

Peak-to-Peak Human Service Task Force

Minutes of July 20, 2016, meeting

Amy Hardy called the meeting to order at 9:10.

Present: Ressa Lively-Smith, Dennis Whalen, Lonnie Howell, Chris Current, Elizabeth Freedman, Kristi Venditti, Amy Skinner, Alisha Reis, Jill Dreves, Angela Lanci-Mancris, Colleen Sinclair, Sarah Buss, Aaron Titus, Dawn Baumhover, Serene Karplus, Madeleine Case, Dale Porter, Hansen Wendlandt, Bob D'Alessandro, Mickey Ellenwood, Julie Phillips, Tiernan Doyle, Angel Bond, Andrew Rasmussen, Tamira Jenlink, Henry Mitchell, Amy Hardy, Susan Gerhart.

At Amy's request, the attendees introduced themselves.

The first order of business, per Amy, was a discussion of the Cold Springs fire. Dawn said that the Red Cross not Alisha was called first. Alisha said that the shelter setup had gone smoothly. Serene said that she had difficulty getting current information and complained that the Boulder County (BoCo) Office of Emergency Management (OEM) site was not updated frequently enough.

A general discussion of the fire and communications issues followed.

Dennis reported on the ham radio operator's role in passing on information.

Dale said that an overlooked component of the fire was getting visitors out of the area during and after road closures.

Aaron said that obtaining current, accurate information is always a problem during disasters and that old information is always inaccurate.

Chris reported that the shelter housed eleven to twelve people per night. The casinos in Black Hawk offered rooms, and families were sent there.

Jill said that the Town's response was extraordinary. Amy asked if the response would have been comparable if the fire had not been so close to Nederland. Alisha replied, that if Nederland were involved in any way, the response would be the same. Amy replied that the other small communities near Nederland need to know this.

Sarah noted that this is the third disaster in six years to which BoCo has responded. She said that they are well versed in disaster management. She further said that disaster assistance begins immediately rather than after the event. She said that we have "dodged a bullet, in this fire.

Chris reported on operations at the emergency shelter, noting that the Red Cross was unused to dealing with our local culture and working in a shelter that had multiple providers. Consequently, the shelter was partitioned so that Red Cross workers would be more comfortable.

Amy asked for a discussion of the mental health issues that frequently follow a disaster. Amy Skinner said that Peak to Peak Counseling is available during an emergency and will continue to be available until other resources are able to get here.

Henry said it is necessary to get a mental health team to the area for evaluations. This time the tools weren't effective. Among the issues is who will provide therapy at the shelter, and who is in charge of these efforts. He asked for feedback, specifically if his group overstepped its boundaries.

Dennis explained how the Red Cross works during a disaster. According to Dennis, the Red Cross is staffed so that it can be anywhere in the country within an hour. Sarah also has a full staff that she can deploy.

A discussion followed on the role of the Red Cross during local disasters.

Alisha mentioned that there was a big need during the fire for animal care and evaluation. People are not going to take their large animals to the BoCo Fairgrounds. If they can keep these animals with them, it will help with evacuation. There's also the mental health component to keeping one's animal companions with them.

Ressa said that there are people willing and able to help but they need to be known to officials.

Serene said there was a problem during and after the fire with seniors trying to load/unload belongings. She said that we must ensure these people get the help they need.

Sarah reported on the aid statistics such as number of gift cards and bus passes distributed.

Julie said that VOAD can help with slurry on homes and other property needs.

Hansen reported on the camper/transient situation. There are 300 homeless people in the area. He says that there are fewer people than usual because they are less successful hitchhiking. Some community members are very angry, and this anger is stoked by misinformation especially about the Food Pantry.

Jill said that various people come to the mountains for various reasons.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00.

The next meeting is August 17, 9:00.

Amy adjourned the meeting at 11:00.