

Zoom Meeting Re-cap

Date: Tuesday, September 1, 2020

Time: 12 noon

Attendees: K. Bielmeier (co-chair), Dawn Reshen-Doty, Justin Bette, Shawn Rochester, Tim Baldwin, Neil Lustig, Father Joe Donnelly, Tom Marks, and Rob LaBonne

Guest: Eric M. Oubre, Sr. Director, Disaster Cycle, American Red Cross, Territory 5

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtRosDhJvpw&feature=youtu.be>

1. **Eric Oubre, American Red Cross Senior Director of Disaster Cycle Services:** We are charged with mass care housing and human services for Region 5. What we are seeing a lot lately are food insecurities. I suspect, if we have a second round of this pandemic that food insecurities will be on the rise again. Child care is also a challenge. While we are recovering from this, we are planning for the next situation. Whatever the *next* challenge of 2020 brings, that is what we should be prepared for.

The Red Cross offers:

- **Ready Rating program** (www.readyrating.org) ~ free, continuity planning for businesses, nonprofits, faith-based, government and NGOs that want to learn where their deficiencies are with emergency planning. This is a free tool. There are two assessments and it helps you build out an OSHA compliant, emergency preparedness action plan. For faith-based groups: where are your constituents; where do those parishioners go; who do they need to contact? For the business: what happens if you're stuck in your business for 72 hours? Who do you contact? Where is your preparedness kit?
Ready Rating Help Videos: <https://www.readyrating.org/video-gallery>
- **Preparedness** ~ in long term recovery, even while recovering, preparedness is our main focus. We have some virtual, youth programs – Pillowcase and Pedro the Penguin that prepare K-3rd and 3rd – 6th grade on how to prepare for a disaster. Since Katrina we have learned that if you teach a child about preparedness, that child will come home and that info becomes the new cartoon. “Mom you need to do this, and Dad, you need to do that.” Studies have shown that children are relentless about getting that information, especially if it comes to them as a cartoon character or as a pillowcase. We partner with the school district and are making this material available to the classroom, virtually, so that teachers can use our program in conjunction with what they're teaching.

- **Services for All** ~ this pandemic and tropical storm has brought a lot of things to light; things that we believe we're immune to. You may look at a home on the outside that is million dollars, but we do not know what is going on inside the home. Ensuring that we provide equal and equitable services, no matter the financial circumstances, and that we offer those services to all is what the American Red Cross strives to do.
- **Long Term Recovery** ~ I encourage everyone, while we are in the recovery phase, to start thinking about the long term effects, as we are going to be in this at least the entire fiscal year. What are we going to do if there is another outbreak in the winter, when people are already in their homes more? What does that look like for the recovery of our businesses?
- **Southbury** ~ With the town's new EOD [emergency operations director] we will be looking at what sheltering in the COVID environment may look like; what public health needs there are; whether opening up a warming center will be needed and how it should be handled to ensure the safety of those running it, as well as those staying there from the community.

2. Community Member Reports:

Worship Communities (Father Joe Donnelly): At Sacred Heart, we are concerned about the restrictions limiting worship gatherings to 100 people, per the Governor's order. With four masses and a large congregation it is increasingly difficult to serve everyone. With the announcement that the Executive Order may continue until Feb. 9th we assume there will not be any changes to these restrictions. Rabbi Eric expressed a similar concern. We are exploring options: (i.e. adding a mass; using technology to allow parishioners to 'attend' service outside and provide communion, etc.) No additional responses from the worship community as of yet.

- **Dawn** asked, should we look at how we, as a committee, look at ways to offer technology solutions to houses of worship? Many are already doing this: YouTube services, live stream, etc. Challenge is that people are now wanting to attend in person; getting tired of the virtual option. But all may not have this option yet, or be capable, broad-band-wise; suggest we reach out.

