

Meeting Notes

COSTEP-CT met Sept. 12, 2012, at the State Library's Van Block Facility

Present: Dana Conover, DEMHS; Kathy Craughwell-Varda, Conservation ConneCTion; Jane Cullinane, Conn. State Library (CSL); Tara Kennedy, Yale Univ.; Rob Novak, Consultant; Paul O'Pecko (Mystic Seaport); Lizette Pelletier, CSL; Ryan Potosnak, FEMA; Bill Sullivan (CSL)

Note taker: Jane.

Guest: Paul Baran, CSL; Marc Oberacker, Polygon

FEDERAL PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AFTER A DISASTER

Dana Conover, of the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) of the Conn. Dept. of Emergency Services and Public Protection, reviewed the federal assistance programs.

DEMHS needs to make everyone aware of the application process and dates of the applicant briefings. Every application for public assistance must be submitted 30 days from the declaration.

In the future Dana hopes to reach private non-profits to be sure they have the opportunity to apply. He would like to send future announcements to 3 or 4 people in COSTEP-CT who can pass on the word to the cultural heritage community. Kathy Craughwell-Varda, Jane Cullinane and Lizette Pelletier will do this.

After a disaster, DEMHS gathers information from town emergency managers regarding how many buildings are affected and what other damage occurred. At this stage, DEMHS doesn't need firm quotes regarding the cost of the damage. The information is analyzed by DEMHS and passed to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) who will then conduct a Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment with the State and, based on results, will make a recommendation to the President about making a Major Disaster Declaration.

After a federal declaration, two types of assistance become available. FEMA can give grants and the Small Business Administration (SBA) can give low-cost loans.

FEMA GRANTS FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

For private non-profits (PNPs), the application process is different based on their status as a Critical or Non-Critical PNP. PNPs deemed Critical are eligible for both Emergency Work and Permanent Work under the Public Assistance Program. A PNP deemed Non-Critical is eligible for Emergency Work under the Public Assistance Program but must first apply to the SBA for a Disaster Loan for Permanent Work. The SBA application and the Public Assistance Application should both be filed simultaneously by the Non-Critical PNP. If denied a loan by SBA or if the amount of the loan does not cover the costs associated with eligible damage, the Non Critical PNP can then be granted Public Assistance funding for that portion of costs associated with Permanent Work not covered by the SBA Disaster Loan. There is a lot more work involved and additional documentation is needed to show eligibility. Even if a PNP had received public assistance after an earlier disaster, it will have to submit all the eligibility paperwork again after a new disaster to show it is still eligible.

A FEMA representative will meet with each eligible applicant individually and help it throughout the process. At this point, an applicant needs to provide documentation of the damage and expected costs. FEMA awards federal funds based on either actual costs for a large project or estimated costs for a small project. If expenses are higher than the estimate there is an option to request a Cost Overrun.

FEMA will pay 75% of an eligible project and will give deadlines for completion of the work depending on the type of project, e.g., 6 months for debris removal. FEMA will look at your insurance and will pay 75% of the deductible and what insurance doesn't cover, that is "uninsured losses."

SBA LOANS – FOR PERMANENT REPAIRS TO FACILITY

Go to the SBA for projects for permanent work, such as repairs to a building. If the SBA says no, apply to FEMA for a grant. If the SBA won't lend enough money, you can choose to do without the SBA loan and apply to FEMA for a grant. You could choose to apply to both and see what happens.

PROVIDING SERVICES TO TOWN RESIDENTS

If a library or PNP provides critical services after a disaster, such as staying open late to provide a heated or air-conditioned space to the public, it should make a legal agreement (a Memorandum of Understanding) with the town. The town would be able to reimburse the PNP's expenses, such as staff and electric bills, and recover those costs under the Public Assistance Program.

MITIGATION FUNDS

If a library had shelves that tipped over after an earthquake, mitigation 406 funds will add braces to prevent those shelves from tipping over in the future, but it won't pay for bracing shelves that didn't tip over. Apply for mitigation 404 funds for those other shelves: this is a competitive grant process.

TRAINING FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE ORGANIZATIONS

We discussed training to help cultural heritage organizations (or PNPs as Dana calls them) so they know, in advance, what they would need to do. DEMHS would need approx. 25 people to offer training. We can also ask the DEMHS Regional Coordinators to provide training and speak at conferences. See the DEMHS website for the list of local Emergency Management Directors.

Dana wants to make a PDF of all the relevant documents to distribute and to put on the COSTEP-CT website. The COSTEP-CT board can make it an annual project to update the information in the PDF, perhaps for May Day. He distributed copies of a number of the documents and forms.

DISASTER ASSISTANCE CENTERS

Jane and Bill Sullivan wonder if libraries could serve as Disaster Assistance Centers where members of the public could meet with FEMA representatives. Perhaps library staff could have some training to help people fill out FEMA forms.

Dana and Marc Oberacker left at this point.

COSTEP-CT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Peer Advisor Network from the Conn. Commission on Culture & Tourism may be able to help COSTEP-CT hire a consultant to help us formally organize. We will discuss this at the November meeting.

NEXT MEETING

After discussion about meeting dates, we felt that Tuesdays were good for most people.

October (date to be announced) at Belfor

November 5th at the State Library's Van Block facility

January 18th, tentatively at Van Block