



# Resilient Neighbors Network

Minutes of RNN Community Meeting of  
Friday, *August 23, 2019*, 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 September 27, 2019:**

1. Roll call
2. Approval of Minutes (July and August 2019)
3. Status of ABA Resilience Book (Ed Thomas)
4. **Comments/Issues/RNN Community Sharing/Good News**
5. Status of Practical Community Resilience Project in South Carolina & Silver Jackets link (Ed Hecker)  
New NHMA Board Member Ed Hecker to talk about RNN Linkage to Silver Jackets
6. Review of Action Items
7. RNN Future Activities
8. Discussion of Best Practices Documentation-New Best Practice on mitigation-based recovery with no Presidential Declaration: Joe Rossi and Coastal Coalition [Material sent separately] and Traci Sears from Montana
9. Next Steps for RNN-DRR Curriculum Future Meeting? Discussion of CTP Grant
  - a. New Grant requires NHMA and RNN to participate with and recommend other possible interested agencies for an advisory committee meeting in Washington D.C. – [Detail by John Wiener circulated with Minutes.] Possible other locations/dates
  - b. NHMA DRR Curriculum & Workshop Status:
    - i. 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, NACo, NGO & private market courses?
    - ii. RNN Volunteers for the development of the Disaster Risk Reduction Curriculum;

- iii. How to take advantage of the latest update from the Multi-Hazard Mitigation Council on the cost/benefit of Hazard Mitigation.
  - c. Natural Hazard Conference
  - 10. *CTP Collaboration Monthly Call* for Topics
  - 11. Comments from Vincent Brown of FEMA on the many things happening at FEMA
  - 12. Status of Island Press Interest, Articles for NHMA Newsletter and/or ABA
  - 13. Adjourn
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## **Minutes for Meeting of Friday, August 23, 2019**

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

#### **1) ROLL CALL:**

Present:

**Tim Trautman** (Charlotte-Mecklenburg)  
**Chuck Wallace** (State of Washington)  
**Jim Murphy** (NHMA Board)  
**Donna Boyce** (NHMA Board)  
**Ed Thomas** (NHMA Board)  
**Erin Capps** (NHMA Board)

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#### **2) APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** (July 2019)

Quorum not present - Minutes were tabled.

#### **3) Status of ABA Resilience Book** (Ed Thomas)

**Ed Thomas** reported on the status of the ABA Resilience Book. Chapter 3 needs a co-author to take over the lead on it.

Many thanks to **Chuck Wallace** who has produced a draft of Chapter 3. Originally, Rebecca Joyce was going to be the lead on this but had to drop out, then Gene Henry offered to work on it with Chuck Wallace but sadly was not able to do anything and he also had to drop out, so we are again looking for a co-author to assist with producing this Chapter.

Yesterday's Board call received the good news that **Tom Robison**, who is back in the United States, will resume his volunteer work as the NHMA Policy and Public Affairs Committee Chair. Tom has extensive experience in hazard mitigation at the federal level and has offered to work as a co-author on this Chapter.

Ed Thomas suggested that it would be nice to get somebody else at the local level to take a look at Chuck's draft and work towards moving it forward so it has been put back on the Agenda to see if anybody else wants to help.

**Donna Boyce** also offered to help and has extensive experience at the local level.

**Chuck Wallace** will reach out to **Tom Robison** and **Donna Boyce** today, to urge we get this finished. Special thanks to Donna Boyce and Tom Robison.

**Jim Murphy** and **Lillian Robison** also volunteered to look over the book chapter.

#### **4) Comments/Issues/RNN Community Sharing/Good News**

**Tim Trautman** gave a general update on activities in Charlotte-Mecklenburg which were mentioned in the last call. Charlotte had a river flood event along its western boundary back in June. About 80 to 100 homes were impacted, of which about 40 got water into the living space. Though this was a relatively small event, it was a tremendous drain on local resources and time spent trying to help folks recover and mitigate and provide services. Tim shared that even the

regulatory components of an event this small have required an amazing amount of time and effort. He anticipates that he and his staff will be working on different parts of this mitigation for the next twelve months.

