

RESTORE LOUISIANA TASK FORCE

April 21, 2017

**Louisiana State Capitol
House Committee Room 5**

Approved

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Jimmy Durbin called the meeting to order at 9:37 AM.

Mr. Durbin: As one of the co-chairs of the Restore Louisiana Task Force, welcome to our meeting today, to the public and task force members. We are so happy to see all of you here. I'm going to ask the clerk to call the roll. Ms. Dupont?

II. ROLL CALL

TASK FORCE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Johnny Bradberry
Mr. Roland Dartez
Mr. Jimmy Durbin
Mr. John Gallagher
Mr. Raymond Jetson
Mayor Dave Norris
Representative J. Rogers Pope
Dr. James Richardson
Mayor-President Joel Robideaux
Representative Rob Shadoin
Mayor Ollie Tyler

TASK FORCE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mr. Randy Cloutre (non-voting, ex-officio)
Mr. Michael Faulk
Representative Edward "Ted" James
Mr. Adam Knapp
Senator Dan "Blade" Morrish
Mr. Michael Olivier
Mr. Don Pierson
Mr. Sean Reilly
Commissioner Mike Strain
Dr. Shawn Wilson
Ms. Jacqui Vines Wyatt

Ms. Dupont: 11 members are present. Sir Chair, we do have a quorum.

LET THE RECORD SHOW THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS ARRIVED AFTER THE ROLL CALL:

Commissioner Mike Strain

SUPPORTING STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Patrick Forbes, Executive Director, Office of Community Development
Lori Dupont, Office of Community Development
Portia Johnson, Office of Community Development
Pat Witty, Louisiana Economic Development
Dan Rees, Office of Community Development
Adrienne Celestine, Office of Community Development
Casey Tingle, Governor's Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness

III. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

~ February 24, 2017

~ March 17, 2017

~ March 31, 2017

Mr. Durbin: Thank you, Madam Clerk. Okay, since we have a quorum we will be able to take care of business today, as long as we maintain this quorum. We have a 21-member task force. We have 11 members present so we do have a quorum. Third item on the agenda is approval of the minutes, of prior meetings. Those meetings have taken place, those minutes have been provided to each of you. We are going to take them one at a time. Minutes of the February 24, 2017 meeting.

Mr. Jetson: Motioned.

Mr. Dartez: Seconded.

Mr. Durbin: All in favor signify by saying aye.

All members: Aye.

Mr. Durbin: Any opposition? There being none, move to the second item of minutes, March 17, 2017.

Mr. Jetson: Motioned.

Mr. Gallagher: Seconded.

Mr. Durbin: All in favor signify by saying aye.

All members: Aye.

Mr. Durbin: Any opposition? There being none, move to the March 31, 2017 minutes.

Mayor Tyler: Motioned.

Mayor Norris: Seconded.

Mr. Durbin: All in favor signify by saying aye.

All members: Aye.

Mr. Durbin: Any opposition? There being none, moving to item four on our agenda.

IV. CHAIRPERSON OPENING REMARKS

~ Jimmy Durbin, Restore Louisiana Task Force Co-Chair

Mr. Durbin: If you think I'm moving too fast, I am told that there is several of our members that may need to leave early for whatever reason, so we are going to move along. This item is chairperson opening remarks. I'm going to make some remarks and then I will open it up for the committee here if any of you want to make any of your own individual remarks, you may. Having read an article in the Advocate this morning, I feel compelled to make a few remarks as chairperson and as a member of this committee. By the way, this is our 12th committee meeting. I was a mayor of the City of Denham Springs, a small community to the east of Baton Rouge for 12 years. As mayor, I had to deal with the effects of four hurricanes and federal money that came to the city of Denham Springs, having learned and worked very hard to learn the process of keeping very detailed records. We went through subsequent audits, the city of Denham Springs, even after I left as mayor. And those, because of the detailed records, we were able to pass those audits with flying colors. But that is because of very detailed audits of labor and materials and so forth. That wasn't a lot of money. That was probably \$10 million for the city of Denham Springs. Livingston Parish went through a very terrible experience of dealing with a contingency contract for removal of debris, storm debris and because of various reasons were zeroed on a \$60 million application by Livingston for reimbursement. FEMA zeroed Livingston Parish in years past for 60 million. That had to be swallowed by a lot of contractors, the parish, and others. I've tried, as a Chairperson, to learn the federal process. It is a very detailed process dealing with HUD. If this task force and the governor and the state of Louisiana did not follow the mandates, the federal government mandates coming down from HUD, explicitly, then down the road, years down the road, there may be issues that would surface because of not complying explicitly with the federal contract. HUD controls by early on the guidelines, they prepare guidelines send to the state, to the Office of Community Development and I've watched this take place, been involved with it. Then an action plan is designed, quickly off OCD has designed following HUD's recommendations and guidelines which is mandated explicitly and returned those action plans ahead of schedule. And HUD subsequently has approved the action plans eventually leading to a letter of credit, if you want to use that term, or a contract with the state for draw down on the federal money. That's where we are right now. IEM has been approved by OCD. The contract is proceeding to be executed, things are moving quickly folks. I just want to let everyone know from my own personal opinion that I am very satisfied with the governor's office and the Office of Community Development in handling the requirements of the federal guidelines. I am very satisfied, but I speak from my own personal view. That's the end of my comment. Anyone else on this committee wishing to make comments? Let me turn you on first. Okay.

Mr. Durbin opened the floor for comments from the task force members.

Rep. Shadoin: When our Governor went to Washington DC, to again for the umpteenth time, plead and cajole and ask for additional money to help our people, he was subjected to a committee hearing, where I felt like there was untruths being told, and foundational statements being made that were not true. And he was chastised, as well as members of this committee, for not getting the money to our people faster than we could and did. I had to ask early on for the right pair of scissors to cut through the red tape. And it just takes a while which is very frustrating sitting here when you're hearing about programs that seemed to take priority over people. We cannot and have not distributed money until it arrived, week before last. That is why nothing has been distributed to our folks. And for him to be subject, and this committee to be subject, to that kind of partisan politics is a great example of what's wrong with the political system now. Our system's not bad, but the people who get in there, who pledged allegiance to a party over their oath of office to the people, and I part ways with them there. Please know that we have beat every deadline that Uncle Sam has handed down by weeks at times, right, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Durbin: Yes.

Rep. Shadoin: So it's not us that have been waiting, but it is the absolute miles and miles of red tape that we have been trying to navigate. And finally, finally, there is some relief coming, and I do know that there is still work on \$2 billion more, and we hope that will come to the relief of the people. If I seem passionate about it, I am. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mayor Norris: One thing I would like my friends that were impacted by the March event, as opposed to the August event, had it not been for our governor's intervention, the March event occurred, everybody added up the numbers, and they said we're not eligible for relief for assistance, and we get a lot of help, a lot of conversation, but basically, the appropriation that the governor was able to get, included us only because he worked to make sure that the people in the March event were included with the people in the August event. Had he not done that, you and I wouldn't have been down here for these meetings. And you wouldn't have been here because we weren't included in that declaration for that event. So when we complain it's been over a year, actually, it hasn't been over a year. It's been over a year since the event, but it's not been nearly that long since our parish is the ones that were specifically involved in March event only, have been added to the federal declaration. So the governor deserves, and his staff deserve, a huge hand, because he did that and took that step. A second thing is, sometimes at the local level, all we deal with other representative of federal agency, FEMA, in particular. But we also deal with folks from Community Development, and everybody has rules that they have to go by that they didn't make, they just have to enforce them. So we end up getting a little ticked off sometimes with some of the people that come, especially FEMA people come and go a little bit. You might be working with somebody and then they're reassigned somebody else, somewhere else. And then somebody new comes in, and you think, well, we've already done this, we've talked about this. And the regulations are very complicated, that it's hard to understand them. But we've had good service in my opinion from the people that'll come to our area, but they labor under a set of rules that they did not necessarily make in having an input in. And to your point about politics over serving the people of Louisiana, when our own people go to Washington, and in public criticize the efforts that our governor is making on our behalf, and it appears for political reasons. If I had felt like the governor had not done a very good job, and I had been called to go there, I would've talked to him and said, I think you should have done this a little differently in private. You don't go as a representative of Louisiana, and hurt your own efforts to try to get some relief for your people. Politics shouldn't have gotten involved in that. And I appreciate what the governor is doing, I appreciate what Pat and other staff members, Jimmy you have been a great leader for this organization and for this group. I think we need to all pull together when we have a disaster in our state.

Mr. Jetson: Just very briefly, Mr. Chairman, many years ago when I served in this body and was sitting in rooms like this, one bit of advice that I would often share is to avoid, at all cost, getting into a urinating contest with a skunk, because even if you win, you lose, and unfortunately, in this context, the only folks who are ending up with the stench on them are the people who deserve a whole lot better than they are getting in this process. And so, while we are arguing about political processes and people's aspirations, unfortunately, people who have suffered immeasurably are seemingly getting lost in all of these, are unfortunately from time to time, used as pawns to advance somebody else's agenda. And so my hope is that at some point, we can move beyond the mindless bickering that is so easy to see through that it is pathetic, and get to a point where the interest of the people who have suffered much remains the priority for everyone. Who has put their hand on a bible especially, and held their hand, and promised to do their best for the people of this state.

Mayor Tyler: Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. I would be remised if I did not echo the sentiments of the previous speakers, and say that our governor, the staff at the state department have done a yeoman job. And trying to make sure that we met really way ahead of time, all of the deadlines, lightning speed I would say, to make sure that we try to provide the citizens in this state the help they needed. And I hope that our people in Louisiana, remember, when it's time to put people

back in office, what has happened during this crisis here in our state. And I hope that they don't forget that those who are serving, and serving with passion and with commitment, are the people that they need to have an office. And so, I, too, am passionate. I think Representative Shadoin probably expressed my sentiments. I feel that this task force has worked diligently, with our governor, to ensure that we're doing everything we possibly can to access resources so that we can serve those who are hurting today. But let us not forget that election time is coming for those who have forgotten who elected them. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Durbin: Thank you, Mayor. Alright, one last thing is to remind everyone that's watching by media, here, news media, newspapers, please help inform the public to go to the website. You complete the process that will help these individuals that are suffering from flooding. That website is restore.la.gov. I know a lot of people living in Livingston Parish, where I live, that are working very hard to comply with filling out, completing the survey that gets them in the door. Please, wherever you are watching, follow up to help yourselves and recommend that website to others that you know have suffered loss. If you were impacted by the flood, please take the Homeowner Flood Damage Survey on that website, restore.la.gov. If in taking the survey, you find yourself in a later phase than you think you should be, keep in mind we have a limited amount of funding and are prioritizing the most vulnerable, the elderly and disabled who have the greatest needs. In addition, we are also working to begin the roll out of programs for small businesses and landlords affected by the flooding. We will have some additional details on these for you today and more in the future. Remember, our focus is always to bring Louisiana residents home as quickly as possible. Thank you. Moving to item five on our agenda, governor's office update. We have Julie Baxter Payer who works for Governor John Bill Edwards. Welcome.

Mr. Durbin closed the floor for comments.

