

LOUISIANA RECOVERY AUTHORITY

Rita Task Force Meeting

Lake Charles Civic Center

Lake Charles, LA

Friday, June 13, 2008

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Randy Roach, chairman of the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) Rita Task Force, called the meeting to order at 1:19 p.m. in the Lake Charles Civic Center in Lake Charles, Louisiana. *(Note: Notices to the public and news media of the time and place of the meeting were given in compliance with the Louisiana Open Meetings Law.)*

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Trevor Theunissen called the roll.

Board Members Present:

Mayor Randy Roach, Chairman
Mr. Tom Henning, Vice Chairman
Mr. Bryan Beam
Dr. Paul Coreil
Ms. Tina Horn
Mr. Chris Landry
Mr. David Richard
Mr. George Swift
Mr. Ben Taylor
Mr. Chris Theriot
Ms. Catherine Thomas
Mr. Mark Viator

Board Members Absent:

Mr. Ernie Broussard
Rep. Joseph Deshotel
Mr. Carl Griffith
Rep. Chuck Kleckly
Dr. Andrea Lewis Miller
Mayor Ron Roberts
Ms. Stephanie Rodrigue

Staff Members Present:

Mr. Paul Rainwater
Mr. Kris Van Orsdel
Ms. Lynn Bankston
Mr. Darin Mann
Ms. Christina Stephens
Ms. Laura Deslatte
Ms. Lindsey deBlieux

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III. CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS and MISSION STATEMENT

Mayor Roach welcomed everyone to the inaugural meeting of the Rita Task Force and encouraged the public in attendance to participate in the public comment phase of the meeting. He read the Rita Task Force Mission Statement. Mayor Roach then went on to give an update on where the Hurricane Rita recovery stands. It has been almost 3 years since Hurricane Rita, the impact was extensive and it is listed on the FEMA list as #3 or #4 on the list of worst disasters to strike the United States. We are beginning to learn what long term recovery means and it is very important that this task force is meeting to discuss the long term challenges the region faces. The world and government rules and regulations look much different than when Audrey or Andrew struck and it is a challenge to work through it all.

IV. LRA Executive Director Introductory Remarks

Mr. Paul Rainwater, Executive Director of the Louisiana Recovery Authority, stated that when he became Director of the LRA he told Mayor Roach that he would reactivate the Hurricane Rita Task Force. On Governor Jindal's first day, he wanted to reorganize the recovery and put everything under the LRA. Mr. Rainwater has authority over programs but works closely with GOHSEP and other state and federal agencies. The Governor detailed Mr. Rainwater into the Office of Community Development which administers the Road Home Program. This has all led to the LRA being the one organization responsible for all of recovery now. All partners involved are working very well together and many improvements have been made in efficiency. The LRA's task is to get money into the hands of local governments and residents and set policies that have sense to them. There are many rules and many Congress does not want to change but it's the LRA's job to work with partners to spend dollars in an efficient way and we must meet many regulations whether we like them or not. **Mr. Rainwater then presented a slideshow.** Included in the slideshow was a slide on first responders, removing marine debris, the fisheries program, the business recovery grant program, the oil and gas workforce training program, the elevation grant program, the Road Home program, FEMA PA grants, Southwest Louisiana FEMA PA allocation, SOWELA, flood plain mapping, the reconfiguring of the size of the LRA Board membership and one on the LRA's top priorities.

Ms. Tina Horn complimented Mr. Rainwater on his efforts in expediting the many processes and bureaucracy involved in the recovery process.

V. Resolution Consideration

Mayor Randy Roach read the resolution aloud and accepted a motion and a second to the motion to consider the resolution. The resolution was voted on by the board and passed unanimously with a 12 to 0 vote. The resolution will now be presented to the LRA Board at their next meeting.

