

Volusia Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD)
General Membership Meeting Summary – 21 January, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 2:09 PM by Deanie Lowe, Co-Chairman.

Ms. Lowe began the meeting with a State of the Volusia COAD – 2015” Address.

State of the Volusia COAD – 2015

Probably many of you watched President Obama’s State of the Union Address last night. I sort of wish he had waited till tomorrow to do that, because he’s a hard act to follow...but we’re going to give it a try, with our own “State of the Volusia COAD Address.”

Our Community Organization Active in Disaster got off to a really slow start back in 2011, when it first became a gleam in the eye of Pat White, Volusia Prepares Coordinator for the Emergency Operations Center. She arranged for nine interested locals to attend a seminar in Sarasota, where they were given the basic strategy for organizing.

Over the next year and a half, those nine met monthly at the old Emergency Operations Center, struggling to define how our local COAD should be formed – and who they could twist the arm of, to become the chairperson.

Former Emergency Management Director Jim Ryan talked me into sitting in on their meetings in January, 2013. Two meetings later, I accepted the job of chair and quickly brought Frank Bruno into the picture to serve as co-chair.

By April of 2013, our group had grown to seventeen, and we called ourselves the COAD Steering Committee. We wrote our bylaws and, after a couple of start-stop incidents, we finally held a large membership kickoff meeting on August 21, 2013, with more than 100 people in attendance!

Over the past year and a half, we have made incredible progress:

- *We developed a COAD brochure that is distributed during speaking engagements
- *Set up our own website, twitter and Facebook accounts
- *Adopted a special texting ability (GroupMe), enabling us to quickly contact key persons in the event of a disaster
- *Formed a Disaster Preparedness Strike Team that developed a Map Your Neighborhood program for teaching residents how to help themselves and their neighbors during a disaster and sponsored a Health & Safety Expo at a local Home Depot.
- *Also formed a Response & Recovery Strike Team that drew up a calling tree, is updating our directory of volunteers & resources and is creating the plan to be used when we're needed for operating a Volunteer Reception Center
- *Several of our members have attended special classes, including Incident Command System 100 & 700; State VOAD training on operating a VRC and on dealing with unsolicited donations
- *We undertook the duties of ESF-15 during the County's annual Hurricane Exercise at the EOC, and we participated in a Point of Distribution tabletop exercise with the Hispanic farm workers in Pierson
- *We have gained tremendous knowledge from special programs presented at our General Membership meetings, which have included presentations by regional and state organizations, to inform us about how they can come to our aid during a disaster

Though we've made great strides, we're coming to the realization that we could do much more to meet the needs of our community if we had funding. For example, it would help greatly if we had the money to do mailers, to encourage

more involvement from businesses and civic organizations...it also would be nice if we could purchase some tables, signs and a pop-up tent, to be used at public gatherings.

Toward that goal, we are in the process of applying for 501(c)(3) status, so that we can apply for grants and so that anyone caring to donate to us can deduct their contribution on their income taxes.

As that old commercial used to say, "We've come a long way, baby!" And we are just beginning!!!

- Mrs. Lowe then introduced the day's speaker, Gabe Tischler, formerly the Deputy Emergency Manager in Arkansas and now the State Director for Catholic Charities in Florida.
 - There is a training schedule for each parish within each of the seven (7) diocese of the Florida Catholic churches that is unique for each church.
 - The training includes planning for immediate as well as long-term response.
 - Faith-based groups and non-profits start working within the community before FEMA, and finish with the long-term recovery later after FEMA is finished.
 - It can take up to a year to organize a long-term recovery organization (LTRO) and each COAD needs to think about what groups can be included in order to form an LTRO.
 - Mrs. Lowe interjected that our COAD already has an LTRO in our organization led by Pastor Dave Troxler. Mr. Tischler said that this was very good forward thinking on our part.

- Mr. Tischler went on to say that when survivors have specific needs, they need to go through what he called case management in order to:
 - Identify those needs;
 - Determine if they qualify for help from LTRO assistance or other non-profit assistance.
- Case management is a component of disaster recovery.
- FEMA provides the initial recovery dollars.
- He went on to say that faith-based groups such as his and UMCOR (United Methodist Conference on Relief) for example, all work together. None of them can do it alone which is why organizations like our COAD are so important.
- These groups can also bring in resources from out-of-state because they are connected at the national level.
- It is critically important to understand the difference between case management which provides a holistic approach, and case work, which helps with immediate emergency needs. FEMA looks at these differently when an appeal is made for funding.
- Initial case work provides very important information for case managers when they come on-line in six (6) months or later.
- COAD and LTROs can apply to be case managers and establish a pool of volunteers to do initial casework.
- Mr. Tischler said that he does training for case management as well as case workers and went on to emphasize:
 - Case work meets basic immediate needs for emergency assistance (EA).
 - Case management is long-term and could last perhaps two to twelve months.
 - There can be a lag time in between.

- Mr. Tischler introduced Alan Rettig, Regional Director of Operations for Volusia County for Catholic Charities.
 - Mr. Rettig started by saying that he has had experience with the fires of 1998, 3 tornadoes, and 3 hurricanes.
 - He really works in long-term recovery. They are not first responders
 - He and his group are focused on networking with other responders.
 - Collaboration is extremely important.
 - Resources are finite and responders must work together to make the best use of them.
 - Based on experiences and with input from Orange County Emergency Services, they have put together a disaster manual for the workplace.
 - Because no big event has occurred relatively recently, they are dealing with a great deal of complacency. Therefore, they are in the process of attempting to bring back an interest in emergency response within the Diocese, even if it is only to know where the elderly live as well as others who might need immediate help.
 - Mr. Rettig discussed at length their food bank which is located in Lakeland, Florida, and gave descriptive examples of their networking and over-all services.
 - David Heald, Chairman of our COAD's Response and Recovery Strike Team, asked what kind of resources are available to us for an undeclared disaster.
 - Mr. Rettig and Mr. Heald will communicate in the future to develop a VRC (Volunteer Reception Center). Mr. Heald will give a schematic to Mr. Rettig
 - It was requested that the Response and Recovery Team be given a copy of the manual previously spoken of, to use as a basis to develop their own.
 - A group discussion ensued about resources and several issues of interest.

- The next item on the agenda was old business: election of officers
 - Ladell Crookston has been nominated by the Steering Committee for the office of treasurer.
 - A motion was made by David Heald, seconded by Jerry Brandon, that one vote be cast by the group.
 - Mrs. Crookston was unanimously elected as treasurer for our Volusia COAD.
- New business:
 - Mrs. Lowe requested that everyone visit our website to register their membership.
 - Mr. Parkhurst strongly recommended that all members take the ICS 100 and 700 courses.
 - He also emphasized the advantages of incorporating businesses into our COAD noting that businesses need to be able to recover also.
 - Mrs. White discussed the following:
 - Emergency Management Institute (EMI) seminars;
 - She has been reaching out to other groups to expand our membership and resources;
 - A mitigation grant is available.
 - It was suggested that the Preparedness Strike Team should discuss these issues.
 - There was a discussion by a representative from Brevard County's VOAD as to what and how they have accomplished their goals for disaster preparedness.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:25 PM.