V. GOVERNOR'S OFFICE UPDATE

~ Julie Baxter Payer, Deputy Chief of Staff, Communications/Legal/Special Projects

Ms. Payer: It's good to be with you today. We've had a very eventful three weeks since the last time that we met in Shreveport. We opened the homeowner program at 7AM on the morning of Monday, April 10th. Within the first 48 hours we had thousands of people who had completed the survey, just in the first couple of days. Later that day, that Monday April 10th, around 4PM we received the email from HUD saying that we were now able to access the funds from Congress for the first time. So that was a big day, April 10th, for the homeowners and the citizens of Louisiana. We selected a contractor to manage this program. We are finalizing negotiations with that contractor which is IEM. We believe that will be finalized this week and Pat will have more on that in his update. We selected a Quality Assurance Quality Control contractor to check accountability in the program and, as the chair was referencing, making sure that everything is in compliance with the federal guidelines. And most of all, a top quality program for homeowners, and good relationships with our homeowners. Conn Reznick is the contractor for the Quality Assurance Quality Control piece. In the time since that Monday, April 10th, we have had, as of this morning, nearly 15,000 people have filled out that survey, so 14,910 I think was the last number I saw this morning, a lot of people. We are very encouraged by that, but I want to put a little pause on that to say that we know that we believe somewhere close to 90,000 homeowners had FEMA-verified loss. So we're here today as the chair said to ask every homeowner who was flooded to sign up and complete the survey. You can do it online at restore.la.gov or you can take it by phone at 1(866)735-2001 and that number is on the website so 1(866)735-2001 and I will just say this, even if you've already rebuilt, please take the survey. Even if you're in the process of rebuilding. Even if you had flood insurance and you've heard our message that we currently do not have enough funds from Congress to spread the assistance to people who had flood insurance, we need to know what your current recovery need is. Do you need reimbursement? Do you need additional construction to finish out your home? Do you need some of both? Are you home? Are you still living away from the home where you flooded? We have close to 90,000 homeowners like I said who filed for FEMA individual assistance, saying their home was flooded in the March or the August floods and had FEMA verified loss. We have 193,000 families total that were impacted by the flood, we have 112,000 of those that had FEMA verified loss. And again some of those were homeowners, some of those were renters. You've heard some questions in the last couple of weeks about how many people are displaced in Louisiana. This survey is giving us the most up to date answer on that question and I want you to just think for a minute about your families and your friends that you know, your family members. When they completed their house to whatever stage they're comfortable to go home, did they register with anyone? Do they tell their flood insurance policy, okay I've got enough flooring in or I've got enough cabinets or finally I've got the draw pulls in so I'm ready. People don't register at that stage. That is why it's very difficult to answer that question. There is no agency that tracks those particular amounts, but we went and asked GOHSEP to look and gather every number that we could to see what is the most, the best guesstimate we can make of homeowners. And so we currently have 161 families left

in TSA, transitional sheltering assistance, that's the FEMA funded hotels. If you've been listening through the 12 committee meetings that we've had. Around December or so, I was telling you that number was around 1,300 families. There has been a very concerted effort by FEMA and the state to work family by family to find long term housing solutions. So this week had a conference call with Parish, OEP directors, to say we have received a letter from FEMA saying that May 10th may be the last day we have TSA. We will continue to ask for extensions and we are, but if that were to be the last day, what emergency measures can we bring together to try to help those families? We do not want anyone to not have a solution after the FEMA funded hotel. And so we're bringing in Parish OEP Directors. Letting them know who's in a hotel in their Parish. Who was originally was from their Parish that may want to return and they're helping us. We did talk to some private sector folks who are going to help us to see if they can help with some affordable units to try to help families. I will tell you, at the task force, this is very difficult, and these are families. We have 36 families that have 6 to 12 people in them. They're large-sized families, so it's difficult to find a living unit without income affordability. We also have some issues with access and functional needs. We have some issues with substance abuse, or mental health issues in some cases, some cases problems with a background check in a small number of cases. So these are difficult problems we are working through but there is an effort and so we are working on that. So 161 families still in TSA. 1,700 families receiving continued rental assistance from FEMA after the flood. 24 families in MHUs of manufactured housing units on group sites. 498 in MHUs on commercial sites. 3,626 in MHUs on private sites. We have 131 families who've been able to find rental units through FEMA's Multifamily Lease and Repair program, where FEMA helped landlords put property back on the market and rent at affordable rates. And we've tried to make an estimate, the most educated estimate we can, of how many people are living with family and friends. At the peak when FEMA was registering people with individual assistance. Some 40,000 people said to FEMA at that time, back in August when they were registering in September, I'm living with family and friends. That's the last time they've checked in with FEMA on that issue, if they're not in an MHU or TSA. And so we tried to reduce that number, GOHSEP looked at the issue, and reduced it by the same amount that TSA has been reduced over time. And so the estimate is that we have perhaps 1,524 families who are living with families and friends if we take that same number. We think that's probably low. So the survey underway right now is probably the best estimate of that number. And I know Pat hates us to give some of these numbers in the middle of the process because we only have 14,000 or close to 15,000 this morning out of 90,000 homeowners in the Homeowner's Assistance Program that's filled out the survey but I just want to give you a sense, one of the questions asks, are you back in your home? Out of 14,917 who've taken the survey this morning 2,651 because of the way they answered previous questions, were not asked to answer that question. But of the 12,000 or so who were asked to answer that, 7,856 households said they were back at home, and 4,410 said we were not. A question of are you interested in rebuilding? Out of 14,917 people, 13,000 families said yes, and 1,915 said no. Just a sense, that's a partial, sort of sample, but just so you can see what we're seeing in the survey. And very good information for us to give to Congress to say the need is still unfulfilled. We still need additional money. So together with all the numbers, we know and what I've just shared with you remembering that our families are not registering with anyone when they complete construction or enough to move back home. We estimate roughly 7,665 families or at least 19,929 people are living away from the home where they lived during the flood. We think that might be low, but that's the best guesstimate that we can make, and this is March and August. But far too many families, even if that number is accurate. So we continue to work day and night for those families because we want everyone home. We've had some questions as a home owner program opened, we had some questions about okay, what help is there for renters, what help is there for small businesses. So I just want to refer you and the audience here today and the folks on the web this will be available on the web today. And we have some copies here to decide for folks we may need it. But we have opened then Homeowner Assistance Program, and in your binders you have copies if people are interested here. Information about the four rental-assistance programs that are going to be opening up over the next couple of months. Again, as with the Homeowner Assistance Programs, the federal government does not allow us to just cut checks to people, only in very limited cases. It's not the same as it was in storms ten years ago. In the cases of reimbursement, we will be helping homeowners with some checks for eligible construction. Again, we need more money to be able to fully reimburse people for the amount they spend, but we're working towards that. So the bulk of the rental assistance money that we've received from Congress. I believe we'll be using about \$130 million of what we've had access to, now \$1.6 billion, for rental assistance. It will go to help landlords put more affordable rental units on the market. And I just want to go through quickly those four programs. The Restore Louisiana Neighborhood Landlord Rental Program, there's a flyer on that, it'll help landlords that had one to seven units that flooded and want to repair and commit to renting affordably. We have the Multi-Family Gap Restoration Program, it'll help landlords who have multi-family structures of 20 or more units that flooded and want to be able to repair and rent affordably. We have some supports for people with disabilities in the Permanent Supportive Housing Program. And we have the Rapid Rehousing Program as well that through our disaster case management people who would like to find an affordable unit can call disaster case management. All of these programs will be administered through the LHC, that's the Louisiana Housing Corporation. They are beginning workshops around the state over the next three to four weeks. The information on the dates of those workshops we don't have locations for all of them, but it will be on Louisiana Housing Corporation's website. The dates

are on these flyers we have. They'll be up on the website as well. And landlords can attend and see how they can receive loan assistance. Renters who need help can call disaster case management, and Louisiana Housing Corporation. Again, a good place to start for questions on rental assistance. That number is 763-8700, its 763-8700 for the Louisiana Housing Corporation or toll free, its 1-888-454-2001. The Louisiana Housing Corporation toll free number is 1-888-454-2001. The Small Business Assistance Program, we also have one flier on that, will be run through our Office of Community Development. Lenders are all being qualified, we've told you about that in past meetings. These community lenders will help make low interest loans from \$20,000 to \$50,000 available to eligible small businesses for working capital and for funds to repair or replace movable equipment and machinery. Assistance for construction related to expenses will not be available through this program. And if you ask me why, I would tell you what we hate having to repeat over and over, we do not have enough funds to have a full, sustainable recovery yet from Congress. So again, we continue to work towards that. So please go to restore.la.gov to see the information sheets that are in your binders for the task force members. And more information on rental assistance and small business. I want to bring your attention to two FEMA letters that are in your binders as well and just make sure that the public is aware. These are April 10th and April 11th. These were denials we received from FEMA for some of the ongoing requests that we've asked for. First of all, after the February tornadoes, we asked for individual assistance in some parishes that did not initially receive it. Individual assistance being those grants from FEMA that people can apply for in the March and August floods it was up to \$33,000. They again, reaffirmed the denial of the Governor's, FEMA did, of the Governor's appeal of the initial denial for individual assistance for Ascension, St. James and St. Tammany. And also denied, again, after the appeal, public assistance program for this storm. They said the damage was not of the severity and magnitude as to warrant that designation. They denied direct temporary housing assistance in New Orleans, FEMA did. Said that there was a sufficient number of existing rental resources within the fair market rent there in New Orleans. I will tell you that we have been meeting with Louisiana Housing Corporation, the Governor's office has, to make sure that if there is a cry of homelessness or inability to find affordable place to live after tornadoes that we would make sure we had resources there. We are being told we're not hearing that, and at the same time there are some assistance measures that we are going to roll out. We're pushing to roll out more to help people make sure they have long term affordable housing units. But we believe that there's some good organizations there in New Orleans meeting a lot of the need right now post-tornados. With respect for our request, the Governor's request to waive the state and local cost share in the March and August 2016 flood recovery. They told us it was under review on April 10th and April 11th we were told the request is denied, so that cost share will not be waived. We asked for that, the governor did, from both of the administration and FEMA and to the president directly. We also finally, we asked about the NFIP penalty for public facilities that if they were in a flood plain, they did not have flood insurance. Facilities like schools, first responder facilities, before they can access public assistance there's a typically \$500,000 penalty that FEMA charges them. And it makes it very difficult for some of these multi building campuses to recover. And FEMA said it is constrained by the law and it is not seeking a change to that law right now. This is a change that the Governor has repeatedly asked for in many requests to the Congressional Delegation in a February letter with attachments that we've shown this task force. It goes along with the other requests that the Governor's been making for the environmental review waiver, for the low to middle income requirement to be 50% instead of 70%. And also for the SBA loan duplication, that is such a problem for home owners that we are asking for relief and asking our Congressional Delegation to work on that as well. So I wanted to update you on that. One update too, and Mayor Tyler, you had asked about this from the March flood survivors who missed FEMA's deadline. And I know Casey Tingle is here from GOHSEP, if we have any in-depth questions on this later. But there was a question from LA Spirit, the mental health counselors from our LDH, she said they were running into people who flooded in the March flood who had not signed up for FEMA for individual assistance in time before the application deadline closed. And GOHSEP collected the numbers from the LA Spirit team and there's about 294 families I believe that LA Spirit has come across that are in that situation. We have the parish breakdown that we can get you, for example 54 families from 35 from. There are nine parishes altogether where those families live. And what GOHSEP is saying, it may be somewhat of a longshot for FEMA to offer individual assistance to those families now. But we will certainly work with Louisiana Spirit and FEMA and ask FEMA to allow those applicants to register with the understanding that FEMA's going to need some information on why their applications were late. Then, a review would take place and we would want LA Spirit and Disaster Case Management to help communicate and assist at the point of contact with the survivor. But GOHSEP is going to follow up on that process as well.

