



## **Resilient Neighbors Network Minutes of Meeting of Friday, *July 20, 2018*, 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 UPCOMING MEETING OF August 17, 2018:**

- 1) Roll call
- 2) Approval of Minutes (April, May, June, and July, 2018)
- 3) Review of Action Items
- 4) **RNN Participation in Montana Training**
- 5) **Veronica Criscitiello (Wightman & Associates) Request suggestions for good leadership exemplar –**  
(Request for feedback went out to RNN Communities)
  - a) Does anyone have a recommendation for a good candidate to interview as a real life risk reduction leader for the Leadership Module?
- 6) Discussion of Best Practices Documentation-New Best Practice on mitigation based recovery with no Presidential Declaration: Joe Rossi and Coastal Coalition [Material to be sent separately]
- 7) External Stakeholders Workgroup – Tom Hughes
- 8) **Rebecca Joyce's Membership Memorandum**
- 9) Further Roll Out of RNN/Disaster Risk Reduction Curriculum: Hiring a Contractor; Further Presentations in Colorado, South Carolina and Montana
- 10) NHMA DRR Curriculum & Workshop Status:
  - Examining how to further improve fit of the RNN Curriculum to the needs of External Stakeholders; coupling better with existing courses: including FEMA, EPA, NOAA, NGO & private market courses?
  - RNN Volunteers for the development of the Disaster Risk Reduction Curriculum;
  - How to take advantage of the latest update from the Multi-Hazard Mitigation Council on the cost/benefit of Hazard Mitigation.
- 11) **NHMA and RNN Community Meeting: Natural Hazards Workshop - July 9-12, 2018?**
- 12) Status of Practical Community Resilience Project in South Carolina
- 13) Comments from Vincent Brown of FEMA on Reorganization and the many things happening at FEMA
- 14) Status of Island Press Interest, ABA-Houston Success Story
- 15) Comments/Issues/Good News
- 16) Adjourn

## Minutes for Meeting of Friday, *July 20, 2018*:

### 11:00 am ET - CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS AND ROLL CALL:

#### 1. ROLL CALL: (Quorum not present)

Present: **Ed Thomas** (NHMA Board Member); **Eugene Henry** (Hillsborough County, FL); **Traci Sears** (State of Montana); **Veronica Criscitiello** (Wightman & Associates).

- Quorum not met. Minutes and Action Items were tabled until the next meeting.
- Informational discussion ensued.

#### 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: - TABLED

#### 3. REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS - TABLED

##### New Action Items:

- A1: - Ed Thomas to distribute a copy of our developing responses to FEMA initiatives for the RNN Communities to weigh in on.
- A2: - NHMA Admin to provide good mailing list of the RNN community to Ed Thomas.- **DONE**
- A3: - Roger Faris and/or Veronica Criscitiello to write up the work that Traci Sears is doing, and Florida is doing, as a way of giving people an on-the-ground view of what is required by FEMA which is different from what FEMA used to expect.
- A4: - Roger Faris to work on writing up the Montana Workshop as a model presentation and get out the benefits of the idea of coming to a workshop where you have planners, engineers, flood plain managers, and attorneys in the room at the same time.
- A5: - Veronica Criscitiello to help put a map up on our website showing areas of the country where we have SMEs or at least come up with a way of showing where we have this availability. This would also help identify gaps where we don't yet have expertise to assist in other parts of the country..
- A6: - Ed Thomas to send copy of FEMA post-disaster curriculum materials out to the RNN Community for comment.
- A7: - Veronica Criscitiello to work with NHMA Admin to get today's material out as a draft to folks on the call and then move it forward as one of the elements of our Grant proposal to FEMA.

