

**Craftsbury Neighbor to Neighbor Committee
Minutes of January 15 Quarterly Meeting
Craftsbury Public Library 6:30 pm**

Present: Members Penelope Doherty, Kris Coville, Jeremiah McCann, Kit Basom, Kim Larose, Tim Fritz; Paige Hartsell, community member (potential N2N member); Susan Houston, Selectboard liaison

Meeting was called to order at 6:35pm. Kris opened by introducing Paige Hartsell, who is interested in our work and considering applying for the vacancy created by Leslie Taylor's recent resignation (we will miss you Leslie!). Welcome Paige.

1. **Discuss and approve minutes of the 10/27/23 meeting.** There being no discussion, Penelope moved and Kit seconded to approve as presented; motion passed unanimously.
2. **Hazard Mitigation Review** – Penelope shared that the annual interim review of the local HMP is starting, with a convening of representatives from the appropriate town committees (2 from N2N, 2 from Planning Commission, 1 from Conservation Commission). The convened group gathers current information on task progress to give to the Selectboard for review and potential action.

- HMP task lines assigned to N2N:

Integrate N2N into the Local Emergency Management Plan

- Jeremiah has recommended N2N be lead for shelter operations to leave Fire Chief for the front lines. Shelter planning and training will be addressed under the shelter planning agenda.
- We still need to develop a scalable call tree for emergency events, to be triggered by local emergency management leads (currently Bruce, Jeremiah).

Identify alternate shelter closer than North Country Union. Penelope had a preliminary discussion with Bruce to help guide us about other possibilities, including potential reciprocal agreements with other towns who have shelter plans in case people cut off from the Academy could get to one of those. Kris, for instance, was able to get to Albany last July as she tried to get to town hall. All agree we should think outside the box when discussing the shelter plan later in the agenda, since we can't predict where people will be cut off.

Also, Penelope attended a Hazard Mitigation Plan session at the September Vermont Emergency Management trainings, where VEM encouraged communities to consider resiliency topics that go beyond the State minimums. All agreed that housing is at the front of the list to consider for Craftsbury. Paige is on the town housing forum and is interested in helping with that connection. To be continued.

3. Flood Recovery News – Penelope reminded all that NEK has formed a Long Term Recovery Group (KURRVE – Kingdom United Resource and Recovery Effort), focusing on unmet needs from this event, then during blue skies looking at opportunities to improve resilience before the next event. Currently there are three families still w/out boilers so Penelope, who volunteers on that committee, is working with local suppliers and community members to deliver firewood until boilers can be repaired.

- Funding – many survivors are still working through their FEMA appeals. There are other grants and loans available and a statewide fund, Vermont Disaster Recovery Fund, that's currently setting up for grants. For smaller items like firewood, KURRVE has some funds and community members are helping. Discussion followed about whether N2N should offer some of the concert proceeds to fund the firewood. Penelope mentioned the full FEMA list has not been received so we don't yet know whether a Craftsbury family will be on that list. Kris reminded us the concert was to benefit Craftsbury families first. All agreed we should wait for the list before expending those funds.
- Firewood options: discussion followed about potential options for firewood should current options not come through.
 - Outdoor Center might have a surplus, not likely but worth asking
 - Susie mentioned the Academy woodlot harvest is half complete and there are logs sitting unused
 - Craftsbury Energy Committee got a grant for wood splitters and we could inquire about usage. Penelope has been in touch with Kevin who of course will help in a pinch should other options fall through.
- Penelope will keep N2N informed of progress/needs as neighbors rebuild plus other recovery news, especially things N2N needs to know for our resilience and emergency planning.

4. Shelter Plan

Takeaways from Red Cross Shelter Training: After talking with Bruce, Jeremiah and Kris, Penelope attended a recent Red Cross Shelter training to gather current information on what's required so we could make a good shelter plan. (As mentioned earlier, it's anticipated N2N will be given lead for shelter management in this year's LEMP update). She shared that:

- We need the generator before we can re-enter agreement with Red Cross to open the Academy shelter. Bruce is working on it.
- The need to activate would be coordinated with Bruce and Jeremiah
- Red Cross can set up very quickly. The RC rep for northern VT lives in Wolcott and will happily come for a conversation.
- There are many administrative requirements to operate a shelter so we might only do this in a large situation.