Mayor Tyler: Thank you.

Ms. Payer: You're welcome. And finally, just before we move on to the resolution. Very important week coming up ahead. It's very important that you know that this coming week is the week in which we expect that congress will vote on a continuing resolution for the coming months of this federal budget year. We need an additional \$2.08 billion to fulfill the full request that the Governor made for sustainable recovery of \$3.7 billion. I want to remind everyone that the economic impact of this, the low end estimate is \$8.7 billion to our state. So the Governor is requesting \$3.7 billion from the Federal Government, we have just this week before this received access to \$1.6 billion. We cannot express strongly enough how

important it is that we as a state, and as a Louisiana family stand together and impress upon Congress our need for this additional \$2 billion. We need enough money to help more homeowners and to help homeowners more fully. We need enough money for a sustainable recovery. We believe that with 1.6 billion that we received just last week from Congress of the \$3.7 billion that we can help about 36,500 families of the 90,000 homeowners who had FEMA verified loss. 80% of the money we received we are putting into homeowner assistance in that homeowner assistance program. We've put a significant portion of the money towards also providing more affordable rentals, helping small businesses. Paying all local government match for their FEMA assistance after the March and August floods to help each one of our communities in that way. But we will need our Congressional Delegation to help and to urge other congressmen and women to help us with an environmental review waiver. We need that language in a legislative fix. The ability to spread more widely beyond low to moderate income families, asking that they put language in the legislation to allow us to spend 50% of our money on low to moderate income, rather than a required 70% right now. Some help for the SBA loan duplication of benefits problem that will keep our state from using this federal money to help people pay off their SBA loans that they took to move forward or will keep our state from helping people as much we'd like, if they took an SBA loan. So, I would ask that you please contact your Congressman, that you ask them to fight for another \$2 billion from this vote, coming up sometime we believe before April 28th. And ask our Congressional Delegation to introduce the legislative fixes that will help us get these waivers we so desperately need to save time and money, so that we can put more dollars into the Homeowner Assistance program. I want you to know that the governor's office and the Office of Community Development originally started asking for help on this environmental review in October. And conversations may have happened before that, but we have our initial letter asking for that in October. So this is very important for the people. Thank you again, we remain strong together, and I say that so importantly. Together we remain strong, and we need to all be working day and night to bring residents home as quickly as possible. That's my update, I'm happy to take any questions and we can move to the resolution too if we have a quorum.

Mr. Durbin opened the floor for questions.

Rep. Pope: Julie, I have one quick question. The letter that you referenced in April 11th where there was the denial, is that going to be appealed or is there any talk about appealing that? I know we have 30 days, according to the letter I'm reading. The reason I ask that is, and I'll use schools as an example, if every building in that, I think I'm correct in this, every building is subject to a \$500,000 penalty, every building.

Ms. Payer: If there was no flood insurance in place, right.

Rep. Pope: That's correct, and I'm going to take one example in my parish and that's Denham Springs High School, there are multiple buildings on our school sites. If they have to come up with that \$500,000 for each building, that one site is going to be responsible for \$4 million just to pay that off and certainly I know that you all are doing everything that you can, I'm not throwing stones at anybody here, other than we do need help. I would hope that the federal government and our congressional delegation would understand that they really need to make sure they do something with that. I would encourage you, if you haven't, please appeal that one.

Ms. Payer: I will definitely take that to the Governor and I will tell you that in this week we've had correspondence with Senator Cassidy's office, specifically asking about that NFIP, and we sent language in February to the Congressional Delegation about the had been used on precedent, it was only applicable after Katrina. But it's in language that we believe would be helpful to be inserted, and so we have been in conversation this week with Senator Cassidy's office about that. Also, they've represented that they've been in conversations, as the governor has with the Office of Management and Budget, for the recommendations from the Trump administration's budget director. And so we hope that, that's effective.

Rep. Pope: I have no doubts you all have done everything that you can. I would just encourage you to continue what you are doing and I appreciate what you have done.

Mr. Dartez: Good Morning, Julie. First off I want to echo what the folks said at the beginning of the meeting. I've been at my job since 2000, so I've been through all 14 of the disasters you all have in the resolution and I'm glad to see the resolution because it pinpoints a lot of the issues and the struggles that from a parish perspective that we've had. So, we are very proud of that. I just, two quick questions, one on those nine north Louisiana parishes that missed the deadline, what is the gap in between, let's say we request through OEP or whoever we got a request from FEMA, what was the deadline? What did they miss I guess is what I'm asking.

Ms. Payer: It's my understanding and I'm going to ask Casey to come to give you the specifics, but after each storm, there's a deadline several months later for filling out the applications. And then there's a case by case sort of review if there's special reasons why somebody missed it. So, I don't know the exact deadlines on the March.

Casey Tingle with GOHSEP approached the witness table.

Mr. Tingle: Casey Tingle with GOHSEP. I'll have to follow up with you on both of the deadlines for both March and August because both of them, I believe were originally extended beyond the initial 60 day deadline that FEMA's has as the standard. And so, I'll have to get back to you on the exact deadlines, but at least for the March event, we're several months beyond the deadline that it was extended to. And that's what creates a little bit of the issue that we're trying to address.

Mr. Dartez: I was at the Shreveport meeting and I remember the issue coming up but I also remember you all talked about you all have requested some extensions and I know that the LMA and the Police Jury Association, in cooperation with your office, would get all that information out, so unfortunately some members of the public missed those deadlines but I would say a good 90, if there's how many families you said? 200 and some odd?

Ms. Payer: Its 294 families.

Mr. Dartez: So they missed the deadline. We don't even know if they are eligible, correct?

Ms. Payer: That is correct.

Mr. Dartez: Okay so there may be some folks that have already been eligible, but I'm proud to say that getting the word out we got at least 99% of the folks who were eligible on the record and in the process of getting some assistance. The second one, you talked about the resolution and asking our delegations support when the vote comes in about ten days, is that money in the resolution or we need to request to add it and then vote yes for it?

Ms. Payer: Are you talking about the \$2 billion?

Mr. Dartez: Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Payer: It's my understanding, just in unconfirmed conversations, in talk, that perhaps there is some money for Louisiana being talked about. I do not have a number. I do not have the \$2 billion assurance. I do not know what the final number will be. And so again, this is why from Louisiana, we urge the public and elected officials of Louisiana to really make known to our Congressional delegation; to press hard in these final days for as close to the \$2 billion dollars as we can.

Mr. Dartez: Okay, the reason I asked was we stand ready. I'm sure the LMA folks as well to get our mayors and parish presidents to fire something off ASAP because we're actually having all this, we were with ten parishes last night in Bienville Parish of north Louisiana impacted. And then this coming Wednesday, I'm going to be with 20 parish presidents, so that's what I want to bring to them to get to ask. And we have, from a parish perspective, we have Bud Carson and Jim Nickel, they represent us on a national level. So, we want to get them on that as well. So, if we could clarify if the money's there, how much, if not, tell us what to ask for, and then vote for the money.

Ms. Payer: The money needs to be put there so we do need you to just make this simple ask for, two things that we need are the \$2.08 billion that remain in the request that the governor made and we need those four waivers that we've talked about, and those are language fixes, the Environmental Review. We need legislation in the Appropriations Bill to say that for homes that are not in a floodplain that are individual house by house cases, where we don't expect the footprint of the house to change, we need environmental review. I can send all of you the language again. It's in letters we've sent to you before, but I'll be glad to resend it out so you can forward on to your contacts in Congress.

Mr. Dartez: This is just a basic snapshot of exactly what we need and bam we can hit it. Thank you for all of your hard work.

Ms. Payer: And thank you, I know that your two associations have done a lot in the past and it's been very helpful and thank you for what you are doing.

Commissioner Strain: Good morning, Ms. Julie. Do you think it would be beneficial if we passed another resolution from this body or send a letter exactly outlining that we are herein requesting the \$2.08 billion and the four waivers?

Ms. Payer: We certainly can, if you pass it, I will type it up and send it.

Commissioner Strain: Mr. Chairman, at the appropriate time, I'd like to make a resolution that we send a letter or pass a resolution to ask formally for the \$2.08 billion and the four waivers be placed in the CR.

Mr. Durbin: Motion by Strain, do we have a second?

Mayor Norris: Seconded.

Mr. Durbin: All in favor of the resolution as presented, say aye.

All members present: Aye.

Mr. Durbin: Any opposition? There is none. Thank you, Commissioner Strain.

Mayor Norris: I think we ought to make a note since a number of people are not here today that we poll everybody on the commissioner so that assuming everybody would want to sign that letter that it would have everybody's name on it rather than just those that are here. Would that be appropriate?

Mr. Durbin: Sure will. Alright, Madam Clerk, would you call the roll on the resolution by Commissioner Strain individually?

Ms. Dupont called the roll for the resolution motioned by Commissioner Strain.

Mr. Bradberry: Approve
Mr. Dartez: Approve
Mr. Durbin: Approve
Mr. Gallagher: Approve
Mr. Jetson: Approve
Mayor Norris: Approve
Rep. Pope: Approve
Dr. Richardson: Approve
Mayor-President Robideaux: Approve
Commissioner Strain: Approve
Mayor Tyler: Approve

Ms. Dupont: 11 members have approved, Sir Chair.

Mr. Durbin: Thank you. 11 members makes it a quorum?

Ms. Dupont: It is a quorum.

Mayor Norris: I would go and ask everybody who is not here before we send the letter so that it would be signed by everybody on the commissioner that is willing to sign it. Is that inappropriate, or?

Mr. Dartez: From the public meeting standpoint, I think we can request that they support what we have passed. They can't actually vote on the resolution, but yes sir, they can support.

Mayor Norris: We vote that we want that resolution to be passed, then I think when we write it as a letter, rather than say it then, everybody ought to have a chance to sign it because otherwise somebody might misinterpret that the resolution that only 11 out of 21 supported it, and everybody needs a chance to support it.

Mr. Durbin: Julie, you will work with Lori to put together a resolution?

Ms. Payer: Yes.

Mr. Bradberry: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, two comments. One, Julie, the 161 families left without a housing solution, in your opinion, how serious are they in that situation?

Ms. Payer: They're very difficult cases. I mean if they were able to be sorted out before now I think they would've been. But I will tell you this, I'm so impressed with the concentration by FEMA teams. We've met every two weeks a nine member FEMA state combined team has worked with each family, they go into the hotels. They're meeting with them weekly if not daily. The LA Spirit's been in. We just applied every resource we can. Some of it is just income affordability. And they just were very precariously housed before the storm and they don't have an income and it's difficult to find a long term solution for them that they can afford. I'll tell you, I don't want to name the company because they're in talks with Louisiana Housing Corporation. But there are some private companies that have said if we can help with some affordable units and I'd encourage any other private folks that can help. We do have some rapid rehousing money that Pat can touch on in a little bit that Louisiana Housing Corporation has that can help for some period of time to house them. But it's difficult there are some background check issues, and some substance abuse and some serious mental health issues, that where they would need more permanent supporting housing type solutions it's hard.