Tim reported that so far, six homes are substantially damaged, and probably more are likely to be, so they are attempting to do a handful of buyouts while trying to provide funding and encourage people who aren't eligible for buyouts to elevate their homes. This will probably mean elevating six to nine feet in the air at this particular section of the river. It will be challenging, since there are very few elevation contractors in the Charlotte area as they are not a coastal community and don't have as high a flood risk.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg reached out to call in elevation experts to advise the community on elevation solutions. A couple of national experts that Tim Trautman has known over the past five to ten years through the Association of State Flood Plain Managers were able to come to Charlotte and do an Elevation Workshop. The experts arrived on Friday, met with Tim's staff and talked through logistics, then Saturday morning gave an Elevation Workshop to about 50 impacted residents. They spent three- or four-hours showing pictures of elevation solutions, going over the elevation process, and explaining about risk and flood risk. Tim shared that it was nice to have an outside perspective come into Charlotte and provide this kind of information to the community. Afterwards they scheduled site visits; the two experts split up with staff members and spent about 30 minutes at each house for five or six hours, talking through logistics, commenting on the practicality of elevating different types of houses, and giving one-on-one counselling.

This was a unique effort to reach out and pull in some people from outside the community with greater expertise than they have locally to offer a different perspective, to try to encourage, incentivize and motivate residents to find contractors and get quotes to move forward. Hopefully they will have a lot of houses get elevated in the next three, six or nine months along the section of river that is particularly at risk. This is the biggest thing Charlotte has been working on.

**Jim Murphy** mentioned that FEMA recently sent out notices about their Substantial Damage Calculator which has since been updated and asked if Tim's community has tried it and found it useful.

**Tim Trautman** shared that they received the calculator but have not made use of it in the Charlotte area. Some of their staff who have gone through training over the years are familiar with the Substantial Damage Calculator and do use it; but they have found that their building permit process, along with inspections to make sure that people aren't doing extensive work without a permit are a more effective way to manage true substantial damage. If they use the Estimator tool in the future they most likely will use it to report information for Disaster Declarations, or to get a feel for how many buildings might be substantially damaged; but their Floodplain Administrator has been handling actual Determinations and Letters based upon repair estimates or flood insurance damage information that comes in as part of the permit process. That's how they've chosen to handle it.

**Ed Thomas** mentioned that there are folks in the home elevation industry who are forming an Association – either a 501(c)3 or a 501(c)4. Rob Scott sent NHMA some information about it and was looking for NHMA to get involved with them which we may yet do; it's unclear just what they want from us yet. However, Tim may find it meaningful that Rob Scott from Louisiana is very much involved in this and wondered if he had heard that name.

**Tim Trautman** shared that Rob Scott was one of the two Experts who flew into Charlotte for the Elevation Workshop. Rob has been telling Tim about this Association for a while and told him a little bit more about it while he was there trying to get it up and running. Also, Randy Beam, a former Corps employee who did non-structural flood-proofing work who's now retired, was the other expert who tag-teamed the Workshop for them there.

**Ed Thomas** suggested this would be a great Best Practice on post-disaster strategies and asked how much it cost for the two experts to put it on. Tim reported the cost was in the \$5-\$6,000 range for a couple of days' worth of physical time. This included the Workshop itself, which was half a day; the field visits, which were another half a day, as well as a meeting with their staff for a few hours which was a type of staff workshop the day before.

From talking to them, Tim said it was amazing to learn that something like \$5,000 would prevent communities from doing things like this. When he was first trying to put it together a month ago, there was a lot of chatter about who was going to pay for it, suggestions that maybe the Corps had money that could be used for it, or they should talk to the state about getting the money for it, etc. They finally decided why the heck don't they just pay for it. Though communities around the country come in all different shapes and sizes, why things like this, that are highly beneficial to citizens and that cost just a few thousand dollars can't be funded by governments, is a mystery. But then, community circumstances differ around the country.

