



## Resilient Neighbors Network

Minutes of RNN Community Meeting of  
Friday, September 25, 2020, 11:00 am ET

**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.

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### AGENDA FOR RNN COMMUNITY MEETING OF September 25, 2020:

1. Roll call
  2. Approval of Minutes (August 2020)
  3. Comments/Issues/RNN Community Sharing/Good News
  4. Discussion of RNN objectives and roles in the new NHMA Strategic and Operational Plan (Ed Hecker)
    - New NHMA Board Member Ed Hecker to talk about RNN Linkage to Silver Jackets
  5. Status of ABA Book – Ed Thomas
  6. Follow-up on any RNN action items and future activities
  7. CTP Collaboration Monthly Call for Topics
  8. Publication opportunities and virtual speaking opportunities
  9. Any comments from Vincent Brown for FEMA updates
  10. Adjourn
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## Minutes for Meeting of Friday, September 25, 2020:

### 11:00 am Eastern Time: CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS AND ROLL CALL:

#### 1) ROLL CALL:

Present:

**Gene Henry** (formerly of Hillsborough County)  
**Ned Swanberg** (State of Vermont)  
**John Lavelle** (Lycoming County)  
**Erin Capps** (NHMA Board)  
**Ed Hecker** (NHMA Board)  
**Ed Thomas** (NHMA Board)  
**Tom Hughes** (NHMA Board)  
**Shannon Burke** (NHMA Board)  
**Donna Boyce** (NHMA Board)

#### OPENING DISCUSSION / PRELIMINARY REMARKS

**Ed Hecker** reported that NHMA is in the process of finalizing its Strategic Plan and the accompanying Operational Plan. We are moving from a Committee format to a Work Group format with some specific actions and deliverables for each. It's encouraging to see folks volunteer to lead some work groups for the Operational Plan. By the end of next week, he will have a good first draft out to everybody and that will be a lead-in for discussion the week after with the Strategic Planning Group.

**Ed Hecker** noted that there are not many communities on the call today, but the RNN Communities will be an extremely important team in building out the Operational Plan. Quite a few folks associated with the RNN have not been participating in recent months, and we need to schedule a special session of the RNN to bring everyone up to speed. Ed Hecker will take time to loop back to everybody that's not been active to get them to participate in this special call so we can specifically talk about the role of the RNN in the Strategic Plan and particularly the Operational Plan as a way of moving everything we've done over the past ten years to the next level.

**Ed Thomas** suggested that David Vaughn and the Clemson team need to be part of any discussions on the RNN and anything on Operational Planning and execution as well.

**Ed Thomas** reported that the ABA just had a marketing call on the ABA Resilience Handbook and they will be sending out an e-mail to all the authors to induce them to participate in getting the word out about the book. It would be great to start getting some of the authors involved in the RNN or possibly the Advisory Committee. There are brilliant authors in the ABA Handbook in addition to Ed Hecker and all the wonderful people who wrote the various chapters. We'll be looking to get them involved in marketing the book, and that's part of our Operational activity which can lead to webinars and other important things.

The ABA is very interested in participating in webinars with us and in otherwise marketing the Book. There is a lot that we can do in adding that as another leg on our stool of getting it out. Very glad to see Shannon Burke participating and hopes her background and her contacts with the American Planning Association will help get the word out about the book and some of the other Operational Activities we have happening.

**Shannon Burke** still has a good relationship with the APA and is looking to have more time for the volunteer work she's been doing and hopes to prioritize her support of NHMA and the RNN. At some point she will chat with Ed Thomas about authoring some things. She mentioned that many times Ed Thomas has brought up the APA and tries to get partnerships off the ground. A lot of these things could be put into the Operational Plan so we would know where we are going, and then could prioritize potential partnering organizations. Often there are so many organizations that we reach out to and somehow the connection doesn't happen.

Shannon Burke, Donna Boyce, and Ponmile Olonilua had a conversation about equity and Donna will share that with the Work Group. This is something that could put us on the right side of everything happening right now. We have a lot of ideas and will be talking about that in a little bit.

**Ed Thomas** shared that the Program Management Team has made a commitment to work with Ponmile as she has some brilliant ideas about follow-on in the areas of environmental just, racial equity and other forms of equity which is something we could look into to find some funding or other opportunities to implement those ideas that she came up with. There's so much to be done and we need to focus with people that are interested in listening. There are some core audiences - we were talking about the audiences for the ABA Book and talking about a number of places to reach out to and he thinks we can weave in the ABA marketing of the book together with the NHMA activities and the whole idea of the DRR Curriculum.

