

**RESTORE LOUISIANA TASK FORCE**  
**March 17, 2017**  
**Lamar-Dixon Expo Center**  
**Main Arena D, Upper Banquet Room**  
**9039 S. St. Landry Avenue**  
**Gonzales, Louisiana 70737**

*Approved*

**MINUTES**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

**Mr. Jimmy Durbin** called the meeting to order at 9:33 AM.

**Mr. Durbin:** Good morning, welcome to the meeting today of the Restore Louisiana Task Force set on today's date, March 17, at 9:30 a.m. It is 9:34 a.m. so we are going to get started. Let everybody take their seats. My name is Jimmy Durbin, former mayor of Denham Springs, Louisiana and I am the co-chair of the task force, together with Ms. Jacqui Vines Wyatt, she would be sitting to my left, she may arrive in a little bit. All right, this is my first visit to this wonderful facility, the Lamar Dixon, and I was talking to the Parish President a minute ago and talking about this arena, I may have to come down here and attend a horse show one day. I want to thank the people of Ascension Parish on behalf of the task force for hosting us here today. We know that this is one of the six parish's that were damaged in both the March and August 2016 floods. As a task force we want you to know this task force and Governor Edwards are doing everything we can to bring home federal rebuilding assistance dollars as quickly as we can. These dollars are not yet available to us at the state level, but we know that HUD has approved our state's first action plan and we do expect to receive the second action plan approval shortly, which will lead shorting after to the setting up of a line of credit in the federal treasury for our use in recovery. I am so happy to have this lady sitting next to me. I have skipped a big important thing, roll call. Listen up folks.

**II. ROLL CALL**

**TASK FORCE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Mr. Johnny Bradberry  
Mr. Randy Clouatre (non-voting, ex-officio)  
Mr. Roland Dartez  
Mr. Jimmy Durbin  
Representative Edward "Ted" James  
Mr. Raymond Jetson  
Mr. Adam Knapp  
Representative J. Rogers Pope  
Dr. James Richardson

**TASK FORCE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Mr. Michael Faulk  
Mr. John Gallagher  
Senator Dan "Blade" Morrish  
Mayor Dave Norris  
Mr. Michael Olivier  
Mr. Don Pierson  
Mr. Sean Reilly  
Mayor-President Joel Robideaux  
Representative Rob Shadoin  
Commissioner Mike Strain  
Mayor Ollie Tyler  
Dr. Shawn Wilson  
Ms. Jacqui Vines Wyatt

**Ms. Dupont:** 8 members are present, 1 non-voting member present. Sir Chair, we do not have a quorum.

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

Mr. Michael Faulk  
Mayor-President Joel Robideaux

**SUPPORTING STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Patrick Forbes, Executive Director, Office of Community Development  
Lauren Tichenor Nichols, Office of Community Development  
Jeff Haley, Office of Community Development  
Lori Dupont, Office of Community Development  
Kayla Westmoreland, Office of Community Development  
Pat Witty, Louisiana Economic Development

### **III. APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 24, 2017 MEETING MINUTES**

**Mr. Durbin:** We have 21 members and to have a quorum we must have 11 voting members present. This is an informational meeting and there will be no action taken today.

### **IV. CHAIRPERSON OPENING REMARKS**

**~ Jimmy Durbin, Restore Louisiana Task Force Co-Chair**

**Mr. Durbin:** Getting back to my comments. A line of credit in the federal treasury for our use in recovering, setting that line of credit up. Pat Forbes, the Executive Director of the Office of Community Development, he will tell us in more detail about that today, he will be taking the front table shortly. Very importantly, today you will hear the very latest on the homeowner's assistance program that we are working to open, hopefully, within the next several weeks. Please stay tuned to the website restore.la.gov, and sign up for the email updates there for the latest on flood recovery assistance, this task force knows that time is of the essence. The state has been ahead of the federal schedule at every deadline given to the state in this federal process required to bring home flood recovery dollars. HUD has commended the state for increasing the speed of recovery and for the historically fast pace in the state submission of the required action plan. However, we know it is not fast enough and we remain committed every day to working to urge congress to appropriate more money as quickly as possible for Ascension Parish families who were flooded and for families in the other 55 parishes that were damaged in 2016 floods. We know that the federal process is a lengthy one and that has many restrictions. We are asking our congressional delegation to help us with the delays that are forced on us by federal regulations. Every member of this task force and Governor Edwards' administration are doing everything we can to bring these federal dollars back to the state at the lowest cost that we can. Our state homeowners' assistance program delivery cost are on the lowest and historically of programs like these, on the lowest end. Our administrative cost is budgeted below what HUD allows at only 4%, we want to spread this rebuilding assistance money to as many people, homeowners, renters, and small businesses as quickly as we possibly can, again, congress has appropriated \$1.65 billion to Louisiana. We are awaiting HUD approval to receive these funds, but Louisiana remains \$2 billion short of what the Governor has said our citizens need to rebuild, roughly, \$3.8 billion is what the Governor has been requesting, so far, \$1.65 billion has been appropriated. After seven trips to Washington, DC, since the floods, Governor Edwards continues to work with Louisiana's congressional delegation urging congress to bring home the additional \$2 billion we need. Thank you again for hosting us today, we will move now to the first item on our agenda today. Task force, we have, the next item is the approval of the previous meetings minutes that meeting took place in the state capital on February 24th, since we have no quorum we will pass approval of those minutes to the next meeting. Governor's office update, we will ask Ms. Julie Baxter Payer, that I've known for quite a long time, she does a very good job, listen up folks, this is an interesting presentation. Ms. Payer.

### **V. GOVERNOR'S OFFICE UPDATE**

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

**Ms. Payer:** Thank you, it's good to be here. I would say, with one caveat, this is I think the very room where I took my bar exam and so I'm having a lot of jitters just sitting here but fortunately that worked out okay, so I know that today will too. I just want to thank the task force members, thank you for your diligent work over all of these months and I know that you'll continue with us as we continue to work with our citizens to recovery from the floods of 2016, both March and August, but I want to speak very specifically for a moment just to the people of Ascension Parish. I want to thank the people of Ascension Parish on behalf of Governor John Bel Edwards and his wife, Donna, for your strength in this recovery. We know that one of the six parishes in Louisiana that was hit twice last year in the flooding, you were hit both in March and August of 2016. I was looking back at some of the families that were affected in Ascension Parish. 287 households registered for FEMA individual assistance grants in the March flooding and more than 12,060 families registered in the August flooding. A total of nearly \$58 million was paid out to Ascension Parish families in both flood events through the FEMA individual assistance. And for both the March and August floods together, for Ascension Parish government and local cities, more than \$26 million is currently obligated that could be reimbursed through FEMA's public assistance dollars. There are more costs than that, that the local governmental entities here at Ascension Parish have identified, but they have yet to be approved or obligated by FEMA. More than 3,850 flood insurance claims have been filed here in Ascension Parish. And from those claims, more than \$65 million in flood insurance checks have been paid out. So, we know that there is a lot of work to do here in Ascension parish and we stand ready to do it with you. We want you to know that the Governor and our office is just frustrated with some of the federal government's delays and restrictions and bureaucracies that your families are; and