**Ed Thomas** shared that this is the kind of stuff that FEMA used to sponsor. They used to do stuff like that – French Wetmore, when he was State Coordinator with the State of Illinois used to sponsor similar sorts of workshops. That is also something that Joe Rossi did on the Massachusetts coast out of a non-profit corporation; he got folks to come

in to make presentations and paid them and did it as a business venture. This is something that needs to be pursued because we want to make it easy for communities to do the right thing which is what Charlotte is doing.

**Tim Trautman** agreed that that was the idea. If local governments, communities or homeowners have impediments to mitigation that can't be overcome, or they don't work to overcome, then what will happen is that people will just figure out a way to build back because it's too overwhelming to deal with it otherwise. They recognized that in Charlotte elevating houses is a challenge and might be an impediment. Folks can't just go online, find a contractor and get started within a few weeks because there isn't an established contractor community there that does elevation. So, they decided to invest a few thousand dollars to educate themselves and provide impacted homeowners with some meaningful information that ultimately will save them time and money in asking the right questions of the contractors that they do find.

**Donna Boyce** agreed that government agencies should pay for this kind of service. She shared that in Long Island, with regard to the Sandy housing rebuild, before the storm hit they had zero to three companies in the area that claimed to be able to elevate homes; shortly after the storm they had a large number of firms saying they could do this. A plethora of firms turned up after the storm claiming to be able to do elevations and her department was stretched so thinly trying to get everything else done that it was harder than you can imagine to try to vet these firms properly – except for one guy who showed up at an ADF meeting clearly inebriated, so it was a safe bet that he wouldn't be a good choice.

Empowering local officials and government workers and the public with this information is vital. Congratulations to Tim Trautman and Charlotte for doing a wonderful job on this.

**Ed Thomas** asked Tim Trautman about funding. Tim shared that funding was a small part of it, but fortunately they created a grant program locally called the Retrofit Program where they spend their local dollars and offer grants to homeowners to do mitigation, with a cost share. They had that program, as well as their Rainy-Day Fund. Their Commissioners appropriated \$3.5 Million from the Rainy-Day Fund to put toward buyouts and to make sure they had adequate funding for the Retrofit Program. That money may allow them to do ten buyouts in a stretch, and hopefully ten to 20 house elevations, of which they will pay 75% and the homeowners will need to find 25% through various other funding mechanisms. They did talk a little bit about funding, but in the context of knowing that there were already opportunities for most people to get some funding from them.

**Jim Murphy** shared that when his team was doing some of this in New Jersey after Superstorm Sandy, there was a lot of resistance for esthetic reasons because some properties would elevate and others would not, and people felt it made the neighborhood very unattractive if only some of them were done.

**Tim Trautman** shared that they also got a little of that in some neighborhoods pre-mitigation and had been able to work around it. In this particular case, there was a mix of houses that were elevated and non-elevated along a particular section of river involving some properties which are now substantially damaged that were probably built in the 1970's. But there was also some development over the past 10 years with a handful of houses built to code so they were up in the air, and prior floods in the area resulted in substantially damaged homes that had elevated already so there is a mix of elevated and non-elevated houses in the area, and the esthetics were not a big issue. The biggest issue they had was with some older homeowners who may have an impediment because of accessibility and mobility issues.

**Ed Thomas** asked about relocation and shared that one of the things most striking to him about Charlotte is that they've turned so much of their floodplain into beautiful parks with bike paths and walking trails.

**Tim Trautman** shared that in this particular stretch of river, they're doing a combination of buyouts and elevations and trying to walk a fine line, as this area is pretty opposed to buyouts in general. So, they have tried to pick a few of the more hazardous areas along this section of river which had the deepest water, to potentially acquire some lots and use them to provide public access to the river in future, but also on a voluntary basis. The folks in less hazardous situations are adamant about not wanting to leave, so they are trying to get them mitigated through elevation. It is a lot of work. It all sounds very minimal when compared to the scale of Hurricanes Harvey or Katrina, but the tremendous drain on staff resources and time, and the meetings they've had with elected officials and non-profits who have provided help for just these few 80 to 100 houses, is draining. So much is underestimated in the value of mitigation; if you have flooding that occurs and the houses are gone, they're just not there; or if they've been elevated and only need to be swept out to be put back up and running in a couple of days, it will save perhaps \$100,000.00 per flood just on community resources alone, local and non-profit – just in this one area.

