**Tuesday, September 6th , 2022 GP-CERT Meeting Minutes:**

**Holtby welcomed everyone and mentioned that tonight’s meeting should last approximately one hour, depending on how much time Training and Education needed for their “teach-back” tonight.**

**Holtby noted that from a weather perspective, we are still looking good – NOAA has issued advisories on Hurricane Danielle, located about 850 miles west-northwest of the Azores, and on Tropical Storm Earl, located about 650 miles south of Bermuda, but both systems are well north and east of us and will have no impact on us. He encouraged everyone to continue to stay prepared and vigilant.**

**Holtby mentioned that National Preparedness Month  is an observance each September to raise awareness about the importance of preparing for disasters and emergencies that could happen at any time. He noted that GP-CERT needs to start doing something to build awareness of this observance each year and requested that anyone with thoughts on this share it with the Command Team.**

**First agenda update item:**

**There was an in-depth discussion on the possible formation of a 501(C)3 or limited liability company. This discussion originated from a meeting that Holtby, Browne, and Farrah had few months ago and part of it it had to do with our ability to access GP-CERT funds – which currently reside on the POA balance sheet in a separate CERT account. Subsequent to our discussion, Holtby went out to a number of other CERTs in our area to see how they had been set up.**

**501(C)3 – Lakewood Ranch CERT is organized along these lines. Advantages are that we would no longer pay sales taxes on any purchases, would have access to additional grants, and any donations made to GP-CERT would be tax deductible. Disadvantages are that we would need to write organizational bylaws to register with the State of Florida, we would need to form a Board of Directors to oversee the 501(c) 3, and there is an initial filing fee to get set up, plus annual filing fees. Lakewood Ranch CERT actually has 4 of their HOAs donate money to them annually for operations, and they have about 200 members across those 4 HOAs and 6,700 homes covered. They receive donations from residents each year, but the HOA funding is their primary source of funds. They also purchase a D&O policy for their 501(c) 3 Board members to cover them, but they rely of the good Samaritan Act to protect members. They also have all members sign a waiver to protect all members and the organization from other members.**

**Ed Litcher commented that Venice Newcomers Club avoided the donations path in order to keep VNC treasurers from resigning.  Donations complicate the IRS aspects of the tax status and the records that need to be maintained and the forms submitted at tax time.  There are also IRS liabilities against the individuals who oversee the donations in case something is improperly handled and reported.  VNC solution was just don't go down the path.**

**Tom Porada was part of the Nevada State Prison Preservation Society and it did a 501c3 back around 2013. It took about 18 months at the time and cost $250 or so for the application.**

**Most of the other CERTs Holtby spoke with just fall under their POA umbrellas. We touched upon the LLC route, and Holtby noted that the cost is essentially the same as a 501(C)3 to set up, but a Board of Directors is not required and there is an additional layer of “liability protection”. The comment was made that litigation is a fact of Florida life, and we should ensure that GP-CERT volunteers stay within our CERT mandate.**

**Holtby noted that the third way to handle our banking “challenge” is to set up our own account at a local bank and provide one of our volunteer’s addresses and SSNs for set-up purposes. As it would be a checking account, no interest would be paid and taxes would not be an issue. We could have all checks require two signatures, as we don’t have all that much money in our account {just over $10K]. If we required the signatories to be “bonded” – usually at 10% of the funds handled or $1K, the bonding cost would be approximately $200 p.a.**

**There was a robust discussion on working with the BOD to have GP-CERT “recognized” as a viable community organization, as some BOD members feel with are government-affiliated. We will work with Board Member Tom Porada to see how best to handle this.**

**The second agenda item is establishment of a working relationship with our new management company, KW and our new GM, Michelle LeCroy. Holtby met with LeCroy three weeks ago, and he provided her with some background on GP-CERT and how we wanted to work with KW to ensure that community storm communication is done effectively. Holtby felt that we needed to set up a meeting with the Command Team to introduce ourselves so that we can work with KW in the event of a storm event. Holtby will reach out to her to get something on LeCroy’s calendar and will let everyone know.**

**The third agenda item is ‘The GP Responder’ newsletter, which was started up in September of 2020. We have published eight issues so far – and we have received wonderful community feedback. Again, thank you to those volunteers and contributors who have helped out so far, and a special thanks to Carole and Jeff Myles who do a fabulous job of putting the newsletter together. The next issue of The GP Responder is scheduled to go out in mid-to-late September – so Holtby requested that attendees please consider contributing an article – we are looking for 100-150 words on anything with a safety or weather focus that would be of interest to the GP community.**

**Holtby thanked those volunteers who came out to the Hurricane Expo that North Port scheduled on Saturday, August 13th. Holtby noted that there were some really informative presentations, but that he would have a hard time justifying setting up a table in future – both GP-CERT and IslandWalk CERT were the only two non-vendors. Holtby noted that while community education is a good thing – most of the attendees were from North Port and not interested in GP-CERT.**

**Agenda Item 5:**

**Holtby still views communications to be our team’s “weak link” and a key item we need to improve upon in 2022. Holtby thanked Steve Phillips for running tonight’s Net Check-in just prior to the regular meeting – but we need better representation from the Zone Leads.**

**Sixth Agenda Item – Recruitment: Still our biggest challenge, and Holtby noted that the Command Team are open to ideas and suggestions. A suggestion was made to offer pizza and soda at our next meeting, and this may be something to try (although not knowing likely attendance can make ordering difficult). Brian Sheftel also noted that a Gran Paradiso CERT Facebook page would be a great at improving our visibility, and he offered to work with Holtby on this initiative.**

**Holtby noted that Trent DePersia had been working to update our trifold marketing materials – and he had a quote for $309 for 1,000 trifolds from Venice Print Center. We still have a little work to do on the trifold before we have the job done, as we needed to include photos specific to our GP volunteers from the Family Safety Day and the Hurricane Expo, as well as find out how best to access funds for this purpose.**

**Seventh Update item – Bob Browne has been working on updating our Operational Plan, and Holtby and Browne had a meeting on this earlier today. It was felt that representation from each area, Command Team, Triage, Communications, Zone Leads, and Access Control made the most sense. Holtby noted that he will attempt to get a meeting set up to discuss the plan.**

**Holtby noted on the agenda that Marci had consented to become our Treasurer, and that Sal had agreed to be our Special Events Coordinator. He also mentioned the need to establish a Planning Committee so that we can publish exactly when we will hold all meetings and special events in 2023 – such as Yellow Box drill, Family Safety Day, and Training. Holtby noted that he had met with the new Activities Director, Allison Heredia, and she had put our meetings on the calendar through 2023 – first Tuesday of every second month at 6 pm. The date for our next meeting is Tuesday, November 8th at 6 pm. Holtby requested that the Command Team continue doing their radio check-in between 5:30 and 6:00 pm on those days. hat day.**

**The Training and Education team then took the floor, and Brian Sheftel discussed the concept of Size-Up. Size-Up is the initial evaluation of an emergency situation by our GP- CERT volunteers in each of the six GP zones. It is a determination of immediate hazards to responders, other lives and property – and also includes a determination on the need for additional resources.**

**Deputy Incident Commander Mitch Farrah provided a copy of the Yellow Box debriefing and there was a discussion on how Zone Leads need to only contact IC if something vital needs to be disclosed – not for every little thing.**

**There was an additional training exercise by Triage that was tabled until the next meeting due to lack of time. Meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.**