

**September 28, 2016 RESTORE LOUISIANA TASK FORCE  
MINUTES**

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**Meeting Minutes**



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Louisiana State Capitol, House Committee Room 5

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**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Erin Monroe Wesley, Special Counsel to the Governor, called the meeting to order at 9:39 a.m. in the House Committee Room 5 of the Louisiana State Capitol, Baton Rouge. Ms. Wesley welcomed everyone on behalf of the Governor to the first Restore Louisiana Task Force. The roll was then called.

**II. ROLL CALL**

**TASK FORCE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

- Mr. Johnny Bradberry
- Mr. Roland Dartez
- Mr. Jimmy Durbin
- Ms. Suzie Elkins
- Mr. Michael Faulk
- Rep. Edward "Ted" James
- Mr. Raymond Jetson
- Mr. Adam Knapp

- Senator Dan "Blade" Morrish
- Mayor Dave Norris
- Mr. Don Pierson
- Rep. J. Rogers Pope
- Mr. Sean Reilly
- Mayor-Pres. Joel Robideaux
- Rep. Robert Shadoin
- Commissioner Mike Strain
- Mayor Ollie Tyler
- Ms. Jacqui Vines Wyatt

**TASK FORCE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

- Mr. Michael Olivier
- Dr. James Richardson
- Dr. Shawn Wilson

**SUPPORTING STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

- Patrick Forbes, Executive Director, Office of Community Development
- Rowdy Gaudet, Office of Community Development
- Lori Dupont, Office of Community Development
- Kayla Westmoreland, Office of Community Development
- Ray Rodriguez, Louisiana Housing Corporation

Ms. Wesley asked that Aaron Neville's "Louisiana" music video be played before Governor Edwards arrived.

**III. GOVERNOR'S OPENING ADDRESS**

Governor Edwards started by thanking each member of the Restore Louisiana Task Force for their willingness to accept the critical role of guiding our state through the recovery and rebuilding process. The people of Louisiana continue to maintain a sense of resiliency despite our fair share of disasters. From Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav and Ike to the 2016 recent flooding events, our state will rebuild stronger and thrive like never before. The March and August flooding events had a devastating impact on our state. 56 of Louisiana's 64 parishes received a federal disaster declaration. The March flooding event caused damage or destruction to more than 29,000 homes. The August storm dropped over 7 trillion gallons of rainwater in Louisiana resulting in the flooding of more than 100,000 homes and claimed 13 lives. Roughly 30,000 search and rescues were performed, with 11,000 citizens sheltered at the peak of the flood. Nearly 140,000 households have registered for assistance with FEMA for the August flooding event. Some areas of Louisiana received more rain than the equivalent to the amount of water discharged by the Mississippi River into the Gulf of Mexico over the course of 80 days. Our early estimates show an \$8.7 billion loss for the state of Louisiana as a result of the August flood, not including public infrastructure damage. The flood waters did not discriminate. I have traveled to every single parish affected by the floods and witnessed first-hand the destruction caused by these unnamed storms to churches, schools, businesses, buildings and infrastructure. I met a family with a baby that had just moved into their new house a couple weeks before the storm. They had to move everything they owned back out to the street. House after house a lifetime of work and memories was condensed to a pile at the end of the driveway. When you went into the shelters, every walk of life was represented — from a woman who went into labor to a Pearl Harbor veteran who when he was a teenage lied about his age in order to serve our country. These are the faces behind every number. I have visited Washington, DC on three separate occasions since the August recess calling on Congress to support for a supplemental appropriation of \$2.6 billion in Community Development Block Grant funds to allow for additional public investments in housing, economic development, and resilient infrastructure. We learned last week that Congress has included a down-payment of \$500 million in federal disaster assistance in its

continuing resolution to fund the operations of the federal government through December 9, 2016. We are grateful for this infusion of money for Louisiana and other disaster states and will continue to call upon Congress to fund our full request for \$2.6 billion in CDBG dollars along with other critical needs. We all want to help families displaced by the flood return to their homes and neighborhoods and restore their quality of life as quickly as possible. Among the many housing solutions available is the Shelter at Home program. This program provides those who qualify with the opportunity to return home sooner rather than later. Shelter at Home provides basic, temporary fixes that will allow you to stay in your home while you make the permanent repairs. Under the program, each applicant's home is evaluated, and if it will take \$15,000 or less to create that safe space, the applicant may be eligible for the program. FEMA regulations do not allow for permanent repairs, therefore the program is not designed to fully repair homes. To date, thousands of citizens have registered for the program. This is just one of the ways we've taken action to help the people of Louisiana, but we still have a long road ahead of us which is why we are here today. I am now calling upon this task force to restore our great state. Each of you have been selected to serve on the Restore Louisiana Task Force because you are uniquely positioned to offer the insights and perspectives needed to advise my office on programming decisions and initiatives that will drive our rebuilding process. It is my charge to you today that you be bold and innovative in your approach to our state's rebuilding efforts. I ask that in your role as my advisory council you guide the establishment and implementation of short and long-term priorities in the following critical recovery areas: Housing and Redevelopment Economic and Workforce Development Education Infrastructure and Transportation Healthcare Fiscal Stability Family Services Agriculture. I am excited to announce my selection of Jimmy Durbin and Jacqui Vines as co-chairs of the RLTF. They will officially resume their co-chair roles at the next meeting of the RLTF. I would also like to thank the team at the Office of Community Development & Pat Forbes, Rowdy Gaudet, and Lori Dupont & my special counsel Erin Monroe Wesley for providing staff support to the RLTF. I wanted to mention also that we lost over \$300 million in devastation to our crops. There are some things we can and will do to help the funding for farming communities. Many of the crops were uninsured losses. So Louisiana will move forward. By working together, we can ensure that our state fully recovers from the historic and unprecedented flooding that has turned too many lives upside down. We will be united and stronger than ever. I thank you for agreeing to give your time and service to the great state of Louisiana.

