

## Meeting Minutes – Resilient Neighbors Network 11:00 am ET Friday, March 17, 2017

**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:**

1. Roll call
2. Approval of Minutes
3. NHMA DRR Curriculum & Workshop Status:
  - a. Discussion of Leadership Component to include in DRR Curriculum Modules  
- Contribution about this and other topics from RNN members
  - b. Module 4: "Whole Community Disaster Risk Reduction and Adaptation" (RNN Module) - update on status
4. Pilot of the RNN/Disaster Risk Reduction Curriculum in Harrisburg, PA
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. Comments/Issues/Good News

### **11:00 am EST - CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL:**

#### **1. ROLL CALL:**

Present: Marcy Leach; Barb Miller; Jim Murphy (NHMA Board Member); Tracee McKenna; Tim Trautman; Ned Swanberg; Mary Kell; Chuck Wallace; Ed Thomas (NHMA Board Member); Tom Hughes (NHMA Board Member)

**INTRODUCTIONS and KUDOS:** Ed Thomas opened introductions for the RNN Community members on the call. Tracee McKenna of the Western Arkansas Planning and Development District, a first-time participant in the RNN Community meeting, introduced herself, followed by Marcy Leach, Barb Miller, Mary Kell, Tim Trautman, Ned Swanberg, and Chuck Wallace.

**Kudos** to Barb Miller who shared that she and her team in Jefferson County, W. Virginia, had just received news that their CRS rating went up from an "8" to a "6". Congratulations were offered to her all around. Ed Thomas asked Mary Kell of Tulsa, Oklahoma, to say a few words about their CRS rating, which is a "2", and explained that they are one of only three communities in the nation who have attained that rating.

**DISCUSSION:** Ed Thomas explained briefly the benefits of a CRS rating.

**Kudos** to Tim Trautman's work in Charlotte, North Carolina, and the incredible successes they have had in turning around a community horribly afflicted by disasters. Ed Thomas shared that he was told by somebody else in Charlotte/Mecklenburg that the biggest problem they now face is that they've done such a great job of reducing disasters that they don't get any post-disaster mitigation money anymore, except what they can get from the rest of the state flowing their way. Tim confirmed that they haven't received any significant post-disaster funds in about 20 years.

**Kudos** to Ned Swanberg, the Regional Flood Plain Manager in the Vermont River Corridor and Flood Plain Program, for an article recently published by Mike Kline and contributing folks from the Ecological Economics Program about looking at federal program disincentives for flood plain conservation and trying to examine how to turn that around. This article to be shared in the upcoming NHMA Newsletter.

Chuck Wallace, Deputy Director of Emergency Management in Grays Harbor County, Washington, shared some insights about challenges he is facing as a result of recent mayoral elections. A year ago, their County had a huge turnover in 9 cities with long-time mayors, seven of whom turned over to people completely new to the political arena. Consequently, there has been a lot of competition between the new mayors and their more established community leaders, such as fire chiefs, police chiefs, etc. He and his team are struggling to maintain their programs and are waiting for an opportunity to move them forward.

**Kudos** from Ed Thomas to Chuck Wallace who also has enormous bragging rights for the construction of the very first tsunami shelter in the United States in Grays Harbor, Washington, which is a public shelter that is also a school. Ed spoke a little about the incredible story of how Chuck managed to persuade people to build this shelter with their own money and virtually no help from anybody else. Chuck added that they are on the verge of doing three more projects, and over the next 18 months they may have more structures. Ed Thomas offered that this story needs to be shared widely as an example of excellent leadership and best practices.

Tom Hughes joined the call and was introduced by Ed Thomas.

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

**A Motion was made** by Mary Kell to approve the Minutes.

**The Motion was seconded** by Chuck Wallace.

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

**VOTED:** Unanimous approval of the Minutes.

3. **NHMA DRR Curriculum & Workshop Status:** The importance of active contributions from the RNN Community to develop the Disaster Risk Reduction Curriculum was mentioned. Everyone was invited to be involved in the process. Copies of the general description of the Curriculum are available for anyone who does not yet have one.

