

Meeting Notes

COSTEP-CT met May 10, 2011 at the Connecticut State Library, Van Block Facility.

Present: Kathy Craughwell-Varda (Conservation ConneCTion); Jane Cullinane (Conn. State Library, Preservation Office); Mark Jones (CSL, Archives); Dana Hewson (Mystic Seaport); Jean McDonough (Federal Emergency Management Agency, Public Assistance); Robert Novak (Consultant); Nancy Orth (FEMA, EHP); Lizette Pelletier (CSL, Public Records Office); Anita Uhlan (FEMA, RI Env. Hist Pres.). Note taker: Jane.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Kathy Craughwell-Varda attended the Rhode Island conference “Protecting the past” which brought together the cultural heritage and first responder communities. One point of interest was the concept of “whole community” where everyone is trained, from individuals up to emergency managers to know what they need to do and how to communicate to the highest level.

The Red Cross Ready Rating Program is intended to be an easy to understand program to help businesses and schools take the steps to become prepared for a disaster. <http://www.readyrating.org/>

The National Weather Service Storm Ready program helps communities be better prepared when a storm strikes. <http://www.stormready.noaa.gov/index.html>

Dana Hewson said this would be his last meeting with us. Paul O’Pecko from Mystic Seaport would serve on COSTEP-CT in his place.

The Conservation ConneCTion May Day flyer will be distributed in the next week or so. It encourages cultural heritage organizations to meet with their local first responders. May Day is an annual initiative that encourages activities to protect cultural heritage from disasters.

<http://www.heritagepreservation.org/programs/TFlessions/MayDay.html>

The next phase in the Conservation ConneCTion’s Disaster Preparedness workshop series is for Donia Conn of the Northeast Document Conservation Center to meet each participant at his or her own home institution and do a tabletop exercise with the scenario: A pipe bursts at 5:00 pm on a Friday night.

<http://www.conservationct.org/>

Work will begin in July to set up the Mutual Aid meetings to encourage communication and cooperation in disaster preparedness. Jean McDonough is working with Dana Conover of the state Dept. of Emergency Management and Homeland Security. She believes he is the right person to contact to try to reach out to the regional coordinators, and through them, the local responders. We want to encourage them to attend the mutual aid meetings.

FEDERAL DISASTER DECLARATIONS

Jean McDonough, with Anita Uhlan and Nancy Orth, spoke about the work FEMA and DEMHS is doing to help towns and qualified non-profits following the federal declaration that the Jan. 11-12 snow storm

was a disaster. Six Connecticut counties are eligible for federal assistance and the other two counties have appealed to see if they are also eligible. Jean and Nancy are living in Connecticut while the applications for federal funds are being processed.

To make a disaster declaration, FEMA needs to see that the damages reach both the statewide threshold of \$4.7 million (not sure this is the right number) and the county threshold, which is determined by population or some such thing. If both thresholds are not reached, a declaration is unlikely.

After a disaster, local and state officials “pre-assess” the damages and then ask FEMA to come in and “assess.” With the FEMA paperwork, the state can then apply for a declaration. The state has 30 days from the event to submit this application. If a federal disaster is declared, there are “applicant briefings” in each county to train applicants and the state distributes a packet of information. An organization or an individual that did not participate in the earlier “assessments” may still apply for assistance once a disaster is declared.

- If Middlesex and Windham counties win their appeal, look for a news announcement. It would be informative for COSTEP-CT members to attend an “applicant briefing.”

A private non-profit organization needs to “qualify” when asking for federal funds. The qualification process would have to begin over again, if a different disaster hit the same organization.

- Perhaps COSTEP-CT can train organizations as to what paperwork would be needed on short notice in the event of a disaster declaration.

A library that opens a temporary facility, for example, in a shopping mall, to help the community gain internet service following a disaster is eligible for reimbursement. Libraries can be considered “critical facilities.” However if the library stays in its own facility it is not eligible for reimbursement.

“406” Mitigation grants come through the FEMA Public Assistance Program following a disaster declaration. “404 HMGP” Mitigation grants amount to 15% of the federal funds and go to the state for competitive grants. The state sets up criteria for evaluating the projects.

FEMA funds are the last resort after insurance or other funding sources are exhausted.

FEMA can provide technical assistance even when funds are not involved.

Jean offered to do an overview of the public assistance program if a group wants a program.

- Perhaps COSTEP-CT could organize a program at the Legislative Office Building and invite members of the State Historical Records Advisory Board, the Connecticut Library Association, the Conn. League of Historical Organizations, etc.

NEXT MEETING: to be announced, possibly to be held in Bridgeport at the Barnum Museum.