##### Action Items from the June Meeting:

- A8: - **Who would like to work on a committee to pick a date, location, etc. for the RNN Community in-person meeting?**
- A9: - Vincent Brown will send the Moonshot materials and FEMA's Strategic Goals for distribution to the RNN Community. - **DONE (Attached with Minutes)**
- A10: - NHMA Admin to ask Jaime Marso, our webmaster, if there's a way of tracking the downloading of new materials as we turn them out. Can we spot where interest is in topics and location? - **DONE - awaiting reply.**
- A11: - Ed Thomas to work with Vince Brown and FEMA to distribute the new post-disaster materials.
- A12: - RNN Community members to distribute information about the new materials via word of mouth effort. That's one of the purposes we've designed and carefully put this material out there for.
- A13: - Ned Swanberg and Tim Lovell to write up their thoughts on 'what the RNN means to me' as part of building this into the DRR Curriculum and showing the benefits of involvement in the RNN.
- A14: - NHMA Admin to present Ned Swanberg with a summary of his remarks by way of writing them up. - **DONE**
- A15: - Ned Swanberg, Ed Thomas, to write up their thoughts on mitigation accountability and think about how we can take this further forward.

A16: - Vince Brown to get together with David Mallory on the grant application.

#### Action Items from April & May Meetings:

- A17: - **ONGOING:** Roger Faris requested a reminder on the Agenda that success stories are still needed from members of the RNN Community. His role is to get from each person a little story about what their most proud of that their community has accomplished with regard to hazard mitigation. **STATUS:** Roger Faris reported he has received several excellent Success Stories and is looking now for about ten more. More stories are needed and welcome.
- A18: - **ONGOING:** Vince Brown to offer more information next month on status of inviting Regional Coordinators to participate in the RNN calls.
- A19: - **ONGOING:** NHMA Admin awaiting confirmation from RNN Community members regarding their info in the Contacts List and their approval to post this to the website.
- A20: - **ONGOING:** RNN Communities to provide comments to Tom Hughes on Multi-Hazard Mitigation material (copy of Emergency Response Guide and Emergency Checklist).
- A21: - **ONGOING:** RNN Communities to provide feedback to Tom Hughes on External Stakeholders Workgroup PDFs he sent out for their next meeting in August.
- A22: - **ONGOING:** Still needing feedback from RNN members to Ed Thomas on whether they want to be part of NHMA's response to Keith Porter on the Multi-Hazard Mitigation Council's draft Cost Benefits of Hazard Mitigation.
- A23: - **ONGOING:** Discussion of Membership Memorandum to continue on next month's agenda.
- A24: - **ONGOING:** Veronica Criscitiello seeks recommendations for a good candidate to interview as a real life risk reduction leader for the Leadership Module.
- A25: - **ONGOING:** Tom Hughes and NHMA Admin to collaborate on sending something to Vince Brown to publish about the RNN.
- A26: - **ONGOING:** Vince Brown to get us information on FIMA's 50th Anniversary Celebration Program. The RNN to let Vince know if there's anything we'd like to get involved with.

#### **PRE-MEETING REMARKS:**

Ed Thomas asked for a good mailing list of the RNN communities. Mary Kell wants to participate more in the RNN. Most recent meeting reminder went out last week and another several days prior to the meeting.

Traci Sears reported there were about 45 engineers in the room for the July 19<sup>th</sup> Workshop in Montana, a very good turnout and extremely successful event. Traci thanked Ed Thomas for the wonderful support of NHMA in putting on the event.

Ed Thomas stated that Montana was a model presentation. We should work with Roger Faris to get the idea of coming out to a workshop where planners, engineers, flood plain managers and attorneys are all in the room at the same time. The Workshop went very well and provided flood plain managers and local officials an opportunity to think about some of the issues that they had and get on-the-spot answers from attorneys as well as enjoy other activities we usually do as part of the Curriculum.

#### **MEETING DISCUSSION:**

Ed Thomas opened discussion by suggesting we focus on the high points of the Montana Workshop. Though a quorum was not present, the group could consider a couple of items of pressing urgency.