with some of the hurdles that we as a state and the 56 parishes impacted by the floods in 2016, are facing. We are working diligently to remove those restrictions in any way that the state can, identifying those for federal agencies and our congressional delegation, asking for their help in getting through those and to spread out the federal funds that have been appropriated. You heard the chair speak of \$1.6 billion already appropriated, but not, contrary to something that I heard this morning that somehow it's sitting in a bank in Louisiana and we are not spending it, that money has not yet arrived in Louisiana. That money is still in the process, the Federal process of distributing community development block grant dollars. And so, we are as you heard the Chair say, and as we have reiterated to and demonstrated to you through our actions, both from the Governor's Office and the Office of Community Development throughout this process, beating every deadline that falls to the state, to fulfill, but it's still a lengthy process. And so, we hope very soon and you'll hear the update from Pat Forbes from the Office of Community Development, to have the grant agreement extended to us. We've had the first part of our action plan for the \$438 million that was appropriated first to Louisiana, not yet here, but appropriated. We've had that action plan approved and their looking at the second \$1.2 billion action plan to see whether to approve that part of our plan. And so we did receive some very good news this week. In terms of one of the requests that we've been coming to the task force about that the governor has worked on in his seven trips so far to Washington DC since the August floods to ask for help from our congressional delegation and from the White House. Now the new administration, and federal agencies involved in sending us these federal disaster recovery dollars. As you know, HUD had a one year limitation, a reimbursement limitation for work done on rebuilding homes after a flood event. So as the March anniversary has now passed, the August anniversary will come, we were concerned as you were. As the Federal dollars have not yet arrived at Louisiana, and for us to open up our Homeowners Assistance Program. If we were limited to only reimbursing for work done within one year of the actual event, there would be a large concern for Homeowners. So, the Governor and the Office of Community Development worked on that last year, and continue to ask this year, various members of the new congressional delegation to help us. And we received word this week that HUD has extended that deadline for both floods until September 8th. So, not the full year that we were requesting from each event, but we will have a reimbursement limitation deadline of September 8th for both the March, 2016 floods and the August, 2016 floods. And we will continue if there is opportunity, and Pat can update you on this, to continue to ask for extensions of that if necessary we will do that. But at this point, we are glad to have that piece of news giving us more room for homeowners who are rebuilding. So we continue to work daily to open up our survey and application process. I would urge everyone who sees this or those on the task force, local officials, who get questions from their constituents, please send folks to restore.la.gov. You can sign up for email updates there. And you will receive the email updates as new flood recovery information comes out and you are interested in knowing how I apply for assistance. It will be a twostep process that we talked to you about at the last meeting. There will be a survey that we want everyone to fill out that wants assistance. And that will then be used to group people into groups of eligibility, not on a first come first served basis, but based on the HUD regulations, the federal regulations, about who we need to help and know that the governor wants to extend this help and any reimbursement that we can supply to people who have already begun the rebuilding process as we can. But we remain \$2 billion short of the ask and this does not, as we've said many times, we anticipate the economic impact of these two flood events last year to be \$8.7 billion. The Governor is asking of the Federal Government \$3.7 billion for assistance. So far again, we've been appropriated \$1.6. We are still \$1 billion short in housing needs alone. We're \$2 billion short if we talk about the infrastructure improvements, the community wide, and region wide flood protection type improvements that we know that you as a parish and as communities want to make. And so we're continuing to fight for that daily, weekly, and both here and with our partners in Washington working as hard as we can. We continue to work to ask that we receive some relief from the environmental review process, and from the mortgage servicing guidelines that are sometimes holding up flood relief checks for home owners who flooded and had mortgages. We have extensively talked to our congressional delegation about that, asking for help. So we continue to do that. I know some of you have been in DC recently. Those on the task force, and have helped us with those asks and anything that the public can do to express the federal hurdles that are stopping them in recovery. We want to help as a state and urge in any specific way that we can our congressional delegation to help. We talked last time at the meeting about the affordable housing problem and it's immense. And you will hear today a presentation that we promised you about the need, the rental, and the problem with people trying to find affordable rentals. We had a problem before the flood and then with so many home owners then being pushed into the rental market. And therefore, by the way that the market works, the rental pricing going up making it even more difficult and just compounding the problem. So you're going hear from our Louisiana Housing Corporation about the problem so that you understand. You may not know how great that problem is, and we want you to understand the need that's facing our communities. But then also, what is the state's action plan for how to deal with that with the community development block grant dollars that we have and what programs we're putting forward. You will also hear today from Pat Forbes in just a moment an update on the RFP process for the home owner assistance program. And I want you to know, and I will let Pat give you the details, but I want you to know that the governors directive, and anytime a question is brought to him, his entire focus has been, when can we get assistance to homeowners and how can we best make sure that any construction program that the state uses this federal dollars to implement has the best cost, the best

quality, and minimal delays in getting assistance to homeowners. That is the driving force of how we are proceeding forward with the Homeowners Assistance Program. As we mentioned before, we have one of the most experienced teams in the country working and putting together these programs. And so you will receive that update today but just know that at the governors heart is the homeowners who flooded and how best can we help them as quickly as possible with a quality product for those homeowners. And so, we just want to urge you that over the next month, please look for the survey information. If you go onto restore.la.gov, you will see a button on the top left of that page that says, how do I apply for state flood assistance? If you click on that, you will see the information about the survey and application, how it works, we will need everyone who wants help to fill out the survey and then you will be invited to fill out the application as eligibility, and your particular eligibility comes up. And so, just know that we do not rest, we work day and night and know that we want to bring this home rebuilding assistance as quickly as possible. So we'll take information from you. It's important because we'll want to know, where are you today, what kind of rebuilding assistance you still need, because what you may have registered with FEMA for, the situation may have changed for you. So we have FEMA's information on you, we have small business association. If you applied for SBA loan, we have that information. We're doing the best we can not to make you repeat Information, if we have it. But we do need your updated information. And so we'll be asking you to fill out that survey. It will probably be within the next month that that opens. And so we'll ask you to stay tuned for that. So just know that we continue to work daily with federal agencies, particularly with our congressional delegation. Asking them to help us with the federal requests. To bring home the additional \$2 billion that we will still need to finish out a sustainable recovery here in Louisiana, and with that I thank you, and I thank Ascension Parish for hosting us today.

**Mr. Durbin:** Thank you, Julie. My good friend from Livingston Parish right here in the front row, when you were talking about the website and what to hit at the top left, he looked at me and he said, I understand. So, thank you for pointing that out. It's very important to a lot of people to understand where they can go to do that survey.

**Ms. Payer:** You're welcome.

#### **Mr. Durbin opened the floor for questions.**

**Mr. Bradberry:** Any idea what the new administration's budget program is, their proposal relative to us having a chance of getting this \$2 billion? Have we analyzed President Trump's budget?

**Ms. Payer:** I'm going to let Pat Forbes answer that question.

#### **Mr. Forbes approached the witness table.**

**Mr. Forbes:** Yes, sir, the budget that we have seen is for fiscal year 2018, and it's for annual allocations. We do not expect an impact on any disaster allocations since they are always appropriated separately. If they did this, it would be devastating to the state and to the cities to lose all the home funds in the community development block grants, but it should not have a direct impact on disaster appropriations. Specifically the ones that we already have.

**Mr. Bradberry:** So, in your opinion, there is no greater risk today than there was before the budget was put together?

**Mr. Forbes:** The only risk that I would say is that if it's an indication of their desire to use community development block grant funds for things, but it does not officially, no, I would say that the risk is not higher.

**Ms. Payer:** Let me just say for those who have not seen the budget, there was a proposal that went out that would cut the entire community development block grant funding, I think it's about \$3 billion, the entire program that would cut the entire home program, which would have a devastating impact on states across the country and a lot of local programs. That was in the administration's proposed budget that came out this week. But what Pat was explaining, and I've had some conversations with the congressional delegation, that seems to think that congress would not go quite that far and when you hear Community Development Block Grants will be eliminated under this proposal, even if that were true, Disaster Community Development Block Grant funds can be appropriated in separate amounts in a supplemental appropriation alongside of the regular budget. So the question is, and this is I think what your root question is, I don't know how much the Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney and the various administration proposals that have come out this week on their budget has for flood recovery. So we'll be looking at that very closely.

**Mr. Bradberry:** Any word from our delegation around their interpretation of the budget and what the risks have done since our last meeting?

**Ms. Payer:** No.

**Mr. Bradberry:** No, no word. So, as far as we know the delegation is working diligently, or not working diligently.

**Ms. Payer:** I certainly trust that they are, this could have some very long ranging impact on Louisiana, and I trust they are working on that.

**Mr. Forbes:** We have certainly gotten from at least one or two members of the congressional delegation a request for information to help them go fight against this budget cut to HUD.

**Mr. Faulk:** What about the shortfall from what the Governor requested to what they've actually appropriated? The possibility, I think it's an additional \$2 billion. What about that possibility during this year with this congress?

**Mr. Forbes:** That is exactly what the Governor and the congressional delegation continued to push for, and again we don't think that this proposed 2018 budget impacts that but we have to get from the White House the request for those funds, and then of course, congress to appropriate the funds, but that is what we are all, most importantly the Governor, working daily to make happen.

**Ms. Payer:** So the continuing resolution, if you remember last year the budget went through in continuing resolutions not an entire year budget for the 17 federal year, which ends at the end of September, and so this continuing resolution that we are under now expires on April 28<sup>th</sup>. So, we are talking about another appropriation that would carry the federal government through the end of its fiscal year. The proposals that came out this week from the White House were proposals that effective year the FY 2018, and so what we need to watch and what we are working on is for the supplemental appropriations bills, or sometimes they call it an omnibus bill, if there's various appropriations bills put together that are going to carry the federal government through September, what is in that particular bill, whether there's another continuing resolution or some sort of appropriations bill, or supplementary appropriation bill to get us through September.

