

Meeting notes

COSTEP-CT met Nov. 9, 2011 at the State Library's Van Block Facility, Hartford, CT

Present: Kathy Craughwell-Varda, Conservation ConneCTion; Jane Cullinane, Conn. State Library; Tara Kennedy, Yale Univ.; Rich Malley, Conn. Historical Society; Rob Novak, Bridgeport Fire Dept.; Tom Paske, FEMA; Paul O'Pecko, Mystic Seaport and Museum; Lizette Pelletier, Conn. State Library; Ryan Potosnak, FEMA; William Sullivan, Conn. State Library; Anita Ullhan, FEMA. Note taker: Jane

UPDATES

On Nov. 15, at the New England Museum Association annual conference in Hartford, there will be a Summit Meeting to bring together people from the cultural heritage and emergency preparedness communities from each of the New England States. The meeting will be a chance for the COSTEP and Alliance for Response folks to meet, compare notes and discuss means and opportunities to share information and investigate possible collaborations.

The minutes of the June meeting are on the COSTEP-CT website, on the Steering Committee page.
<http://costep.cslib.org>

The Shore Line Trolley Museum was damaged by Hurricane Irene when, in spite of the best effort and use of their disaster plan, the motors on many of the trolley cars were damaged and some tracks washed away. But they are doing well at this point, they did receive some FEMA funds and have begun fundraising for building a new car barn on a higher elevation.

The New Haven carousel was also damaged by the hurricane but the town had prepared well and removed the carousel horses in advance of the storm.

Connecticut was fortunate, or at least, we don't know of any other major damage from the multiple major storms that have hit the state this year.

The statewide contract for Emergency Response services that was issued two days before Hurricane Irene hit has been withdrawn. It was bad timing, as the potential vendors were overwhelmed by the need for their services after the hurricane. The contract is expected to be reissued on Nov. 10th.

Jane Cullinane proposed a program for the May 2012 Conn. Library Association conference. Patricia Colwell of Putnam Public Library will talk about how her library helped the community "After Irene." Jane, Lizette Pelletier and Mark Jones will speak about the statewide contract, the mutual aid groups and COSTEP-CT.

Kathy Craughwell-Varda will give a talk about disaster planning to the Association of Conn. Library Boards on Nov. 10.

Tara Kennedy received the AIC-CERT training to be able to respond to collections disasters
<http://www.conservation-us.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.ViewPage&PageID=695>

After Hurricane Irene, Heritage Preservation had a conference call with cultural agencies in all the affected states in order to get an idea of the extent of the damage. Heritage Preservation maintains a list of the cultural agencies in Connecticut that they keep in touch with.

<http://heritagepreservation.org/PROGRAMS/SWTORNADOESCULTURAL.HTML#ct> And, there is a link to sign up for their mailing list.

GETTING THE WORD OUT

After the June tornado in the Springfield, Mass. area, Anita Ullhan of FEMA realized that some of the damaged homes and buildings were in a historic district. The Preservation Massachusetts, a non-profit

that promotes the preservation of historic buildings and landscapes was aware of this impact but did not have a good way to communicate its concerns, in a timely fashion, to city, town and emergency response officials.

Anita introduced Tom Paske who works for FEMA in the Springfield, Mass. area. Tom has a background in historic building preservation. He participated in a triage survey of the damaged historic structures.

Jane proposed that perhaps one the best ways COSTEP-CT can proceed is to get individuals in each town to approach the town emergency management officials. Perhaps the town clerk or town librarian, for example, can raise awareness of the need to protect cultural heritage and the ability of cultural heritage to assist the community.

Lizette mentioned the IPER project reaches town officials and state agencies. While only town clerks and state agency records liaison officers participated in the first essential records course offered on November 1st, the target audience for the project includes first responders and emergency planning officials. The course content does mention the importance of protecting cultural resources and could be another way to bring our message to each community.

Following Hurricane Irene, when so many individuals and businesses lost power, libraries stepped forward to help their communities by offering a place to gather, to charge computers and cell phones, to fill water bottles and so on. Following the October Northeaster, when power was out for so many, once again, libraries continued in this role and museums also stepped up and offered programs to help entertain children who were out of school for up to 10 days. But it was difficult to let people know this opportunity existed. Many people would not automatically think of the library or museum as a place to go and many did not have phone, email, internet or TV at home.

Following the October Nor'easter, the state legislature and the Witt study will look at the response of Conn. Light and Power to restore power to hundreds of thousands of residents and businesses. Bill Sullinan wondered if this will present an opportunity to bring attention what COSTEP-CT hope to achieve.

Perhaps we should also begin attending the emergency managers' regional meetings.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Anita said that public libraries are now considered a "critical facility" by FEMA. If a library had to open a temporary facility following a declared disaster, then the expenses of operating the temp. facility would be eligible for FEMA funds.

Communities could use FEMA mitigation grants to get generators so libraries could stay in business after a disaster. Bill considered the various ways and means that libraries might have to use to keep internet access going, including broadband wireless internet access, which could kick in if DSL, cable or fiber-based ISP service was down.

Libraries can apply for federal funds through their towns to pay overtime costs related to being open extra hours to serve as warming and charging centers after a declared disaster.

NEXT MEETING

Dec. 7, 2011, at 10:00

at the State Library Van Block facility

Directions: <http://www.cslib.org/facvb.htm>

Possible agenda item:

Meet Todd Jones (or Johnson?) who worked with Tom Paske on the FEMA triage survey of damaged historic structures in Springfield. Todd is from Connecticut.