

Village officials discuss emergency response; trustees skip meeting

by JILL SCHMELZER
Reporter

During the Nov. 30 Village Board work session, officials set a special meeting to be held this past Monday to discuss the emergency response techniques used during the first few days after the October storm.

Mayor Mary Lowther, Administrator Sally Kuzon, Deputy Treasurer Lynda Juul, Department of Public Works Crew Chief Michael Parker and Director of Emergency Services Jim Zymanek gathered at 5 p.m. Monday in Village Hall to discuss what worked and what didn't during the cleanup process.

Lowther raised the question, "Where are the trustees? I am very disappointed they did not feel it was important to attend this meeting."

The officials held the meeting despite the lack of trustees in attendance.

The first question raised regard-

ed the Federal Emergency Management Agency reimbursement and its changed policies since Hurricane Katrina.

"It's a lot more frustrating, because it is being handled differently," said Zymanek, who is estimating the cost of damage to the Town of Amherst and submitting a request for reimbursement to the agency.

"We'll be through our budget process by the time the reimbursement comes through," Lowther said, noting this could cause some financial obstacles during the budget process.

Village and town volunteers lacked cots and generators in those first days after the early winter storm knocked out power, downed trees and blocked roads, forcing stranded residents to seek assistance from shelters.

One big issue people faced was the home health care recipients who needed oxygen, dialysis and other medical supplies requiring electrical outlets. Also, shelter

operators are not trained health care providers.

"We knew special needs issues were up-and-coming things," Zymanek said, noting that prior to the storm, emergency service coordinators were discussing ways to improve the techniques.

Lowther raised another question, this time regarding the inability to use power for nearly 10 days.

She noted that the lack of telephone service made it difficult for people who may have needed help to communicate with others. Village officials also had problems contacting residents and each other.

Zymanek said Amherst and Williamsville were lucky because of the low death count. The town had two fatalities, whereas the village had zero. He also noted that there were no electrocutions despite the downed live wires.

The next topic was road clearing.

"I think we did very well," said

Zymanek, noting that the village streets were opened as soon as possible because of downed power lines.

Residents need more education on personal preparedness for the first 72 hours following a natural disaster, Zymanek said. During those first three days, emergency response crews need to get a grasp on how to begin relief efforts.

Lowther said the village lies within the town, but the information didn't trickle down to the appropriate officials at a fast enough rate.

"Number one, if we get anything like this again, you should be brought into our Emergency Operations Center," Zymanek said. The center was headquartered at the Amherst Police Station.

Instead of the village having its own EOC, there should be a joint one so everyone is aware of the steps being taken to resolve the problem areas, he added.

Travel bans should be issued

jointly by the town and village, rather than one statement issued and then another two hours later, Zymanek said.

"Even if it's just the first 72 hours, sit at the table with us," Zymanek said.

Zymanek asked the officials to be proactive and call to ask where a meeting is being held if another storm should rip through the region.

Some improvement areas the team is reviewing include having the American Red Cross train volunteers as Red Cross trainers, Zymanek said.

Officials also found that they should research the generator power at the municipal building, located at 5565 Main St.

They are also looking into hosting seminars and issuing pamphlets about 72-hour preparedness techniques.

e-mail: JSchmelzer@beenews.com

Storm-damaged trees topic of sessions

Town forester and certified arborist Richard Stedman of Wright-Frontier Tree Care will be available at three sessions to answer residents' questions about trees damaged during the Oct. 12-13 storm.

- Amherst Center for Senior Services, 370 J.J. Audubon Parkway, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 13.

- Amherst Museum, 3755 Tonawanda Creek Road, 6 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 20.

- Harlem Road Community Center, 4255 Harlem Road, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 10.

All seminars are free and open to the public and presented by the Town of Amherst Highway Department Forestry Division.

For more information, call Bob Anderson, highway superintendent at 631-5990, ext. 24.

Information on inspecting for storm damaged trees is available on the town's Web site, <http://www.amherst.ny.us>.

Show planned at planetarium

The planetarium at Williamsville North High School, 1595 Hopkins Road, will be holding "Season of Light," at 6 and 7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 21.

This planetarium star show features the customs and traditions of winter festivals of long ago.

The show is about the coldest and darkest of seasons — a season that holds some of the warmest and brightest celebrations of the year and recounts the historical, religious, and cultural rituals practiced during the winter solstice. Naturally, astronomy is a

focus in the show — a few constellations, the Sun's path across the sky, and the Earth's tilt and orbit around the Sun are used to explain the changing seasons.

For more information, visit www.williamsvillek12.org/planetarium or call 626-8523.



WARM CLOTHING PROJECT — Amherst Senior Center volunteers Kathy Garrison, left, and Jan Bauchle organize donations to the center's annual Warm Clothing Project which benefits children in Amherst. The two directed the center's donations for the project which is coordinated by the Amherst Youth Board. The Senior Center collected winter clothing to dress 11 children from the three Town of Amherst school districts. All children will receive new coats, boots, sweaters, hats and mittens.

PIANO STUDIOS
• Beginning & Advanced Students • Accompanist
• Suzuki Method for Beginners • Teacher Training
Mary Handley 834-2266

DAVE SMITH
Ford
Your one stop location for first class personalized service
Formerly "Al Maroone Ford"
4045 Transit Road
Williamsville, NY 14221
716.634.2000

Book of 5 Car Washes \$25⁰⁰
Need the perfect gift?
Gift Certificates
for Car Detail... Inside & Out

Winter Survival Kit \$22⁹⁵
1 set winter wiper blades installed
1 can lock de-icer
1 snow brush
& we top off with windshield wiper fluid!

FIND THE LOVE
ITEMS YOU
UNDER \$100
The Best Source for the Best Finds.
Visit www.BeeNews.com to see the scores of opportunities for items from our classified section weekly.
Bee Group Newspapers
Advertisers: For more information or to place an ad, please call 632-4712.

Internet
HOLIDAY SPECIAL!
Unlimited Hours
\$99 One Full Year!
Offer Ends 12/31/06
• FREE 24/7 Live Technical Support
• Instant Messaging - keep your buddy list
• 10 e-mail addresses with Spam Protection
• Custom Start Page - news, weather & more!
Express Surf up to **6X faster!**
just 10 more per month
Sign Up Online! www.LocalNet.com
Call Today & Save!
LocalNet 692-5800
Reliable Internet Access Since 1994

Assessing Needs. Increasing Scores.
Williamsville
Orchard Park
Kenmore
Lancaster
Lockport
Huntington SAT prep
Call 1-800-CAN LEARN
SAT prep for students seeking dramatic score improvements.
Huntington LEARNING CENTER

LIONEL
New York Central Flyer with TrainSounds™
Steam still reigns supreme with the famous Lionel New York Central Flyer train set, featuring the TrainSounds™ sound system.
• Rugged die-cast metal steam locomotive with working headlight and real puffing smoke
• TrainSounds™ sound system with real steam chuffing sounds, crew announcements, brake squeal, bell, and whistle
• Huge 40" x 60" oval layout using the easy-to-assemble FasTrack™ track system
• Powerful 80-watt transformer with programmable accessory voltage
Real Railroad Sounds!
The name FasTrack™ is used with permission from Piko, Inc.
NIAGARA HOBBY & CRAFT MART
3366 Union Rd. (at Walden Ave.) Cheektowaga
1/2 mile from the Walden Galleria • 10 mins. from Buffalo Niagara Int'l Airport
Open Monday-Saturday: 10am-9pm, Sunday: 10am-5pm
(716) 681-1666 • www.niagarahobby.com • Open 362 Days a Year!