Mr. Bradberry: I'm just wondering if there's hope for these people or are we going to have these 161 families on the street basically.

Ms. Payer: Well, we're doing everything we can so that that doesn't happen and we're certainly asking FEMA to extend the deadline. Casey, I know Casey, drafts all the letters with the work that we have been doing to show FEMA that we do merit an extension, so if you want to touch on some of the efforts.

Mr. Tingle: Sure. As it related to TSA, obviously we've made a lot of progress. We're left with, as Julie mentioned, very difficult situations in order to be able to match up family situations with available resources to place them into and for a variety of reasons. FEMA's last extension to us, letter, did not include the standard language on how to request the next extension, and just indicated that the program would be terminated on May the 10th. We still intend to request an extension to that for at least an additional 30 days. I would say that we have some opportunities to reduce the existing number by the May 10th deadline and certainly taking every effort to do so, assuming that we won't get any extension. But at this time, we I don't think we're able to project that we're going to be able to find a workable solution for all those families, which is why the extension will be required and requested.

Mr. Bradberry: How do you feel about getting an extension?

Mr. Tingle: I'm cautiously optimistic.

Mr. Bradberry: Sure you're not a politician?

Mr. Tingle: It's going to be challenging but I think the engagement that we've had thus far to get to where we are, the progress that we've made, certainly supports that. And the unique situations that we find ourselves, these families find

themselves in, that don't allow them to easily be connected with existing resources would support that as well. I would hope that those things would be recognized and supported.

Mr. Bradberry: Thank you. The second point I have, Mr. Chairman, is directed towards Julie, I understand you are moving on.

Ms. Payer: I have accepted a position as Executive Counsel for the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs and I wasn't going to make it public here today but it's my hardest part of that is stepping away from you all in the recovery work, and I just want to say that working with the Office of Community Development, is just about the best people in the world you can work with in the Governor's Office, so thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Mr. Bradberry: I want to take this opportunity for myself, not speaking for the rest of the board, but thank you for the hard and diligent work. You have been exceptional at what you have done and you brought a lot of value to the effort, and I thank you personally for all of that.

Ms. Payer: Thank you. I won't be far, and you may see me again, I'll be supporting.

Mr. Bradberry: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mayor Norris: May I ask you one question? He could have just spoken for all of us, we all feel the same way. So, Mr. Bradberry, was kind enough to make that comment but I think everybody agrees with that. That wasn't the question I had though. On the issue of the environmental review, that has to be enacted by Congress, correct?

Ms. Payer: It does because HUD is saying it cannot do it internally. I know you've read some comments recently that says it's not a legislative fix. I don't know any other way to fix it right now, if there is an alternative compliance we're open to that, if there is a different way to word it from the language that we suggested. HUD is saying we have to have a change in the law before we can let you waive those reviews.

Mayor Norris: That has the potential to really slow down the process in my opinion. Pat may disagree with that but I think them having to do that to the extent that we have to do it is really going to slow down the progress of the program. Is that right?

Mr. Forbes: Pat Forbes, Louisiana Office of Community Development. Yes, sir, it is a 45 day process and it has to occur. You all have heard all this before I know but I will say it again, once people apply they have to stop work until we get this environmental review done. So we're talking about the, we're doing environmental reviews ahead of time to prevent that, but it's just another obstacle to getting people's houses rebuilt. I will also mention something that Ms. Baxter Payer said earlier about the Economic Development Program and why we don't lend for construction. That is again, because of the environmental reviews that are required to go do construction and the cost of that makes it cost prohibitive to actually go deliver the program. So, instance, after instance, after instance, yes sir, the environmental reviews slow us down. I will clarify why congress has to do this, it is because in the disaster recovery legislation that is generally passed, the language says the secretary of HUD may waive any regulations that they think are inhibiting their ability to deliver this program efficiently, and then they list exceptions. One of those exceptions is always environmental review. The only thing that we're trying to get, is for that exception to be removed. And we're not even asking for all environmentals, we want to do environmental reviews on big projects where it's important. We're asking for a very specific subset, which is single family dwellings that don't change a footprint.

Mayor Norris: But that is a big part, that's a lot of the total number.

Mr. Forbes: Yes, sir. It's probably \$40 or \$50 million dollars that we could put into homeowner's homes instead of a contractor to perform the reviews.

Mayor Norris: You know that if that big slug of environmental reviews hits the market all at once, that we don't have enough contractors. You may say 45 days but it could be six months before all could be done.

Mr. Forbes: It is very time consuming. Our selected contractor has a very aggressive approach to getting out and doing them and we hope to get them done very fast for the process but it is still not fast compared to not having to do it.

Mayor Norris: You know, I have to ask this question, if you feel like that it would not be a good idea to say. Do we have a champion among our legislators in Washington that we ought to specifically ask to try to push this?

Mr. Forbes: I don't know that I could point to a particular member of the delegation. When the governor talks with the delegation and sends letters and we send information to help them with this, we include all the delegation members and their staffs, and look to them to provide leadership to go and get this done.

Mr. Durbin: Okay, Julie, let's move into the next item on the agenda.

Mr. Tingle: If I could, Mr. Dartez, I found the answer to the question on the deadline for March and it was extended to June 13, 2016. That was the final IA deadline for the March event.

Mr. Dartez: That's going to be difficult. Taking eight months later to get in.

Mr. Durbin closed the floor for questions.

VI. ACTION ITEM

~ Consideration of Federal Recovery Improvements Resolution

Ms. Payer: This resolution is a resolution that was requested I think originally the motion was made by Dr. Wilson on the task force and a lot of support from everyone that I've talked to on the task force. Can we put together a list of the practical hurdles that we keep running into after storm after storm, that are federal hurdles, and group those and send those to anyone who will listen in Washington, and ask them to address this? And so this is a resolution we have already discussed at a previous meeting, I believe it was on February 24th. We've discussed it before then, the latest draft we discussed on February 24th. There were some edits that came in from you all, there were some edits from state agencies. As we came down to saying we were going to vote on it today, I got a lot of feverish suggestions over the last week. And so we have talked to you all, answered your questions. So this is the latest form for those who are in the audience. There's some copies on the chair to my left that, if you want to look at those. But what we've done is not try to list every problem that everyone's faced after a storm, but take the issues that there are some ways we could fix it at a the federal level. We've tried to have a diplomatic respectful approach in the resolution to talk about and thanks to some help from my favorite gentleman Dr. Richardson, who helps me tone down my language when I'm having a tough day and so he made sure that we worded this very kindly, and talks about two phases and a lot of these are, we talk about these before, but these are the waiver requests that we are talking about right now, they're in here. We're talking about changes that can be made permanently, so states won't have to run into this. These are problems really that every state could face and not just Louisiana, because of the way federal restrictions and guidelines work. And so we're very hopeful especially under the new administration in Washington, that talk so much about being against the red tape and the problems that a bloated government can cause, that they will take this seriously, and look at it, and see what we can do over the next couple of years to make things better for states who experience disasters. So basically, I'll just quickly tell you there's two sections, the immediate response phase and some of the problems we find there, as well as the long-term recovery phase, and those are CDBG hurdles, the Community Development Block Grant hurdles, and some of the issues with disaster funding coming through HUD and through Community Development Block Grant dollars and coming with these restrictions like the Environmental Review and others, and so this is the resolution and so I'm happy to answer any questions on it if there are any more questions and then we'd ask for your vote.

Mr. Durbin: Excuse me, for the public and for those watching, would you go to the immediate response phase and just read the bold print in each section that we are taking up today?

Ms. Payer: Yes, we talk about some suggestions for the way that FEMA is structured to deliver assistance. A lot of times there's a big turnover of FEMA employees. People get frustrated by that, local governments get frustrated by that. Sometimes FEMA's making decisions about areas like transportation infrastructure that are difficult if you don't have training so we're asking for some help their emergency sheltering and care. We've talked with LDH, or Louisiana Department of Health. There's some issues with reimbursement, and taking a long time and not being sure if you're going to get reimbursed. So, when people are moving out of shelters and into, say, a nursing home, the nursing home is not sure whether or not they'll be reimbursed and we can clear some of that up ahead of storms. The priority access to TSA, possibly for at-risk elderly residents and people with disabilities to make sure that there's not unnecessary institutionalization. Prevention and treatment. We talk about some of the ideas of possibly pre-certifying high-risk states, as having a competent response plan for distributing funds for crisis counselling, behavioral health, that kind of thing. There's a lot of long-term problems that it takes too long in the bureaucratic federal process to be able to get down and actually help people, knowing that there is some mechanism for reimbursement, so there's some practical suggestions made there. Alternative means of reimbursement for some medical facilities, under FEMA's reimbursement process. If you go down to FEMA's interpretation of the Stafford Act, we talk about the lack of clarity for the healthcare industry. Again, so many physical health and mental health issues after any disaster, and so it's important that that process gets smoothed out. Shelter At Home. We've had issues there with the temporary versus permanent repairs, we talked about fixing that in some specific language that might help that. On page five, FEMA eligible expenses, property, private property debris removal, we've talked in this task force meeting about the concern of trying to get it over the ditches and through the right a ways and to the place where it can be taken away, so people don't have to stare for months at their own belongings sitting outside their home. And FEMA public assistance cost share for local and state governments, making sure that it reflects the amount of damage that local government received. Looking at procedures for subsurface road problems, that a lot of times FEMA will, I'm really paraphrasing, but look at only visible damages, and so communities come back a year or two later, and it's really damage caused by the flood, but because you couldn't see it underneath the road, perhaps it loses out on reimbursement. And we all know that it happens, submerged roads are a problem after the flood, and it's not good for a community to have to have that unstable infrastructure, and so we talk about that. Assistance for those who are not in a designated flood zone that had flood damage but didn't have flood insurance. We saw that all over the state in March and August. We talk about some help for hazardous waste and orphaned containers for making sure that we have a clear way to take care of disposing of any waste

that might be a public health issue. And then the federal highway administration on page six talks about how we can better cost share for debris pickup, that's always an issue after the storms. Making sure that we have an early release of money that can be used. This is sort of similar to what we find in the shelter at home problem, which is kind of trying to make DOTD spend its money on temporary repairs, when they'd really like to get started on the permanent repairs, and use that early money for that, rather than having to build a bypass structure that they have to tear down, and then find money to build the permanent structure. So that came from DOTD. And then if you look at the long-term recovery phase, we talk about the environmental reviews, the SBA duplications, a couple of suggestions there, the low to moderate income requirement for post-disaster funding, that it should be lowered to 50%. The requirement that it be spent on benefiting that population because disasters don't discriminate in the way that they affect families. The NFIP penalty we've talked about that this morning and then the mortgage servicing guidelines that are having mortgage companies hold payments when they're on the check with homeowners requiring contractors or are holding payments too long so that homeowners get stopped in their rebuilding. So those are some of the really practical problems that we found with some suggestions about how to fix them legislatively, or with policy changes within federal agencies. So my suggestion to you, and I'm open to other suggestions, is that we adopt this resolution and send it with a cover letter to our congressional delegation and every agency that's mentioned in here. That can take a look at it and see what they could recommend and we would be glad to do that if you're willing to adopt the resolution. I will mention, there was one question that came up, and I don't know if he's here, Representative Shadoin was asking about, on page two, the last whereas, whereas regulatory and legislative barriers at the federal level may hinder the expeditious delivery of recovery efforts to impacted states and local communities. Representative Shadoin was suggesting that maybe we say have hindered the expeditious delivery, rather than may hinder. So I'm open to changing that if that's how you would like to pass the Resolution.