**Donna Boyce** suggested it would be great to write up some of these Lessons Learned. It may seem that Charlotte's flood is not on the scale of some of the larger storms, but the issues they face will be issues faced in every community. If we can write it up and share those lessons in a White Paper or something of that sort, it would be tremendously helpful.

**Ed Thomas** agreed that would be an excellent thing to do; maybe we want to provide some funding for preparing White Papers like that; some editorial and writing support to the RNN Communities and other communities. Certainly, the work that was done first in South Carolina, which was then taken up to our RNN Community in Montana with respect to how they handled substantial damage in a very rural state when they had no Presidential Declaration, and no Rainy Day Funds available, either, is a good model. Charlotte is also an incredible model with respect to thinking about the fact that they had established a Rainy-Day Fund, they had a process in place, they spent some money, they brought these experts in- and it would be great to write that up.

**Ed Thomas** mentioned that Roger Faris has not been on a call in a while; perhaps we could start by seeing if we could get some free help on this. We'll have some material in the Minutes from this meeting on what Tim Trautman has shared, and maybe we could use that to have Roger do an interview around it to get this going.

**Donna Boyce** suggested that perhaps we could somehow think this through and present it from the standpoint of how different communities worked through the same but different situation; such as, if you have a rainy day fund, or if you don't have a rainy day fund; if you have a Presidential Declaration, or if you don't have a Presidential Declaration, etc. If we frame it so that different communities can use this as a resource, it would be dynamic. We want to say that some folks elevating and other folks not elevating in communities can be a challenge. Donna shared that some folks in rowhouses in New York City after Superstorm Sandy – rowhouses being homes that are literally attached to one another - at one point were told that if they wanted to elevate, and were ready to do so, but their neighbor didn't want to elevate, it wasn't an impediment for them because there was an 'engineering solution' for that. Of course, this was not true - there is no 'engineering solution' for that.

Donna shared that we'd like folks to be a little bit more informed as they go forward, and hopefully have good sense, and that together with whatever carrots can be used to incentivize as many people as possible to elevate their homes in a responsible fashion, and then considering aging in place, which is something that we've all thought about – so that people in many different types of communities with different situations have a chance to look at these matters and consider them before a disaster takes place. With respect to rainy day funds, Donna Boyce mentioned that she knows of a jurisdiction that has a Rainy-Day Fund but wasn't able to use it. It was a Rainy-Day Disaster Fund and the community wasn't able to use it because the local politicians said No. So, being able to think other options through in advance could be a huge resource for many jurisdictions.

**Ed Thomas** suggested we start with getting what help we can from Roger Faris. Beyond that, we should consider putting the hiring of a skilled writer into our Grant proposal. Jim Murphy will remember Jacquie Monday who was a brilliant writer and used to just churn out material like this; having somebody like that on tap for us to write up this sort of stuff will be a really good use of money.

**Tim Trautman** agreed. In these cases, especially when everyone's so busy, he likes the idea of finding somebody that can write it up who's not involved in the community issue, and actually needs to interview RNN members in order to prepare the White Paper or article. It would be good for them to talk on the phone and interview the community representative – it helps it get done. And then we can perhaps put it into a context that is more useful nationally because the writer isn't in the throes of managing the mitigation at the same time. For their specific case with regard to Charlotte, Tim is concerned about timing because they're still working on implementing the mitigations and elevations and will be for the next.

**Erin Capps** suggested that as we start getting into a White Paper, it might be next year that we're talking about presenting a related webinar. This is something we can keep discussing with the group regardless of the outcome, as long as folks are willing to share.