VI. Issues Affecting Southwest Louisiana Presentation

Mayor Randy Roach presented a Power Point presentation on the issues affecting the Hurricane Rita impacted area. He discussed the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana

and the history of the body. While Southwest Louisiana has traditionally participated in these projects, historically most attention has been given to Southeast Louisiana. There was a critical need in Southeast Louisiana and over the years much focus and many priorities on projects has been in that area. But as a result of Hurricane Rita, things have changed and Southwest Louisiana, Cameron and Vermilion parishes especially, are feeling some of the pains of the land loss that Rita has caused. Mayor Roach said that the job of this Rita Task Force is to focus on these issues. He suggested at the next meeting that the Task Force have a representative from CPRAL to discuss SWLA priorities and focus on issues on the coastal restoration of the area. Our mission is to address the long term recovery and that is going to be drive in part by how we handle coastal restoration issues and how we can focus on them.

Mr. David Richard stated that a stronger voice in what is set in the state is needed and that SWLA has been overlooked in many needs. From a cost effective standpoint, the protection has been overlooked and they have tried to modify that, and Governor Jindal's plan has critical things that were destroyed with Rita and help fund those immediate needs. He said some needs still need to be addressed, so the Task Force needs to focus on those. He said CPRAL has only two members from SWLA so it is imperative that the Task Force emphasizes this.

Ms. Tina Horn stated that the Governor has put together a task force on coastal parishes that Mr. Paul Rainwater will be serving on and that the Rita Task Force needs to compare notes on things that affect us as a coast.

Mr. Chris Theriot stated that Vermilion Parish met with the Office of Community Development about Community Development Block Grant monies regarding recovery and the problem they are having is a serious overlap in funding. Things are getting bogged down because there are different entities that you have to deal with. Department of Natural Resources and CPRAL are doing overlapping work on a lot of it. There are many different programs under different agencies. He stated they give the parishes money but implement each plan differently or under different authorities and that puts a roadblock up. He behooved the LRA to address the roadblocks and give the projects to one entity to streamline. He stated that Vermilion Parish losses about twenty to thirty thousand dollars every month because they have bridges commerce has to divert around.

Mr. Paul Rainwater stated that the state has federal responsibility to manage those dollars. He said Office of Community Development now actually sits under the LRA. Marine debris is complicated because it's a leveraged project. FEMA Public Assistance dollars move out quickly as long as you negotiate with FEMA. The LRA is there to help with negotiations. Mr. Rainwater said if you are having issues please let him know.

Mayor Randy Roach stated that when the Governor appointed Mr. Rainwater that he consolidated authority to him. He then read a quote by Mike Tidwell in his book Bayou Farewell. Governor Foster read this book and it inspired him to move on the issue of coastal restoration. Coastal parishes understand the struggles and the priority of living on the land. As we go through this process of long term recovery, we cannot lose that culture. As well as base flood elevations may be, without giving special consideration to culture and landscape of unique

Louisiana would be a mistake. If we still have to elevate then we have to find a way to help those who cannot afford it, we cannot ignore it.

Ms. Tina Horn gave an update on Cameron Parish insurance rating maps. She stated that the parish is planning an appeal and they are contracting with someone to help them change some of the zones on the maps. V zones go up into Lake Charles and a V zone is a high velocity zone with three foot waves, however during the storm, there were no three foot waves in that area. She stated that the parish feels like FEMA went over and beyond their requirements and there are a lot of definitions that they feel like they cannot live with. In a V zone you cannot have an agricultural building, which the parish cannot live with.

Mayor Roach stated that the FEMA representatives he met with understand or at least recognize the cultural impact of these regulations.

VII. Texas Housing Update

Mr. Mark Viator, Industrial Workforce Alliance Facilitator under the Southeast Texas Workforce Development Board, gave a Power Point presentation updating the Task Force on housing issues in Southeast Texas. Presentation is attached.

VIII. Louisiana Housing Update

Mr. Paul Rainwater, Executive Director of the Louisiana Recovery Authority, gave a Power Point presentation updating the Task Force on housing issues in Southwest Louisiana. Presentation is attached.