#### **IV. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Ms. Wesley introduced each task force member and gave a brief bio on each member. In terms of staff, Erin Monroe Wesley, Special Counsel to the Governor Lori Dupont, Office of Community Development Patrick Forbes, Executive Director of the Office of Community Development Rowdy Gaudet, Chief of Staff of the Office of Community Development Ray Rodriguez with the Louisiana Housing Corporation (he will be key staff support on our housing needs) and Kayla Westmoreland with the Office of Community Development. So that is your staff and that is your task force.

#### **V. REVIEW OF ETHICS AND OPEN MEETINGS LAWS**

- Kathleen Allen, Ethics Administrator for Louisiana Board of Ethics
- Dan Rees, Deputy Executive Counsel for Division of Administration

Ms. Allen started by stating she would be giving a quick 5 minute overview of the code of governmental ethics. She did take note that most of the members of the task force may have already received the proper training in the past due to their public service. But now that you are part of this important task force you are also a public servant in a different capacity so I'm asked here as a reminder that those provisions of the ethics code would apply to you as members of this task force. If you are an elected official that may be a different standard now that you are an appointed member of this body here. So if there are in questions our office is available to help you along with this. I discussed with Erin that there is in fact a training that is available, but if you have not received that training this year and you are currently a public servant you can go ahead and take that online or we can discuss at a future meeting if there are any questions on how it may affect you. The

governmental code of ethics is a conflict of interest statute. Its goal and purpose is to prevent conflicts of interest in your public capacity or public service and your private capacity in some way. There are restrictions with immediate family members that may come into play. We have a lot of information on our website. So if there is ever a question that you may have or you see coming in the future, again you can contact our office but it is usually going to involve your service on this task force and if there are any actions between you, your family members, your businesses you may have or have an interest in that are going to interact with this task force those may be the red flags that trigger maybe I need to ask a question, we are certainly here and there to help if you have any of those types of questions we can do what we can informally and formally we can offer advice as the Board of Ethics.

Mr. Rees offered a very brief review of Open Meetings Laws. Most of the task force members are already aware of the open meetings laws because of your service in the public sector. At the outset we do not have any governance rules set yet, what we need to simply worry about is that once there is a quorum of the individuals on the task force, which is a majority, that any discussion about your mission is subject to the open meetings law, which means we need to have at least 24 hour public notice. Public participation is allowed, public comment is allowed. The staff will be working with you all on gathering agenda items, on posting the agenda items, but please be aware that if there is something that you would like to have addressed at the meetings it does need to be on the agenda. Once we establish future governance rules, as far as if the chairs and co-chairs choose to have by-laws and what not, that are spelling out operations and such, then we will know what open meetings laws are applicable. At this point I am trying to figure of if there will be a need for executive sessions, which is an exception to the open meetings law, but that would be something to be addressed in the future, based on the nature of the task force, I'm not certain if that is something you would need to be worried about.

Mr. Rees added an additional item, which is akin to the open meetings law, the Public Records Law. Most of you all know about this law being in the public sector. We do believe that the public records law will apply to the operations of the task force so we want each of you to be aware that the records generated with your work are subject, upon request, to public disclosure.

**Ms. Wesley opened the floor for questions.**

**Mr. Dartez:** When you talk about the agenda, I know certain public bodies, if we need to amend the agenda to deal with something that wasn't on the 24 hour notice requires unanimous consent of the board. Do we need to follow along those same guidelines?

**Mr. Rees:** Yes

**Mayor Robideaux:** If for some reason the task force or 11 members of the task force feel the need to travel to DC to have meetings with the agencies or the congressional delegation, how does the public meeting laws work?

**Mr. Rees:** If the task forces' meeting with a quorum then it could be subject to the rules of saying it is going to be open to the public. So in deciding your missions and your tasks & operations you need to keep aware that once you hit that threshold you could be operating a trigger. Now if these are public hearings that you are attending, like if you are attending a sub-committee hearing, that is already something that is open to the public. If you are behind closed doors, then that is something you need to make certain doesn't trip any wires.

## **VI. IMPACTS OF MARCH/AUGUST FLOOD EVENTS AND FEMA PROGRAM RESPONSES**

- Jim Waskom, Director, GOHSEP
- Mark Riley, Deputy Director, GOHSEP
- Casey Tingle, Assistant Deputy Director, Hazard Mitigation, GOHSEP

Mr. Waskom started by thanking the task force for their service and continued service. He wanted to start their presentation with a few brief remarks regarding this storm and previous storms. We have actually had 3 Stafford Act disasters since the Governor took office. The floods actually started in December and went into January that was one. Then we had the March floods which impacted every corner of the State. Finally we had the most current flood in August. We have also had the tornadoes in the river parishes which didn't reach the threshold for a Stafford Act disaster, which Mark will touch on in a little bit. Just in terms of impact for this particular August flood, this is the 4th largest disaster in the history of disasters ever. So in terms of monetary impacts, it impacted communities and families as the 4th largest disaster ever. The task you are going to have before you, coordination is going to be the key. Mark is going to touch on it but just shy of 150,000 folks registered with FEMA's website, so that gives you another idea of the impact. The big thing for me right now is the housing piece and the capacity for housing, which you will probably hear more from Pat Forbes and Ray Rodriguez on today. With that, again thank you for your service and continued service, I'm turning it over to Mark Riley who will give you some more insight as to the recovery process and where we are with that.