Mr. Durbin opened the floor for comments.

Mayor-President Robideaux: I'm glad you brought up Representative Shadoin into the deal because I felt obligated to bring it up, and I'm going off of memory because I don't have his email in front of me, but I thought he maybe wanted just to scratch the word may out and just say that regulatory and legislative barriers at the federal level hinder the expeditious delivery. I don't have a strong feeling one way or another on the wording. And then in talking with him also if you would look, there's two may's in there that I think gave him some pause. If you go down to the be it further resolved paragraph, two down, where we say that the post-disaster hurdles that federal law and regulation may have unintentionally created in the past for homeowners that we would also consider getting rid of the may. Now, those may have been Dr. Richardson's recommendations to you if you were having one of those days to put the may in but I know that Rob wanted us to at least have a conversation about it, and again so on his behalf I'm glad you brought it up. And I don't have strong feelings one way or the other than to say if it in fact does hinder and if it does in fact unintentionally create these hurdles then I would say we should remove the word may in both places.

Mr. Durbin: Is that a motion?

Mayor-President Robideaux: I can make it but before, if there is any other discussion on it I certainly would open that up, if not, I'll make the motion that we delete may out of both of those paragraphs.

Mr. Durbin: Motion made by Mayor-President Robideaux to amend the resolution to change the word may. Take the word may out and insert what?

Mayor-President Robideaux: I think if you just take it out it reads okay but I'm not a grammar expert.

Ms. Payer: It would say whereas regulatory and legislative barriers at the federal level hinder the expeditious delivery and then. And the be it further resolved paragraph, it talks about the federal government also wishes to quickly improve the nation's readiness in capacity to respond to catastrophic disasters and to explore common post disaster hurdles that federal law and regulation have unintentionally created in the past.

Mr. Durbin: With that amendment of the resolution, is that motion seconded?

Commissioner Strain: Seconded.

Mr. Durbin: Okay, the motion to amend the resolution has been seconded. All in favor signify by saying aye.

All members present: Aye.

Mr. Durbin: Is there any opposition? There being none, the amendment has unanimously passed. Now ready to take up the resolution as amended.

Mr. Dartez: Motioned.

Mr. Bradberry: Seconded.

Mr. Durbin: Motioned by Mr. Dartez and seconded by Mr. Bradberry to adopt and pass the resolution as printed with the amendment of those two areas. All in favor signify by saying aye.

All members present: Aye.

Mr. Durbin: Any opposition? There being none, unanimously passed. Alright, any other comments?

Dr. Richardson: I was going to second it. And it was my discussions with Julie and I about what this should be or should not be but Rob and I talked about it before the meeting and it's done. Great. Thank you, Julie.

Mr. Durbin closed the floor for comments.

VII. LOUISIANA OFFICE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE **~ Patrick Forbes, Executive Director**

Mr. Durbin: Alright moving to the next item on the agenda and that is the presentation of the Executive Director of the Office of Community Development, Mr. Pat Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: Mr. Chairman, members of the task force, I will start right into the presentation which you have in your binders. I will focus mostly today on the homeowner program. It's been, as Ms. Payer said earlier, a very busy several weeks and I want to cover the progress that has occurred, but if we have questions in other areas, we'll try to handle those as well.

Mr. Forbes began his PowerPoint presentation. The PowerPoint can be found on restore.la.gov website.

Mr. Durbin allowed questions during the presentation therefore the floor was never officially opened.

Mr. Durbin: Pat, I hate to interrupt, but when you use the word we are presently seeing 50 environmental reviews right as we speak, who is we? What entity is we?

Mr. Forbes: The Office of Community Development is using their own environmental contractor to do these first ones so that we can get them done without having the contractor in place.

Mr. Durbin: Thank you.

Mr. Forbes: Good question. Sorry for the lack of clarity.

Mayor Norris: Would you repeat what you just said? About the disparity between Sandy and Louisiana?

Mr. Forbes: For every FEMA verified loss in the state of New York for Sandy, nearly \$70,000 was awarded to either the state or the city.

Mayor Norris: In their appropriations?

Mr. Forbes: In their appropriation in their similar disaster recovery appropriation of CDBG funds. Currently, the state of Louisiana's appropriation is at some \$15,000 per FEMA verified lost household. Yes, sir. In fact, the ask that the Governor has made of Congress is still quite conservative in requesting \$33,000 per household. We still are confident that's the right number for our request, but it's still quite conservative compared to those other states in Sandy.

Mr. Dartez: You're talking about the disparity and you say the cost is higher in New York and let's say New Jersey. So let's say a home in Louisiana valued at 80,000 would probably be valued at \$100,000 and, I'm just making up numbers as far as example wise, so let's say a home in Louisiana is worth \$80,000 and sustained \$70,000 worth of damage versus the same type home in, maybe New York may be valued at \$125,000 and sustained \$110,000. So is that where it is when you say that the value at New York is probably higher.

Mr. Forbes: Yes, sir, correct. The cost of labor and construction can be higher. We are using Xactimate for our cost estimates here. Xactimate is regional and so the Xactimate numbers in New York or New Jersey would be higher than here.

Mr. Dartez: The reason I bring it up, I'm sure whenever we put a spotlight on huge disparity from \$70,000 to roughly \$15,000, that point is going to be brought out to us, but the reality is from a percentage perspective, that's huge, \$70,000 versus \$15,000.

Mr. Forbes: It is massive and it is not exclusively the homeowner programs that are driving that disparity either. Remember, we have zero funds allocated right now to infrastructure enhancement to investing in things that will protect all these investments that we are making now and that every homeowner in the state has made, and that the banks and the insurance companies have made. We've put zero dollars so far because of this shortage into infrastructure enhancement. In New York and New Jersey and the other states impacted by Sandy, they have hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars invested in infrastructure enhancement.

Mr. Dartez: Thank you.

Mr. Jetson: Pat, I did not know when the best time would be to ask this question so since we started I'd get it in and since we've started unpacking the program, this contractor selected and these first steps are either underway or eminent, what is the framework to ensure that the section three requirements are being met as we begin this process?

Mr. Forbes: We all have section three requirements. Every grantee of ours always has, by regulation or law I'm not sure, the requirements that our contractors and that our sub grantees follow section three. In fact, in our RFP and then our SFO, we went further and required proposers and offerors to demonstrate to us what their plan would be for using local labor, low to moderate income labor and local contractor. So, we went right on the knife's edge, in fact we had several technical assistants conversations with HUD to make sure we didn't go over the line in overly restricting our procurement, by requiring local hiring and contractors. But we have from our selected contractor their approach to maximizing the use.

Mr. Jetson: And while I appreciate their approach and I appreciate the front end. I was driving recently on the interstate and I recognized that the recommended speed limit was a bit lower than the rate at which I was traveling at that point. As I made the turn, I saw a vehicle with some blue lights sitting on the side and it is amazing how I brought that in line very quickly, and so while it is good to have the recommendations and expectations on the front end, what is the process for accountability to ensure that people actually comply with it?

Mr. Forbes: We will continue to monitor those deliverables and milestones and requirements throughout the process to make sure that they do that.

Mr. Jetson: Okay, and just to be very clear for those, my concern is deeply rooted in the Katrina experience and it is a learning that has been repeated over and over again and it is that when people who have been impacted have an opportunity to participate in their recovery. It makes a difference on so many levels, including the economic opportunities that are present.

Mr. Forbes: Yes, sir, I would say that's one of the things we've learned is that the more of that money we can keep, the more that drives the recovery, too. Thank you.

Mayor Norris: I'm just, since you mentioned New Jersey in comparison with Louisiana, do you recall the number, and someone brought this to us much earlier than this conversation, what the percentage of administration cost was in New Jersey as compared to what the administration cost you anticipate in Louisiana?

Mr. Forbes: So I'm going to define a couple of things. One is what HUD defines as administration, and that is the funds they allow us to use to administer the programs and they cap that at 5% and I'm fairly confident that New York City and New Jersey all use the 5%, I could be wrong. I know that we are setting our budget at 4%, we are looking at whether we can actually go lower than that. We absolutely plan to try to go lower than that. And every dollar that we save, we can put in other programs, because we can just write action plan amendments, and move money out of administration. We've done that before, and we will do it again. The next part is program delivery. This is what HUD calls program delivery. And that is the cost to actually get a program delivered to the homeowner or the beneficiary, whatever the program is. In New York, there was at least one of their programs where their program delivery costs, this is New York City, were at 45%. HUD would not pay that. They're paying the additional over 20%, which is kind of a standard, out of their own coffers. Our budget right now in the homeowner program is, we are shooting for 15%, and that's everything. And that is not just this contractor but the QA/QC contract, all the other things that we have to pay for to deliver that program, including the program management contractor's fees and costs.

Mayor Norris: So, if you negotiate when you finish your contract, if you stay somewhere around 15% on the program delivery costs, that'll be substantially lower than in New Jersey?

Mr. Forbes: Yes, sir. I will say, what happened in a lot of cases in New York and New Jersey is that they went very quickly, they did emergency procurements, they got contractors in place in a very short period of time and inevitably, in every single case, they wound up replacing their contractors, winding up with multiple contractors, multiple program changes and as you've pointed out, higher program delivery costs. So, we hope that by doing the work we've done leading up to getting to the point where the funds were available that we have positioned ourselves to not go through that and to be able to be running full speed.

Mr. Durbin: Mr. Forbes, I appreciate you using the word we, I understand who you are referring to, but let me see if I can't clarify this. Less than 5% would be the cost of OCD, right?

Mr. Forbes: Correct.

Mr. Durbin: Less than 5%?

Mr. Forbes: Yes, sir.

Mr. Durbin: That is set by HU, 5%?

Mr. Forbes: That's correct.

Mr. Durbin: So, you are expecting the Office of Community Development's cost of management being less than 5%?

Mr. Forbes: We have actually only budgeted 4% and we expect it to be less than that. In fact, I will, for reference, in Katrina/Rita grants we are currently budgeted to close them out at 1.7% administrative rate.

Mr. Durbin: And the other is the contractor's cost of what?

Mr. Forbes: Of delivering the program. So we separate-

Mr. Durbin: IEM?

Mr. Forbes: Yes, sir, IEM, and as well as our QA/QC contractor and any of our IT costs, the state's IT office will be managing some of the IT work for us. We pay for that, of course, so there are lots of other costs in there, but what it costs us to get the thing done that's not the grant to the homeowner.