The more we can embed the idea of equity, environmental justice, underrepresented persons in everything we do, think and say, it will be incredibly important. The nation is ready for that activity now. We're at a point where people are truly interested in a more resilient society, more interested in seriously having a conversation about equity, racial justice, under-represented persons. So many things are coming together now that the Natural Hazard Mitigation Association can really contribute to that national discussion. He hopes that Alessandra Jerolleman is also part of this as she is very much interested in that.

**Ed Hecker** shared for the benefit of those present who were not on the Board call yesterday that he sent out a read-ahead to the Board of Directors with the extract of comments received including some fairly extensive comments from Shannon Burke on how we might better address equity and justice issues or objectives and strategies within the Strategic Plan. We had an initial discussion for about 15 minutes on this yesterday at the end of the meeting, and it's part of what leads to the need for a separate call to do justice to the topics that Shannon Burke and others have raised and that we need to make sure are properly reflected in the plan.

**2) Approval of Minutes (August 2020) - Minutes were tabled.**

**3) Comments/Issues/RNN Community Sharing/Good News**

**Erin Capps** reported on the Montana Resource Seminar last week with the State of Montana and their Department of National Resources and Floodplain Management. We made presentations from some of the Modules from the DRR Curriculum. The event was virtual this year, though it is usually held in person. We gave a number of webinars and recorded presentations, some with the possibility of live feed with video. There was good attendance with comments and questions throughout. The videos will be available on the State of Montana website. The State of Montana has confirmed it is okay for us to share them on our website, and of course Shaye Bodine and Traci Sears of Montana are part of the RNN Community. Though they are not on the call with us today, we will have more information to come on the Montana Conference as the webinars are uploaded. It was a good opportunity to look at and update some of the Modules through our new contract with Clemson University with support from David Vaughn.

**Ned Swanberg** reported that things have been quiet in Vermont. They're still low with COVID-19 so it's mostly an issue of keeping up with permitting. There has been some discussion with states permitting around 50 land use regulations that would be significantly helpful in changing definitions and responsibilities related to river corridor protection. It's still a work in process, not yet entirely clear.

The Vermont Annual Conference is coming up with the Emergency Management Group. There will be a presentation on "Floodplain 101: Don't Make it Worse" and it will focus on pointing out the importance of communication and linking back to zoning administrators and substantial damage estimates, and the importance of trying to respect the efforts of municipalities and the state toward working toward No Adverse Impact and long term flood resilience.

**Gene Henry** reported on happenings in Florida for him since he's taken on more of a consulting role. He has retired and is now part of a great team helping at Applied Sciences.

The Regional Planning Council is working with the Resiliency for Sea Level Rise, Tampa Bay-wide. Hillsborough County has designed a whole new department called *Innovation and Resilience*. Gene's team is working with them to pull together a project in Port Tampa Bay to look at future conditions.

For those who know Whitney from the State of Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Gene mentioned that she is pushing out grant applications through the state of Florida that are paying communities \$75,000.00 to help them with their planning process to look at applied statutes. Florida has a Peril of Flood Act that all coastal communities have to address with regard to future impacts due to sea level rise. Communities have to change their Comprehensive Plan, so planning money via a grant application is being put out for that. In addition, the state is offering up to \$500,000.00 for implementation projects which some of the coastal communities throughout the state are going after. Those funds will help them put things into the ground that their planning projects have identified. It's working very well. In addition to all that, there are some huge projects being worked on with the Water Management Districts as well as Tallahassee DEP, again looking at storm water and water quality. That's the news in a quick nutshell. There is a lot of passion as far as Regional Planning Councils and single communities are concerned who have been affected by floods, and then the Comp Plan changes which are making people look more to the Sea Level Rise and future conditions.

**Gene Henry** reported that their team was going to put in with the City of Tampa for one of the MIT grants, but did not. The City of Tampa and their team worked on a resiliency plan under Whitney last year and there were a lot of action items they were going to push for through MIT funds, but they required full teams and time was not available to get everything together to meet application criteria. The communities that are members of the RNN not many realize the significant outlay of resources required to actually design and implement HUD programs under MIT or DR, the CDB. It's quite expensive, and one session through HUD last month was devoted to explaining the significance of the resources required. In the documents that we have on our websites (NHMA/RNN) it does speak to properly setting up projects and the resources required. Gene doesn't know how else to get that information out to the smaller communities, and it's unfortunate because the smaller communities are the ones that really need these funds in order to rebuild to a stronger future and won't have the teams in order to use the funds to the maximum ability.