*See attached PowerPoint for overview of presentation.*

**Ms. Wesley opened the floor for questions.**

**Question 1:**

**Rep. Shadoin:** Regarding 404 and 406 funds, can you educate the task force as they move along regarding the different "pools" or "pockets" of money?

**Mr. Riley:** The 404 money has much more discretion to it than the 406 funds the 406 funds are tied specifically to a public assistance project. For example, if a building has been damaged, they will pay for the repair of that damage. Also, if you can come up with a mitigation type activity that can be associated with that building, they (FEMA) will give additional funding to that specific building.

**Rep. Shadoin:** I'd like to repeat that the task force will need assistance with that from GOHSEP moving forward.

Mr. Waskom, Mr. Riley, Mr. Tingle: All agreed.

**Question 2:**

**Rep. Pope:** In regards to the Small Business Administration (SBA) and their loans, there are major issues with it. I question the October 13, 2016 deadline to apply for SBA loans and if that is correct.

**Mr. Riley:** Yes, that is the correct deadline.

**Rep. Pope:** For those individuals or businesses that have not yet applied for SBA loans, is there any way of extending or prolonging that date?

**Mr. Riley:** Yes, all deadlines mentioned in the presentation are eligible for extensions. As they go forward with their evaluations, they will go back to FEMA and ask for an extension, if they see that is necessary.

**Rep. Pope:** The people that I represent, including myself, are having major issues getting a response from the SBA. They call and get different answers from different people. I suggest the task force look into SBA and see what they are doing, where they are going, because they are holding up a lot of people in Livingston Parish, due to limited response. It is key for them to come back as people and businesses. I ask that GOHSEP expand on how they can go about improving that process.

**Mr. Riley:** Yes sir. Let me give you a little background on how the State and FEMA organize for disasters. The State appoints a State Recovery Officer, which in this case is myself, and the President appoints a Federal Recovery Officer, which is a gentleman by the name of Gerald "Gerry" Stolar. Gerry and I work very closely, we meet constantly, and our offices are very close to one another. These sorts of issues, and this is the first I've heard about the SBA, should be brought to us so if we see an issue with the federal response or the state response we can deal with it. So I'll take this back to Gerry and I'll have a conversation with him. Maybe after this meeting adjourns I can meet with you to get more details on what you are seeing, so I can go back to him with some details and see what solutions we can come up with.

**Rep. Pope:** That sounds fair. Thank you.

### Question 3:

**Mr. Faulk:** In the scope of what you just presented, is the Comite Diversion Canal project in that scope?

**Mr. Riley:** So the Hazard Mitigation fund that we talked about and in this disaster the lock-in is \$252 million dollars. A couple of things, and I'm not an expert on that particular project, as I understand it that is an Army Corps of Engineers project and will have to come with funding from Congress to the Army Corps of Engineers in order to complete that project. There are other projects like that out there that may not be an Army Corps of Engineers project that we may be able to use Hazard Mitigation funding to assist with. I think that is one of the things you will be considering to what kind of projects out there will give us the bang for the buck for these dollars we have to spend.

**Mr. Faulk:** The reason I ask the question is because it has been going on for a while and I think this just brought it to light and it has some folks wanting to increase the activity.

**Ms. Wesley:** And as part of our request to Congress we have made the request specific to Comite River Diversion and so there is a request for about \$125 million from Congress to help fund that project. So that request is into the President and being considered by Congress.

### Questions 4 & 5:

**Secretary Bradberry:** Two questions. One has to do with the Infrastructure damage. Is there a time frame that has been associated with schools, roads, public buildings? Is there a target date by which we want this information done?

**Mr. Riley:** Technically once an entity is registered for public assistance they will have a kick-off meeting, which is a specific meeting with FEMA to start the process of identifying damages and then they will have 60 days from that meeting in order to complete that identification of damage. Now that is not a scope of work analysis of what needs to be done, it's just simply pointing out the areas where that damage has occurred and then lead FEMA and the state back to develop the individual project worksheets to build out that scope of work.

**Secretary Bradberry:** So in all these cases has the 60 day clock started?

**Mr. Riley:** I don't have the number of applicants with me but I think we are somewhere north of 500 applicants have applied and we are still in the process of doing kick-off meetings, so the clock has started with some but not all. We are also monitoring that deadline very closely and if we get an issue, for example Denham Springs has come to me and said we are not going to be able to do this in 60 days because of everything else going on with the city, so we will ask for an extension of that deadline for that applicant. If it looks like we are going to have a universal problem, then we will ask for a universal extension.

**Secretary Bradberry:** I mean they are all equally important but surely we have a priority on getting our schools up and running.

**Mr. Riley:** Yes sir. In fact one of the first things Gerry and I did is form a school specific team, which is a FEMA member and a state member going out to all the affected schools. One of the first things we were asking was whether or not there were any temporary facilities they needed because we wanted to get those on the ground. One thing that surprised me is how resilient these schools are and how quickly they have been able to develop their own plans without a whole lot of assistance from us. But we are in the process now of scoping the damage to each of the school buildings and we will write project worksheets and then that will give the schools funding to go about repairing those buildings.

**Secretary Bradberry:** I would say that roads and bridges are pretty far along. Secretary Wilson has his staff working on that. My second question has to do with Hazard Mitigation. You say the \$252 million number is a lockin number, so it can go up or down?

**Mr. Riley:** Yes

**Secretary Bradberry:** Who is providing the input into what could make that number go up or down? In other words who is identifying programs that would be flood mitigation type projects that we could undertake?