**Mr. Clouatre:** Julie, Pat, when we were up there a couple weeks ago in DC, the president and several council members, some conversation was taking place, and this is prior to the letter that went out, looking at the budget and we felt we tried to make it straight and, correct me if I'm wrong, but we want to keep this money in disaster relief that it would stay more or less locked, it still has to be funded but it would be locked into disaster relief.

**Ms. Payer:** Which money are you talking about?

**Mr. Clouatre:** The \$2 billion.

**Ms. Payer:** Absolutely, yes.

**Mr. Clouatre:** That's the keynote of our talking points when we are talking to them, basically, disaster relief.

**Ms. Payer:** Well, certainly we would think that, we would hope, at some point in the future, the federal government would find a way to get disaster recovery dollars down here quicker than nine months to a year after the event.

**Mr. Clouatre:** Right.

**Ms. Payer:** But at this point, that does seem to be by all accounts, from HUD, from our Office of Community Development, that community development block grant disaster funds are the way to request disaster recovery dollars. That is what Congress knows to do after a disaster in terms of how we get money to a state to help them recover, it typically comes through disaster CDBG funding.

**Mr. Forbes:** I think you are asking if it's going to be pegged specifically for disaster recovery and the answer is absolutely. When congress writes that language.

**Mr. Clouatre:** That's what I want to make clear to everyone.

**Mr. Forbes:** It's very specific that it may only be used in response to the effects of the covered disaster and so it will only be able to be used to address the effects of the March and August floods.

**Mr. Clouatre:** And we know that there are, on the federal level under the Trump administration, there's a move on cutting programs but that's the word we went up there with and that's the message we took to them and we want to keep, and it was driven in very hard.

**Representative James:** Pat, I'm curious, as you mentioned two, I'm curious as to which two of the congressional members have committed to assisting us in this fight. You could tell me offline.

**Mr. Forbes:** Okay, thank you.

**Representative James:** I think it's important, as we hear a lot coming down, it's important, especially for me, to know which two have been joining us in this.

**Mr. Forbes:** Yes, sir.

**Mr. Durbin closed the floor for questions.**

## **VI. LOCAL OFFICIALS**

**Mr. Durbin:** I would like to call Parish President Kenny Matassa to the front. Thank you, sir.

**President Matassa:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm here to welcome everyone here today and I really appreciate all the hard work of this committee, especially our committee member from Ascension. We do have some Ascension councilmen here, would you please stand, we have a few, I don't know all of them that are here, and Mr. Clouatre also, we welcome

you here to Gonzales and this is a great place, Lamar Dixon, which is our diamond in the rough and if you have been around here when they had a catastrophe, you would understand how important this building is for the region. This last flood we had, this arena was full of animals and next to it was full of animals also. We had over 1200 animals, horses to pigs to guinea pigs and everything you can imagine, exotic birds and everything else. The 4H building had companies like church groups and different ones that came down to help, the Mormons and everybody else. Then in the other building we had over 800 individuals from the parish that got flooded out of their homes. So, this is a very important building, I mean not building, facility, for us. I want you to know that Ascension parish is the fastest growing parish. We just got some numbers back from the treasurer in Louisiana. So, our primary concerns about what just happened is bridges, infrastructures, housing needs, increased compliance and cost, NFIP, which Rick will talk about later and is this task force concerned about Ascension Parish, because I'm concerned that the Governor's office is not giving the attention to Ascension parish that we deserve. The March and August floods affected lifelong residents who built houses and been here living in the house for 40 years and never had water in it so they never had flood insurance, it was paid for. So, the idea about them having to spend every nickel they got in the bank before they can get money is ludicrous. We objected because there was no member of Ascension on this board, but we got one that's a non-member, but we had to do that to get one. Ascension received just 1% in the first round of federal funding, we must get double digits funds again in the next round, and it's just not fair. I think one of the main things that hurts in that area is a threshold that is set too low. From middle income needs to be reduced for 70% to 50% for eligibility for grant funding, so that our people in Galvez, Prairieville, Gonzales can get some relief from losing everything. I appreciate all your hard work and I will turn this over to Rick Webre, which will give the play by play, what's happening, what we're looking for. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Webre:** I'm Rick Webre, the emergency manager for Ascension parish. Mr. Chairman and members of the commission, I appreciate the opportunity to brief you. There's a memorandum that you have in front of you, I'd like to have you record it as my written statement for the committee. And I'm going to use it as a guide to brief you.

**A copy of the memorandum can be found on the [restore.la.gov](#) website.**

It's much more detailed than a short briefing that I'm about to go through real quick. A little bit of demographics on Ascension Parish. The population is around 120,325 square miles, we have 27 schools, 37 chemical manufacturers or storage facilities throughout the parish, three class one railways, three state evacuation routes. We are divided by the Mississippi River, which in terms of logistics that come down the river, pales in comparison to all other modes of transportation. We've got three primary watersheds on the east bank of the parish. The northern watershed, north of Hwy. 42, drained by Bayou Manchac and the Amite River. The southern watershed, which you are sitting in now, south of Hwy. 30 is drained by Bayou Conway and the Panama Canal into St. James. The central watershed, which is behind a levee protection district throughout the parish, which sustained the lion's share of the damage during the August flood. The room that you are sitting in right now was the disaster recovery center for Ascension Parish and during the time that it was open, I think it closed on December 18<sup>th</sup>, 6,579 visitors came through the disaster recovery center, and 4,535 were related to unmet needs for housing throughout Ascension Parish. Just through the disaster recovery center alone, \$124 million was issued in assistance to our residents, and \$7 million, about \$7.9 million, to businesses. A total of \$132 billion, and that's a drop in the bucket for the unmet needs that we're going to have moving forward as we recover. Now this is why the community development block grant is going to play such a key role moving forward in the recovery process. Again, if you look at some of the FEMA categories, the work category A, debris removal, the flood covered about 250 square miles and within that 250 square miles, we had 336,000 tons of C and D debris, construction demolition debris. About 81,000 pounds of hazardous waste. 2,700 items of white good and about 28,000 pounds of electronic waste. Cost to date with just contracting alone just to get the debris collected and removed is about \$7.6 million. And Monday we're continuing with our force accounts, internal force accounts and labor and equipment to continue removing the final amounts of debris that remain on state highways and some other outliers throughout the parish. And right now, FEMA has not authorized us to remove debris from private property, the extent that we have is private property debris removal. That means 30 feet beyond the right of way. So you can see how important CDBG is going to be moving forward for people that don't have the funding to get other debris from their property. Whether it's the demolished home or what have you. So we can get it 30 feet from the right-of-way. We've got extended curbside pickup, but we can't go beyond that. We're not authorized to go on private property to pick that up. CDBG is going to be critical for our home owners to get their properties cleared out. Now we have some residences that live along some of the water ways that have complete structures floated into their yard, with no fault of their own, and are going to have to remove it. So where does the funding for that come from? This is going to play a key role in that. Force accounts, our response to this incident. Right now, if you look at all of our forced account labor, forced account equipment, our pumping station operation, sand bagging operation, roadway barricade, sheltering operations, we're about \$3.2 million in cost just for our force accounts to respond to the incident in August alone, that's not including the March flood. If you look at the building that you're sitting in now, over your shoulders, this was an area that we opened for animal rescue. We opened it up to five

