

LEPC Meeting Minutes

January 9, 2018

12:00 pm Walters State Community College – Foundation Room

As the LEPC Chairman Eric Powell was unable to attend, the meeting was called to order by LEPC Vice Chairman Nathan Antrican. The pledge of allegiance was led by Chad Bryant. Invocation was led by Lt. Billy Gulley.

Nathan briefly introduced himself as the new Vice Chairman, then introduced LEPC Secretary Lindsey Horn who reminded everyone about the LEPC Facebook page.

Nathan then introduced the first speaker, Ellen Wilhoit, Board President of Mountain Tough. Mrs. Wilhoit shared with the LEPC her experience with the Sevier County fires, and what brought her to the position of Board President of Mountain Tough. She explained that listening and responding with a caring heart and positive attitude is one of the most important things to do for those who are affected by these fires.

She explained that not only were rental homes destroyed, but resident's homes were destroyed, cars and vehicles were destroyed, and many lost pets. Fourteen lives were also lost to the fire.

Mountain Tough began as a way to be a voice for the community to show what was being done with money and goods donated and to show that those donations were being handled with good stewardship.

Mrs. Wilhoit explained that planning comes before the disaster.

Timeline: November 28 evacuation shelters opened (same day as fire began)

Nov. 28 – Dec. 3 – search and rescue

Dec. 5 – Volunteer Reception Center opened – Volunteer Knoxville began new sister organization, Volunteer East TN.

Dec. 6 – Boyd's Bear Distribution Center opened – this was how Mrs. Wilhoit began her service; sorting clothes; Mountain Tough website launched

Dec. 7 – Knoxville donation warehouse opened

Dec. 9 – AmeriCorps workers arrived

Dec. 12 – Resource Center opened to help families

Dec. 15 – Disaster declared by FEMA

When donating to help victims of disasters – money and gift cards help a great deal as it allows volunteers to help people rather than sort through clothing and other items, as helpful as those are.

Long term recovery has to happen locally. Have people in community who can and are willing to help.

Apply for 501(c)3 status.

Recovery starts when the disaster happens.

The most important long term issue for Sevier County is finding homes for people long term.

Most important immediate needs: food, water, shelter, care for pets

Most important long-term needs: housing, transportation, rebuilding homes and businesses

When assembling committee to help, have the right people: faith-based, legal, health, business, non-profits, construction, fundraising, marketing/PR, community service, utilities.

Get to know your local resources and have contacts with those resources.

In Sevier County, 200,000 volunteer hours were counted, which amounted to \$4.9 million.

There are always negative effects of any recovery, short or long term: people will claim you do not work fast enough, or that you are not using the money to help properly.

Make sure to be transparent and let people know where their money/goods are going; those people will be more willing to donate again.

Don Owen with TN Baptist Disaster Relief was the second speaker. He spoke about what the TN Baptist Disaster Relief is and what they do, and explained that they are "silent partners" who stay until the job is done, as their work is more focused on helping others in Christ's name.

They receive their marching orders from different agencies, depending on the scale of the disaster. If the issue is local, TN Baptist Disaster Relief can make the decision to go and help. If it is a state issue, they respond when requested by state/local agencies. If the issue is national/international, they wait for orders from the State Department, who gets the request from FEMA or the Red Cross.

Currently TN Baptist Disaster Relief is working in Sevier County, and until October 2017, they had team members in Sevier County helping every single day, including Sunday's.

They provide food and showers trailers, which is an aspect of recovery Mr. Owen said many people overlook. First responders and victims of disaster need to be able to feel clean and refreshed, so TN Baptist Disaster Relief provides showering stations.

TN Baptist Disaster Relief is also currently working in Dominica, helping to rebuild the island after a category 5 hurricane destroyed the island. They have adopted the whole island to rebuild and assist in creating long term sustainment. They are sending a block making machine to the island to help the people learn masonry so they can build more structurally sound buildings that can withstand such storms in future.

After the presentations, EMA Director Chris Bell opened the floor up for questions. Nathan Antrican then made everyone aware that if there was any training or events, to submit that information to LEPC Secretary Lindsey Horn (lindsey.horn@co.hamblen.tn.us) and she will forward it on. New guests and members were greeted and introduced, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:15 pm.

The Morristown LEPC would like to thank **O'Charleys** and **FOOD CITY** for their generous lunch donation.

Our next scheduled meeting to be held on April 10, 2018.