**Mr. Riley:** The identity of programs is not a factor in where that number goes. It is strictly a mathematical calculation. You take all of the dollars that are expected to be obligated in the public assistance program, take all of the dollars that have been approved in the individual program, take mission assignments which are the dollars that other federal agencies have spent to respond to this disaster, and you add them up and you multiply them by 15% and that is what you get.

**Secretary Bradberry:** I'd like to talk to you a bit more about that so I understand it better.

#### **Questions 6, 7 and 8:**

**Ms. Elkins:** My question is on the match. Are local governments or the state going to be putting up the 10% for the PA projects?

**Mr. Riley:** Historically what we have done in the other 11 disasters you saw in that slide, whoever the applicant is puts up the 10%.

**Ms. Elkins:** So, will block grant dollars be used to help them with the match?

**Mr. Riley:** That is something that will have to be determined. That is not within our purview to determine because we don't manage community development block grant money but I have seen CDBG money be used in the past for matches, especially in the Hazard Mitigation program. The 10% match is only a PA specific match and in the Hazard Mitigation program we are still at a 25% match and there is no regulatory process to adjust that.

**Ms. Elkins:** Right, I understand that. I know a lot of areas use their block grant dollars to help the local governments put up their match and then the same thing with Hazard Mitigation, FEMA will put up 75% of that and then CDBG funds are used for the other 25%, so that was what I was asking. You know, the capacity of the local governments. Are they going to have the monies to put up that 10% match and whether there has been any talk of that? My second question has to do with the Army Corps of Engineers. As far as I know I don't think CDBG dollars can be used anymore if the Army Corps of Engineers has a project. HUD won't allow you to use CDBG monies for that.

**Mr. Riley:** That is my understanding as well. The Army Corps of Engineers will have jurisdiction over a water body, which gives them the authority to go in and do any mitigation activity there is. That funding comes from Congress and there is a concept in all the programs we have call Duplication of Benefits. It's hard to take federal dollars and put them in another program.

**Ms. Elkins:** My third is just a basic comment on SBA. They are very difficult. I think we should all understand that for housing purposes if an individual applies for SBA monies and they are granted those dollars by SBA, then it becomes a DOB. And that means if the state is giving them \$90,000 and SBA gives them \$90,000, then it is a DOB and it zeroes out. So what you are looking at and don't be shocked, those persons who are getting SBA loans, it is reducing the amount of money they can get from other funding. Where for people that don't go to SBA, they are eligible for grant monies for their whole repairs.

**Mr. Riley:** Part of the FEMA process in the individual assistance program is when you register, they will not process your registration any further unless you first gone to the SBA and applied. The individual assistance grant program in FEMA terms is a grant program of last resorts, so they are going to make you go and look for other available federal programs first. And only if you get denied for SBA or the approved loan is not sufficient to cover all of the expenses caused by the damage then the other programs and individual assistance program will kick in.

**Ms. Elkins:** In my experience with working with SBA, and I do this for a living, and that doesn't happen. Even here in Baton Rouge. My sister's house was destroyed, she went to FEMA, FEMA had already given her the maximum amount and she did not go through SBA. If she had and SBA had given her a \$30,000 loan, she wouldn't have gotten anything from FEMA.

**Mr. Riley:** I'll let FEMA answer that. I know that part of the process is before they will move your application forward you have to apply to SBA. Once she has done that they come in and do the analysis and if she has gotten the max amount then she must have had significant damage.

**Casey Tingle:** The difference is between the funding that FEMA provides through home repair through IA occurs first and doesn't require the SBA step in order to be eligible or as there are Other Needs Assistance programs for things like contents, particular equipment, vehicles, and those sorts of things does require the SBA step before that Other Needs Assistance process kicks in.

**Ms. Elkins:** I just think that is what the committee needs to know for their jurisdictions, that if they have their homeowners go ahead and apply for SBA and SBA gives them a loan for \$40,000 or \$100,000, it becomes a DOB, a duplication of benefit, and they won't be eligible for CDBG funds and a lot of people don't understand that and they get angry when they trying to get assistance. Pat Forbes knows what I'm talking about. We didn't have that with Katrina. We used the block grant dollars to repay SBA. Well that doesn't happen anymore, the federal government put a stop to that. It's now a duplication of benefit. Even non-profit dollars are considered a DOB. And sometimes this hurts homeowners.

**Casey Tingle:** I think that is a valid point. I think the timing of the assistance is what creates a lot of the issues there because of the sequence of delivery. CDBG is largely an unknown until some point post disaster and based upon the impacts and congressional action, whereas FEMA, IA and SBA are enacted as soon as there is a declaration and so should the task force committee to some sort of an action plan for grant funding through CDBG for homeowners, I think you are absolutely correct and that is something that we need to be aware of.

**Ms. Elkins:** And homeowners do to because if you are low to mod, someone who can't afford an SBA loan and you apply for it and they give it to you and you are paying a loan when you could have gotten a grant. So those people that are doing the work right now, you know, it's sad.

**Mr. Riley:** If you need this, we can get someone from FEMA who is an expert in this process to come in and



give you some granular detail.

