

Housing workshop provides pragmatic and creative ways to see a future Greenville

Plumas News

The Housing Workshop put on by the Dixie Fire Collaborative on Saturday, Feb. 5 in the Greenville Elementary School cafeteria might have been best described as a pragmatism-meets-creative-thinking in helping to guide property owners in Greenville to take the steps necessary in attempting to rebuild.

Sue Weber, co-chair of the Dixie Fire Collaborative, started off the housing workshop stressing that residents should sign up for case management with Plumas Rural Services even if they don't think they might need it right now. Stressing that all applications for various types of help all stem from applications there.

Lee Anne Schramel, representing both Rotary and Plumas Strong, explained the new signs, which will be popping up soon. They read "We're Rebuilding" to give those driving through Greenville a better sense of who is returning and who is rebuilding.

There was a sign-up sheet where people could sign and give their addresses for the signs to be put up—for free.

"We will put one of these signs on your parcels. You are going to be surprised at how many signs will be put out," said Schramel. The signs are printed up by Wild Hare Signs and are sponsored by Plumas Strong. The signs will be put on sites after cleanup of any given lot is completed.

Weber had organized tables with an activity card on each table that described the circumstances of fictitious people whose circumstances mirrored many of those who've lost their homes: people on fixed incomes, families, people without insurance, etc. Her intent was to get a brainstorming flow chart started at each table for what the family or person on each card will have to think about in order to rebuild.

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At the beginning of the exercise many of the hundred or so participants seemed hesitant—having come to the housing workshop for answers rather than discussion. But Weber won most people over to become engaged in the activity.

Weber’s background in education came through in the activity and the share-out each table did afterwards. People default to a matrix approach to taking in new information, wanting it downloaded into the brain and hope not to have to think about it. But Weber required people to think creatively and strategize about rebuilding—an approach not all are used to.

The workshop took place over the backdrop of two things: research by many finding that Greenville at six months is actually ahead of where many other burned communities are in their recoveries, and also a piece aired on the six-month anniversary by Fox40 on rebuilding in which a UC Berkeley professor of urban planning tried to persuade that there should not be a rebuilding.

Some of the ideas that came out during the share-out were for people to consider duplex designs and shared living spaces as well as tiny houses given the expense in rebuilding—especially for those without insurance. The need for temporary housing also was touched on as well as funding resources (both grants and loans).

The activity brought home the stark reality of the inequities of who can rebuild and who cannot.

One table said, “pray” was the first thing they thought of, and then went on to think of agencies and help surrounding housing that were also important: household goods, furnishings, ebt cards, etc. They offered up Tiny Pines Discount Warehouse in Oroville as a good resource for furnishings. The emphasis of the workshop seemed to be a mix of practical advice and encouragement to think creatively to get to the goal of what everyone wants: a place to live in Greenville.

The group enjoyed a lunch of donated soups made by various community members.

After lunch a panel of experts representing architectural design, construction, United Policy Holders, Hope Crisis Response Network as well as various Plumas County agencies including the Planning Department, the Environmental Health Department, the Building Department and the Assessor’s Office addressed the audience and were available for a Q & A session for the property owners.