

LOUISIANA RECOVERY AUTHORITY

Rita Task Force Meeting

Lake Charles Civic Center

Lake Charles, LA

January 7, 2009

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Roach, Chairman of the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) Rita Task Force, called the meeting to order at 1:10 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

Ms. Shelly Appleby called the roll.

Board Members Present:

Mayor Randy Roach, Chairman
Mr. Tom Henning, Vice Chairman
Mr. Bryan Beam
Mr. Ernie Broussard
Rep. Chuck Kleckley
Ms. Tina Horn
Mr. Chris Landry
Mayor Ron Roberts
Ms. Stephanie Rodrigue
Mr. George Swift
Mr. Ben Taylor
Mr. Chris Theriot
Ms. Catherine Thomas
Mr. Mark Viator

Board Members Absent:

Dr. Paul Coreil
Rep. Joseph Deshotel
Mr. Carl Griffith
Dr. Andrea Lewis Miller
Mr. David Richard

Staff Members Present:

Mr. Paul Rainwater
Ms. Lynn Bankston
Mr. Darin Mann
Ms. Christina Stephens
Ms. Angela Vanveckhoven

III. READING & APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JUNE 13, 2008 MEETING

A motion was made by Mr. Ernie Broussard and seconded by Mr. George Swift to accept the minutes of the June 13, 2008 meeting as presented. Motion passed.

IV. CHAIRMAN OF THE RITA TASK FORCE REMARKS

Deferred.

V. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

VI. HURRICANES GUSTAV & IKE RECOVERY UPDATE

Mr. Paul Rainwater, Executive Director of the Louisiana Recovery Authority, gave a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation that covered challenges faced in 2008, status of Road, Gustav/Ike, DFIRMS, housing status, FEMA issues. Points of interest included:

2008 Challenges

- About 4,000 grants left to pay out in Road Home
- Launched 2 of the largest home elevation program in American history
- Over \$115 million spent in workforce investment
- Continue to streamline Long-Term Community project process; 1st project was the demolition of the former Sears Retail Store in Lake Charles
- Louisiana Land Trust – Road Home can transfer property to La. Land Trust per January, 2009 Attorney General opinion
- Gustav/Ike - more than 2/3rd of the state impacted resulting in a loss of 25 working days

Road Home

- Aggressively managing ICF – transition in June 2009 to smaller contractors
- Breakdown of Road Home selections & appeals

Gustav/Ike

- Individual assistance & housing update

Emergency Housing/DFIRMS

- FEMA refusing to fund construction of almost all of the new or replacement buildings in Cameron; dialogue ongoing regarding appeal on FEMA maps

The remaining part of the presentation focused on various statistics for displaced residents from Rita, Gustav & Ike, challenges of the Small Rental Program, low-income housing tax credits, FEMA public assistance programs. Sowela became a priority at the beginning of 2009, at which time they were in the 4th & final phase of the rebuilding effort. Status of the Alternative Housing Pilot Program was addressed and projects approved through the Long Term Community Recovery Funding program. Over \$16 million FEMA dollars allocated for Chennault Industrial Airport and the Lake Charles Regional Airport. Mr. Rainwater also reported on the positive dialogue between Louisiana officials and President Obama's transition team, which included discussions with potential FEMA director candidates.

Mr. Rainwater concluded the meeting with an overview of the Gustav/Ike Action Plan. The State will receive an estimated \$1.2 billion dollars from HUD. The State will allocate these funds directly to the impacted parishes based on housing and infrastructure damages. Parishes will be selected from a menu of options to include housing, infrastructure, agriculture and fisheries recovery and economic development.

The complete presentation can be found at www.lra.louisiana.gov under Recovery Task Forces.

VII. UPDATE ON AGRICULTURE LOSSES & IMPACTS FROM HURRICANES

Commissioner Mike Strain of the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry introduced his staff and thanked the LRA and Governor's Office for their tremendous leadership. Along with assistance from the Congressional delegation, the current administration was the 1st to allocate CDBG funding to farmers.

Dr. Strain gave an overview of the impacts of the 2005 & 2008 hurricane seasons.

- 3 year effect on citrus growth
- Over \$1 billion loss in 3 week period
- Looking at basin needs – working with USACE
- Storms hit at harvest time – inadequate crop insurance, which is much higher in La. than Iowa
- Farm Bill – payouts expected Oct/Nov of 2009; only pay 65% of what insurance did not cover
- Sugarcane: major loss of plant cane; federal government compounded problem by allowing import of sugar
- Soybeans, corn & cotton – lost over 50% of crops
- Rice – significant;
- Sweet potato – 75-80% loss
- Timber loss - \$100 million; timber on decline since Katrina/Rita
- Wheat – 50% yield compared to 2008; capital is huge problem for farmers
- Largest agricultural disaster in La. history due to Gustav & Ike

Dept. of Agriculture & Forestry responsible for providing fuel to state and local governments. Delivered hay, water and fuel to livestock evacuation sites. Department also very involved in emergency response of food distribution, such as MRE's, providing warehouse space for emergency response organizations.

