

Central Texas VOAD Meeting Minutes
February 14, 2013
United Way for Greater Austin
2000 E. MLK Jr., Blvd., Austin, TX

The Central Texas VOAD convened at 9:30 AM. Please see attached sign-in sheet for a list of those present.

Action 1: The December 13, 2012, meeting minutes were approved with a motion by Betty Learned, a second by Joe Canfield, and unanimous vote.

Action 2: Toni Silver motioned to set up a Twitter account for the Central Texas VOAD. Betty Learned seconded the motion and body unanimously voted in favor if it.

President David Stone welcomed attendees, who then introduced themselves. Approval of the minutes followed.

Toni Silver, chair of the Communications Committee, reported that several people from multiple agencies responded to her that they couldn't make the meeting but wanted to participate in future meetings, including the Salvation Army.

Regarding the wildfires in Spicewood and Bastrop, Betty Learned reported that a few houses remained to be complete in Spicewood but case management activities had ended and recovery efforts were nearing an end. David Stone reported that Bastrop was still in the process of rebuilding, and the Bastrop County Long Term Recovery Team's president, Christine Files, was transitioning out of her role. For both communities, erosion control and reforestation are ongoing activities.

David Stone announced that the chairperson position for the Membership Committee is vacant. He would like to see the committee readdress membership needs and representation. The Executive Committee will supply a membership packet online and update information. Stone outlined several challenges associated with membership:

- Updating organizations' information
- Re-energizing and re-engaging inactive members
- Reaching out to organizations in rural areas of the Central Texas VOAD region, including holding meetings in other counties, by conference call, or in the evenings (summer was suggested as a good season for evening meetings)

Comments about committee structure included that people often gravitate towards projects a start and end date and an alternate or assistant to the chairperson be appointed to relieve the chair during absences and keep the committee work progressing.

Wray Hooper reported on the role his organization provided emergency assistance at the Trail of Lights and other activities during the winter season.

Linda Haynie with the City of Austin Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management reported the activities of the UrbanShield disaster response exercise on 12/1-12/2/12 and showed a DVD about the event. She reported that for the first time hospitals participated in the Haz Mat drill. In Round Rock there was active shooter situation; drug cartel/hostage/fire situation in Hays County; and a chemical explosion at the Expo Center in Austin. A news clip discussing the haz mat drill is available at www.austincert.org. A total of 520 volunteers for 5,250 volunteer hours participated. Lessons learned included:

- Finding, coordinating, and training up to 1,000 volunteers was a challenge. Austin Disaster Relief Network (ADRN) and ACC contributed significantly to volunteer recruitment.
- The event highlighted the capacity and professionalism of VOADs to first responders, such as law enforcement.
- Active responders learned that they could not be understood through their haz mat suits.
- About 50 people “died” in the Expo Center drill because responders couldn’t get to them (even after 10 hours).
- Capacity of emergency response could be expanded through preparedness training and training local response teams to supplement the efforts of emergency response professionals.

Dallas will be conducting an exercise next year.

Red Cross representatives (Josh Jackson and Bill Dorman) reported about the N. Austin Apartment Fire on 12/20/12. Red Cross was initially activated at 2:30 AM. Sixty people were initially displaced. Because of winds from the cold front, 68 units were razed displacing several hundred people. Northwest Fellowship Church provided shelter for people and animals. ADRN also contributed significantly to relief efforts. The Red Cross assisted about 200 people and 72 cases. The event lasted 76 hours, with 150 churches sponsoring families to meet their basic and other needs. Badges helped identify families to receive aid such as store discounts, items at warehouses, etc. Toni Silver announced who responded from the Central Texas VOAD and community organizations to provide help.

Red Cross used Twitter to post actions of the apartment management, including management’s return of deposits and last month’s rent to fire survivors.

A discussion of the Central Texas VOAD response protocol and use of Twitter to facilitate immediate communications followed. Current call-to-action response procedure follows a top-down hierarchy, beginning with the president. Challenges to responsiveness include holiday season occurrences, gaps in resource list, and use of e-mail. The body discussed using Twitter and CallFire as alternatives to email messaging for actions requiring immediate response. The body agreed that Twitter could facilitate increased responsiveness to calls to action/needs by

members and voted unanimously to set up an account. David Stone would be responsible for establishing the account, and the Central Texas VOAD Executive Committee would be the keepers of the associated user name and password.

Discussion of membership dues was requested to be added to the next agenda.

ADRN's Daniel Geraci stated that the organization has a call center with an information line for donors and service providers and a hotline for victims and survivors.

Red Cross' Bill Dorman reported about the Long-Term Recovery Committee (LTRC) exercise. The purpose of the exercise is to explore the founding principles of the VOAD in long-term recovery. He suggested that discussion of specific issues (e.g., topics re: donated goods handling, tactics, communication, call downs, etc.) follow each Central Texas VOAD meeting. Red Cross could facilitate and provide reports about the meetings. Josh Jackson could head the steering committee, with first topic to be the call-to-action response structure. A framework for exercise is to be developed by the next Central Texas VOAD meeting.

A question about the availability of an after-action report about the November 2012 disaster assistance center exercise was asked. Dorman explained that a guideline for setting up a disaster assistance center was available.

David Stone announced that notes from the Executive Committee about its strategic vision would be distributed. The task of the next Executive Committee may include the update of the bylaws for consistency with national and state VOADs.

Committee officer elections are to take place at the April 11 meeting. Each office has a one-year term, with a two-term maximum. David Stone requested that interest in a nomination or considerations for nominees be emailed to the Nominations Committee; considerations for nominations of representatives from other organizations outside of Travis County were encouraged. Wray Hooper expressed interest in serving on the Communications Committee.

The meeting concluded with discussion about website hosting and online donations and volunteer management during a disaster. Aidmatrix was mentioned. Members were invited to bring information to the full body.

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 PM.