- **As we think about the RNN, how can we make it so that it meets the needs of the folks it is designed for: the RNN members and the people who do this sort of job around the country?**
  - Joe Rossi had suggested we consider moving to a committee structure where we meet every other month or quarterly, or something like that.
- **What do you as RNN members really want out of this, what do you individually want to do, and what do you collectively want to do?**
- Peer-to-peer networking and communication is one thing that can be done.
  - We have RNN Community members participating in Workshops.
  - It was great to have the members putting on this Workshop in Montana, with the support of Tim Trautman who did an incredible job.
  - We also had the support of NHMA doing education and inspiration, and Traci Sears, Ed Thomas, and the NHMA Contractor, Wightman & Associates.

- We are expecting another success next week with the support of the RNN Communities in South Carolina. Tom Hughes, Michele Adams and another RNN Community Member will be there.

- **Any ideas on what we should be doing?**

Gene Henry observed how valuable the RNN is. Resources have shrunk and demands are higher now than they were in the recession. FEMA has huge compliance issues. **The question is, how do our members get the money for training approved, or carve out time to break away from the office for a day of training or assisting?**

- The value of the RNN is in its expertise.
  - Can we become an expert entity to assist communities during disasters or preparing their layout plans?
- In the beginning, when we pulled the RNN together, we had more time.
  - How do we project our Membership in the RNN into the communities that need it, when we are already stretched for time in our own communities as well?

Traci Sears agreed and said that having experience and training available before a disaster occurs is extremely valuable.

- On-the-ground training works wonders.
- She and her counterpart were able to do EMAC requests, and do webinars prior to them coming in, along with on-the-ground training while they were there.
- This would be a valuable model to follow.

One thing she sees is similar to what the private companies do when assessing property to find out what will make it more resilient.

- A major weakness is in making sure communities can put something in place after any natural disaster.
- Many times communities don't know what they're missing in order to be able to recover or be more resilient.
- It is important to be able to do an assessment on a community to tell them what they need to do to prepare.

Ed Thomas suggested setting up a system, possibly based on EMAC, having folks be available and continue on with the Curriculum where we have more peer-to-peer networking by having folks with expertise go out as part of the training workshops.

- **What else makes sense?**
  - There are many opportunities and possibilities to participate.
- **What can we do with the limited FEMA funds, how can we leverage this for the folks who are most going to benefit for the people out in the field?**
  - Traci's effort in Montana is by itself a Best Practice with regard to the amount of training that's gone on; is it worth replicating around the country?
- Gene Henry has a good point: Today is not the same as it used to be.
  - We have a totally different situation with respect to state and local government in particular because of the changes following the recession.
    - State folks and local folks just don't have the time they used to have.
    - How can we do something about that?

Gene Henry suggested that we find a way for FEMA and states to recognize the RNN as a group with valuable SMEs they can use to train around the country prior to an event and add support for the RNN Communities involvement that way.

- **How do we add value to the RNN for everybody else until the time comes that the grass roots effort can start growing grass again?**
  - The real need is the floods, wild fires, etc.
  - We have a lot of opportunities to sit down with our peers and say listen, we've got some experience, here's the source material.
  - We know that we need someone to come in at a higher level, digest this and help us make recommendations that can be moved on to elected officials, administrative leadership, etc. so decisions for the future can be made.
- If we just change the perspective a little bit, and can find a way to use those avenues with the assistance of FEMA, states and associations to get the word out about the RNN – sort of like a speakers bureau, but an SME bureau.

- What's been shown to work with the RNN so far and continue on with that just fit that into something so it can continue to grow.

Ed Thomas stated that this is the great challenge. Back in the days when we talked about EMAC, one needed to have a credentialed resource. That has been our guiding light with regard to the DRR Curriculum - to have SMEs lined up, ready to go, who meet the need to have someone who could be identified as an SME with a title who could be requested through EMAC ahead of time.