IX. Hazard Mitigation and Elevation Update

Mr. Casey Levy, State Hazard Mitigation Officer with the Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, gave a Power Point presentation to the Task Force updating them on hazard mitigation issues and process in Louisiana. Presentation is attached.

X. Natural Resources Update

Mr. Kris Van Orsdel, the Infrastructure Policy Director at the Louisiana Recovery Authority, gave a Power Point presentation to the Task Force updating them on natural resources issues in Louisiana. Presentation is attached. He stated that one of the main goals in natural resources has been to find additional monies from Congress to fund fisheries programs.

Mr. Chris Theriot stated he met with the Coast Guard about silt in the waters. He stated that FEMA said they will pick up anything that is sticking out of the water. They will only make one attempt to grab it. There is now a major silt issue because they have cut debris and spread it when the attempt to pick it up is unsuccessful. FEMA assured Mr. Theriot that they will not take on the silt issue but did infer that the LRA might have to go to DC to address the issue because

the Coast Guard and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries were in charge of taking care of this.

Mayor Randy Roach suggested that the way to do this is to prepare a resolution or outline what the Task Force needs to take action on. He stated that the Task Force could present it at the next board meeting and send to all federal agencies involved.

Mr. Paul Coreil stated that removal is the best thing we can do but asked what about those structures that cannot be removed. He asked if we are mapping them so that fisherman can avoid them in the water. Mr. Kris Van Orsdel stated that every item goes onto a map and all that information is turned over to the state and the public can have access to this map. Mr. Coreil then asked when the LRA expects the 1st round of grant and loan program to be disbursed. Mr. Van Orsdel stated that OCD staff is now in the field speaking to grantees and will follow up and get an answer.

XI. Closing

Mayor Randy Roach suggested that the Rita Task Force meet quarterly with meetings rotating between the affected parishes with the next meeting being in September in Cameron.

Mr. Paul Rainwater stated that the LRA staff is available to help local and parish officials at any time. The LRA is trying to focus on real results. We want to work with Texas partners with ideas to take to Washington. He said flood plain maps and marine debris along with a few other issues are of utmost importance.

XII. Public Comment

Ms. Donna Little, Small Business Development Center at McNeese State University, P.O. Box 90508, Lake Charles, LA 70609, stated that staff is available at her office to help businesses apply for the loan and grant program. There are a number of contractors to sit one on one with applicants and help them figure out how to help their business. It's a free service and confidential. She encouraged people to help spread the word. The deadline is July 18, so small businesses should apply now to beat the deadline.

Ms. Natalie Robinson (ADDRESS?) stated that there is a dirt pit turned into a landfill that they want to reopen. She stated they are meeting with DEQ to address their concerns. She said all the water being pumped into the landfill is contaminated and will affect the groundwater in their homes. She said the issue not only affects the residents but everyone who enjoys fishing and those south of Lake Charles. Ms. Nancy Higginbotham then came to the podium to state that this landfill was originally opened as a disaster dumping site after the storm where all the debris was taken to. It closed in September of 2007 and as of now they are trying to reopen this pit.

Mayor Randy Roach stated that the Task Force is not a Task Force that has any actual jurisdiction but it does exist to receive comment and transport this information to the appropriate agency. He said the Task Force is going to relay the message to DEQ.

Mayor Randy Roach then thanked everyone, LRA, Mr. Rainwater, members of the Task Force, and presenters. He stated that he wants to meet quarterly and around the affected parishes. He asked the members to please send all of their contact information to Mr. Rainwater and the LRA staff. He said the Task Force needs to remain action oriented and help speed this recovery process along.

XIII. Adjournment

Mayor Randy Roach adjourned the meeting.

Mr. Rainwater then encouraged everyone at the meeting to walk across the hall to attend Governor Jindal's press conference.