parishes regionally. Ascension parish didn't have to do it, but we did. So we had this full of animals. At the bottom of the stairs, the vendor rooms, was a quarantine area and the veterinarian offices. All five barns were full. We had over 12,000 companion animals and livestock. And what we're asking FEMA to do is, because we didn't have to open it up regionally but we did, we're asking to be made whole for the use of the facility as an emergency response base. So we had 1,200 residents in all three buildings south of us, the gym, the trademark center, the 4H building. And we had 1,200 animals here in the location that you're sitting at now. And FEMA normally doesn't have an appetite to pay us for the use of the facility, but because it was regional we're going to ask FEMA for reimbursement on that. And in moving forward we'd like to see how CDBG impacts that. If you move on to permanent categories of work, road and bridge. FEMA normally doesn't have a huge appetite for reimbursing local governments for damage to transportation infrastructure if it's not completely visible. But immediately post incident we were losing a bridge a week. We were getting scouring behind the bridge bulkheads because of the debris removal trucks, and the weight of the debris removal trucks. We were seeing the transportation infrastructure, the roadways, beginning to collapse in its shoulders. They wanted science from the March flood, so they took me to school. So what we'll do is we're going to give them as much science as we can. We're using something called falling weight deflectometry, where it drops a weight in the middle of the road, and then seismographs picks it up, and it registers what the caliber or how well the road base is structured. If you look at that one image that you see, as you move closer to the water ways, the roadway bed starts to degrade. So we're using falling weight deflectometry, we're using coring, and we're using ground penetrating radar. If you look at the next two pages, what we did to validate it. The key to this is going to be validating the process that we use, the non-destructive testing that we are using, that it's a valid method of using and we can link it back to the disaster. So what we did is we used the FWD, we tested it, we located a void in a bridge, and we had our public work crews stand by and we cut the bridge open immediately after. And you can see them digging the pavement up at the time. And then somebody standing in the void that was identified by the falling weight deflectometry. So we know that the methodology is valid. And we know we can link it back to the flood because this bridge was located behind our flood protection infrastructure in March, which didn't flood. We were able to control the level of the flood, which is unique to Ascension Parish alone. So once we validate the testing methodology, we're going to submit all of that to FEMA to see exactly what their appetite is for reimbursing us forward. But the key that CDBG is going to play in this is that we're going to have some houses in this area that we know are going to be abandoned that the lien holder is going to accept responsibility for it. So if we want to get that house or these homes back in the commerce, the transportation infrastructure to get to them, needs to be up to speed. It needs to have quality transportation infrastructure. Because we have if you look on page five, because we have water control facilities within the parish. And that central watershed that I mentioned earlier controls the flooding in a central watershed. It becomes a double edged sword. Once it's overcome, then the levee systems hold the water in. So we did have to do an intentional cut in several areas of the levee, just to de-water a large portion of the parish. Then immediately after the flood, we had a tropical storm that spun up out in the gulf. So had we left the cut open in the levee, would've been subject to storm surge which we were. I mean it doesn't look like it but Ascension Parish is very susceptible to storm surge. So we have to do temporary repairs to our levee systems to protect the central watershed from storm surge. That's another expense that Ascension Parish will have to incur. Category E, built buildings and equipment, I'm not going to go down this list of damages that we have, you can read that at your pleasure, but this is some of the damages that we have incurred as a result of the flood. Very little damage to the utilities department. Flood plain management, if we look at the way that we're going to manage the flood plain in the future, it's going to take an entire paradigm shift of the way that we manage the flood plain. Historically, we were able to tell our residents that we've got you protected to historical levels of inundation, and we can no longer say that. So we're going to have to have a whole mindset shift the way that we do it. Because, now, historic elevation is three feet above our flood protection infrastructure. So we can no longer tell them, we've got you protected to historic levels of inundation. Because that's three feet higher than it normally was. We couldn't have written a novel to explain that two river system was going to converge in the middle of our parish, and cause the damage that it incurred. I'm proud to say the re-interment process for caskets that floated up in our parish is complete. I had a young lady that worked for me that took this project on. And we've been made whole from FEMA individual assistance just shy of about \$1,200. So that's went extremely well. Just in closing, I believe that the CDBG the key role is going to be unmet needs for housing within Ascension Parish still will have that major need. And then two, I really want to emphasize the fact that the infrastructure needs to be repaired to get to the housing, to ensure we get the housing back into the commercial system. And again, if we could request that the people that lived in the flooded areas, many of which work through our industry, they won't even qualify for anything from CDBG unless we adjust the low to moderate income index down to about 50% because that's going to definitely help our residents to do that. Other than being subject to your questions, this concludes my briefing, and you can look at this memo in more detail to get any data.

**Mr. Durbin opened the floor for questions.**

**Mr. Jetson:** First of all, thank you so much for the information and the presentation. Couple of questions, first, on page six, where you have the outline of the damages, I noticed that there is not a dollar amount or an estimate associated with the schools or the city of Gonzales building. Can you help me understand why that is the case?

**Mr. Webre:** Yes, the reason we don't have a dollar value there is that they are under a different public assistance program. We filed our own, the school system filed theirs, so I will let them brief you on the dollar value of their damages. I don't think it's my position to do that.

**Mr. Jetson:** Okay, and so based upon your filing, you made a comment early on about your ask of FEMA and I would assume your conversations with them. How would you describe the response of progress around these guys at this point?

**Mr. Webre:** I believe the FEMA response to the temporary categories of work has been adequate. Categories A and B, which is debris removal and emergency response. Under a flood for the permanent categories, C through G, which is all about building and infrastructure and roadway infrastructure, that's going to remain to be seen. We've got 18 months total to get the work done and get everything submitted to FEMA. The key is that we've got a structure that's substantially damaged, it falls under the same processes that you would normally do with your residence. I mean, you still have to bring it back up to code. You have to bring it back into the Floodplain Management Code, whether it's a fire station or a school or what have you. So, that is the challenge moving forward with FEMA, and how they are going to approach this with reimbursement on bringing these buildings back up to code, if they were substantially damaged.

**Mr. Jetson:** Thank you.

**Mr. Dartez:** Good morning. Yeah, we were in DC as well and I want to thank you both for your leadership and the council speaking with Senator Cassidy's office as well as Congressman Graves. The vital information you guys brought to those folks not only for the allocation that Ms. Julie talked about this morning, but trying to get that extra \$2 billion. I don't even know if that's still going to be enough, but I've been through a number of disasters and I've been through this place a number of times. I don't think people realize the state impact this facility has on disasters in a positive way. And the folks at Ascension always step up. So I know some comments were made that hopefully you guys realize that this committee and this Governor hadn't forgot about Ascension Parish. I promise you it hadn't. So we were always looking to you, not only during the disaster, but after trying to make you whole. Thank you very much.

**President Matassa:** Thank you for your words Mr. Dartez. Let me also say this, when we went to Washington, we made it clear, we spoke to everyone but one from Louisiana and he was in a meeting, and we asked for some money direct to the parishes. Nothing against the Governor's office but we need some of that money direct to the parishes. Thank you.

**Mr. Knapp:** Thank you for your hard work and for all of your leadership during the disaster. I think the comment for the importance of moving from 70% to 50% can't be overstated and I think many of us on this board also agree. I know the staff at OCD have pushed to request that that be done, to ask for that to be moved. I think that is part of what's been coming, is sort of waiting for that as part of the approval we expect. I think that's the expectation of the second cycle of appropriations being approved. But from the stand point of, I know many of us, if not all of us on the task force that is an urgent need to see done. And I think that's important that we also bring that that is broader than just organizations like this task force that need to do that. We have meetings from our chamber at the chamber with Livingston and Ascension chamber about different fly ins that have been planned just as Parish presidents and others have been heading up to meet with folks in Washington. The more that we can bring this too many different prospective to make the case for additional appropriation as well as these waiver requests it's usually important to the recovery of all our parishes. I just wanted to say that we also should call to attention the importance of chambers of commerce around the state be doing the same to make that kind of outreach. It can weigh in quite a lot we think in those requests. Just to say also a huge thank you to the emphasis that you've made on using this facility as a regional facility not only in this disaster but many others. It's a huge blessing to the state to have access to a facility like this. Thank you.

**President Matassa:** Let me just say to everyone here that we appreciate all of the citizens for coming out and we do have refreshments on the right. I mean right or left, depending on where you are sitting, and just get up and get them at any time you want. I appreciate you all for coming.

**Mr. Clouatre:** Once again I want to thank Parish President Matassa for everything. Between him and his staff, working through this disaster, the worst disaster ever on record that anybody can even remember for Ascension Parish. It was a long, grueling thing and probably still got two years left on a recovery, and it's consumed the 100% of his and his staffs time and it's going to continue to do that and I think that some of our residents are realizing that some of the things take long, but we do want to emphasize, continue to push for a percentage change, and continue, everybody, to work with our federal partners to get the money down. And I just want to go ahead and once again thank them. And if anybody hasn't been to Lamar Dixon before, anybody in the audience, anybody on the panel, we can saddle up a horse for you right out here. I'm sure that there's

one available. But I've been in arenas from the East Coast all the way past Texas, and this place is great. And it's thanks to the work of the Parish President and the Council and all of the above. We've made this a very versatile, multi-use facility, and I'm encouraging anybody, don't just drive back out the gate. Drive around this place whenever you're leaving and go visit the outdoor show, if you need to. But this, you're only going to see a part of it. And you get behind there, you're going to see the lakes. You're going to see where the Boy Scouts gather. The new soccer field and things like that and all of these areas are converted in an instant to our OAP department and our parish administration to emergency shelters. And Rick I don't know if it was in your numbers but one of the things we do have here we're blessed with all the camper parking spots. And I personally in my depth concern more we had people stay here much on campus. And so, once again appreciate current president and the administration for coming forward. We would like to have this task force to take their message back up to the Governor.