- It's very important to try to get this material out before a disaster takes place.
- The only states that have really worked on getting the legal profession involved in disaster preparation ahead of time are Florida, Montana, Utah, and a few others.
- We used to see this happening a lot but it has trailed off.
- It is important to try to get the planners, architects, engineers, etc. all in a room together to try to do this and spread the idea that this is what we really want and need.
- We need to write up the work that Traci Sears is doing, and Florida is doing, as a way of giving people an on-the-ground view of what is required by FEMA, which is different than what FEMA used to expect.

Traci Sears shared that she had to work with the emergency coordinators to make sure they would have funds to cover the cost of bringing an SME in – to have the \$8,000.00 or so for their state to commit under their emergency fund in order to bring in somebody with that kind of expertise.

- **This ideally should be done across the board** – looking at and building a group of resources that states and communities can utilize to cover some direct costs associated with bringing in SMEs.
- **We must be careful with messaging on EMAC** because the wording can either qualify or disqualify the use of funds.
  - In South Carolina, for example, they did EMAC in Mississippi, but had to pay out of their state funds even though they had a Presidential Declaration because the way it was worded didn't qualify for reimbursement.
  - Bringing in people to instruct on how this can be worded when requesting assistance is valuable.

Ed Thomas shared it is important how we convey this information to folks to make sure that they know that states will be asked to pay for SME support going forward, and this is what will be expected by FEMA.

- How can we do that?

Gene Henry noted that it is important to continue obtaining credit hours for anything that's provided - like for building officials, planners, architects, legal, etc.

- If we can always list credit hours in any session to show the pre-disaster training meets some level of basic credit hours, it is a benefit.
  - This is one way to encourage and add value to involvement.
- Many communities wait for FEMA or somebody else to pay for something they need instead of finding a way to move forward on it themselves.
  - The problem with this approach is that these communities need a lot of this insight before they suffer their next disaster but don't know how to achieve it.
    - I.e., communities may need to insure that a building official understands the need to be prepared for expedited permitting in the event of a disaster so notices can get to the structures that are destroyed alerting them that they have to come in and meet these requirements.
    - Same for wild fire and the issues that go along with that.
- The SMEs are willing to go out and assist these communities, but are forced to sacrifice personal time and resources to do so if no other entity such as FEMA or the state will pay for it.
  - Even regionally, there is still the issue of how a person can be reimbursed.
- **How do we get the SMEs who are volunteers to be capable of breaking away a significant amount of time multiple times during the year to assist these communities?**
  - Is this a stumbling block; or do we just work with our independently wealthy members who are retired and can more readily volunteer?
- We've got the credit hours. We need to make sure people understand the menu of training, when its needed, and why they should have it.
- It helps that we have good partners.

Ed Thomas: These are good points. What I'm hearing is a need to validate the Curriculum so that it's clear as to what we're trying to do and then go on from there, to say this is how we're doing it, this is what it looks like, and start coming up with ways to look at groups of SME's who are available to volunteer their time and contribute.

- Some municipalities might be in favor of their senior folks with some knowledge being asked to go out if the community could be reimbursed for their time or overhead. This might be a way of absorbing some costs. That is what happens with a lot of EMAC requests.
- Two things will be influential here – one is that the whole FEMA Mitigation Program has been absorbed into the overall Preparedness Group at FEMA; and the Preparedness Group gets an enormous amount of FEMA training dollars at the state level.
  - First: If we can convince FEMA that they want to use some of these dollars for hands-on expert hazard mitigation training, that could be one possible way to bring out a bunch of SME, peer-to-peer people who are skilled and knowledgeable about what communities need to know to become resilient and help them achieve solutions.
  - Second: If we could have the Preparedness Group work with the Disaster Response & Recovery Group so that FEMA public assistance dollars - in terms of technical assistance and support - will fund EMAC when a Presidentially Declared disaster takes place for mitigation purposes.
    - This is totally reasonable and possible under the FEMA Technical Assistance portion of the Disaster Fund.
    - This may be something that we at the NHMA level can work with our friends in Washington, D.C. on, to say, 'this is what our RNN members want and here are some ways we can do it'.
      - One is the use of state training dollars. We have seen these being used for this purpose in places like Pennsylvania and Utah.
      - We could also say that one of the most important aspects of the Stafford Act funding is the provision of technical assistance and support to government folks post-disaster, so that when we have a post-disaster event we want our program to be treated just as well as any other program on support.