**Ms. Wesley:** Can we maybe schedule that for the next meeting, in terms of presentations?

#### **Questions 9 and 10:**

**Mr. Knapp:** One, to echo Rep. Pope's comment on the SBA program we have heard that at the Baton Rouge Area Chamber and throughout the region, concerns about that. One thing that may be useful is the data that you shared with us on slide 10 in your presentation, is extremely informative to us, and as you have said, those points are going to be moving over time as we learn more about the dollars that are available and the programs. It would be helpful to continue to get that at each of our meetings. And second, it may be useful to separate the IA information, homeowner loans from business loans. It does help tell a different picture of the business response to understand those two things are separated. The business loan number is significantly smaller than the individual loan number. It will grow over time but it is smaller, so it would be helpful to see that progression. Questions are regarding the Public Assistance program. Has anything changed over the last 10 years on the ability to more rapidly negotiate cost estimates on the project worksheets to get more rapidly to a conclusion of that cost estimate and start to move forward in public assistance recovery? And second, global settlements over multiple projects within one category, so the Central School System we're looking for a, the Livingston School System we're looking for a way for all of its schools are able to be looked at together. Is that possible to see if those would be able to be negotiated and moved forward in a more rapid way in education recovery?

**Mr. Riley:** Short answer, yes. There are a number of pieces of legislation since Katrina that affected school systems specifically and one is the entire campus approach opposed to the building by building approach. For example, instead of having the NFIP offset on each building, now it's by campus. Under the Sandy Act, Congress is allowing FEMA to create capped projects, and with that capped project the ability to do anything they want that is an eligible activity. So if they want to redesign the entire school system with that capped grant, they can do that. The issue with coming to a quick analysis is really the sticking point. The risk you take by using a capped grant is if you miss a cost then you are stuck. So there is a trade-off and we work very closely with the individual applicants to make sure they understand that trade-off if they make that decision. Just to be very blunt about it we still often get into serious discussions with FEMA about what the level of damage is and they will have their experts and we will have our experts and we battle it out sometimes. This is a process. A highly bureaucratic process, so we will continue to work through it.

**Mr. Knapp:** That has got to be the least most favorite words in recovery is a "highly bureaucratic process".

#### **Question 11:**

**Mayor Tyler:** Mr. Riley, I know that you have been working with families and businesses in northwest LA with the flooding that occurred there in March and I guess I'm really concerned about how the new influx of dollars will be used to continue to help us in our recovery efforts up in that part of the state. Listening to the comments this morning it appears that we may be in conflict with dollars we have already received and I just don't know how we fall in that process. Can you help me understand?

**Mr. Riley:** If I'm understanding your question, you are focused on Hazard Mitigation dollars and how those are to be allocated. We are still working through that process and just as a program item, even the dollars that will come in the Hazard Mitigation program for this disaster can be allocated across the state. They are not necessarily disaster specific or parish specific. I don't want to step too far out but I do think that this one of the things this task force will be doing is doing an analysis on what is the most effective way to take this money and combine it with other sources of money to create the resilience that the Governor talked about.

#### **Questions 12 and 13:**

**Mayor Norris:** Mr. Riley has been in West Monroe a lot, we had a tornado and got that cleaned up so we could be ready for a flood. I've always been impressed with how people from GOHSEP have been able to help us and explain things to us but honestly if you were just coming in from another planet, this is the most mind boggling process nobody can understand it. It's not the runaround, it's trying to explain to people that aren't knowledgeable about how all these programs work. If the Governor is able to get another \$2.8 billion, are we under staffed at the state level to try and deal with this? We have a project that is going on right now that is either money that we got from Rita, Isaac or something, and I think one thing this committee could do is we need to have some additional assistance for GOHSEP, so some of these things can be done in a more timely manner. I'm not being critical of how GOHSEP handles it, I think the rules they are having to live by make it very difficult for them to do their job in a timely manner.

**Mr. Waskom:** I would not turn down anymore assistance. Look, I've been in office almost 9 months. Currently we have 51 TO positions. Mark's section has 335 which are full time equivalent non-TO positions in GOHSEP. So we have 385. A lot of this gets bogged down in the bureaucratic process with us going back and forth with FEMA on projects and worksheets and the versions attached to it. Mark mentioned we have 36,000 open projects going back 11 disasters. Those 36,000 have 8,000 versions attached to them for when an applicant comes back to us and says they missed something and have to go back and add to it, which means we have to go back to FEMA and try to get that included. I don't know if throwing more people at the problem would solve it. It certainly may help some of the reductions but GOHSEP staff full-time positions have been cut over the 8 years from 167 down to 51, so when we have these big disasters like this what we have to do is use unit manning roster to take Mark's folks from recovery section and use them in the response section phase. So that stops them from doing what they are doing on these project worksheets to come respond to a disaster and then we send them back. Now that's not all of them but that's some of them. I will add that all of our salaries and benefits of those 385 employees are paid with federal grant money, so all the state general fund I get is to go pay back FEMA cost share, other state agencies through interagency transfers, so by the time I do that I literally have nothing left in the state general fund so every bit of my funding comes through federal grant dollars. So if we ever get cutoff from FEMA for state management costs I guess we will be working for free. In my view, we can always use more help. We do have two contracts for closeout services and for technical assistance in Mark's section, about 60 people &ndash; GCR & CB&I.

**Mayor Norris:** How do you operate with your manpower cut by 2/3s?

**Mr. Waskom:** It is challenging but like I said, we take people from Mark's recovery section and use them in the response section phase.

**Mr. Riley:** The good news is the \$2.8 billion belongs to Pat (OCD), not me.

**Mayor Norris:** Well they're no speed demons. I just think you lose the benefit of giving people some help by the fact that it is stretched over two generations of people. I think if you came to this group with some recommendations on how this process might be streamlined, I think everybody would be receptive. CDBG is a great group and we have wonderful projects with them, but it takes a long time to get anything done, and then people forget that the state actually did help them, or that the feds actually did help them.