**Representative Pope:** Well, I didn't have one until, I thank God for Joe down the road here that normally I usually have something to say and didn't and that's probably what caused this catastrophe. I apologize, but I wanted to repeat this, I'm going to have something to say. Mr. President, you mentioned a while ago in your opening remark that you had received or the parish had received 1%, could you expand on that a little bit? Tell me where that 1% came from, how that came about. I don't think this task force has issued any monies at this point in time but where did that figure come? I'm curious, I really am.

**President Matassa:** The first round of money, the \$400 and something million dollars, we got 1% of it for Ascension Parish. To the citizens, not the parish.

**Representative Pope:** Wouldn't that be for the homeowners?

**President Matassa:** Yes and what we are looking at is because of that ratio, it needs to be changed. The people that got flooded had a little money in the banks, so they weren't eligible. If it would have been reduced to 50% a lot of them would have then.

**Mr. Webre:** I believe that what he was making reference to was the funding available from the March flood compared to – which is a drop in the bucket to what happened because it was such a large scale disaster that ranged from the west coast of Louisiana all the way down to the southeast in the way that it was dispersed. I think also what he wants to ask the board is, once we get our arms around how we are going to do this with the state, this is a first time for all of us too because normally CDBG is dedicated down to the local level, if we are going to maintain it at the state level, as soon as we can get standard operating procedures and how we can inform our residents to apply for the funding would be astronomical help.

**Representative Pope:** One trick question that I ask, because I've been singing this song, same one you have, I'd like to dance with you, and I really would.

**Mr. Webre:** Right.

**Representative Pope:** I think the fact that we need to lower it, at least to 50%, I think this committee has heard that before, we've heard it in other places that we've been, and I think that's probably an ongoing thing. The most important thing I think, it was said to me and the one that I think we have the most issues with, that I have the most issues is similar to what you had, and that is to direct appropriations back to the parishes and let them decide. I think that we, as a local body, could do a better job than we could on a statewide basis, that's just a personal opinion. I know that the parish that I represent is very interested in the same thing that you just stated so I just wanted to say that publicly.

**President Matassa:** Thank you very much. Mr. Roland is here and at the convention recently what I heard from the Governor's office is that we can look to be reimbursed at 10% in the March flood and 25% through CDBG funds. Problem I have with that is if that's going to get paid out of the CDBG funds and we can't get any grants out of that, if it's a pot of money for CDBG and it's used for that, which is a good use, but it will cut us out from any grants other than that.

**Mr. Dartez:** Pat correct me on this one but the \$150 million dollars for the 10% for August and 25% for March, what's on public assistance?

**Mr. Forbes:** I'm sorry, say again.

**Mr. Dartez:** What the president is talking about is the \$150 million allocated for local governments on the public assistance.

**Mr. Forbes:** \$105 million, but it covers every public assistance match need, 100%.

**Mr. Dartez:** I think his concern is that won't allow for grants for other public assistance programs.

**Representative Pope:** It would be a duplication.

**Mr. Forbes:** I think this is different from duplication. If I heard the parish president correctly they would like to have some money to do some smart recovery projects in Ascension Parish allocated to them. As I think everybody knows, we are \$2 billion short of the request that the Governor has made. In that \$2 billion is \$600 million to do resilience projects and it's entirely possible that funds from that, as well as potentially hazard mitigation, could be allocated to parishes to do smart projects that they know are going to help drive their resilience and long-term recovery, but at this point, you are right, we have not allocated any funds to an infrastructure allocation to parishes simply because of the shortage of funds.

**President Matassa:** Thank you for all your help.

**Mr. Durbin closed the floor for questions.**

## **VII. LA OFFICE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

**~ Patrick Forbes, Executive Director, LA Office of Community Development**

**~ Lauren Nichols, Deputy Director of Recovery Programs, LA Office of Community Development**

**Mr. Durbin:** Mr. Forbes before you get started with your presentation, Parish-President Robideaux would like to ask you a question.

**Parish-President Robideaux:** Pat, all I'm going to ask is that during your presentation, we've had a lot of meetings, and so we hear the same thing repeated, but it's not necessarily the case, and I get the sense from the audience and then from some of the presenters. It's probably good if you could just recap the \$400 million and what we limited it to and why. The elderly, the disabled, and then the next of money, how we are dealing with that. Just so that everyone has a little bit of background on the first \$400 that was allocated, then the next \$1.2 that was allocated, and then what our hopes are for any additional money.

**Mr. Forbes:** Yes, sir, I will be glad to. But if I may, I'm going to talk a little bit in this presentation in a minute about combining the two grants into one. So I'd like to talk about them in total. I'd also like to make sure that everybody's clear that we have already requested technical assistance from HUD on reducing from 70% to 50% on low to moderate income. We absolutely recognize the importance of doing that for our recovery, and we are pursuing that in every way possible at this point.

**Mr. Durbin:** Pat, introduce yourself to the audience.

**Mr. Forbes:** Thank you sir, Pat Forbes, I'm the Executive Director of the Louisiana Office of Community Development.

**Ms. Nichols:** Hi, good morning, I'm Lauren Nichols, I also work with the Office of Community Development.

**Mr. Forbes:** So, I will do exactly what you just requested, Mayor-President, right now before I get into the presentation. Combined we have two grants worth over \$1.6 billion. As Ms. Baxter Payer said earlier, we have zero of those funds in the state right now. We have zero of those funds available in the federal treasury to us right now. That requires HUD to send us a grant agreement to sign, then to set up a line of credit for us and we have not received that grant agreement from HUD yet. It's not necessarily slow, this is the process. But we don't have that grant agreement to sign, which we will readily do as soon as we get it and get it back to them overnight. But to speak to the \$1.6 billion, \$1.3 billion of that, nearly \$1.3 billion of that is allocated in the current action plans to homeowner rehabilitation program. Which will assist some 36,000 households with funding to rebuild their homes. Those are households that have major or severe damage and do not have structural flood insurance. There is an additional \$105 million that I spoke about earlier, which is for the local match, the nonfederal match for all FEMA public assistance grants. That's to help all these governments and nonprofits that are strapped from dealing with all these disasters, to not have to come up with extra cash to pay that match for FEMA public assistance. There is \$130 million in money for rental programs, affordable rental programs. And the folks from Louisiana Housing Corporation will be up here in a bit to talk about the need for that and some more additional details on those programs. There is \$62 million allocated for economic revitalization in the state. That will go to small businesses and critical services that are providing critical services in the areas that are recovering. The \$62 million includes farmers, a program for farmers. So, is that adequate?

**Mayor-President Robideaux:** Yes.

**Mr. Forbes:** Okay, thank you and today's presentation will be talking about some timelines primarily. As we get closer to having the funds available, of course, we want to make sure that we have everything come together in a way that we don't delay anything for homeowners getting the help they need to get reconstructed.

**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 for questions.**

**Mr. Bradberry:** Mr. Forbes, what timeline do you think will be followed? You have one that's shorter than the other, obviously the \$438 is shorter than the \$1.2 billion.

**Mr. Forbes:** We will still be trying to get the line of credit established in mid-April. That's what we are still shooting for, which is the first one, the shorter one. It may be a little bit longer than that because of combining the two but in the long run, I think that it will not be much difference, and it will be well worth the efficiencies that we'll get out of that.

**Mr. Bradberry:** All right, I agree that combining them will be more efficient. I just hope that we can get it done the quickest timeframe.

**Mr. Forbes:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Bradberry:** That'll help the people a lot.

**Mr. Forbes:** The governor has made clear over and over again that anything that delays getting assistance to the homeowners is not acceptable. What we're shooting for with the combined is to get it all done in time, to get the line of credit in place in time for our contractor to be there, and all those things to line up so that we're hitting the ground running.

**Mr. Bradberry:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Dr. Richardson:** Is asking the Office of State Purchasing to put out new RFP, is that subject to legal challenge?

**Mr. Forbes:** The Office of State Purchasing, no sir. That's actually in the state procurement process and our RFP is quite clear that we're at liberty, as the state law, we're at liberty to cancel an RFP at any time that we choose.