Traci Sears shared that when reaching out to Mississippi and South Carolina she was told that this is one of the reasons why South Carolina was coming out with paying forward all the help that Mississippi gave them during disaster events.

- We have to be conscious of time.
  - Firefighters are sent out all over because the state has to pull from other states for help with wildfire, so they have a mutual agreement to share their expertise.
  - Some of the teams put together in other states don't have a lot of expertise or experience, so they look to disaster events as a way to assist and also increase training for their own teams.
- This is a great idea - we can build on this in all areas.

Gene Henry: There's always the local commitment.

- Even with assistance from FEMA or at the state level, they want to see volunteer hours or assistance.
- Anything provided by an SME coming in that can be identified as helping meet the local match, by time or monetary assistance that FEMA provided to try to ease the requirements of funding.

Ed Thomas: This is something we can point out to FEMA - one of the purposes of NHMA is to raise the impediments and find solutions for them.

Gene Henry: Can we show available volunteers regionally? If we can show the number of SMEs that are available by region or state, it takes some burden off of the membership that's currently available to teach.

- **Can we put a map up on our website or at least come up with a way of showing where we have this availability?**
  - This would also help identify gaps where we don't yet have expertise to assist in other parts of the country.

Ed Thomas: This is a good idea. That's something that could be done within the resources available to us with our FEMA assistance.

**Traci Sears: How can we start working with the folks at FEMA on this?**

- If this is Brock Long's vision for states to be self-sufficient, the people who are doing this should be compensated for their time.
- **How do we get FEMA to recognize that this is important even without a Presidential Declaration?**
- **Is there a funding pot available to bring resources in so the states don't have to wait for that Declaration in order to get compensated for these folks coming in to assist them?**

**Gene Henry:** Something's coming up here – we're all reaching a period where we have to update our hazards documents.

- Many communities under CRS want to do some level of flood plain management planning.
- Then there are communities that, with all these changing maps and risks, and all these higher standards, wonder how they can make themselves more resilient versus budgeting their resources for cleaning up the same disaster debris over and over again.
- **Can we use some level of tedium (?) to seek that level of assistance?**
  - We have some private partners in our NHMA membership that maybe could provide some reimbursement for travel.
  - **Is there some way to paint the picture and show resource availability?**
  - Maybe a little competition with FEMA's bigger subcontractors that provide this training - it's not always the people that actually have the expertise and scars down their back that have worked the disasters.
  - If we can look at something to get communities to be able to take care of smaller disasters - we're supposed to be the first responders at the local level.

**Ed Thomas: This is the beginning of something we can pitch to FEMA as part of our Grant around the DRR Curriculum which makes use of the investment that FEMA has already made in the Curriculum in a way that would exactly focus on what the Stafford Act says all along about kicking in when a disaster is beyond the scope of the local community.**

- Let us write this up. We need to take the lead with NHMA Admin and Veronica Criscitiello to write this up and begin to develop this into a proposal for our annual Grant.
  - We want to include this as part of what the RNN is going to do, which is come up with a methodology of taking the peer-to-peer SME expertise and deploying it, getting past the barriers of time and money and coming up with something that can be deployed through EMAC or Mutual Aid and can be done ahead of time to help folks vision how to spend training dollars better before an event.
  - Then looking to other organizations that might be interested in supporting this, whether they're Foundations or insurance companies - or the insurance company foundations that are in favor also of this being done .
  - Then seeing if we can, through APA, ASFP, American Society of Civil Engineers, ABA Initiative, etc., all pitch this to FEMA to say, look, if you really want to encourage state and local expertise so there isn't this enormous demand for FEMA coming in all the time, we're going to have to train people and grow a more preparedness-based nation; and that will take training and expertise and mutual aid to get everybody up to a much higher level of understanding.