**Mr. Riley:** With the Hazard Mitigation funding in the recovery division we're managing over \$17 billion, you go to any other state in the union and they may be managing \$3 or \$4 billion. So we are 3 or 4 times larger in these programs than any other state in the union. It's very complex in terms of contracting, procurement and cost reasonableness and all the hoops you have to run through in order to actually get the FEMA money in play. It's a pretty serious event.

**Mayor Norris:** One of the projects we had, and it might have been the one that's going on now, it was handed off by sub-contractors for evaluations to private engineers, well we are now on our third set consulting engineers that have had to start over each time, yet we are paying them each time. That's not saving money, that's costing money.

## Questions 14 and 15:

**Rep. James:** In addition to the SBA issues, the FEMA guidelines regarding primary vs. secondary homes. That is a huge impediment to people coming back. We have folks that have lost both, their primary and their secondary homes. Is that something that we need to include in our conversations with the congressional delegation? Is it as simple as a presidential executive order, waiver? How can we get the assistance to those folks to get past that impediment?

**Mr. Riley:** FEMAs, well the statutory philosophy behind the individual assistance program is to assist that individual to get back into their home, their primary home. It is not a repair program, it is not a fix everything that may be broken with you, it is do a minimal basic amount of funding in order to assist you, not to completely make you whole, but assist you into getting back into your primary residence. I will say that if that is to be affected it would have to be a congressional action amendment to the Stafford Act.

**Rep. James:** Okay. Well we talk about getting folks back, and unfortunately we have a lot of folks that are renters. If those people don't have places to go then we are not going to be able to get people to come back. I know a lot of these people have been sent to SBA and that seems to be the answer but you have heard all of the issues that we have with SBA and a lot of those folks are senior citizens, who are not in the position to get another loan, so we need to address these issues with the senior population. Second question: Debris removal. What happens with testing of the air quality? In my area we have about 50 feet of debris, not only is it an eye sore but I'm concerned about the folks that are coming back and those that are sheltering at home. Are we testing air quality? Whose responsibility is that?

**Mr. Riley:** That is the local jurisdictions responsibility and there are processes if there is a health and safety issue that is identified, there are processes in which we can get FEMA involved in that. Many times it is just the normal responsibility of the jurisdictions to engage in issues that affect health and safety. In the debris program there is specific guidance on how to separate different types of debris to make sure that if it is something hazard, it is treated that way. Homeowners are encouraged to do that but some don't, so when contractors pick it up they go to common dump site and dispose of it accordingly.

**Rep. James:** That is a huge burden on a homeowner. I'll say that I watched many evenings and I don't see any separation going on. I see very little organization with the debris removal. I guess that is a conversation with the contractor and the local government to address that issue because I don't see a lot of separation and I'm very concerned about the hazardous nature of the debris and it is going to be there for a while.

## Question 16:

**Mr. Dartez:** My question is in regards to reaction in North Louisiana, and we appreciate the request for the 90/10 split for the March floods, do you have any insight on if the decision is going to be made or not?

**Mr. Riley:** The current ability to do this is driven by regulation, not policy, and the regulation has specific guidance about meeting certain thresholds in order to get it and the March event just didn't meet that threshold. For Katrina it took us two years to get them to go to 90/10, and then we had to get congressional action to get them to go to 100% because of the size of the event. I personally think there is an argument that could be made because of all of the events that have occurred in the State of Louisiana that we need some additional assistance beyond what is currently going on. The back to back to back to back to back nature of these, from Katrina to Rita to Gustav to Ike to Isaac, etc. Every year we have something very significant going on.

## Questions 17 and 18:

**Mr. Jetson:** I will say in regards to Adam's comment is the only thing more difficult in hearing highly bureaucratic process is experiencing it and unfortunately there are a lot of people in our communities who are

in the throes of a highly bureaucratic process. The decision to advocate to FEMA for the individual assistance because they were better equipped to undertake that. Can you share with me what were the determining factors in discerning them as being better equipped?

**Mr. Riley:** I'll talk to you in terms of what FEMA has on the ground. They have 2600 people on the ground in the State of Louisiana supporting the individual assistance program. If the state took on that burden, the \$640 million that has been dispersed, the state would have had to be in the position to disperse that funding and then go back to FEMA and get a reimbursement at the end. So FEMA takes that financial burden on themselves and then comes back to us, sometimes years later, to get the 25% that we will owe them and then if we need to enter into an agreement with them on how to pay that off.

**Mr. Jetson:** That alone is justification for me. My question now is what are the opportunities to better inform citizens as to how to work their way through this terribly bureaucratic process? So that they understand that the decisions that are being made, options available, consequences on decisions made, etc.

**Mr. Riley:** FEMA opens disaster recovery centers across the impacted areas, I think we have had as many as 32, we currently have 26 still open and that is where an individual can go and meet face to face with FEMA IA expert or SBA or HUD or any other agency that is available to offer assistance, but the process is to go there. It is a constant battle, that process is not perfect, for example many people lost their cars and can't make it to the DRC. It is a bureaucratic process.

**Mr. Jetson:** It is a bureaucratic process and even for those individuals who can make it to the DRC the thing that is the rarest to find is a straight response and in a timely manner for a pressing situation that they are facing. That is the reality that is being experienced by 1000s of people across this state. My request to you is going forward if there are recommendations on how we can better inform people as to how to navigate this process, what are the options, what are the consequences of the decisions that they are making and how is it that they assert their level of disagreement on the decisions that are being made about their lives because you have people who are basically being told, here is the decision and you have the right to appeal but in practice they are running around in circles while at the same time living in just horrible situations. In addition to that, my hope for whatever future funding that is secured is the interface between the people and who accesses those programs so we don't replicate the level of bureaucratic balderdash that is taking place unfortunately across our communities.

