize these issues for the Leadership Module.

It is possible the Leadership Module may be developed into more than a one-Module piece incorporating best practices and skill sets.

It was recommended that profiles going forward should include difficulties that each community has faced and overcome, or are facing and working to overcome, along with achievements to reflect real-world experience that will resonate with grass-roots practitioners trying to use this Curriculum

DISCUSSION of the *Roadmap to Resilience*:

Barb Miller commented on the *Roadmap to Resilience*, that gathering comments on this is something that we don't want to lose ground on going forward. She suggested that contractor assistance will be needed. **Ed Thomas to add this as one of the things we put into the next contract going forward, that the contractor take comments into account.**

Ed Thomas suggested the possibility that this document eventually may split off into two documents. It is primarily directed to people who are professionals in the business of hazard mitigation, but it can equally serve people who are going through a disaster for the first time who are not professionals in the field of hazard mitigation, or who have no experience at all in the realm of hazard mitigation (such as, perhaps, a neighborhood activist). The audience for this document also includes FEMA people too. **Ed Thomas to add this as one of the things we put into the next contract as well** as we will need some help with that.

There being no further discussion, it was concluded:

The RNN will discuss how much contractor support it will need going forward as NHMA gets closer to putting out a contract for the next set of modules.

THE RNN will proceed forward with the Curriculum as part of what it does with the money already granted from FEMA, and it will hire a contractor to assist with continued roll out of the Curriculum.

5. RNN COMMUNITY MEMBERSHIP:

Ed Thomas opened the floor to discuss expanding RNN Community membership.

Rebecca Joyce spoke about the Membership Memorandum she had prepared which was distributed a day before. She reported receiving one comment back on it about getting to know the different communities in person instead of on line.

Rebecca explained that the Memorandum is intended to help the RNN Communities get more organized and includes some of the things discussed at the Retreat last summer about encouraging new members and people to come aboard as existing members and get them more engaged in the process.

As a new community joins, they should perhaps receive a welcome letter and a contact phone call just to talk and answer questions, and then be asked to sign an Agreement of Participation.

Rebecca clarified that the Agreement of Participation is not between the new member's locality and the NHMA; it's just asking the member representative to sign on their own behalf. It is not a legally binding document, and does not require them to commit any funding or labor; it's basically just for us to demonstrate that we have somebody that says, 'I'd be interested in helping with the DRR curriculum', or somebody that would say 'I'd be glad to be a mentor to a new community that comes along', or 'I'd be willing to make sure that I have somebody from my community on the call each month.' We're just trying to tighten our RNN participation a little bit and move it forward, because as the new grant funding comes up, we definitely want to show progress.

DISCUSSION: The concept for the Participation Agreement appealed to everyone on the call; the need for something more framed and formal, stating how one joins, what joining means and showing the benefits of membership and its requirements.

It was agreed that everyone would look over the Memorandum and get comments back to Rebecca by May 10.

FURTHER DISCUSSION:

With regard to incorporating some of FEMA's post-disaster community profiles into our Curriculum, Ed Thomas suggested that we find out if any of those communities might be interested in joining the RNN.

6. Natural Hazards Workshop/NHMA Symposium - Combined Event July 9-12, 2017

Ed Thomas opened the floor to discussion about the Hazard Workshop Symposium, and if the RNN Communities want to participate in one this year. Not everyone seemed to have received an Invitation to it yet. **Ed Thomas will mention this to Lauri Peek.**

NHMA Admin will forward the Symposium Agenda to everyone right after the meeting.

Ed Thomas shared that he is not absolutely sure he will attend it this year. He does not see the point of asking the RNN members to go to it this year either. His thought is that we should concentrate on developing the DRR Curriculum.

The Annual Meeting of the RNN Community was discussed:

Ed Thomas expressed the consensus, and asked for confirmation, that the RNN wished to build a meeting of the RNN Communities into the current FEMA funding.

A question was asked about when the meeting would need to occur.

Ed Thomas answered that the current money we have from FEMA goes through October 1, 2017. Unless an extension is granted (which he thinks might be allowed) the meeting would have to occur by then.

Ed restated the question: Does the RNN Community want to meet before October 1st, or does it want to wait until we have more development on the Curriculum?

Barb Miller shared that the October 1st timeline is probably more realistic for most RNN members, as everyone is busy and as we get into summer and vacations etc., a late September/early October time frame would probably be best. She asked for additional comments.

Marcy Leach agreed that October 1st was a better time for her as well.