Mayor-President Robideaux: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I'm going to try to channel my inner Dr. Richardson here. As we go back to Congress and some of our best allies could actually be the congressional delegation from New York and New Jersey. What I don't want is for us to be misleading in any way, so when we say houses, would it be more appropriate of a comparison if we used structures? Because they may have had some really high value coastal buildings, multi-story that just isn't really apples to apples here. So, I don't want us to put ourselves in a position where it sounds like we're saying they got too much money, and look how little we are getting. I just want to be very careful in that comparison. So, the more information we can kind of put out there in the public forum, I think that reflects the situation for all three examples. Probably will serve us better as we go to congress and ask for them.

Mr. Forbes: Thank you for clarifying. I, in no way, meant to imply that they got too much money. In fact, I think that many people in New York and New Jersey would say that they still need additional funds. That storm was absolutely devastating and obviously bigger than the floods that we had, one of the second largest, most devastating disaster in our history, and I also do not mean that they did a poor job of delivering the programs. I think that folks there are happy with the benefits that they are getting and with the rebuilding. They're also thrilled with the way that they are doing the infrastructure investments. My only point is that, when we compare to that, we are woefully short of what we need for a full recovery.

Mayor-President Robideaux: Thank you for clarification. And well, I just really wanted to give you an opportunity to say that, so thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mayor Norris: They have the same 70% limit on low to moderate income. In other words, they weren't repairing Trump Towers, they were repairing low to moderate income structures.

Mr. Forbes: Actually at that time it was 50%.

Mayor Norris: 50%, okay.

Mr. Forbes: They only started putting 70% in 2015 into the language, so that was actually 50%.

Mayor Norris: I agree that they have more expensive infrastructure and more expensive businesses to repair, but if they were limited to the low to moderate income, same as we're talking about, even if it was 50%, we're not talking about them repairing structures, we are talking about housing that was housing low to moderate income people.

Mr. Forbes: Low to moderate income and everybody. They effectively addressed every homeowner who applied needs. I want to point out though, one clarification, is that these are not buildings, these are not businesses, these are not municipal structures, that's why we use this number because it is consistent from disaster to disaster. These are households with a FEMA verified loss, in the individual assistance program.

Mayor-President Robideaux: So, Pat, the second column though, the CDBG allocation, I know on your next slide you show what our \$1.6 billion is being spent on, which is a whole host of things, the vast majority of which is housing. So, when I look at the \$4.1 and the \$8.6, is that the entire allocation that those municipalities received that they could have spent on both housing and businesses?

Mr. Forbes: That's the total.

Mayor-President Robideaux: Any number of structures or whatever their structures were. I agree that the housing is the housing, but the full allocation is not limited to housing, it's whatever they decide to spend it on.

Mr. Forbes: Exactly right, which is, that's the \$600 million that we're requesting for infrastructure enhancement. They certainly have done some very innovative infrastructure enhancement and resilience building projects in all the grantees up there.

Mr. Dartez: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My questions are kind of, or comments, along lines with President Robideaux, when we do apples to apples, and your numbers are correct, and they're the facts, but I think when you get maybe on a federal level, they focus on the optics and not the facts of what's actually going on. I think maybe if, and I don't expect you to have these numbers, maybe an apples to apples comparison may be looking at what was the average total distribution or allocation per home from Rita and Katrina, and then you put a 12 year inflation factor in there and maybe that may be a good snapshot for the federal government to realize that per household we are getting less even from our own disaster 12 years ago, and I think that may be a good idea of apples to apples.

Mr. Forbes: Sure, that's great, we'll take a look.

Mr. Dartez: And like said, and I appreciate these numbers and I'm a little bit shocked at the disparity, but I share President Robideaux's concern that when you get on the federal level they're going to tell you you're comparing a flood to a storm surge. So the disaster that we all were impacted in '05 by both storms, average allocation that may be a better snapshot of

exactly how low of a distribution from the federal government that we're getting. Because, like you stated I mean, the real number for these two floods is \$8 billion. And the best that we can hope for is a little over three. So I appreciate it and thank you again for going under the average cost of administrative fees because the public needs to know every dollar you save in-house goes directly to the rebuilding of our state. So thank you for that.

Mr. Jetson: Pat, when we were at Lamar and there was a presentation from LHC regarding rental housing, I believe, and there was a gap, we had one program that was for units 20 and larger and one for 7 and below. There was supposed to be conversations of about what we did with that unintentional gap for units that were between 8 and 19.

Mr. Forbes: I do not have an answer for you Mr. Jetson, I'm sorry. I will talk to LHC and get that for you.

Mr. Jetson: Alright, thank you.

Rep. Pope: I was going to wait until you got through your report, you know the question that I'm going to ask you.

Mr. Forbes: Yes, sir.

Rep. Pope: Has a lot to do indirectly with your report. And to give the committee and the audience a little background, this is a question that's not going to catch him by surprise. I have prepared him that I was going to ask the question because I had an opportunity to have a meeting when he was in the House of Representatives Homeland Security meeting. I believe that was Monday, and I asked this question, but I think that it's important for the people to understand where I'm going with this. It has to do with my favorite, next to favorite topic, and that's the Small Business Administration. If I'm correct, we're treating anything that we get or the people get from SBA as a grant.

Mr. Forbes: It is equivalent to a grant in that it represents exact one to one duplication of benefits for our grants.

Rep. Pope: And we all know that it is a loan.

Mr. Forbes: Yes, sir.

Rep. Pope: That has to be paid back, okay. My question to Pat and he has and thank you for that Pat for answering my question, but I want it answered to the world wide web. If these people that have obtained a Small Business Administration loan, if they, after hearing testimony around the state, if they've gone all around and they've heard comments here, they've heard things, they know this, they have taken it upon themselves to go and say, okay, I don't want this money, I'll pay it back, and I'm representing a large constituency that has done this, so that maybe they would be eligible, that this wouldn't come off the top for that grant. Am I making any sense here? And then you're going to explain it to the people better than me.

Mr. Forbes: I doubt that.

Rep. Pope: But where I'm going with this is if they take that SBA loan then they're not, if there are any eligible monies coming from low to moderate, and wherever they are in that, they're going to have to take that off the top.

Mr. Forbes: Yes, sir.

Rep. Pope: Now, if these people pay that back, they are still going to have to take it off the top, is what I've been told. Is that correct?

Mr. Forbes: That's correct. Yes, sir.

Rep. Pope: Now, I don't understand that. I don't understand why we would have to do that. If I've gone or the mayor over here is gone and he's taking money out of his or her retirement system or wherever they could get the money to pay this off because of multiple reasons. No wonder they don't want to do anything with the federal government anymore. Two, they don't want to have this and then the third thing, it would lower their ability to be able to get a potential grant. Am I making sense here?

Mr. Forbes: Yes, sir.

Rep. Pope: Would you explain that to the people please?

Mr. Forbes: The current regulations are that if someone closes on the SBA loan, they don't even have to have ever drawn the funds, if they close on the loan it is considered a duplication of benefits in the approved amount, and so, consequently paying the loan back before our program gets to you would not eliminate that duplication of benefits because you would have closed on the loan. The only room that we have any leeway on is those people who were approved for loans but never closed on them. So, that is one of the pieces of requested legislature change that the governor has provided and that you all have decided to pass a resolution on today, but at this point, that's the regulatory environment.

Rep. Pope: I was in Washington and I understand that. The people that I represent wanted an answer to that. They believe what I tell them but they wanted somebody else to tell them.

Mr. Forbes: It's extremely important that people know that so they can make their best decisions from where they are not, yes, sir.

Rep. Shadoin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Following up on that, so there was a couple that testified at our meeting over in Denham Springs that they had paid off their house, this came, then they had the where with all to be able to go ahead and

get ahead of it and start fixing so they could move back in, and now they have a mortgage on their house as I understand and they are not eligible.

Mr. Forbes: They are not ineligible for the program per se, but the money that they got from SBA is a duplication that we can fill additional gap but we can't replace those funds.

Rep. Shadoin: You know it's happened before but we were talking, what would happen if they just said, okay we are not paying it back? Then they would need a lawyer like me. But no, if they said look everybody, we are getting penalized for being industrious and getting ahead of this.

Mr. Forbes: I do not know what the SBA collection practices are.

Rep. Shadoin: Your crystal ball is kind of cracked like mine, that's alright, I don't either. Okay, Pat, thanks for your work.

Mr. Durbin closed the floor for questions.

VIII. PRESENTATIONS

~ Health & Social Services Recovery Support Function Update

~ Agriculture & Forestry – Farmers' Assistance Program

Mr. Durbin: Okay, next on the agenda is, we are going to have an update from the Health and Social Services recovery support function. This is going to be from the Department of Children and Family Services, Ms. Terri Ricks.

Ms. Ricks: Sir, good morning. I'm Terri Ricks, Department of Children and Family Services. We do have representatives from both the Department of Education, as well as Louisiana Department of Health this morning. We did update the presentation that we're going to give you today, and so the one that is in your binder is outdated so if you would follow along with us with the one that is being handed out to you today, that would be more beneficial. We thank you so much, Mr. Chairman and members, for allowing us to come and update you on the work that we have been doing with the recovery support function three, which is Health and Social Services, and this is definitely what we do on a regular basis, but as you know the work that we do is completely exacerbated by any type of incident, and of course one so large as what we've been through, to introduce our recovery support function properly we have asked two of our friends from LDH, Nicole Coursey with the Louisiana Spirit Program, and Katie Underwood, the Disaster Case Management Program Manager, to introduce this work that we are keeping an eye on in recovery support function three.

Ms. Coursey: My name is Nicole Coursey. I am with Louisiana Spirit. We just want to let you know what we are encountering over there, encountering in the flood affected areas. They are encountering survivors who are desperate, anxious, tired and stressed. They are living with children who are not adjusting while in schools, adults who have increased alcohol consumption and even more severe problems. Some are reporting an increased in suicide. The flood has had serious impacts on our survivor's mental and physical states. Children typically have three safe places, their home, their school, and their church. Over the entire service area, Louisiana Spirit Crisis Counselors have encountered a total of 1,934 children under the age of 18 and that number is continuing to grow. For many of these children, especially in the hardest-hit areas, all three of these safe places have been impacted, causing a major disruption in their lives. Let's think about that. They may not eat, sleep, play, or learn the same way they did before the flood that destroyed their safety net, and impacted the adults that they count on. If any of them were destroyed or their child was relocated from any or all of them, he or she would be stressed and in pain. I'd like to tell you about just one week in our work at Louisiana Spirit to kind of illustrate the health and social service needs of survivors. During the week of March the 20th, Louisiana Spirit crisis counselors provided services to 419 survivors, who were servicing as a result of the August floods. Of those survivors, ten were preschool aged children, 16 were adolescents, and the rest were adults between the ages of 18 and 65. 260 of these 419 survivors reported an extreme change in their activity level with 93 reporting increased agitation. 84 reported feeling of isolation and were withdrawn. 299 reported extreme fatigue and exhaustion, and of those 25 stated that they were preoccupied with thoughts of death and destruction. It's important that we put ourselves in their shoes, what it would feel like to lose everything familiar to you, your home, your family, your community network, your sense of normalcy and balance. Louisiana Spirit crisis counselors during that same week referred four survivors for substance abuse treatment. 48 from mental health services, and 39 to resources for those with disabilities or other functional needs. We are concerned, however, as to whether those resources will be able to adequately meet their needs. As many agencies and organizations that would normally help those in need are overwhelmed and under-resourced. During that same week of March 20th, we received three referrals from either disaster case management, or the FEMA recertification staff, alerting us of survivors expressing suicide ideation. One of these cases referred to us by Disaster Case Management came from a woman who had called their toll free number. This call came from one of the parishes hardest hit by the August flooding event. She expressed on the phone that she shared her living situation, just how hard everything feels to her and her family. She explained that she is living with her daughter and son-in-law, and that her son-in-law is very unhappy with the situation. She's not only expressed extreme

concern, but she also stated that she should just commit suicide. We immediately work to dispatch a Louisiana Spirit team to assist her. 911 was called by a neighbor. The survivor was transported to the hospital via ambulance, and the team went to the hospital to make sure someone was with that survivor until other family members could arrive. A Physician's Emergency Certificate for treatment was ordered and the survivor was admitted for three days, ultimately, keeping her alive and safe from harming herself or others. A follow-up visit has confirmed this survivor is doing much better. Finally, there are many survivors in need of Louisiana Spirit crisis counselors, and other resources to assist them in their full recovery and resilience. We make sure to keep this in mind with the crisis counselors, many of whom themselves are survivors. We consider them the real heroes of recovery, working in the most strenuous of occasions, to make sure that their fellow survivors are cared for. Thank you.