**Dr. Richardson:** Even after you have made the award?

**Mr. Forbes:** Yes, sir, that is correct. So, that decision rests with the Office of State Purchasing and our request is being made to them today to rescind that RFP and then a separate request to start an expedited procurement process.

**Dr. Richardson:** How different will the new RFP be?

**Mr. Forbes:** Sir?

**Dr. Richardson:** How different will the new RFP be?

**Mr. Forbes:** Not very, I'd rather not talk about it because there is a publication process that ensures that everybody gets the information, simultaneously, so I don't want to go into too much detail, but it will not be very different. It will be very, very similar to the RFP that we put out before.

**Mr. Knapp:** Sorry to interrupt your presentation, we were whispering between ourselves, the slide that is on program eligibility, if you can speak to the small businesses and non-profit organizations, are they both open at the same time, in respect with the small businesses first and then a case by case basis later and non-profits?

**Ms. Nichols:** There are non-profit organizations that would be eligible first based upon the services they offer.

**Mr. Knapp:** So, they would have to be providing one of these key critical services?

**Ms. Nichols:** Yes.

**Mr. Bradberry:** Pat, could you explain one more time, could you summarize to the extent that you can, the RFP issues and more importantly what we're doing going forward?

**Mr. Forbes:** Yes, sir. What we're doing going forward is, and this is something we include in every RFP we ever put out, is the state Office of Community Development is at liberty to pull that RFP back.

**Mr. Bradberry:** Why are we pulling it back?

**Mr. Forbes:** There have been three protests to the RFP regarding an issue that the contractor board considered yesterday. There was one complaint filed on contractor support, that specific complaint was really not addressed by the contractors. What the contractors licensing board did do was determine that the opinion of their attorney regarding the necessity of a residential contractor's license at the time of proposal is the state law. Consequently, three of the proposers for our RFP would be disqualified under that and that is not a decision necessarily that we as the Office of Community Development have to adopt. They are the contractor's licensing board. So they make decisions about that, contractors' licenses. But they have, considered an opinion from their attorney, and approved it yesterday, that will result in an amount of proposers being disqualified. We think that in the interest, first and foremost, of minimizing the delays in getting the contractor on board, but also in the interest of reducing cost and making sure that we get the absolute highest quality work that pulling it back and reissuing it on an expedited basis is the best approach to accomplish that because if we don't, there is a much higher risk of litigation potentially stopping our processes. And we just can't, we don't want to take the chance of having to stop the process of getting the contractor in place.

**Mr. Bradberry:** So, going forward you are going to, quote, expedite the process. What does that mean? What are you going to do differently and what does it mean?

**Mr. Forbes:** Well we are also requesting, and this is the process meeting the state law, we request of the Office of State Purchasing the ability to do an expedited procurement process. It's an SFO, solicitation for offers, and we can shorten some of the times that the proposal to the SFO is out there, we are looking at if we can shorten some of the times for the protest period so we can make sure we get this done as quickly as possible and get the contractor on the project.

**Mr. Bradberry:** And when do you think that will be?

**Mr. Forbes:** We're looking at mid-April or shortly thereafter.

**Mr. Bradberry:** Thank you.

**Dr. Richardson:** Pat, are you asking that they have the license in hand?

**Mr. Forbes:** Yes, sir.

**Dr. Richardson:** Alright, how quickly does it take to get a contractor's license if they want to apply?

**Mr. Forbes:** It can take a month. There are procedures for them making an emergency request but there is also the, we have the understanding that every one of these teams, because of the way we combine the program management and construction, every one of these teams has construction companies on their teams, so as long as the prime proposer has those licenses in place they can be considered.

**Dr. Richardson:** Is that subject to challenge?

**Mr. Forbes:** I would suggest sir that anything is subject to challenge, we can be sued for anything. The conclusion we have come to is that the most easily defensible approach from a legal perspective is to go the route that we have chosen and that is highly, highly most likely to result in the fastest delivery of a program manager to work on this program because of the risk and questions associated with this other approach.

**Dr. Richardson:** People are complaining about the delay but that would be nothing compared to dealing with legal challenges.

**Mr. Forbes:** Yes, sir. That's exactly why we've chosen this path, is that the legal challenges associated with the alternative. The risks of having legal challenges associated with the alternative, to slow the program down, are much, much higher than the path that we've chosen. That is first and foremost, the consideration that we have, if we go a different route and it's highly likely that we'll be tied up and have our processes shut down as opposed to re-issuing the direct value process, being in control of the process, and being able to do that outside of the courts.

**Dr. Richardson:** And almost have to guarantee we'll not get the extra money from the government.

**Mr. Forbes:** You mean if we strung the process out by months and legal wrangling? Yes, sir, we are in agreement.

**Dr. Richardson:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Representative Pope:** How big of a part does cost play in the second RFP?

**Mr. Forbes:** It's an important part of the reason that we've chosen this path. The cost on all the proposals we got were high, and in fact, what we will likely do is increase the percentage of points that we allocate to pricing so that we can ensure that people focus on that as an important part of their proposal. We absolutely hope that we will reduce the cost of delivering this program and consequently be able to help more homeowners by the end of the program by virtue of reducing the costs as a contractor.

**Mr. Bradberry:** I just want to say on record that I support the approach you are taking. I think its taking less risk appropriately and moving forward as fast as we can.

**Mr. Durbin closed the floor for questions.**

### **VIII. PRESENTATIONS**

- ~ **Keith Cunningham, Executive Director, Louisiana Housing Corporation**
- ~ **Bradley Sweazy, Chief Operating Officer, Louisiana Housing Corporation**

**Mr. Cunningham:** Thank you all for giving us an opportunity to come before you today to discuss housing strategies and our rental program for the state of Louisiana due to the flood for both the March and August flooding. I can't express to you how important the role and responsibilities you have taken as a victim of the August flooding. It is very important that we can do whatever we can to assist you in getting what you need to make the decisions you have to make. So we really do appreciate the time and the attention of you all.

**Mr. Durbin:** Before we proceed, please introduce yourself and everyone at the table with you.

**Mr. Cunningham:** Absolutely. I'm Keith Cunningham, Executive Director of the Louisiana Housing Corporation. With me are Bradley Sweazy the Chief Operating Officer, Norma Connor the manager of our housing authority, and Lisa Bergeron, who is the current Director of our disaster program at the Louisiana Housing Corporation. I also have one of my board members present. So, we are putting a lot of effort and energy into this to make sure we get it right. As responsible as you can be to the situation. We'd like to start off with a presentation that we have prepared.

**Mr. Cunningham 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 for questions.**

**Dr. Richardson:** On what basis did you make that calculation?

**Mr. Cunningham:** There were a number of different factors considered. We looked at the population that was impacted by the flood using some of the data, some of the analysis but we also looked at what were opportunities to really move quickly to impact families that were affected by the flooding.

**Mr. Sweazy:** Yes, so we look at the number of properties that we need to address that are damaged, so we do have available a multi-step program but we're also looking at that for the expansion of the affordable housing assistance. We have about 40,000 something families right now that are affected.

**Dr. Richardson:** Because of the storm or because of the federal funds?

**Mr. Sweazy:** Because of the storm, pre-storm, as we talked about the pre-storm, the rental housing situation was already pretty dramatic, the floods happened and it made things even worse.

**Dr. Richardson:** And this has not been approved by the board, the board takes your suggestions and your recommendations?

**Mr. Sweazy:** Sorry?

**Dr. Richardson:** This calculation is what you are recommending to your board and we get the money for this?

**Mr. Sweazy:** Right, well our relationship with the OCD and our board is through programs, so we will unless we enter into a proper debtor agreement. As a partnership between this agency, the Louisiana Housing Corporation and the Office of Community Development, around those housing programs. I would have to review the appropriate guidelines.

**Mayor-President Robideaux:** Is that money being spent to get units back into commerce so that they are available? The last program is actually assistance to the renter?

**Mr. Cunningham:** Yes, that's correct. Both were kind of divvied up.

**Mayor-President Robideaux:** I'm unclear on the piggyback program.

**Mr. Cunningham:** The Piggyback Program is a program in which we anticipate layering CDBG funds into other programs, particularly the Low Income Housing Tax Program. We have this on the book at \$20 million. We want to make sure that we are addressing through the multi-family restoration program and the rental repair rebuild program as many needs as possible, as quickly as possible. And these programs represent the best ability to do that in our location.