#### **Question 19:**

**Mayor Durbin:** Great questions have been posed to you all. Thank you for your responses. As a former mayor and having walked through Denham Springs City Hall having sustained 4.5 feet of water and almost total destruction, now gutted and with the benefit of certain institutions providing use of a building for the city to move to and operate, is there an expedited way for a public entity to tap into funding to repair or is the process very complicated being first a formal assessment is made, then deadlines to meet and so forth? I'm totally confused as a former mayor so I can't begin to think what Mayor Landry is going through right now in Denham Springs and elsewhere across the state.

**Mr. Riley:** We actually met with Mayor Landry yesterday and helped walk him through some of this process. I'm not sure on how to define an expedited process, in order for FEMA to make funding available the scope of work, for say the city hall, has got to be identified so that they can match that scope of work with the necessary funding to complete it. In Katrina there were some very aggressive programs in which funding was made available, having to reconcile that funding on the backend several years later has created significant debts in places like the City of New Orleans, so whether that's a good process or not I'm don't know. That was a legislative process also. We are trying to identify those key areas, like schools, like city hall, that need a lot of focus on the front end of this, so that we can get those up and running. In the case of city hall, the way the program works is if it is damaged over 50% of its value, then you are eligible for funding to replace that building. So it is important to go through this process, the deliberate phase. For

instance I wouldn't want them to be spending money today on repairing that building if in fact they may be entitled to a replacement building because they may prefer the replacement building. It is a deliberate process and for those things that are critical we are working as fast as we can and focusing on those things so we can get the funding in place as soon as possible.

**Mayor Durbin:** Did you describe all of the critical deadlines that have to be met to Mayor Landry?

**Mr. Riley:** Yes sir we did. In that case the city has submitted a request to extend the deadline for identifying damage for 3 months and we have submitted a letter to FEMA requested the extension.

**Mr. Waskom:** One of the pitfalls you run into in expediting the funds without the process, and I understand it's bureaucratic, is exactly what we are dealing with now going back to Katrina. I have a 6 person team that is doing nothing but going back and trying to reconcile these invoices because it its haste to get money to the communities after Katrina the expended a bunch of money without keeping detailed records and now the federal government wants their money back. There were also insurance payments made that resulted in a duplication of benefits where now we are talking millions of dollars that we are going to be telling people that GOHSEP, which we are the conduit for money from FEMA, we can't give you any money right now because you are already on the hook for millions of dollars. I just want this committee to be aware of that and that's not a pleasant task either.

**Question 20:**

**Rep. Shadoin:** Mr. Riley you mentioned that this was a legislative procedure or process in terms of what, is that referring to the legislative branch of United States Congress or is it of the state?

**Mr. Riley:** The conversation was related to the 90/10 split issue and in order to affect that, like we did in Katrina, you would have to seek congressional action.

**RESOLUTION:**

**Rep. Pope:** We have listened to a lot of things and I certainly want to applaud you people because I think you are doing the best you can under the circumstances you are dealt and I do appreciate that, so if I come across as like I can sometimes, don't take it personally, that is just me. I would like for this task force though to look at the possibility of a resolution that I would like to put forth based on conversations that I have heard here. If someone could go and ask FEMA and the SBA to extend the disaster application deadlines immediately, especially for SBA homeowners and business programs to give impacted citizens, which this is the nation's 4th largest disaster that we know about, more time to plan and prepare for their recovery needs. Would that be something we could do?

**Mr. Riley:** Yes sir. And as I said earlier, we watch all these deadlines and if we see continued need as a deadline approaches it is routine for me to submit a letter asking for an extension.

**Rep. Pope:** Then I'm going to ask the task force if they would consider that resolution and make it part of the official record.

**Mr. Durbin:** I second that motion.

**Ms. Wesley:** Any comments or questions about the motion on the table? Okay. Let's do a roll call vote on the motion on the table.

Ms. Dupont:

- Mr. Johnny Bradberry Support
- Mr. Roland Dartez Support
- Mr. Jimmy Durbin Support
- Ms. Suzie Elkins Support
- Mr. Michael Faulk Support
- Rep. Edward "Ted" James Support
- Mr. Raymond Jetson Support
- Note: Mr. Sean Reilly and Commissioner Mike
- Mr. Adam Knapp Support
- Strain had stepped out of the meeting during
- Senator Dan "Blade" Morrish Support this time.
- Mayor Dave Norris Support
- Mr. Don Pierson Support
- Rep. J. Rogers Pope Support
- Mayor-Pres. Joel Robideaux Support
- Rep. Robert Shadoin Support
- Mayor Ollie Tyler Support
- Ms. Jacqui Vines Wyatt Support

Mr. Michael Olivier Absent  
 Dr. James Richardson Absent  
 Dr. Shawn Wilson Absent  
 Mr. Sean Reilly Absent  
 Commissioner Mike Strain Absent

16 members in support, no objections

**Ms. Wesley:** We will work on a staff level and work with GOHSEP to formalize that resolution. That concludes the questions for the panel. Thank you gentlemen for being here today.

## **VII. OVERVIEW OF DISASTER COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS**

- Patrick Forbes, Executive Director, Office of Community Development

Mr. Forbes reiterated everyone's thanks to the task force for serving on this panel, as this is a very important work and that he looks forward to working with everyone and being a resource to you as all of you go through the important deliberations. We will continue to share information and provide information to you, but we will also be looking for information from you about you and your community's impacts and suggestions you have so that we can do the best job possible of providing you with options for recovery.