On the topic of Technology, **Shawn** asked if is there a way to use UV lighting to make restaurants, offices, houses or worship safer, and is there any support from the State to help subsidize the equipment, etc.? (Action step)

Seniors (Justin Bette): Feedback was that the Grocery Brigade was very helpful. That is no longer running but now there are delivery options at grocery stores and pharmacies

and even liquor stores, so those who concerned are able to stay out of those potentially higher risk areas.

Business (Justin Bette): Many that I speak with regularly – **attorneys, insurance people**, etc. – are in the same scenario as those of us in **real estate**, which is - we've never been busier. The market is stronger, in some ways, than in 2005, with very low inventory. Ex. in Heritage Village there are 30 condos available today, usually that number would like 80 or 90 at this time in the calendar year. There are around 42 homes available in Southbury, across all price points, but that is roughly half of what is usually the case this time of year. We are not seeing a huge influx of Manhattanites in Southbury. More from NYC bureaus, southern Westchester and Fairfield County, including cities like Norwalk and Stamford. People are attracted to our town for its quality of life, our schools, and a desire to leave whatever urban area they're in. For **restaurants**, some have adjusted to the limited capacity and the outdoor dining and are making it work, while for others it is a struggle. They wonder what will happen this winter when outdoor dining is no longer viable. There is this dichotomy in the local economy where some industries are just reeling (from the pandemic) and others of us are working harder than ever. Commercial real estate is having a harder time, obviously, as we see closings in town, such as Pier One and Victoria's Secret. These are national chains and there's nothing we could have done about it, of course, but it will be interesting to see where this is headed. On this topic, **Kevin Bielmeier** shared insights from his meeting with Southbury Green's development team with whom he had just met.

Rob LaBonne – suggested this committee could help small businesses and the community with identifying where they may find supports, such as IT help.

Dawn Reshen-Doty - Q: Services in-kind or are there resources we can offer?

Father Joe: It is difficult sometimes to know who needs the help. Many do not ask for it.

Eric: New Englanders are private people. This is my daily struggle with the Red Cross. It's not just a person's financial situation. Sometimes people just don't know the process of what to do when disaster strikes. They need someone to talk to. But people are not always going to ask for help. We are a self-sustaining community, but there are needs within. There are pockets of individuals that have needs.

Having successfully run the Grocery Brigade, we can identify those who may have specific needs, should we go back into another shut-down. Where are the vulnerable population, what are their needs? People who cannot get out or have some health-related need or immune-compromised issue, do not feel safe coming out.

Discussion continued on this topic and that of a having community fund.

The main purpose of this committee to identify the needs of our community and then try to meet them.

Shawn: The mental health of stress and isolation. Moving into winter, much less sunlight. Are there resources or other creative ways we can connect with adults and kids?

Eric: Region 5 are one of the holders of the 'Mental Health funds' - that is available. We need to get creative - being virtual – to not lose connectivity. Spiritual needs – how to offer – virtually – that spiritual connection. Now 5 – 6 months into the pandemic, are our front-line workers *still* feeling the love, like heroes, etc.

Neal Lustig:

- School systems are opening or have opened. A lot of responsibility.
- 3,000 flu shot program launching
- Digesting guidance on the coming C-19 vaccination
- Escape from NY is strong
- It is almost like 2005, activity-wise
- From our POV, economically things are going UP not down
- 500 person pool party in Oxford - troubling

3. ACTION STEPS:

- Ask the worship community who may need technological support (JD)
- Reach out to local lighting business regarding UV light (KB)
- Ask the business community if they would like to be on a list of pro-bono support services or community resources specifically for Covid-19 relief ____
- Create a list of available services to offer to the community that they may take advantage of **vs** asking and trying to see who needs the help ____
- Draft a survey (via EDC) to assess recent impact and needs per C-19 (KB)
- Create a list of ways that people can 'plug in' or offer support ____
- Utilize the Grocery Brigade, and other outreaches, to identify those who may potentially be at risk should there be another resurgence ____

4. Adjourned at 1:00pm

5. Next meeting: Tuesday, September 15th at 12 noon

Guest contact info:

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Resources:

<https://www.4-ct.org/>

www.readyrating.org

<https://www.readyrating.org/video-gallery>