Action Steps by Department: Meet with USDA Secretary in Washington, D.C. to help facilitate disaster recovery aid for agriculture; continued emergency response for agriculture producers.

Discussion:

Pet Evacuations: 95% went well. Housed 1604 pets with owners in Shreveport & Alexandria. Problems arose when shelter too full & had to separate owners & pets. Large animals, cattle on their own. Future plans will be to try and have human and animal shelters in close proximity to one another.

Southwest La. Farmers: Rep. Kleckley commented as to many farmers feeling “shorted” due to most funds being allocated to the Southeastern part of the state. Dr. Stain replied that allocations were based on where the losses occurred.

FARM Bill: Mayor Roach asked how can the Rita Task Force help support at the federal level:
1) Support LRA & CDBG – how we can set up funds.

The complete presentation can be found at www.lra.louisiana.gov under Recovery Task Forces.

VIII. DIGITAL FLOOD INSURANCE RATE MAP & COASTAL RECOVERY UPDATE

Jerome “Zee” Zeringue, Director of Planning & Programs in the Governor’s Office of Coastal Activities gave an update on Southwest La. projects. His overview included:

- a. Programs/Funding Sources
- b. Project Status
- c. Southwest Coastal Louisiana Feasibility Study – 1st phase 6 months – 1 year; complete study 2 years.

Feasibility Study: Study will update the vulnerability for storm surge of the southwest La. coast & ways to address. One problem is criteria developed by Corp in addressing issues in New Orleans – need to develop standards to phase in protection needed due to communities that cannot afford to build at one time. Study will address suggested use of levees in Southwest La. Comment made that we want to make sure that levees are not built where not needed – need to assure that the natural ecosystem is maintained. The study will not affect projects already identified.

Questions about study: (Mr. Trahan/Vermillion Parish) 1) As study is developed & if funding is there – can they proceed with projects identified for restoration and flood control? 2) Upon completion of study – when will appropriations actually be available?

Ms. Earnestine “Tina” Horn, Administrator of Cameron Parish gave an overview of status of recovery and issues in Cameron Parish. Points of interest included:

- d. Have come a long way – but still many obstacles remaining
- e. Population: 10,000 before Rita; at present 5,000
- f. Ernie Broussard asset for recovery process
- g. Building higher & stronger
- h. Many didn’t foresee another storm – didn’t expect for 50 years
- i. Biggest issue after Ike – harder for commercial fishermen; need temporary housing; they want to spend their saved money on permanent, not temporary, housing

FIRM Map – Cameron Parish: Cameron Parish has hired consultant to appeal FIRM maps, which is not the first time. It also happened back in the late 80’s – fought and were successful. Current proposed FEMA maps: 85% V Zone, 9% A & 6% X; FEMA is stating that no public rebuilds will occur (i.e., Johnson Bayou Community Center, schools, etc.). The conversion of A zone to V; increased cost of construction associated with building within V zones and federal assistance will be unavailable in V zones.

David Mitten of Lonnie Harper & Associates, consultant for Cameron Parish, presented more on strategy to appeal the DFIRM map issue.

Jennifer Jones, Assistant District Attorney for Cameron Parish, stated that Cameron was successful in bringing back a hospital after Rita. Cameron Parish Police Jury has asked Ms. Jones to look into what types of injunctions they can file against DFIRMS. Mayor Roach asked if they had considered a “taking”. Ms. Rodrigue commented that Rita CDBG funds should not be under eligibility requirements of DFIRMS.

IX. HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 180 PRESENTATION

Mayor Randy Roach asked that the Rita Task Force consider supporting House Concurrent Resolution 180. He stated that the cultural identify of Louisiana was developed by the coastal communities. He further commented that we have tried to explain the differences between storm surge and flooding to Washington. 80% of the world’s wetlands are located in Louisiana. If nothing is done, we won’t recognize coastal Louisiana in 20 years. Mayor Roach concluded by reading House Concurrent Resolution 180.

SOUTHEAST TEXAS RECOVERY – MARK VIATOR

Damage from Ike was worse than Rita. Sabine Pass going through same situation as Cameron Parish as to issue with DFIRM. The Bolivar Peninsula is in a similar situation. Suggested that all these communities should “link arms” and address as one voice.

The complete presentation can be found at www.lra.louisiana.gov under Recovery Task Forces.

X. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Cindy Richard stated that Dr. Paul Coreil is in Washington, D.C. and could not attend task force meeting but the Task Force has his full support of resolution.

XI. CLOSING REMARKS

None.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

4:20 P.M.