

COUNCIL ON WATERSHED MANAGEMENT MEETING MINUTES

MEETING NO. 12: MONDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2019

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Location: Louisiana State Capitol, House Committee Room 5

I. Call to Order

Council Chairman – Pat Forbes, OCD

Pat Forbes: Is it 3 p.m. and I would like to call the December 16, 2019 meeting of the Council on Watershed Management meeting to order. Will the council secretary please do roll call.

II. Roll Call

Council Secretary – Lori Dupont, OCD

Lori Dupont: Office of Community Development, Patrick Forbes

Pat Forbes: Here

Lori Dupont: Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Jack Montoucet

Pat Forbes: He is on his way, but absent at this time.

Lori Dupont: Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, Jeffrey Giering

Jeffrey Giering: Here

Lori Dupont: Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, Sam Martin

Sam Martin: Here

Lori Dupont: Department of Transportation and Development, Chris Knotts

Chris Knotts: Here

Lori Dupont: Four members are present, we do not have a quorum.

Let the record show that Jack Montoucet arrived during opening remarks and was present the rest of the meeting.

III. Pledge of Allegiance

Council Chairman – Pat Forbes, OCD

Pat Forbes: Mr. Jeffrey Giering has offered to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Jeffrey Giering: Everyone please rise.

IV. Public Comment

Council Chairman – Pat Forbes, OCD

Pat Forbes: This is an opportunity for public comment on agenda items, we ask that they be limited to three minutes per citizen and note that they will be taken both now and at the end of

the meeting. Is there any public comment at this time? Hearing none, we will move on with the agenda.

V. Opening Remarks

Council Chairman – Pat Forbes, OCD

Pat Forbes: Thank you. We have two items on the agenda today. One is council approval of the revised action plan for submittal to HUD. As you all probably remember, at our last meeting we were about seven days before the end of the comment period. Let the record show that Secretary Jack Montoucet is here. We approved conditionally the action plan in its draft form. After receiving all comments, we saw that there were certain modifications needed to the action plan. And so we are here today to approve a new version of the action plan. As well as to, sorry, got two sets of notes here, to talk about the round one funding for the program. Okay, I'm gonna read this because it's from my attorney. The preparation and submission of an action plan for the utilization of community development block grant funds is part of the administration of CDBG funds. The Office of Community Development is charged by law with that administration. While there's not a technical legal requirement that the council review or authorize the action plan given the significance of the initial action plan in establishing the overall framework of the CDBG funding of the Louisiana Watershed initiative. We're seeking the express support of the council in the submission of this final version of the original action plan to HUD. The updates is where we'll consider the two agenda items. And first is the CDBG mitigation action plan. I will tell you the meetings you've been to so far. We have had staff here presenting on the issues before the Council. The majority of the watershed initiative staff lives in New Orleans and we ask them to travel ahead of the weather and get home. So we'll walk through this from the presentation if that's okay with you, ladies and gentlemen.

VI. Updates

A. CDBG-MIT Action Plan with Public Comments

Pat Forbes: As everybody knows, the action plan is for \$1.2 billion in mitigation funds. This is the timeline for it. November 29th, is when our required 45 day public comment period ended. We received some 100 comments. Actually, the majority of those were presented during the public meetings that we held around the state. But we also received another 45 comments through our website. Most of the comments that we received were about details of funding and projects that will not be in the action plan. So while they were informative and helpful for understanding what people are thinking about and what their priorities are. For the most part, they were not critical to the action plan itself. The action plan describes an approach to the spending, the means of distribution, the methods of distribution. And the funding amounts for different activities, not specific projects. And so a whole lot of the comments that we got were about round one and other projects specific type questions. You can see a few of the more common ones we got. Some are about the MIDs. I think everyone is clear. We have gone over the most impacting distressed parishes and the projects. The 50% rule applies to projects that benefit the MIDs not necessarily that are within the MID. But that was a common question that we had. Here's the process. We're having the update today. We plan to submit the action plan before the end of the year. I will tell you that we just received today a document from HUD. It's a certification of the state ability to manage the funding and it comes with every single allocation that HUD provides. And we have to

