

Community Resilience Organization Hartford Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 25, 2016, at 11:00 a.m.
Hartford Town Hall, 1 st Floor Room 2
171 Bridge Street, White River Junction, VT

The purpose of the meeting was a quarterly conference call amongst the Vermont Community Resilience Organizations. The meeting was led by Peg Elmer, the statewide coordinator. Participants shared information about their activities over the past three months and what it is planning over the next several months. The following is information shared.

HARTFORD (CROH) - 2016 RESILIENCE WEEK (AUGUST 22-27, from Matt Osborn)

Description: A week of workshops on a wide range of resilience topics at different venues around Hartford culminating with a resilience celebration on the eve of the 5th anniversary of the Irene Flood.

Workshops: We had eleven separate workshops over six days. Workshops were held at the Hartford Town Hall, Bugbee Senior Center, Quechee Library, West Hartford Library, The Center for Transformational Practice and Sunrise Farm. The week kicked-off with an "Introduction to Resilience" Panel Discussion. Topics of the remaining workshops included: *Weather Climate & Resilience, Energy Independence, Collapse & Opportunity, Emergency Preparedness 101 for Seniors, Wild Edibles, Symposium on Soils, Skill Share, Growing in Winter and Emergency Preparedness 101.*

Celebration Event: We originally planned a large event, then opted for something more manageable. Good idea.

- Tree planting (four fruit trees planted in front of the town hall) demonstration of how to plant a tree.
- River Table Demonstration (very effective)
- Firsthand accounts of the Irene Flood
- Music & food provided
- Excellent Keynote by Peg Elmer Hough
- Festive atmosphere attended by 55-60 people

Publicity:

- Advertisements in the Valley News (\$235)
- Valley News Calendar (free)
- List Serv Postings (Hartford, Upper Valley, Sierra Club, etc.)
- Save the date postcard
- Resilience Week Poster
- Word of Mouth

Low Budget:

- Food and beverages donated by the Upper Valley Food Co-op and the Co-op Food Store.
- CROH members baked cookies.
- Speakers donated their services.
- Budget limited to \$235 on three transaction ads in the Valley News.

Results: We were thrilled with the amount of community participation, positive energy and enthusiasm for our first resilience week.

- The speakers were excellent.
- The topics were varied and well-received.
- We had a total of 296 people attend 11 workshops.
- The end of summer seems to be a good time to hold the event before folks get busy again.
- We think we had a very successful event
- CROH identity established. Hopefully, we can build on that.
- CROH would like to sponsor another Resilience Week event in 2017.

PLAINFIELD (reported by Sarah Corey McShane)

Things are moving along well in Plainfield. The Resiliency Committee successfully participated in Old Home Day, helped dismantle the picnic shelter at the Rec Field (getting undermined by the Great Brook's consistent flooding), and started coordinating the spring riparian planting with the Friends of the Winooski. So far so good.

We're making plans for a few community events this winter and spring including hosting a 'preparedness party' with the Fire Station and starting up a Neighborhood Watch Program. We're hoping the Neighborhood Watch Program can have some element of crime prevention, but really be focused on building community connections and helping residents get to know each other.

Re: plans to have a meeting in the spring at the Echo Museum... please keep us in the loop... we'd like to share our stories and learn from one another.

WATERBURY (reported by Steve Lotspeich)

Waterbury CROs is blended with the Floodplain Management Working Group, and focused on community projects. They meet monthly, are well-established and organized. Representatives from CVRPC and the ANR's Watershed Management Division usually join them, and Ann Smith of the Friends of the Winooski is a member of the Group. Ongoing projects include:

- Successful attainment of CRS designation (Community Rating System, by FEMA with assistance from the Insurance Service Organization (ISO), which results in lowered premiums for floodplain insurance for affected property owners in the town) at level 9 – the starting level. The designation is tied to a point system. It requires an active floodplain management program, and many points are gained via public outreach and education.
- Working with the Vermont River Conservancy on a pilot project to conserve floodplain land, which also receives big points on the CRS system
- Heading into Phase II of river corridor mapping with a pilot study that CVRPC and the ANR's Watershed Management Division are carrying out with assistance from the Town.
- An Anniversary Celebration of their Irene Recovery occurred on August 28th. The *Waterbury Record* created a special issue on flood recovery, including a "Thank You for Floodplains" article written by the consultant firm Milone & MacBroom.