**Mr. Knapp:** I appreciate that there was a description included in the material about the five programs with monetary allocations. In the loading capacity tax credits, have the ADG allocated an amount of tax credits to be tied up and used throughout the proposed piggyback allocation?

**Mr. Cunningham:** We have not done a specific one to the flood related parishes. This would be one thing that we consider in the process. We have the ability to reverse those credits in that way, we just have not designed it to do that specifically.

**Mr. Knapp:** And as a follow-up, do you have an idea of how much of the \$20 million you will need to leverage to get that?

**Mr. Cunningham:** There is no QAP at this time. I don't have that information but we can get it.

**Mr. Knapp:** I think it would be helpful to know that the total amount of equity that you're talking about with the different projects that are out there and be able to start to make some estimates of that to know how many units. The second question I want to ask is in the details of the multi-family program, this is a different between those two in the gap between 1 to 7 new properties and 20 units and above. Is there something in the middle that addresses those other properties?

**Mr. Cunningham:** Not at this time.

**Mr. Sweazy:** We hope to eventually get to all of them. The more funds we get allocated to Louisiana the more we can open the program up and help. The 20 and above is more of your larger properties and we don't really have a timeline for the mid-range between 20 and 30. It was several factors considered, I would have to get back with greater detail and I understand your question. This may be an opportunity for us to look and determine if there are ways to redesign some concepts and I'm appreciating it. It's something we want to recognize.

**Mr. Jetson:** QAP?

**Mr. Sweazy:** Qualified Allocation Plan.

**Mr. Jetson:** I'm just saying that under the programs, what if I am the owner of a 12 unit facility, that doesn't do me much good.

**Mr. Cunningham:** You are right and we are not able to serve all the needs and I do understand though.

**Mr. Jetson:** I understand it is hard and we cannot serve everyone, but I would not only assume is an arbitrary exclusion of a group of individuals who through no fault of their own find themselves in a terrible situation. My initial question was about the timeline and one of the revelations that had occurred being involved in this process after several years of being in government is you see that government is by determination, the urgency and need that it would be. So, the process just doesn't allow and that is part of the frustration that I think some of these folks are involved in. This is not a myth that is specific to you in the entirety of responsibilities, but having said that, my first is about this timeline, you mentioned April

workshops and then the summer announcement for progress. Is there some reason that the public information gathering or other steps that you have to take in order for an announcement cannot be occurring simultaneously?

**Mr. Cunningham:** From the standpoint of them occurring simultaneously, there are a couple of particular things that we need to make sure we establish and operate the program correctly. We are looking at ways to streamline the process and I want to give you something that we will obviously work hard to meet as a timeline, but as we move forward in design and it finally comes together, we'll have more information about how quickly we can implement it and it gives an opportunity for us to complete the assessments and bring more information back as we finalize some of the aspects of the program and the way it will operate.

**Mr. Jetson:** I guess the thing that probably all of us and certainly your organization is that I have a problem with those people who are waiting who realistically don't have any other options at this point and this is not going to be years before the construction is where it is needed. And my final question you made reference to the cooperative endeavor agreement with the state and that would be to appropriate to the Office of Community Development and what is the quality assurance for the owner that's around the execution of the \$130 million in funds? How do we assure them that the entire is the intended purpose of those funds is effectively?

**Mr. Cunningham:** From the state inspector and there are definitely measures in our CEA that will govern how this agency, how the Louisiana Housing Corporation, operates the program. It gives us the opportunity to continue to monitor our performance and proceed to evaluate how we perform.

**Mr. Jetson:** I appreciate all your hard work and I look forward to all updates.

**Mr. Durbin closed the floor for questions.**

## **IX. PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Mr. Durbin:** We have a public comment period for anyone wishing to speak may come and sit down in front of a mic and speak briefly on any item that we have talked about today, if you'd care to do so.

- **Veronica Berto, Baton Rouge resident**

**Ms. Berto:** I was under the assumption that the funding for the homeowner rehab would have begun by mid-March and now it looks like mid-April, why is that?

**Ms. Payer:** I think that what we were hoping to do is to open the survey for the home owners assistance program which is the first step of the application process in by mid to late March and we have not had the grant agreement from HUD completed as quickly as we thought it might be. The grant agreement is the agreement that HUD sends to us. That the state then has to fill out the answers, and sign that form. And then the next step is the line of credit to be made available in the federal treasury office. This is why we have to deal with figuring this money out. And so the next step is the line of credit that we need. And so, again, we think that line of credit should open sometime in mid-April. And so we did hope we that we would've received the grant agreement from HUD so we could move towards actually having it available for Louisiana a little sooner than we have, and so at this point it looks like we're hoping to get the grant agreement, it's not just for the \$438 million but for the whole \$1.6 billion chunk, in mid-April. And so with the survey part we were hoping to open up by mid-March, we'll probably have to do that a couple of weeks later than what we had hoped. So we hope to do that by mid-April now, and we certainly want it to be today if we could, it's just some of the federal processes that are not as quickly as we had hoped. So, on that part we are right on in terms of pushing it a little quicker but we'll be ready as soon as the line of credit is made available.

**Ms. Berto:** Do you anticipate any other delays?

**Ms. Payer:** The only reason I can't answer that is because I don't have control of the federal process. I know that HUD typically in national publications and like writing letters to us. And I believe recently at a national conference has stated that we're in a bad state in terms of responding, we are particularly reminding them it's not fast enough, we're doing everything we can to be ahead of our deadlines. But this issue of how does the federal government get disaster recovery dollars down is very problematic in our eyes. We have many states have gone through many disasters and for some reason the federal government just has a lot of room for improvement still in how we can see that being better and so all we do from our side on behalf of the Louisiana citizens, parishes, the state of Louisiana is absolutely ready, every time it comes to our part in that process and to make sure the if we can anticipate any questions or any delays and the answer goes ahead of time. Which we have done and we are asking the congressional delegation to help us move some of these delays that we're finding in the process, and so that's our commitment to you and on our part we're to ensuring that will cause the absolute minimal delays to home owners because we want to get in there today if we could and help with construction.

- **Ann Gibbons, Baton Rouge resident**

**Ms. Gibbons:** Whether you on the task force are aware, but we were advised, as homeowners, with the flood, to take pictures and document that. So that when FEMA came out, we would have that information. I am single, I am 68 years old, recently retired, and we destroyed my house with all of the flooding construction. When my inspector came in several weeks later, he spoke Spanish I do not, we pointed to my home, and he said, I had to explain that in his report, my concrete slab was not demolished, but all uphold and so on. He also gave several other comments and said I had \$2,000 done to my home, I lost over that, \$50,000 is what my construction has cost me so far, FEMA did reimburse me \$10,000 and some personal property. I was shocked that we do not really get reimbursed for my entire house, I am a one person, and I was reimbursed for insulation in my bedroom only. I was only reimbursed for the flooring in my bathroom, and my bedroom, and my kitchen, FEMA did not consider my three bedroom home, which really, really disappointed me. There was no need for me to take pictures of the drive leading to my home, for all my personal property, all of the sheet rock in my home, and cabinets and everything else. I was totally shocked by the way FEMA treated me, I don't know if this is normal, but I appealed three times, according to the guidelines of the letters that they sent me, within the 30 days. My construction was not completed, I did not have receipts for everything, so they finally denied me because I had not incurred enough expenses. But that third appeal letter, the supervisor down at the Celtic Center told me I could not appeal again because they wouldn't file denied. I had paid out my home repair from personal loans from friends and my mother's life insurance because I am retired, SBA would not give me a loan, and FEMA did not put me back in my house. When that same agency came around to repair my home and ask me what I needed, I had already put my cabinets in, no, I would not let them come in my house. That kind of quality construction does not go in my home, the money that I think the state spent on that program was a bunch of waste. I really am disgusted with that contractor that came around in my neighborhood, several different ones. I think we all should be warned this, if I understand this correct, you all are proposing hiring construction people that you mandate the quality that they repair be appropriate of house. And I also understand what's going on today, you are paying to repair homes and contractors and businesses, what about us who have already personally paid to get us back into our home? And also go in to the local stores, buy the gas, and everything else that happens in our neighborhood, I do live off whenever, I 12, so yes I saw the water coming and I grabbed my medicine and one change of clothes and I left my house.

**Mr. Forbes:** Thank you Ms. Gibbons. A couple of different things. One, we had some, at least 12 to 15, different local meetings around the state and what we heard from everybody was you've got to get those systems to everybody that you can, not just a few people. So, the program that we designed in response to that and once we got the additional \$1.2 billion does include reimbursement and it can be up to 100% of the repair cost for people who are low to moderate income and elderly, which is above 62.