A lot more is going on in Florida. He could talk about projects that are going on through the CDBG MIT Fund, Mitigation Funds, as well as DR Funds for Key West and mitigation techniques they're incorporating to elevate structures, buy-out structures, etc. He understands they're going up along the panhandle from Hurricane Michael. There is a lot of resiliency.

**Gene** shared that he has been listening to some of the training sessions about Puerto Rico and some of the work that's going on with FEMA. There are homes being built in Puerto Rico that he's heard about and would love to see being built in Florida and along the rest of the Gulf and Atlantic Coasts. The homes are designed to orient the building to take advantage of the light as well as new types of windows and/or traditional windows made out of new materials. They're building these homes energy-efficient, self-sufficient or sustainable, resilient to future electrical outages, etc. Suggested folks take a look at that because it's something significant to share with our community partners.

A couple years ago, Gene served on a Tribal Committee with the National Advisory Committee. The Tribes are very similar to some of Florida's small cities and have many of the same problems which is one of the reasons he served on it. There are so many obstacles that confront them, and it's very difficult for them to take advantage of these funds that are coming through which would allow them to build to a stronger future. It's disheartening sometimes to see so much funding out there that so many communities can't put their hands around or get to. Agreed with Erin Capps that we'll start seeing some changes and once some case studies are established and follow-on types of instructions are set up, a lot more will come in the future.

**Gene Henry** reported that Hillsborough County was going to start joining in on the RNN Community calls. He will work to remind them and keep them enthused about participating.

**John Lavelle** reported on events in Lycoming County. COVID has thrown them for loop with certain projects which have since been put on the back burner. Right now they are working on multiple buy-outs that they have under various stages of completion either working toward closing or demolition at this point, through various grant sources, and are also waiting to hear back on CDBG DR Grant where

they're intending to purchase another six properties in Muncy Borough, and are currently waiting to hear back if they got approval on that. Finally, they're working on their Hazard Mitigation Plan update and are just about to enter the Risk Assessment Phase of the planning process. Obviously the most challenging part of this has been achieving some sort of effective meeting solution to include all 52 municipalities, get them involved, get feedback from them and make the meeting engaging enough to retain their attention once the meeting starts. That's about it from Lycoming County.

**4) Discussion of RNN objectives and roles in the new NHMA Strategic and Operational Plan (Ed Hecker)**  
**- New NHMA Board Member Ed Hecker to talk about RNN Linkage to Silver Jackets**

**Erin Capps** announced that Ed Hecker will chair and lead the RNN calls going forward.

**Ed Hecker** reported that we distributed the draft Strategic Plan that was shared with the Board of Directors at the end of August. He hoped that some of the RNN Communities have been able to review it and specifically look at a couple of the objectives and strategies that apply directly to the RNN and our intended role for the RNN going forward, including building out the membership, restoring some of the members to active status, and then translating that into the Operational Plan. There are some specific things we can do and some of the things that Gene Henry was talking about earlier are exactly on point for what we want to do more of over time, as we build out resources and strategies to help communities.

We've received some very good comments on the initial draft of the Plan that we're still addressing and discussed briefly at the Board call yesterday. We're going to have a special session of the Board within the next two weeks to finalize the draft Plan, addressing those comments and making some final adjustments to it. Concurrently, we're developing an Operational Plan where we're going to have Work Groups with specified actions in order to achieve the goals and objectives that we've stated in the Strategic Plan. With that discussion, particularly as we focus on the role and objectives for the RNN Communities, we'll be setting up a separate call for the RNN - just as we're doing for the Board - and in advance of that call, we will pulse the membership to try and get as full a participation in that session as we possibly can. This will make it so we can set an Agenda and objectives for the next year and get fairly aggressive in pursuing the objectives, including expanding membership in the RNN.

Looping back to an example of what we did in Montana last week, we've already been talking to Shaye Bodine and Traci Sears about having a call with them and members of both the RNN and the Board of Directors about what we learned from that first fully virtual workshop that we can apply to the next generation of workshops that we're going to have hosted and sponsored by NHMA with local input and DRR segments as was done in Montana. Hopefully, everyone saw the full Agenda for that workshop last week. It went extremely well, with some good feedback from participants, and we want to set up a plan for having similar types of events, eventually transitioning back to face-to-face venues, but in the near term look at how we can schedule additional virtual workshops with RNN Communities as the nexus for scheduling and setting those up with NHMA assistance from our new partners at Clemson University and others.