LONDONDERRY (reported by Bruce Frauman and Jennifer Probst)

They're called Mighty Londonderry. Their Emergency Management Director, who participates with the team and prompted its creation, has been working with Neighborhood Connections (a group started by a popular local physician) to integrate the Mighty Londonderry work on their inventory of needs with information Neighborhood Connections might have (issues of HIPA). In the past few months, chair Bruce Frauman has been attending a group meeting at Neighborhood Connections, called Community Partners. He presented to the group about Mighty Londonderry and was well received. They're also working on establishing a local shelter, having come up against the Red Cross only certifying and supplying regional shelters. They will attend the next LEPC (Local Emergency Planning Committee, which is a regional FEMA creature usually run by the RPC in Vermont) to learn more. Jennifer and Kevin Beattie, the town's EMD, will attend the Emergency Preparedness Conference at Lake Morey Inn next month. Mighty Londonderry is initiating a gathering of the emergency responders, providing food, to try to build some connections between strong silos there and making clear the "chain of command" of different silos in the region. This information and the local emergency operations plan may be made more accessible to the public. Londonderry has been coping with a number of "hot button" issues, including the future of a flood wall after Irene. The state transportation agency finally has ruled that the wall will stay (it protects a road and bridge). This wall held up resolution of what would have been our final and most visible FEMA buyout property. Instead it will be funded through a Community Development Block Grant and the buildings can finally be razed. Mighty Londonderry may help guide a proposed snowboard sculpture to that location, to help townspeople view the wall as a community asset. Perhaps after the sculpture is up, Mighty Londonderry will hold a day to CRO.

ROYALTON/BETHEL (reported by Peg Hough)

We're not sure an ongoing CRO was established because she moved out of town, but Peg drew together a multi-town (Sharon and Tunbridge were also represented) CRO effort to develop and stage the White River Resilience Festival, a day of work and celebration, on the 5th anniversary of Irene. The day itself was a success, drawing about 200 people. It included a race (whose participants were particularly vocal about the Festival becoming an annual event), work projects (riverbank cleanup with the White River Partnership and library landscaping), music, food (including providers reminiscent of community meals in the days after Irene), video-taping documentation of Irene stories and collection of photos (the event nudged the Historical Society into realizing they had no record of Irene, and the Festival provided a convenient solution, running photos of Irene and the 1927 flood in the art gallery all day, and story-sharing), and many exhibits aimed at individual preparedness and increasing understanding of climate change and flood resiliency. The Fire Department was particularly gratified to have an outreach opportunity and to share the Swift Water Rescue skills learned since Irene. Several people, especially between environmental types and emergency responders, remarked how the day had helped them connect with townspeople they'd not known well before.

The development of the event brought benefits as well. The discussion of possible work projects prompted action on three trail projects over the six months. The men involved couldn't see the public being invited to be close by chainsaws, so each time a trail project was proposed, they acted on their own to get the work done outside of the Festival. In addition, the Emergency Management Director gained sandbags (for a sandbag-filling competition as part of the event), and resolution on their local storage and use, which she'd been requesting since Irene. Also, discussion continues, and volunteers were gained, to establish and supply at least one local emergency shelter. Peg noted that it was not difficult to raise local funds for the event, and it wasn't expensive, such that \$100 donations from the Festival were then given to the Royalton and Bethel Food Shelves.

PUTNEY AND RICHMOND (Peg reporting)

Teams in those towns are quiet or gone. Both those Selectboards designated the Town Manager as the point person, or maybe they reluctantly volunteered. There's too much on the plate of a Town Manager to gather and coordinate an active CROs team as well. A lesson learned from the pilot.

JEFFERSONVILLE (Peg reporting)

Jeffersonville, like Waterbury, blended their CROs with their existing Floodplain Advisory Group. They've been coordinated by staff at Lamoille County Planning Commission. Via establishing a CROs and participating in the ECHO Summit 18 months ago, a High Meadows Fund grant was gained to do watershed research with the towns of Wolcott, Johnson and Cambridge. This has kept them busy.

ST J AND GREENSBORO (Peg reporting)

Both have local Hazard Mitigation Plans that name a CROs or CRO-like committee to implement strategies aimed at outreach and education. The St J Planning Commission has expressed interest in the ECHO summit. The CRO-like group in Greensboro, their Hazard Mitigation Committee, already exists, and has completed inventories in the past of vulnerable residents and helpful resources (which needs updating), and was integral to the recent plan update. They want to be informed of and connected via the CROs network.

Discussion on Annual Gathering:

Those on the quarterly conference call like the idea of "piggy-backing" with another event, like ECHO's spring summit, or the event with RVT and Norwich University this past spring. Peg related that the group behind RVT, which she and Rebecca participate on, will meet again after the election (since that outcome will impact the interest in NGOs carrying much of the responsibility for climate work versus state agencies), and that Norwich University continues to participate as an interested partner.

Other news reported by Peg:

The Assessment Tool should be ready for Beta testing next week. Lack of funding to staff CROs has the Board evolving to a "working board" concept, consisting of members invested in supporting CROs because of their day jobs or because they are members of a local CRO team. The goal is to continue having at least a networking website of resources, an annual gathering, and the quarterly exchanges. Any staff capability and funding gained will be aimed at supporting the existing active teams.