Ms. Underwood: Hi, you're all going to have to bear with me, I'm a little under the weather today, but I'll do my best to share some information about Disaster Case Management with you guys. So to cover a week and what Disaster Case Management may look like, I'll start with the referral or the request versus process. One of the many ways we get requests or referrals is through our hotline. And just through there, we receive an average of 120 calls a week requesting assistance. Some examples of these requests are single mother with three children from the Acadiana area, her rental had major damages, and she lost all of her personal property and a vehicle. They've been living with friends since the flood in a cramped home, where tensions are high. She needed help finding a new rental and with replacing furniture, appliances, and transportation. One of her kids has been struggling since the floods with both behavioral issues and with their school work. An elderly couple, who are homeowners in Parish, they have flood insurance, but did not have enough to cover the repair, and to cover repair what was damaged, nor did they have contents coverage. They're living in two rooms that are in a damaged home and need help with furniture and appliances. The wife, Lizeil, hasn't been able to afford her medication since this flood. A middle aged couple from Livingston Parish. They were homeowners and own four rental properties as well. They're almost done repairing their own home, but do not have the ability to repair their rental units. A young man, who receives 24 hour supportive services, and was living in an income-based housing before the flood. He lost everything. His guardian and service staff have not been able to find him a new affordable rental. He's been living in a hotel since August. So when we get these requests, and these requests come to the hotline, they come to us through a myriad of ways. What we do as LDH is we take these and we refer them out to our agencies that are contracted through OCD to provide case management services. Then the agency assigns these cases to a case manager, and the case management process begins. Initially, an in-depth assessment including identifying vulnerabilities, disaster-related unmet needs, and what, if any, resources the survivors received thus far to assist in the recovery as assessed. Based on that intake and assessment, the case manager opens a case and works with the survivor to develop a recovery plan with goals tailored to the survivor's specific needs. Because from the examples I've shared with you, nobody's story is the same, they're all unique, they're all their own individual journey through recovery. Based on those goals, the case manager will work with them to identify what resources may be available to assist in meeting their goals. And to make referrals to agencies that could hopefully provide them with resources and/or services. This may include a referral to Louisiana Spirit for Crisis Counseling in support. A referral for utility assistance, advocacy with landlords, FEMA, SPA, gathering documentation and writing up a formal appeal to FEMA. Coordinating volunteers to paint a house, locating rental properties, and utilizing donated dollars to cover security deposits and rent. Presenting a case to a long term recovery committee for donated materials and supplies. Funding our volunteer labor. Providing furniture vouchers that are funded through philanthropic efforts. And most recently, working diligently to ensure clients understand the CDBG homeowner program, and assisting them as needed with completing the survey. With few and fragmented resources, case management is not an easy or quick process. It involves time, dedication, persistence, and patience on both the part of the survivor and the case manager. To walk to the process of developing a plan and then navigating the path to successful recovery. In closing, I want to share just a couple of examples of success stories as well that have occurred through Disaster Case Management. One is while we're working in TSA with FEMA in TSA hotel with FEMA, a case manager encountered a couple with a six-month-old baby and a four-year-old child who were in crisis. He received a job offer to start work immediately, but he needed appropriate attire including a pair of steel-toe boots. With the father employed, the family reported they would be able to move out of TSA. The couple also stated they had no food or food for their baby. The Disaster Case Management utilizes the multi-agency disaster warehouse. And we're not only able to obtain steel-toe boots in the man's size, but also food and baby items for the family. Additionally, the family was provided with a gas card to assist the man to getting to work, and a gift card to assist for additional food and booster seat for the eldest child. The other story I want to share is a story where FEMA initially told the survivor that she was ineligible for homeowner repair assistance because she had insufficient damage. An appeal was submitted documenting the flood related damage to the underside of her mobile home that contributed to mold throughout the home. Within 7 days of when the disaster case manager faxed the appeal, FEMA returned and conducted another on-site inspection and issued the survivor a check for close to \$6,000 in home repair money, and also 2 months of rental assistance.

Ms. Ricks: Thank you, Katie. Mr. Chairman, this presentation by my colleagues and I hope can illustrate to you what we are looking at to solve problems that people are having.

Ms. Ricks began the PowerPoint presentation. The PowerPoint can be found on restore.la.gov website.

Mr. Durbin allowed questions during the presentation therefore the floor was never officially opened.

Rep. Pope: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and as someone that has somewhat of an interest in the education part, Erin, I want to thank you for your report. I want to thank all of you for your report, especially yours, Erin. I think it's very concise, very good. And I would like to publicly say that I think the Superintendent White, the board of elementary education certainly with Aaron's leadership under superintendent White has done a yeoman's job in handling this particular issues as far as schools around the state and certainly in the impacted areas for the August flood. And I'm not just saying this for me, I'm saying it for all school people. We certainly appreciate the effort that you've made, thank you for that. I think you've done exemplary work, and I would hope that you would share that with your superintendent. Because I think they did something that without your leadership, without your direction, without your knowledge some of us would be still be out there in some places they don't need to be which you have outlined very well. We still got ways to go, we know that, you all know that and you all continue to work with us. Just this week I think that there was a policy that come out of the House Education Committee that's probably going to have a long ranging effect if something like this happens a year from now or five years. Hopefully it never will but if it does there will be guidelines to go by and the Department really worked with us a lot on that and I applaud them for that. But let me say again, thank you for your work. I appreciate the way you all handled this. I appreciate all the things that you've done. And the second thing, Ms. Ricks, I appreciate what you have done even though you and I had a conversation earlier this week. I do want to thank you for your work.

Ms. Ricks: Thank you, sir. Thank you Representative Pope.

Mr. Dartez: Ms. Ricks, I'm Roland Dartez and I know you talked about you all reached out to Ella May and the OEP guys but please mark down May 3rd. We actually represent all 64 parishes. So, we are the go between, the liaison, and Toye Tayler is here, and Toye is going to be at that meeting as well, our legislative day. I'll just text my office and we're actually going to have 41 parishes that are already registered for that event. I have your email address and I'm going to send you some stuff this weekend. Let us be your voice to get to the parishes. But I'll give you some time on our agenda that morning at 9 o'clock at the Hilton on the 10th floor. I'll email you all the particulars but this is kind of new to me as well but I remember after the oil spill we worked with your office and Louisiana Spirit and all those guys about the reality of everything from substance abuse to domestic abuse. The numbers just went way up, so we worked with the National Association of Counties as well to address that. So I'll get you the information this weekend. We want to be there to assist you to get the help and the assistance those folks need.

Ms. Ricks: Thank you.

Mr. Durbin: Ms. Ricks, and all of you, we are very thankful and very much appreciative for all of your efforts. Our next meeting is May 12th. I would ask the remaining members of the task force to join with me to place an item on the agenda which would be in a resolution form to seek and support the \$65 million that you are talking about.

Ms. Ricks: Thank you.

Mr. Durbin: So, we will have that on the agenda, we all agree with that?

All present members: Yes.

Mr. Durbin: So, we'll put that on the agenda, so you may want to put May 12th back on your calendar to visit with us again to speak on behalf of that resolution.

Ms. Ricks: Yes, sir, we'll do that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Durbin closed the floor for questions.

Mr. Durbin: Okay, Agriculture and Forestry, do we have with us today Mr. Rene Simon? Glad to have you here with us, Mr. Simon.

Mr. Simon: Mr. Chairman, thank you. I know we have lunch right now so I'm going to try to be brief in my comments, so let me get right to it. Thank you for allowing me to be here today I certainly appreciate it and thank you to recovery task force, to Governor Edwards for giving \$10 million of the recovery money to economic development so that we could help our farmers. And I'd be remiss if I didn't recognize our partners at Office of Community Development. Namely Pat Forbes, Adrienne Celestine, Lauren Tichenor-Nichols, LaSonta Davenport and Tomorr LeBeouf, who have been a great resource for us. We partnered with them over the last nine years, through all these disasters. Unfortunately, we're getting pretty good at these things, but I really want to single those people out and recognize the work that they've done. The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, through its Louisiana Cultural Finance Authority has directly administered over \$80 million in CDBG funds since Hurricanes Gustav and Ike. We've helped 1,100 farmers and agribusinesses. We've helped 1,200 fishermen, seafood wholesale dealer brokers, LSU and Southern Ag Centers. I realized that we represent