Alternate location Discussion followed regarding access to the current location, and what happened recently in Irasburg where a Red Cross shelter was opened but no one used it. Group decided to explore an alternate, less formal emergency sheltering

support system, such as supply bins at strategic locations in the community that we could draw on in smaller situations (e.g., when a family can't reach their house and needs supplies to stay with an accessible neighbor). We could also have point-of-contact anchors identified in each "neighborhood" to help us know what's happening if the area is cut off. Both of these support systems could be tapped as needed when a full Red Cross shelter activation seems inappropriate. Kris took lead, with Tim, Kit, Kim, and Paige volunteering to help.

Jeremiah pointed out we don't want too many bins to equip/maintain/update. Two is too few, but 7, for instance, might be too many. Think strategically about where people might be cut off from their homes – we don't need to equip them if they're stranded in their homes. Perhaps Jones Farm, somewhere on Wild Branch at Collinsville (Cheryl Bailey?), perhaps near Tim Fritz, and Town Hall? Think central and strategic so we could easily access when we hear someone is cut off from their house and needs supplies to stay with others. If it's much bigger than can be handled by a few bins, we likely need a shelter activation. Also think about funding the bins.

Discussion followed about mapping locally-perceived neighborhoods, perhaps starting with the lessons learned about that from the Hazard Mitigation Plan update survey:

- think about anchors and a communication plan. Could that tie into the call trees? (see next item)
- In this informal network, with supplies people could go anywhere: friend or relative's homes, churches, etc.
- Think about those with no network – we have more people who've moved here without family
- Kit suggested we consider placing flags in bins for use in identifying the resource point.

Call Tree – we must finalize a call tree plan for emergency situations. A key goal is to keep people off roads! Therefore it must have a lead on both sides of the river. As learned in July, it must also be scalable - we should plan/train for a large event but in practice utilize only the number of persons necessary, coordinating closely with Bruce or Jeremiah after they notify us of need.

Penelope showed the call tree used by the Care Center as an example.

- PUSH a consistent message/update
- PULL information - find out needs
- CONVEY information back to Bruce/Jeremiah as directed in the LEMP
- Any leads must be able to utilize the common form developed during the last event that dovetails with the state's WebEOC system – it can't duplicate or require someone else to enter the data. Information must travel in real time.
- Should not include persons who have essential roles to maintain elsewhere.

Jeremiah and Penelope will develop a draft, thinking about several scenarios plus the three phases of an incident: response, relief, recovery.

After shelter plans and call tree are determined, we should consider (at summer meeting?) a communication plan to educate citizens.

- Clearly outline the emergency plan, designated check-in points if allowed on roads, access to resources, people to call for news.
- Utilize direct mailings (could be a good use of concert funds)? FPF? Website?

5. Check-ins

- Food Insecurity: Kris reported that the food pantry served 81 on thanksgiving and distributed 90 holiday boxes. Craftsbury continues to serve in the low 70s households/week and Albany 65-70s households/week. She mentioned studies that say it takes 10 years for a community to build back from a crisis.
- Kim - Mental Health Initiative: nothing to report.
- Kit - Business/School/Churches:
 - weather has impact on business. With the current up and down, there's no known rhythm. For the Genny, the snowmobile trail in Albany is not producing as much traffic as hoped.
 - Everyone Eats is ending. The program has been beneficial, enabling stores to build back revenue, plus it provided grounding in the community.
 - Craftsbury Genny is "chugging along"

Penelope asked Kit about the Craftsbury Housing Forum (CHF) letter on housing, asking rental owners to consider converting from short term to long term rentals. Was there any concern about taking away from housing needed for tourists that support businesses? Kit will check in with the group.

- Health Officer - Tim reports that Hardwick EMS continues to be under stress for (coverage? Equipment? Vehicles?). He also said rental home inspections are now being handled by the state, which is a relief.

6. Other Business

- Kris reported the Freedom & Unity group asked if N2N could arrange drivers to the town meeting preview on Saturday, and also possibly to town meeting in March. Discussion followed about our existing process on the town website, and the need to have advance notice to match a volunteer. All felt notice was a bit short; Kris will remind the F&U group that a process exists but it's a one-to-one match. If someone feels they need a ride and a neighbor or friend can't take them, they should sign up in time for us to broadcast for a match.
- A reminder that the Town Meeting preliminary session is January 20th at Town Hall.

Discussion followed about best night for regular Neighbor to Neighbor meetings. Kris asked all to decide whether Mondays are a good night, or whether other nights work

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better. Some members expressed preference for 7pm start to accommodate supper, others preferred the 6:30pm start to allow earlier adjournment. Kris will check with Michelle about conflicts at Town Hall, then send out a doodle poll. Therefore the next meeting date and time is TBD.

Tim moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Kit. Motion carried and meeting adjourned at 8:15pm.