do this every time. Because this is mitigation, that certification document has changed a little bit from previous times. Otherwise, we'd be able to turn it around in a day. But it will take us probably four, five days maybe into early next week before we're able to meet all the requirements and the certification. There are staff meeting today to talk about what that looks like and what the timeline would be. But until we had that certification completed, HUD he told us that it doesn't makes sense to submit the action plan until we got everything together. So consequently, the submittal of the action plan will be driven by the readiness the of that certification statement. And then, of course, HUD has up to 60 days to review. They can approve, they can reject it, they can partially approve it. And we will see how that comes out. We, of course, expect approval of the action plan in its current form. And you can see that HUD originally set a deadline of February 3rd for some middle of the action plan. From talking with other grantees it is likely that they will be requesting an extension of that deadline. Of course, we'll meet that but it may be that that deadline gets pushed back. Then you can see the grant agreement that follows a HUD's approval usually by some 15 to 30 days. They have to create the document. We sign a grant agreement with them. That's when the funds become available for the state to start spending them.

Chris Knotts: I have a quick question for clarification. The other entities, other grantees, the slide with all the dates on it, the original deadline for submittal was February 3, and we are submitted ours early, is the date we submitted, is that when the HUD review period starts?

Pat Forbes: The date we submitted is the day their clock starts. That is why they don't want us to turn in the action plan without the certification documents, because they want to have everything running at the same time.

Chris Knotts: All right, thank you, I just wanted to clarify that.

Pat Forbes: Okay, have all the members read the revisions? I want to mention one other revision to the action plan that folks will notice. There was language submitted by Wildlife and Fisheries staff for the original action plan that was inadvertently left out. And so that constitutes one of the major pieces of revision to the action plan that we're considering today. Has of all the members had a chance to review the action plan and the revisions since the original draft was approved. Okay, any questions? Any comments? Anybody motion to approve submittal?

Jack Montoucet: Motion.

Chris Knotts: Second.

Pat Forbes: Thank you, with all members in favor, the motion carries.

B. Watershed Projects Grant Program: Local and Regional – Round 1 Funding

Pat Forbes: The second topic. This was actually announced last week on our website. But we want to make sure that it gets reviewed here as well. As everyone knows, I think the program staff has spent a huge amount of time. And that means everybody, folks from anyone of these agency has been all over the state meeting with local people about what their thoughts are. Not just about the action plan but about round one, the \$100 million funding round. We heard a lot in the last two weeks of requests for extension of the deadline for submittal of the pre-application. That deadline was originally the end of this week, I think December 20th. And after hearing all those comments, we talked about the need to extend. And so officially as of Friday, but we're also announcing today and we'll be making broad announcement that deadline for pre-applications has been moved to January 17. There were a lot of reasons for this. The pre-application is a pretty simple form. But one of the biggies is that there are a lot of new government folks just coming into office. And they

needed an opportunity to be able to vet the lists and vet the projects. And make sure that the project list represented the desires of each of the entities and their new governments. And so January 17th will give everybody an opportunity to do that, as well as those folks that just needed more time to evaluate what projects they had. So that deadline is officially moved and we'll be doing a broader public announcement of that today. Their frequently asked questions on our website relative to the round one funding and folks can reference that if they have questions. In addition to that, we have the email address @la.watershed.gov. And we review the emails every day, actually all day. So if anybody has comments or additional questions regarding any of this, they can submit questions to the website.

VII. Next Steps

Pat Forbes: As for next steps, round 1 funding will be in place, it's just that the timeline will be pushed back a little bit now with January 17 deadline for receipt of pre-applications. We're gonna push back full application. What we don't want to do, we do know the full application is gonna be complicated. We have to make sure that people have time to do that. We have to make sure that they have the resources to do it well. What we've said over, and over, and over again is we can't afford for an entity or a region to be underrepresented in this process, by virtue of not having the financial or the technical wherewithal to participate in. And so we're gonna make sure there's ample time for people request for full application. Deadline for receipt of that full application is April 24th. And we will begin issuing award letters by May the 22nd, if not earlier. I will ask, once again, if there any public comments relative to anything we talked about today? Any further discussion from the Council members? Any questions? I don't see any lights here. I guess I have to learn to do that.

VIII. Closing Remarks

Pat Forbes: Okay, it has been a whirlwind tour. I will speak for the staff who have been doing it and for the agencies who have been represented there, in the past two weeks have made eight regional meetings and talked with probably, I would have to say, over 200 people who have attended about round 1. It's been a real push and we are excited about getting the funding invested and ready for the next steps. So we are ready to go. If no other comments, no questions, do I have a motion to adjourn?

IX. Adjournment

Sam Martin: Motion.

Jeffrey Giering: Second.

Pat Forbes: Any objections? Hearing none, we are adjourned at 3:47 PM.