**Ed Thomas** thanked Tim Trautman and offered many thanks to everyone who is helping with the ABA Book. Special thanks to Chuck Wallace from the RNN Communities who offered and has delivered a first draft for Chapter 3. He is hoping that the book will be of great assistance.

As we're getting closer to the Arkansas workshop, we need to share those materials with Tim Trautman and ask him to think about whether he wants us to put on any sort of workshop that may be of assistance to him.

**5) Status of Practical Community Resilience Project in South Carolina & Silver Jackets link (Ed Hecker)**  
New NHMA Board Member Ed Hecker to talk about RNN Linkage to Silver Jackets

**6) Review of Action Items**

7) **RNN Future Activities**

8) **Discussion of Best Practices Documentation-New Best Practice on mitigation-based recovery with no Presidential Declaration: Joe Rossi and Coastal Coalition [Material sent separately] and Traci Sears from Montana** – Tabled until Joe Rossi or Traci Sears can report on this.

9) **Next Steps for RNN-DRR Curriculum Future Meeting? Discussion of CTP Grant**

a) **New Grant requires NHMA and RNN to participate with and recommend other possible interested agencies for an advisory committee meeting in Washington D.C. – [Detail by John Wiener circulated with Minutes.] Possible other locations/dates**

b) **NHMA DRR Curriculum & Workshop Status:**

- i) **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, NACo, NGO & private market courses?**
- ii) **RNN Volunteers for the development of the Disaster Risk Reduction Curriculum;**
- iii) **How to take advantage of the latest update from the Multi-Hazard Mitigation Council on the cost/benefit of Hazard Mitigation.**

c) **Natural Hazard Conference**

10) **CTP Collaboration Monthly Call for Topics**

Please keep in mind we have the *CTP Collaboration Monthly Call for Topics*.

11) **Comments from Vincent Brown of FEMA on the many things happening at FEMA**

12) **Status of Island Press Interest, Articles for NHMA Newsletter and/or ABA**

13) **Adjourn**

A **Motion** to adjourn was made by Ed Thomas.

The Motion was **seconded** by Tim Trautman.

There being no objection,

Meeting adjourned 11:50 a.m.

Next meeting is **September 27, 2019 at 11:00 a.m.** Eastern Time.

*[ACTION ITEMS LIST FOLLOWS]*

## ACTION ITEMS:

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### August 2019 RNN Action Items List

#### Status of ABA Resilience Book (Ed Thomas)

- (Aug-A1) **Chuck Wallace** to reach out to **Tom Robison** and **Donna Boyce** to urge finishing Chapter 3.
- (Aug-A2) **Jim Murphy** and **Lillian Robison** to assist in looking over the book chapter.

#### Best Practices

- (Aug-A3) **NHMA Board to consider** providing some funding for preparing White Papers, editorial and writing support to the RNN Communities for the purpose of writing up White Papers on **1)** the work that was done first in South Carolina, which was then taken up to our RNN Community in Montana with respect to how they handled substantial damage in a very rural state when they had no Presidential Declaration, and no Rainy Day Funds available, either as a good model; and **2)** Charlotte-Mecklenburg as an incredible model with respect to thinking about the fact that they had established a Rainy-Day Fund, they had a process in place, they spent some money, they brought experts in to educate the community on elevation mitigation.
- (Aug-A4) **NHMA Admin** to submit a draft of Tim Trautman's report from the Minutes to Roger Faris for him to do an interview around it to get a White Paper or Best Practice or Lessons Learned started on Charlotte as a model for elevation mitigation.

#### Grant Proposal

- (Aug-A5) **Erin Capps** to work with David Mallory to put the hiring of a skilled writer into our Grant proposal.

#### Arkansas Workshop Materials

- (Aug-A6) **Ed Thomas and Erin Capps** to share mitigation materials from the Arkansas workshop with Tim Trautman
- (Aug-A7) **Tim Trautman** to think about whether he wants NHMA to put on any sort of workshop that may be of assistance to him.

#### Webinars

- (Aug-A8) **Erin Capps** to schedule a webinar sometime next year on elevation mitigation per the example of Charlotte-Mecklenburg.
-