- a. **Discussion of Leadership Component to include in DRR Curriculum Modules - Contributions about this and other topics from RNN members**

**The Leadership Module of the DRR Curriculum was discussed.** Ed Thomas mentioned that this is a major component of the Curriculum that has not yet been filled. It should ultimately describe how a community can start from scratch and become as successful a place as Tulsa, Oklahoma, Charlotte/Mecklenburg, or Grays Harbor, Washington. How did these communities do what they did that turned things around? How did Chuck Wallace, for example, accomplish the building of the first-ever tsunami shelter in America with no supportive funding? How did Barb Miller manage to pull together the resources to recover from the Harpers Ferry fire, which wasn't qualified as an FDA disaster, did not rise to the level of a federal emergency, but was utterly devastating to the community that suffered it? The RNN Community members have real experience and can talk on a peer to peer basis with folks about how to achieve resilience in their communities. Ed urged each member to write up a vignette describing how they achieved their success.

Chuck Wallace volunteered to take the lead on this Module. Ed will get all the information he has on this out to him. Jim Mullen will also help on this Module; Chuck will connect with Jim to get his thoughts and contributions.

**b. Module 4: "Whole Community Disaster Risk Reduction and Adaptation" (RNN Module) - update on status**

Barb Miller explained that the presentation for the Whole Community Disaster Risk Reduction Adaptation Module hasn't been finalized yet but was sent out to those who have been working on it and changes have been made. Some material has been added, and they are waiting to get comments back.

The Learning Objectives of this Module will describe changing trends in RNN communities across the United States and talk about some of the things from the Whole Community approach that will provide some hazard-specific examples. It will recognize some lessons learned through Resilient Neighbors Network Communities' success stories and may also include some not-so-successful stories as learning experiences.

Speaking on behalf of Rebecca Joyce, Barb Miller shared that this Module will initially highlight two communities, though in future the plan is to have slides and information from all of the RNN Communities included so that at different times when it is presented around the country it can highlight either all the communities or specific communities, depending upon available time or need. The present Module highlights Rebecca's community, which is Central Shenandoah Valley in Virginia, as well as Jefferson County, and Tim Trautman is included too with Charlotte/Mecklenburg. Barb will be presenting this at the Harrisburg Workshop in Pennsylvania and Rebecca will be participating remotely by telephone or webinar.

Tim Trautman commented on some minor changes to the Module he had offered, and Barb and he will speak by phone to make sure she can represent his slides adequately.

**4. Pilot of the RNN/Disaster Risk Reduction Curriculum in Harrisburg, PA:** Ed Thomas reminded all that everyone is invited to participate at the Harrisburg Workshop in Pennsylvania. A couple of people are planning to come and will be presenting in person, and one or two will be presenting remotely. After the Harrisburg rollout, we will be very involved in kicking the Curriculum forward, examining it closely, and by the next RNN meeting in April be asking, "How did we do?" At that point, we will examine where we're going with funds that we have from FEMA, both with respect to the RNN and the DRR curriculum's further roll out.

Ed Thomas is working with folks like Island Press, to see if we can get them interested in pieces of the Curriculum and continues working with the American Bar Association to get some Modules which are very suitable, presented to the young lawyers who work post-disaster under the Memorandum Agreement with FEMA.

A question was asked about schedules and plans: Will Curriculum after the Pilot be presented monthly, quarterly, yearly, or only when people call in to request them?

Ed Thomas explained that the vision for the DRR Curriculum right now is to turn it into a program that would actually Credential someone as a Disaster Risk Reduction Ambassador, or whatever the RNN Communities finally choose to name it. There would be a lot of on-line learning available, pre-&post-test, which someone could take at leisure, on-line, based on Modules that will be presented at Harrisburg and other places. We will continue the webinar series, rolling out additional Curriculum Modules, such as the Legal Module, as well as some of the material that will not be presented in Harrisburg.