Ed Thomas shared that he did not see the RNN Communities meeting before then, and offered that it would be better to meet after completing another chunk of the Curriculum so the group could go over it.

Ed suggested that a similar presentation to Harrisburg be planned for rollout by October 1st of the next part of the Curriculum, to be held in one of the other RNN Communities or states, such as Florida, in Hillsborough County; or perhaps Charlotte-Mecklenburg, or even at the training center in West Virginia - all good venues for the group to consider.

There being no remarks against, it was accepted to plan for an event like Harrisburg as the next event sometime before October 1st.

Ed Thomas observed that since this will probably push the next RNN Annual Meeting past October 1st, he will need to ask for an extension on the grant time from FEMA. However, not feeling an urgent need for an RNN Community meeting, he hoped to continue to use funds to keep going with some of the other initiatives that NHMA and the RNN are doing.

7. STATUS OF PRACTICAL COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROJECT IN SOUTH CAROLINA:

Ed Thomas did not have much to say on the Practical Community Resilience project other than it was sort of going forward. **He will let everyone know as more information is made available** and shared that It has the potential to be very exciting, as they are flowing funds from the University into this effort.

8. STATUS OF ISLAND PRESS INTEREST, ABA:

Ed Thomas reported on his efforts with Island Press and ABA.

He is trying to get Island Press interested in the work we're doing, including the American Bar Association, which also is involving the American Planning Association; and hopes that this material will be of use to the RNN communities.

He shared that he would love to have folks from the RNN who are available to present at meetings for the ABA, and suggested the possibility of coming up with funds to get them there, if that is something the RNN Community members are interested in doing.

Ed will get out a memo on that, and would welcome anyone that's interested in co-writing a book that he has been asked to put together by the ABA, which is not just lawyers talking to lawyers, but lawyers and experts – such as everyone in the RNN - talking to the lawyers and the communities about resilience problems, issues and the like.

9. COMMENTS/ISSUES/GOOD NEWS: The floor was opened to discuss any good news or comments by RNN Community members on the call.

Rebecca Joyce shared that West Virginia is having a state-wide conference on resilience in August, put on by the Resilience Virginia Organization, and they have asked her to present. They will be doing part of Module 4 and want information about the RNN, so she will be speaking in one of the break-out sessions(?). Dates for the event are August 1st and 2nd, in Richmond, Virginia.

Rebecca Joyce to send the invitation to Barb Miller, and to send information about the event to NHMA Admin for the Newsletter.

Barb Miller to help Rebecca Joyce with the presentation, if she is attending.

Rebecca Joyce and Ed Thomas discussed the possibility of him speaking at the conference with her. Ed shared that he has been tentatively identified as a potential speaker for some of the ABA resilience materials and is also working with his friend George Huff in an effort on Continuity of Operations and similar things in the area, so I may see her there. He promised that NHMA will make sure to support her with whatever she needs for a successful presentation.

Rebecca explained that her hope is to include on the slide a little bit about each community and some of their successes and challenges so is hoping to be able to highlight all of the RNN communities with their presentation. Ed suggested that means getting into high gear and maybe connecting with Roger Faris about his promise to help with the Community histories and profiles.

Ed asked generally if anyone had contacts in places like Charleston or otherwise who would wish to come up to speak at the ABA Conference in Savannah. He will be sending everyone information on that momentarily. They are looking for somebody to speak on sea level rise. Sea level rise appears to be a big impediment when talking to people in Savannah, Georgia.

Ed Thomas to get out information to everyone on what they are up to with the ABA and the book; if anyone is interested in participating with that, it's a way to get your point of view out there.

NEXT STEPS:

- NHMA Admin to get the Action Item List out ASAP.
- Ed Thomas to send a link to the Hazards Work shop agenda/schedule.
- Everyone else to follow up with Lori Peek if they didn't get an invitation.
- NHMA Admin to send Lori Peek's address along to everyone.
- Ed Thomas to prepare a memo bringing everyone up to date on where we are with respect to what we're doing with the American Bar Association and the American Planning Association.
- Rebecca Joyce to send a follow up to the Rebecca memo requesting comments on the Memorandum by May 10th so it can get nailed down.
- Rebecca Joyce to reach out to Roger Faris.
- The first item of business at the next meeting will be a draft of the Memorandum.

There being no further business, the Meeting was adjourned.

NEXT MEETING:

The next RNN meeting will be on 5/19/2017 at 11:00 a.m., EST.

3:58 (EST) pm – The meeting adjourned.