**Gene Henry: Can we please write up these two or three statements Ed just made and get that out to us? It would help a lot because he succinctly identified everything we just said.**

- Question: NHMA has their Curriculum, which is their specialty and which their SMEs can speak to in various areas;
- There are also the working communities that have SMEs that can go into a community and assist.
  - Lots of times the states and FEMA will work through their contractors to do this.
  - Does this dilute the ability of NHMA?
    - Example: Some groups will send a contractor out to the Office of Emergency Management to do the update of its Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. They have the process down to a science on how to gather information from various agencies, how to maintain compliance with the state in which their working as well as with FEMA, etc.;

- Is there any issue or crossover with NHMA doing something similar but with different abilities than the subcontractors already established in this whole process and format?

Ed Thomas: I have never seen or heard a contractor being able to take the advocacy position with respect to higher standards that we do. I'm not aware of anyone who has developed as comprehensive, locally based, multi-hazard concept for mitigation planning, response and recovery as we have.

- Don't know if many contractors can bring into the field what our SMEs are there to offer.
- As already mentioned, there are many folks out there who probably don't have the 'scars on their back' from actually doing resilience mitigation.
- However, we do want to be careful about this, as we're not looking to get into competition with private business and industry.
- At the same time, there's a definite niche that we can fill.
  - **Is there a space for NHMA to do something that would be useful to you folks at the local level?**

Gene Henry: Probably 40-60% of communities can't afford to work with the larger organizations, nor do they want an off-the-shelf program that's pre-formatted and provided.

- Having someone come in and spend time in those specialty areas that are unique to the community is valuable - especially if it's a small community where you have one person acting as the building official, flood plain administrator, county and city engineer, etc., who also has the passion and the fortitude to sit and go through the whole process - versus having someone just come in and say 'here's the format, use this plan as built'.
- There is a place for communities that just don't have the internal infrastructure to really meet the demands of minimal or moderate size disasters, even if they aren't state or nationally declared.
- These communities really need help to look at some of their codes or programs to strengthen whatever area their looking at.
- Even if we have some connections with the tribal communities, they need a lot.
  - If we have some membership with good connections with the various tribes, that would assist because those communities are probably about a decade or so behind even the smaller communities in trying to build their communities' resilience.
- Ed's comments are right on target. This is worthwhile and needs to be put into the Grant Application as well.
- There is no competition here; we don't even see it that way, but we do see that the smaller communities, or that certain communities, have special needs or interests and they don't want to have these larger contractors come in and dictate to them because they want to learn it; and they want to insure that their plan stays alive for more than the decade or so over the transition between one administrator and another. This is very valuable.

Traci Sears: Must drop off the call. Please include her in all future discussions on this. Please let her know if there's anything she can do to help or reach out to folks that we need in the state.

Ed Thomas: Before Traci leaves:

- **As we develop responses to FEMA initiatives, do the RNN Communities want to be part of that or take a look at that material?**
  - FEMA has asked us to comment on what they're calling a post-disaster curriculum which is basically an effort on the part of Mat Campbell's group to teach people how to function on FEMA programs post disaster. It is somewhat similar the post-disaster element of our DRR Curriculum.
    - **Do you want to see those materials, or do you want to participate in a webinar on them that will be held August 2<sup>nd</sup>?**
    - We will have representatives go out to FEMA to meet and pitch the idea that we want to not just look at how to comply with FEMA grant stuff, but also how to deal with pulling together all the programs that are available post-disaster.

Gene Henry: Yes, send the materials on.

Ed Thomas: **We'll get this out to the RNN Communities and see where we go from there.**

- Veronica Criscitiello to help NHMA Admin get this out as a draft.



- Distribute first to the folks that were on the call today, and then move this forward as one of the elements of our Grant proposal to FEMA.

## **ADJOURN**

Meeting adjourned: 12:01 p.m.