everyone in the state, but the people we that we most directly represent are the poorest areas of these states. These rural areas, all the people that have been impacted, but a lot of times aren't recognized for the impacts that they have or how bad they've been hurt. Some parts of this state have experienced a 40% decline in population over the last 40 years. So it's imperative that we help agriculture out. Agriculture is the backbone to these areas. Agriculture's assessed Commissioner Strain, one of your task force members likes to always pull these figures. Agriculture's a \$13, \$14 billion a year industry. Just kind of depends on commodity prices, year in, year out. So it's imperative that we help these areas, in Louisiana. It's not only the dollars and cents, but it's a way of life. It's a way of people recognizing tradition and continuing on with that tradition and keeping people in those rural areas. They can't make money, they move to the city, they put more burden on these urban areas which cause greater flooding in these urban areas. All the associated problems that go without this. So, it's imperative that we help these people. I just want to visit with you a little bit about the program that we're going to administer with the help of the office of community development. As you know Louisiana experienced some pretty significant events in March and in August, these not only impacted our urban areas and suburban areas, but they severely impacted our rural areas and our farmers. The March event, according to LSU Ag Center and Dr. Kurt Guidry, the March floods which of course were along North Louisiana mostly, impacted about \$90 million in agricultural production. The main commodities were corn, cotton, soybeans, rice, sweet potatoes, wheat, livestock, vegetables, and forages. The event in August, which of course was along the I-10, 12 corridor predominately, I don't want to leave anybody out, but those areas were impacted by, according to Dr. Guidry, \$277 million in agricultural loss production. So this is a total of approximately \$370 million that these areas were impacted, whether it's corn, sugar cane, livestock, fruit, and vegetables. Traditionally our farmers rely on USDA to obtain the necessary relief from disasters. But the form bills have been very lacking in this and we don't have a direct loss mechanism, other than crop insurance which is woefully inadequate for many of our crops, and many of the things we grow here in Louisiana. So it is necessary I think and I think the Office of Community Development and the Governor's Office has seen fit to help our farmers in these rural areas by designating \$10 million of this recovery money to us to help our impacted areas. A little bit about these programs that we've administered before and that we are going to start just some eligibility guidelines. A farmer has to have been in business before 2016, had to have been farming by March 1st, 2016 and they have to be currently farming. We want to help farmers and this rural way of life continue so they have to continue farming in 2017 to be eligible for these programs. A farmer has to have a gross farm revenue of at least \$25,000 and had to have obtained at least a \$10,000 loss. We will calculate this loss by using a crop loss calculator developed by the LSU AgCenter and Dr. Kurt Guidry. We worked with him previously in other storms and other disasters, so we have this model that we use. It's based on an Excel spreadsheet and Dr. Guidry has been very good about working with us and helping us develop this and helping our farmers become eligible for this. We're going to help a farmer based on losses up to \$100,000 as long as the funding is available. If we have more farmers request than the \$10 million total that we have, then we have to do a pro-rated share. In 2008, 2009 we administered the out of the \$45 million that was allocated, we were able to give farmers about 35%, 36% of their loss. So we're familiar with this, a little bit different than last time. Last time we did a loan grant program where we loaned the farmers 80% and we granted them 20%. This time we're doing 100% grant, so that the farmers can utilize this money. Because of low commodity prices right now they don't need to be burdened with any additional loans, so we are going to make this one of our priorities is making this a grant this year. And of course you're familiar with the objectives that we're trying to meet, whether it's the low to moderate income or job retention, urgent need. We're working very closely with OCD to make sure that our farmers fit into one of these categories and follow the guidelines as laid out by HUD. We were successful in doing that last time, I think we'll be successful in doing it this time with their guidance. One thing I know that you've been talking about is duplication of benefits. I can tell you it's much more strenuous this time than it was in 2009. For those of you all who maybe weren't involved in 2009, this is really a very hard hurdle that we're having to overcome, plus I've heard you speak about the environmental assessment. This is a harder hurdle to overcome than it was previously. So, both of those I'm glad you are addressing them. I think it is very good foresight on you to send letters to the delegation to try and make sure that we can have some relief in legislation to try to ease some of these burdens. It is much more onerous this time than it has been, just to reiterate that.

Rep. Shadoin: You say it's a more onerous burden. You mean in terms of dealing with Washington or just the two floods?

Mr. Simon: Yes, in 2009 we did not have to undergo the scrutiny for duplication of benefits that we are having to undergo now because of a 2011 CFR that gave guidance to the way duplication of benefits are now determined. We have to be much more rigorous in the way we're determining duplication of benefits versus 2009. An example is if a lot of our farmers don't participate in SBA but you've heard about if somebody has a house and they go and get the loan, that's considered duplication of benefits. We're having to do the same thing with USDA now, so we're having to go and make sure the farmers didn't receive an emergency loan from USDA to try to keep going. If they do, then it will decrease the amount that they could possibly be awarded from these grant programs.

Rep. Shadoin: So, the rules and regulations are what changed?

Mr. Simon: Yes.

Rep. Shadoin: Between '09 and when we had the floods of '16?

Mr. Simon: Correct, and like I said, if you would go back and you would look at, and OCD could provide that in much more knowledgeable about it, but I know we are having to do a whole lot more work now than we had to do in 2009 on this duplication of benefits issue. A lot more work, we're spending a lot more time on it.

Rep. Shadoin: With less results or slower results?

Mr. Simon: Well it slows the process, number one it slows the process because it adds another layer that we have to go through and number two it reduces the amount of the potential award. I think that that's probably number one, you reduce the amount of potential award. Number two because it's a more strenuous process, it takes longer. It's just another added layer.

Rep. Shadoin: Has that been brought to the attention of our delegation or the new administration in Washington? That this is the kind of stuff that chokes people?

Mr. Simon: Yes. And listen, we pushed back against OCD, but OCD is following what HUD tells them they have to do. We have some very serious conversations with them and although I'm very grateful of the work we do with them, we have some serious conversations. But a lot of what they do, almost everything they are doing now, and because it is a more difficult and laborious process, that's my opinion, and the way I do it having dealt with this for the past, Commissioner Strain and I have been doing this for almost nine, ten years now. We do have some experience. And I can tell you this is much more onerous than it has been in the past.

Commissioner Strain: First of all I would like to thank Governor John Bel Edwards. From day one he made sure that agriculture was included in the team. Pat, I want to thank you for your continuing work, and that especially I want to publicly commend Rene Simon. When we had Gustav and Ike in 2009, he and I, and at that time, the Lt. Governor Mitch Landrieu, would dispatch to Washington, basically with the assignment don't come back until you bring back some funds. We stayed up there, literally for weeks, and the end result, more than \$800 million in recovery funds was brought back to all the different states affected by Gustav and Ike. The Agriculture Finance Authority under his leadership and with working with OCD was able and assigned to administer over \$80 million not only to Ag and Forestry but also to fisheries and a number of other programs. This was first time this had ever been done and everything was step by step. And the reason was, because the desired provisions of the farm bill at the time of the short program were literally non-existent. And again, we find ourselves in this set where we had farmers overall over \$300 million damages, and more than half not insured, and the disaster provisions of a farm bill now are almost non-existent. They're not budgeted, they're not funded, and that's why you have to go back to get ad hoc funding. These programs are very important, because when you look at the non-insured provisions, and it's about maintaining the vitality of the economy in those communities. And if you look at all the different aspects, agriculture, and forestry, all of that as well as fisheries, when that community fails the economy fails, the whole community fails. And that's why we are here and our initial loss was \$50 million we have \$10 million on hand. And we will get it out, and you do a great job expeditiously and the best with what we have. Other discussions I've had on our continued discussions in Washington DC, and again as late as last Tuesday in DC, now with Ray Starling who comes from the Carolina, so comes from North Carolina. And again, who is the Agriculture Advisor to the President, is that we do need a better program, where each individual state does not have to try to get ad hoc funding. Because as we see, it's getting more difficult, and more red tape. And we're also finding, a lot of people do not want to participate as you see from a number of these discussions. So, our discussion now is to add in the future agriculture into the Staffer Act, and so we'll be talking about that. But I just want to publicly commend you all, each and every one, for the ongoing work that you do.

Mr. Simon: Thank you, Commissioner. We certainly appreciate your guidance and leadership through these programs and all the work you've done going to Washington. You ought to have a hall up there with a name for you, something now at least, now you have at least a hotel room with your name on it?

Commissioner Strain: I knew I was in trouble when I walked into the hotel and the maître d' said, Commissioner Strain, welcome back.

Mr. Simon: Yeah, and we appreciate all you've done too, Commissioner, and the leadership you've given us. Just to continue on, just a few more points I'd like to make, some of the eligibility requirements again, the farms have to have been in operation in 2016 and continue operating today. So, if they went out of business after the floods, we appreciate their losses, we appreciate all they're going through, but we want to try to keep those people in business. So to help them, they have to be planting a crop this year. So we have 51 parishes available, the whole state as you know, all parishes didn't qualify. Mainly the parishes in Southeast Louisiana from St. Mary kind of eastward, St. Mary, Lafourche, Terrebonne, those parishes heading east along the coast there did not qualify. We do have two parishes we have worked on. I don't know if we will be able to get them in, but not Vidalia, but Concordia and Tensas parishes, they're not presently included. We are all working on trying to get them included. So hopefully, we'll be able to include those, because those are two very large agricultural parishes that are not included right now. So, just to continue on, our use of funds with these farmers are

going to be able to use them for, as you know, if they turn dirt we have to do an environmental assessment. So we have to be very careful. How do you get a farmer not to turn dirt to use these funds? So we have to be very careful what they use these funds for. Some of the uses that they can use them for are to buy feed or seed, fertilizer, fuel, pesticides, herbicides, office supplies, insurances, utilities, custom harvesters or custom applicators, or some other things. And we feel that we will be able to use all of our funds, even though we can't pay directly for somebody turning dirt, which is kind of ironic as a farmer. Our timeline that we have looked at, we have had to kind of change our timeline a little bit, because we did have to get special approval to use this money from HUD, so it pushed us back about a month. Our new timeline, which is tentative is we're looking at, we're in the middle of starting, we're not in the middle, and we are starting the beginning process of hiring additional staff to be able to administer this program. We've just announced those on civil service websites. So we're receiving applications, but we're going to start doing public outreach in mid-June, our application period will be starting in mid-July. We hope to be able to have some funds out the door by mid-October, so that our farmers can use some of this money. We realize as you do, that this isn't fast enough, we certainly understand that but we certainly echo some comments earlier, we'd rather do this right than to do this expeditiously and then to have somebody come back. I'm very proud of the work our team has done. Over administering \$80 million, we have not had any significant findings. We've been able to do it between administration and program delivery, on our part, we've been able to do it at about 3.5% total, between administrative and program delivery. We're very proud of that. This time we're going to be a little bit more than that just because of the reduced amount of money. But, we're going to be in about the 5.5% range from administrative and program delivery cost for our program will be at about. So, we're trying to make sure that we get every dollar we can to our farmers. We recognize, we understand what they do for us, what they do for our rural communities and all of Louisiana. Just in closing, I'll be glad to take any questions from you. Again, I want to echo Commissioner Strain. Thank you, Commissioner for your work, and what you've done in allowing us to administer this program. He's not a boss that keeps his thumb on you. He'll let you administer it. He allows us to move forward and do this expeditiously and we certainly appreciate his guidance. And our LAFA staff, Ashley Dupre is heading up this recovery, she's the director of recovery programs for us, and Melanie Tullier and Katrina Urban on our staff are doing a great job. Moving forward, working a lot, working very diligently. We didn't get rid of any work. So, we've just added a bunch of work to it. So, we are working very diligently on these programs. We're in the middle of hiring some additional staff to administer them. With that, I know at lunchtime I'll be glad to take any questions if you have any.

Mr. Durbin: I don't think there are any questions but thank you very much, Mr. Simon, for this very interesting update.

Mr. Simon: Thank you and if you all need something from us, the Commissioner is on your staff, I mean on your task force, we'd be glad to work through him or contact us directly. Thank you very much, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today.

Mr. Durbin closed the floor for questions.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Durbin: Okay, with any public meeting there is the required public comment period. The public comment period is now open. Anyone wishing to come take the mic, you may come forward now. Nobody from the public is approaching the mic. So, public comment period is closed. Thank you.

X. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Durbin: In your binders you have the GOHSEP task force update in tab nine, per the request of the task force. OCD has provided us with the AMI, Average Median Income, tiers in the next insert. And, finally we have scheduled for May 12th, Friday, and do we have a location?

Ms. Dupont: Not yet confirmed.

Mr. Durbin: No location yet but Friday, May 12th, 9:30 AM task force meeting.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Durbin: Thank you very much for coming today. This meeting is now adjourned.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:41 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jimmy Durbin
Co-Chair of the Restore Louisiana Task Force

Date Approved: May 12, 2017 *LD*