Assuming this is well received and we go forward and finish the 24 Curriculum Modules currently under design, we have funds to continue developing the other 8 modules which are not being developed this year, including the Leadership Module, with this past fiscal year's money.

The idea right now is that this will be used more in on-line presentations once we get it done, than it will be in personal presentations. The opportunity exists to use bits and pieces of these, either on-line or in person as one needs them, modifying them to meet a particular use, and at the same time if somebody wants to

hear more, we can explain that this is our Module and pitch the Curriculum and its credential. We can also market these by offering a full Workshop, or a menu of Modules that can be presented on request for a fee, either in person or remotely. It is very important for the RNN Communities to decide on their vision for this Curriculum.

Barb Miller commented that when offering a credential, some people will want an overall credential after going through the whole Curriculum; other people will just want 2 or 3 of the Modules only. We could offer something like the Professional Development Series produced by FEMA for Emergency Managers which has around 7 different certificates that one can get, and once someone finishes off all the certificates (if that's what they want to do), they get a final certificate that says they've complete all of them and then have an overall professional development series certificate.

Ed added that this is the vision for Harrisburg, to offer either a Certificate of Attendance, participating in the whole workshop, or Certificates for pieces of the Workshop or an additional module or two, whatever folks want.

Ed Thomas explained one other aspect of the contract we have with Wightman & Associates is that they will be working with other organizations, like the International Association of Emergency Managers, ATA, etc., to see if those organizations might want to offer a *sub-credential* in one part or another of our Curriculum; for example, someone could become a Certified Emergency Manager CBM-*DRR*. We would supply pieces of the required curriculum to assist with someone else's credentialing. There are a lot of ways we can go here; the point is that we have information that is simply not available anywhere else, and we want to get it out there however we can.

5. **RNN Community Membership:** Barb Miller addressed the RNN Community Membership Memorandum prepared by Rebecca Joyce which was designed to help clarify the RNN members' expectations and what they want to get out of the RNN. Most important was the Statement of Participation.

Barb Miller explained that a few RNN Community members who were former Project Impact Communities, would recall that as a Project Impact Community, they were each given a Partnership Agreement that they had to sign. Rebecca's Statement of Participation is designed along similar lines. It is a non-binding statement, not intended as a legal agreement or anything like that, and is not meant for other members of the community, just for you as an individual participant within the RNN, and does not ask for anything unreasonable. It just asks what kinds of things you personally are willing to obligate yourself to. Things like monthly phone calls, attending the National Meeting, do you want to be a part of the group that's presenting the DRR Curriculum, etc., just a list of different things and areas of interest.

Each member would go down the list and check the boxes so that everybody understands what everybody else is interested in, and what you're interested in participating in. Maybe there's something on that list that just bores you senseless and you really don't want to be a part of that but there are other things on there that you're passionate about. And it's the variety of passions that we have within this group that makes it strong and makes it go forward. So, Rebecca is really interested in any thoughts you have about this; all of it can be modified as to what you as individual members of the group want to do.

**DISCUSSION:** It was agreed that everyone would take a few days to look over the Memorandum, formulate their thoughts about it, and email a reply to Rebecca within a week. Whether they want to reply just to Rebecca, or to Rebecca and Barb, or to the whole group, is fine, but respond within a week; then it will be taken up again in the next call.

**FURTHER DISCUSSION:** Ed Thomas remarked that its' very important for the RNN to figure out how it wants to proceed, as the Federal budget tightens up; already the FEMA Mapping Budget has been chopped entirely from the Presidents' budget, along with a lot of other stuff that is near and dear to all our hearts, such as the Block Grant Program, and many other things. The Mapping Budget is the funding that we have for the Cooperating Technical Partners Program. We really need to be able to make a strong defense of RNN and what we're doing if we're going to be successful and continue on with their funding, and without their funding, also. We just won't be able to pay for people to come to meetings and things like that.

