

Bethel Red Cross Emergency Shelter Meeting

August 18, 2014

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Attending: Jan Abert, Jenn Bartleman, Mary Ann Church, Richard Church, Susie Fedak, Carla Hodgdon, Jennie Marx, Linda Nordman, Jessie Orr, Linda Orr, Wendell Wills.

1. **Carla's Updates:** A) Clips from Manager Training: skipped due to time constraints. B) Telephone Tree: will update at each meeting. Carla had two updates. C) Wish List/Thank You Letters: are drafted and waiting for approval from the Selectboard.
2. **Role Assignments:** Everyone has been given his or her assignment(s). No one felt they couldn't live with these. When the shelter is opened, people will need to be flexible with their roles.
3. **Dates for Local Training:** Rochester has a training scheduled for September 25, 6-10 pm. We will look at weekend dates in October for a training here.
4. **Emergency Evacuation Plan/Gathering Place:** Per shelter rules, we need a gathering place in case of emergency evacuation from the shelter. Different options were discussed. Carla will approach Valley Motors about using their property.
5. **Signage Needs:** tabled until next meeting due to time constraints.
6. **Forward Festival:** Several members volunteered to staff a shelter booth for an hour or two [pending Selectboard approval for the booth]. Jenn will wear a dog suit with a Red Cross vest. [Others will merely wear vests.] Susie will check whether C+ and the shelter might share a booth, which would make staffing easier. A large poster of the shelter layout will be on display. Pending approval, there will be a can and/or box for donations. Linda Nordman [Upper Valley Red Cross] donated a previously used Red Cross blanket for display.
7. **Linda Norman and Anna Mary Zigmann, with the Upper Valley Red Cross:** Anna Mary [who staffed the Williamstown Emergency Shelter post-Irene] could not attend. Linda staffed the shelter at Hartford. She shared her experiences at Hartford, where the entire shelter was in the school gym. There were 76 people at the shelter the first night, and an average of 12-15 there for the subsequent 18 nights. Two volunteers would monitor the shelter all night. Food was prepared in a licensed kitchen, per Red Cross rules, so all meals were brought in. Sears lent the shelter a refrigerator to keep some snack foods, as well as medications [e.g., insulin] cold. Donations of prepared foods from non-licensed kitchens were eaten by the staff or donated to other organizations [e.g., The Haven]. She encouraged us to use our common sense and problem solving skills when it comes to shelter rules. The key is focusing on providing the basics: a safe environment and effective organization. Some entertainment, especially for children, is also important. There was no specific security team at the Hartford shelter, but the police did rounds regularly. When deemed necessary, staff dialed '911'. They utilized professionals [such as EMS] when faced with health or mental health needs outside their abilities. They did not dispense over-the-counter medications, however, bottles of aspirin, ibuprofen, antacids and others were available in a common space. Linda supported Bethel's intent to allow pets, not at the shelter itself, but on school property. She was very impressed with the organization and planning the Committee has completed so far and felt we are well ahead of most communities. Shelters in small towns are very different from larger shelters, such as those used in Katrina and Sandy. It is important to utilize the community, and make do with what is available. Keep in mind that those at the shelter will have lost much –or– everything. Other tips: Keep the shelter clean [bleach and water], buy cheap earplugs to give out for those who need to sleep during the day, have some over-the-counter meds and diapers available. The Red Cross is all donation funded, except when the President declares a national disaster in an area. Red Cross volunteers travel from all over the country and state to help when needed. Many people know the Red Cross for its blood drives, but it also helps those who have suffered a house fire, natural disasters, violence [such as mass shootings], and raises money for other issues, such as suicide prevention. Linda answered questions from the group, and again praised the Committee's progress and creativity.
8. **Other:** None.
9. **Next Meeting / Agenda Items:** Monday, SEPTEMBER 15th at 4:30 pm at the Town Hall. Agenda Items: signage, totes, Forward Festival, planning for drills.