

Council of Federal Executive Secretariats
February Council Meeting
February 7, 2012
American Red Cross National Headquarters
430 17th Street, NW
Board of Governors Hall

Council members present: See below.

Others present: Linda C. Mathes, Chief Executive Officer, American Red Cross National Capital Region. Katherine Spivey, Plain Writing Launcher, General Services Administration.

Welcoming remarks. 9:15 a.m. Eric Wachter, chair of the Council of Federal Executive Secretariats, welcomed everyone to the February meeting, thanked Mike Robbins from the American Red Cross and thanked the American Red Cross for serving as hosts for the meeting.

Welcome/introduction. 9:20 a.m. Robins welcomed the council to the American Red Cross National Headquarters and introduced Mathes.

Keynote Speaker. 9:21 a.m. Mathes welcomed the council and spoke about the history of the Board of Governors Hall, the headquarters building, the Red Cross and the American Red Cross. She noted that the American Red Cross responds to 70,000 disasters each year and at least 500 fires in the Washington metropolitan area. Mathes explained that the American Red Cross has five major areas of service: helping disaster victims; connecting the Armed Forces with their families; teaching lifesaving skills; collecting, testing and supplying blood across the nation; and partnering in international services. She explained that 44-50% of blood donations in the United States come from American Red Cross donations and that more than 15 million people each year gain lifesaving skills through the American Red Cross. Mathes expressed her gratitude for donations through the Combined Federal Campaign.

Best practice – plain writing. 9:55 a.m. Spivey discussed plain language and the Plain Writing Act of 2010 with the council. She gave an abridged PowerPoint presented and offered to share the full version of the presentation with the council. Wachter said he would email the file to the council. Spivey stated that plain writing is a style of writing that helps readers find information and helps readers understand the information. If documents do not do both, then they are not written plainly. She shared some techniques that writers can use to reach readers, such as including headers, tables and bullets and using words people use every day. People do not respond if they do not understand; write in plain language to get a bigger response.

Committee Reports. 10:39 a.m. After break the four committee chairs gave reports. Wachter introduced the technology committee and shared the results of the conference call the committee held. The committee members talked about what correspondence tracking systems they used and the need to survey what other agencies are using to track correspondence and summarize the findings in a report to the council. This report will provide direction for the technology committee and assist in a meeting with OMB.

Christine Brown asked the members of the plain writing committee to introduce themselves and told the council that the best starting point was to do a short survey of the council members. She suggested that information be included on the council website and that the committee give short presentations at the council meetings. Brown welcomed any suggestions and asked the council to take time answering the survey when it is sent out.

Vivan Beamon and Dynna Bigby spoke for Tracy Catoe, who is the website committee chair and who was not present at the meeting. The website committee was not able to have a conference call but shared ideas through email. It plans to:

- Update the schedule for the year;
- Update the council membership list;
- Make a list of members who are inactive;
- Add the meeting minutes;
- Post the guest speakers presentation and best practice presentation;
- Invite agencies to join;
- Post link to departments websites;
- Include profiles of agencies;
- Update the style guide on the resource page;
- Update the correspondence guide to use for plain language;
- Add White House guidelines;
- Update the charter (it was noted that the charter is updated); and
- Council summaries are outdated.

Wachter asked how accessible the website site since it is behind a firewall. Dynna answered that Tracy is working on making it public

Patrice Allen-Gifford introduced the membership committee and reported that the committee would like to think about what a council member is and what it should be. It discussed the idea that one senior-level person represent each agency and subagencies when it comes to voting or speaking for his or her agency. No one would be excluded from participating, however. The membership committee aims to service the chair and assistant the chair in finding out who the members are and encourage nonparticipating agencies to join. The committee would actively help support meetings by doing some of the leg work to help the chair by, for example, finding hosts for meetings and best practice topics.

After Allen-Gifford completed her report, Wachter asked about the March meeting that Brown is hosting at USAID. He asked if anyone had any suggestions for a best practice topic. Handbooks, the structure of different executive secretariat offices and correspondence challenges were some of the suggestions. Allen-Gifford said the membership committee would discuss these ideas. Wachter said he would email the council a report that USDA prepared last year on what some offices do.

White House Update. 11:10 a.m.

Old Business/New Business. 11:25 a.m. Wachter suggested that the council table the discussion on transfer letters until next month so that the council had more time to review the draft policy. Wachter explained that he will be sending out a survey in the next two weeks and would share the feedback. Diane Reinke asked what the survey is about, and Wachter explained that it was designed so that council members and nonmembers could provide feedback to help guide the council. Wachter stated that Gemma Button had emailed him about a policy on joint letters, similar to what was drafted for transfer letters. Wachter suggested that the council could work on that at a future meeting after a number of attendees expressed support for such a policy. Wachter asked for volunteers to serve on an executive committee he would like to establish. The executive committee would advise the chair and the committee chairs.

Open Floor. 11:37 a.m. Wachter opened the floor. Mary Jefferson suggested that the White House could be a resource by sharing any mailing lists of executive secretariat offices they have. These lists would help the council communicate increase participation. Main said she would share her list with Wachter.

Adjourn. 11:40 a.m.

Council of Federal Executive Secretariats February Meeting Attendees

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Agency</u>	<u>Position</u>
Anatta		DOC	Editor
Patrice	Allen-Gifford	DHS	Associate Executive Secretary
Kathryn	Alvarez	Treasury	Correspondence Specialist
Gloria	Barrett	DOL	Senior Analyst
Vivian	Beamon	DOJ/EDUST	Management & Program Analyst
Dynna	Bigby	FDA/ES	Program Manager
Ann	Brewer	NIH/HHS	Director, Executive Secretariat
Andrew	Brown	SBA	IT Specialist
Christine	Brown	USAID	Lead Corresponce Analyst
Dennis	Bumpass	SBA	Executive Secretary
Gemma	Button	VA	Deputy Executive Secretary
Frances	Campbell	WHO	Supervisor - Document Tracking Unit -ORM
Tara	Chipman	DOJ/ATF	Chief, Executive Secretariat
Michael	Coogan	DOE	Writer/Editor
Cynthia	Douglas	HHS	Cause Specialist
Julie	Fandsen	FDA	Junior Policy Analyst
Tim	Feeney	DOI	Writer/Editor
Clarence	Finney	DOS	Director, Office of Correspondence and Records
Myra	Freeman	WHO	Records Analyst
Saralene	Green	DOJ	Management Analyst
Marcia	Hines	DOJ	Records Manager
Mary	Jefferson	FAA	Director, Executive Secretariat
Zina	Kornegay	ATF	Executive Secretary
Galen	Main	WHO	Assistant Director, Agency Liaison
Keshia	McDaniel	DOL	Supervisor Executive Secretariat
Patricia	Nolan	DHS	Senior Liaison Officer
Laura	O'Neill	HHS	Management Analyst
Diane	Reinke	HHS/OIG	Writer - Editor
Paulette	Saunders	VA	Chief Correspondences
Linda	Smiroldo Herda	MCC	Director of Speechwriting & Editorial Services
Jynell	Spriggs	IRS	Chief Correspondence Officer
Pat	Street	MCC	Executive Secretary
Andrew	Tarpgaard	FAA	Team Leader
Joseph	Tezak	DHS/CBD	Director, Executive Secretariat
Chris	Vanes	GOP	Senior Analyst
Eric	Wachter	EPA	Director, Executive Secretariat
Tony	Waterloo	DOL	Supervisor of Operation
Sharnett	Willis	EPA	Staff