We will share some of the comments that we're addressing on the Strategic Plan with this group, but we really need to get full participation from the RNN Communities in this discussion, because we'll make sure that as we set up reasonable and actionable roles for the RNN Communities, we want to hear from them in terms of what would be a good standard of practice to shoot for and how we can gather NHMA and our partner resources to help the Communities take on that role within their state.

Additionally, we're going to have a call with the USACE team in a couple of weeks to talk specifically about how we can align the strategic direction of the RNN with the strategic direction of the Silver Jackets Teams and other similar teams, based on the lessons learned and what we've gained in terms of the first eight to ten years of the programs. It's a look back at everything we've done up to this point and then a look forward to how we play that forward and in line with the national will around mitigation, equity, justice, etc., incorporating that fully into what we're doing with our partners at the state and community level.

**5) Status of ABA Book – Ed Thomas**

**Ed Thomas** was pleased to report that the American Bar Association's Resilience Handbook has been distributed. He just attempted to send out some marketing material on that as well as some information on a webinar that will be happening next Tuesday that everyone is invited to attend. NHMA Admin will distribute that email to the RNN Community.

This book was in a lot of ways a joint project between the ABA and the NHMA including the RNN members. We had RNN members write chapters - Ed Hecker, with the assistance of Doug Bellomo; David Vaughn did a brilliant chapter; Ed Thomas got some stuff in there and was one of the editors, so it's a solid book, and it fits directly into what we're trying to do here and into the ABA efforts that we have pioneered on that particular topic of environmental justice, equity, fairness and disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. So, it fits beautifully into our idea of operationalizing what we're doing, in doing webinars and the like, especially with non-traditional audiences - the folks that really make the development decisions beyond the planning departments.

In the Economic Development Departments and the ABA marketing efforts that we talked about today, we talked about reaching out to people like the National Association of Counties, the Association of State Legislative Officials, and others that really need to hear this stuff. It's not just for lawyers, it is for architects, engineers, people that do continuity planning, business owners, and others. So we're hoping to incorporate the ABA efforts to leverage them with NHMA's operational efforts to do webinars and the like both with attorney's participating and listening to folks like Shannon Burke, Alessandra Jerolleman, Ponmile Olonilua, Doug Bellomo, Ed Hecker, and others on the topic of how to do resilience. The Book is well worth a look; we can get a 25% discount which is on the flyer we are distributing. Donna Boyce was one of the authors along with Chuck Wallace on behalf of the RNN Communities.

**Ed Thomas** noted that as we market this, do not entertain the thought that he or any other author will receive a dime of any proceeds. All that money goes to the ABA. The book is expensive, but so well worth it.

#### **6) Follow-up on any RNN action items and future activities**

**Erin Capps** will follow up to get more information from Annie Vest on the Oklahoma Flood Plain Managers Conference.

**Erin Capps** did follow up with Montana for the speakers and **Gene Henry** did follow up with getting some folks from Hillsborough County on board with the RNN.

#### **7) CTP Collaboration Monthly Call for Topics**

**Erin Capps** reminded everyone about the CTP Monthly Collaboration call for topics and reported that FEMA featured the Montana Workshop in its newsletter and mentioned the NHMA DRR Curriculum.

#### **8) Publication opportunities and virtual speaking opportunities**

Any other virtual speaking opportunities are welcome. Please let us know if you are aware of any so we can continue coordinating other potential conferences either virtual or in person.

#### **9) Any comments from Vincent Brown for FEMA updates**

Vince Brown was not present.

#### **10) Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

## September 2020 Action Items List

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- (Sept)-A1. **Ed Hecker and NHMA Admin** to schedule a special session of the RNN to discuss the Strategic Plan. (*IN PROCESS*)
- (Sept)-A2. **Ed Hecker** to loop back to everyone in the RNN who have not been active to get them to participate in this special call.
- (Sept)-A3. **Ed Hecker** to share some of the comments that we're addressing on the Strategic Plan with the RNN.
- (Sept)-A4. **Erin Capps** to follow up with Annie Vest to get more information on the Oklahoma Flood Plain Managers Conference.