6. **Natural Hazards Workshop/NHMA Symposium - combined event July 9-12, 2017:** Ed Thomas explained that the new Director of the Hazards' Center, long-time NHMA Member and former Board member Lori Peek, is deeply committed to stepping out of a purely academic atmosphere in Broomfield and wants to

incorporate and embed the Practitioner community into the Workshop itself. This gives NHMA and the RNN an opportunity of having some time slots before, during and after the Hazards Workshop to organize sessions for the RNN and for the NHMA Board/RNN Communities. NHMA is considering saying yes, but if it does, we will have a very slimmed down Symposium, if we have one at all, and it would just be built into the overall Workshop.

**DISCUSSION and QUESTION:** Assuming that we are able to build the RNN Communities into the Hazards Workshop, and assuming we have money, would the RNN Members like to get together for their annual meeting in Broomfield, or would they like to just say no, we'll do it someplace else?

**DISCUSSION:** One persons shared that they had no strong preference and were unsure with their personal schedule in July whether they could come to Broomfield or not; but this would be true if it was held somewhere else depending on the time of year. They observed there were dual benefits of going to Broomfield because everyone could participate and have a meeting; whereas, if it was done somewhere else, we might not have that opportunity.

Barb Miller shared that she also did not feel strongly about one place or another, just that it was important for the RNN Community to get together and have the time to share amongst themselves. The RNN community needs to get together and talk about what it wants to do and even start talking about looking outside of government for funding; there may be other opportunities out there and researching this before getting together would be beneficial.

Ed Thomas agreed that it was prudent to begin thinking about where else to find funding. Though Ed, Tom Hughes, and Erin Capps are involved in working with Lori Peek on this, no huge amount of progress has been made; yet it is very clear that Lori Peek is talking about doing something dramatically different from what has been done in the past.

**DISCUSSION:** It was agreed that we should put the Hazards Workshop on our calendar for July 9-12; the NHMA Board will probably have another session at the end of it to talk about next steps. The RNN communities, as an integral part of NHMA, are welcome to any Board meeting it has as well.

7. **Status of Practical Community Resilience Project in South Carolina:** Ed Thomas briefly recapped the background of the Clemson University resilience project in South Carolina. They are working on developing something in a county just outside of Clemson. The project is in the beginning stages and will incorporate elements of the Disaster Risk Reduction Curriculum, picking from a menu of choices as they try to educate local folks about resilience to disasters and disaster risk reduction. There will be three pilots and two have not launched yet. There is one in Pennsylvania.

Tom Hughes shared that when Barb Miller was talking about duties and responsibilities (as far as commitment goes) he has some communities in Pennsylvania that would love to be part of this group. They're doing some of the things that the RNN is doing already at the local level. They're not waiting for the state, not waiting for the feds, they're doing things on their own which a lot of members here in the RNN are doing.

Ed Thomas suggested that the RNN Communities move immediately forward to bring Mont Alto Borough, PA, and others into the RNN. As we are looking to recruit communities, others nominated by the RNN are welcome as well. Chuck Wallace was invited to reach out to folks on the west coast and everyone was urged to bring in, or suggest new communities members to invite into the RNN.

**It was agreed** that Rebecca's Memorandum is okay to share with potential new RNN members.

8. **Comments/Issues/Good News:** Tim Trautman shared that a House Bill was posted yesterday on severe repetitive loss properties that everyone may want to look into and hopefully be supportive of. The PEW Foundation was behind the Bill and it was introduced by Congressman Royce. A link to this Bill will be shared with the RNN Communities and included in the upcoming Newsletter.

Barb Miller thanked Tracee McKenna for joining the call today. Tracee shared that she is very interested in participating and her executive director is on board with her participation as well. She found Rebecca's Memo very helpful and feels she could meaningfully participate.

**A Motion was made and Unanimously Approved that the Western Arkansas Planning and Development District be accepted into the RNN as a Member Community.**

Ed Thomas welcomed Tracee McKenna into the Resilient Neighbors Network.

**There being no further business, the Meeting was adjourned.**

**NEXT MEETING:**

The next RNN meeting will be on 4/21/2017 at 11:00 a.m., EST.

11:57 (EST) am – The meeting adjourned.