**Ms. Gibbons:** I have \$1,300 from social security, no retirement and I am 68.5 years old.

**Mr. Forbes:** Right, so it seems like you would be the perfect candidate for our 100% reimbursement portion of the program, folks who don't meet specific criteria are going to be reimbursed initially at 25%. And that's one of the reasons that the governor is seeking that additional \$2 billion, so that we can increase that 25% reimbursement, but for somebody in your situation it is currently at a 100%. With respect to quality again because of the lack of funds the quality that we're going to pay for is what is called in the estimating software economy grade materials. The quality of the workmanship will not become a frail, it is standard workmanship and it will require and you might've heard me talk about the QA/QC Contractor earlier, that's part of their job is helping us ensure that the contractor that's out there doing the work is doing them with quality work.

**Ms. Gibbons:** I do want to thank you and I do hear the Governor on his monthly radio talk shows so I already signed up and went to a neighborhood meeting for all of our neighbors to also sign up. Because there are some of them couples that are repairing things on their own because they don't have the funds for a contractor. I have a disabled elderly lady in neighborhood who still has two by fours in her house, so I'm going to try to get all of my neighborhood to come in and we have a meeting. So I would like to encourage the public announcements that it really does, we need to have more mainly needs, I think also it need to be more prepared for something, hurricanes, I can tell you what to do. Tornadoes, I lived through one in Houston when I lived there, I can tell you what not to do, okay, I can also tell you what to do. Floods, my home is at 56 feet above flood level, I had two foot of water in my house, and I was totally shocked by this situation, my family lives down in Bayou Fall in the Naperville Parish. I went and stayed with my sister for a while and we had sand bags and pumps going, we could not get in and out of her property because it was too much water. I tried to argue with them, that water needs to go somewhere and our rivers and canals are not open. I understand we're trying to fix this issue today but I hope and pray this never happens again because we're not changing the environment to accommodate anything in this nature. That's it.

- **Charlette Minor, representing Louisiana citizens & neighbors**

**Ms. Minor:** I would like to suggest that moving the survey information to the front page of the website so that it can be clearly lead to it. Also, can some type of flyer be circulated or provided for circulation? Something simple explaining how to navigate the website and the survey itself?

**Mr. Durbin:** Executive Director Forbes is taking great notes so thank you for that ma'am.

- **Tommy Underwood, Baton Rouge resident**

**Mr. Underwood:** Hello, I'm Tommy Underwood, I am a veteran of 21 years. 16 years in the Navy, God Bless, and the rest with the Louisiana National Guard. I'm a man, they said I want you to be on a ship. On two ships, the first one was 28, second one was the Saratoga. They shot it. Well the captain, the old man we always called him, it was a big and the point that started all these wars he says I got mine. And they shot up two aircraft that if they would have got up, probably start World War III. I always commend the young men and women. Law enforcement of this great country. I'm an old veteran. When I stayed from my hotel, two months, nobody, can't help you, can't help you. I had my daddy, World War II, Marine Corps. No marines come over. No army. My sister, God bless her, I have to live with her or live with a friend? What do I have to do? Do I have to beg, is that what it takes? I'm here for you even though I've got diabetes, high blood pressure, I'll get in a uniform. I've been getting by at 60, why because I love this country, this great country, the people, all of you, all and I will raise my voice because you have to be passionate for this country. For God and country. I think you have to open your eyes, open your heart. You can say all you want to with computers and stuff, talk to me here and here. God gave us this state. That's a blessing, we're losing that slowly, we're losing Louisiana slowly, every year, and nobody stopped it. What are we doing? After that I was stationed in Florida. They put artificial reefs, they tried to keep them. This is the state right here. You have to be proud of the state. Make it better and listen. People have been giving me all kinds of excuses, they did give me some money, then I went to a company, which I'm not going to say who it was, they got sued. After two months nobody's looking at me, they're just like I'm too busy, I'm too busy. I had American flag, I have the Marine Corps flag, the Army flag. Do you know who Churchill was? Nobody knows this, why? Because Mr. Churchill was scared of Hitler. 120<sup>th</sup> Battalion went over to Iceland because he didn't want to be sneak attacked from Hitler. America, Canada and Great Britain. My dad, God bless him, was from Idaho. After he went through all kinds of hell from that was stationed, I'll have to remember but, Paris Island, San Diego, Marshal Islands, we should remember this. I can still remember who the axis powers are. Then I'll tell you something weird. That then to there I thought of the thought, it went somewhere else got the ball.

**Mr. Forbes:** Please get the comment card filled out because I want to leave here today with your information because there are other resources. We've got disaster case management and some other resources that we can connect you with and there are non-profit groups as well. Thank you for your service.

- **Thomas Jarreau, Denham Springs resident**

**Mr. Jarreau:** I'm a 100% disabled veteran. I want to take this time to thank the task force, the governor's staff and normal people working that are helping us get back in our homes. Thank you very much.

- **Nicholls Melancon, Prairieville resident**

**Mr. Melancon:** My name is Nicholls Melancon and I'm from Ascension Parish and I live with health issues. My daughter called up and said everything is flooded, her house and all up and down the road. My house didn't flood because it was built in 1947 but I lost some equipment, tractors, welding machines, etc. Is there any help for me?

**Mr. Forbes:** Did you apply for FEMA?

**Mr. Melancon:** Yes and the SBA loan.

**Mr. Forbes:** Okay. I do know that the only program that we are going to be rolling out would not help because our program does not cover contents, and it would not cover the other structure consequently.

**Mr. Melancon:** That's okay that is what I expected.

**Mr. Forbes:** We would love to be able to cover other things but we are so short of funds right now so obviously the thing we have to do is just try to help as many people get back into their homes as possible right now. Additional funds come, things will certainly change with respect to who all we can reach and do to help them.

- **Monique Robinson, Vital Resource Solutions**

**Ms. Robinson:** Good afternoon task force, thank you for allowing me to speak today at your meeting. I'd also like to thank you for all of your concerns and all of the work you have done to this point. I have attended several meetings in Baton Rouge and I was impressed and just felt really informed every time I walked away from a task force meeting. My name is Monique Robinson. I am the Director of the local non-profit group Vital Resource Solutions and right now we are assisting flood survivors with their expenses as they come from the FEMA TSA program to their own revenue. My concern is about the LHC presentation. I felt like they didn't have really solid deadlines, really solid plan as far as implementing their plan

and initiatives and I would just like to ask you all if there is any way possible to properly line their timelines up with the home restoration program. I'm working with several renters right now who have phased out of the TSA program that don't know where to go or we have to rush as they are eliminated from the TSA program, finding them somewhere to go, pay their rent on time and immediately get them assistance within one to two day timeframes. They are very vulnerable, single mother with children. So, really they need to step up their program, step up their initiatives and to make a clear cut objective for the next meeting.

**Mr. Forbes:** Thank you very much, it's a great comment. I just want to make it clear that LHC is doing everything possible and so is the Office of Community Development keeping this close to us, we absolutely feel responsible for this, for the rental programs and anything else we have other people do for us. It is absolutely critical for us to get the rental assistance in place as quickly as possible. I promise that at the next convening, we will have updates on timelines.

**Ms. Robinson:** I appreciate it. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Durbin closed the floor for public comments.**

## **X. OTHER BUSINESS**

**Mr. Durbin:** Other business. Webinars are being held by GOHSEP and FEMA's Mitigation Hazard Performance Analysis professionals throughout next week for an initial introduction to the Watershed Study and proposed activities that will ultimately be beneficial to recovery, local planning and development. In tab 6 of our binders we have been provided an invitation to participate in each webinar – each webinar is approximately 30 minutes long. You will also find the PowerPoint being used for the webinars that you can review before participating. GOHSEP update in tab 7, if there are any questions from the task force members I will ask Mr. Casey Tingle to approach the witness table. Are there any questions? No? Okay. Per request of the task force, OCD has provided us with the AMI tiers and a glossary of terms in tabs 8 and 9 of the binders. I will announce our next meeting date, Friday, March 31<sup>st</sup> and it will take place in Shreveport, Louisiana. Thank you all for coming today. It is my pleasure to work with all of you and I appreciate you folk's service.

## **XI. ADJOURNMENT**

**Meeting was adjourned at 12:07 PM.**

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

Date Approved: April 21, 2017

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