*See attached PowerPoint for overview of presentation.*

**Ms. Wesley opened the floor for questions.**

### **Question 1:**

**Mayor Robideaux:** Pat and I have had this conversation before. First let me say that I am very limited in my understanding on how federal bureaucracy works but I have had conversations with a lot of financial institutions that are ready to help, yesterday. They want to lend the money to their residents that they may or may not already have a relationship with, they also know however that most of the loans they make will probably be classified and will fall into a category that disincentives them from making those loans. So they are asking is there any way for us to get involved to be able to help people immediately. With the knowledge that if and when there are any recovery dollars, those dollars can then be used to then be used to take care of,

what I'm going to call, bridge loans, that they made to the individuals, rather than have them wait until we find out how much money and go through the process of how we are going to allocate it amongst the different categories. Simplest terms, it seems like the financial institutions could react very quickly with FEMA applications and obviously be very adept at documenting what needs to be documented to make the loan, they then get repayment off of any appropriations we get from Congress. And then what ever short fall exists between the loan and the congressional appropriation, to me that when the SBA could step in and replace that loan balance, whatever that balance is, with the low interest SBA loan and we avoid the DOB and that kind of approach allows us to react more quickly and what I think the Governor saying is we need to figure out what to do as fast as possible so these people can make decisions, knowing that there is a light at the end of the tunnel instead of making them wait to make these decisions. Saying that, I'm not sure what role the task force can play in trying to figure out if bridge loans are a venue or an avenue to getting money to people now rather than later but I hope it's something we can engage conversations with the delegation, SBA and FEMA to see if there is a quicker path instead of waiting on the actual appropriation dollars.

**Mr. Forbes:** Reimbursement of housing repair costs is certainly an eligible activity and is something that has been done in the Northeast after Sandy. You could say that the housing program post-Katrina had a reimbursement aspect to it in the sense that when folks go out and borrow money to rebuild their house and the grant money doesn't come through until a year later, obviously they can take that grant and take that money to pay off the loan or the portion of it that the money will cover. Short of having the appropriation, it is difficult to give the banks comfort that we are going to have money to do that, but certainly we can look backwards and pay money for individuals/homeowners for things that they did before we got the appropriation.

**Mayor Robideaux:** Yes, and that was the discussion that we had. So there really is no way for us to guarantee to the financial institutions, hey you are going to get some of your money and then SBA will come in and take those loans off, and if we don't get any money then I say I think the SBA ought to step in with its program to then relieve those loans in total to give the banks some assurance. The other piece though, that is equally as important, we should probably discuss with the congressional delegation to come up with some legislation that protects those financial institutions that those loans won't be classified and count against them and whatever reserve requirements are required, that they will be treated separately from their normal balance sheet/analysis, once the federal government comes in or examiners, come in and do exactly what it is they are trained to do. I hope we can figure it out, if it is what I'm talking about or whether it is some other way, my hope is that we can figure out a way, like the Governor asked us to do, to move something along as quickly as possible to give the flood survivors the ability to make an informed decision sooner rather than later.

**Mr. Forbes:** I will say that something else I didn't mention is a loan loss reserve is also an eligible activity for CDBG funds. So that may go some distance towards addressing the issue you are talking about.

**Rep. James:** I'd like a list of the entitlement communities you mentioned.

**Mr. Forbes:** Within this area St. Tammany Parish, Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Alexandria, Shreveport, Monroe, Lake Charles, New Orleans, Houma

**Questions 2, 3, 4, and 5:**

**Secretary Bradberry:** Just so I'm clear, the \$125 million for the Comite River Diversion, that is or is not included in the \$2.6 billion recovery request?

**Mr. Forbes:** It is not. The \$2.6 billion is the total request the Governor made through the Community Development Block Grant fund. He made an additional request for \$125 million of Corps appropriation to finish the Comite project.

**Secretary Bradberry:** So ideally we want that to come from the Corps?

**Mr. Forbes:** Yes

**Secretary Bradberry:** Now will there be a cost share associated with that \$125 million coming to the Corps? So that CDBG funds can be applied to that cost share?

**Mr. Forbes:** The Corps of Engineers has a restriction of a max of \$250,000 for match. That is the one place they don't let us match. But I understand and many of you know that project way better than I do and I know the local government has been taxing themselves and the local people have been taxing themselves for a long time.

**Secretary Bradberry:** Yes and we will be hard pressed to find that kind of money.

**Question 6:**

**Rep. James:** You said Baton Rouge, and I see the Mayor of Baker back there. Is that East Baton Rouge or City of Baton Rouge that is an entitlement community?

**Mr. Forbes:** It is the City of Baton Rouge.

**Rep. James:** So Mr. Mayor, you got to get in.

**Question 7:**

**Mayor Tyler:** First I want to commend the Office of Community Development department. You do a great job of working with those entitlement municipalities, and we are one of those in Shreveport. Because of the timing for helping victims and families with flooding, even from last year's flooding, we have had to use some of our CDBG funds to help those families, because you know that is part of the objectives that you have for CDBG funding, particularly the low- to moderate income families, is there an opportunity for, or will the opportunity be given, to us getting some reimbursements back from the new money for flooding so that we can go back to trying to utilize those plans, utilize the funding that we got entitlement money to continue those efforts, such as elimination of blight, and helping with the other objectives that we have nationally?

**Mr. Forbes:** I have actually already addressed that question to HUD about reimbursing funds so that we can apply funds that we have available now to the immediate need and then reimburse if we get an appropriation and the answer I received was yes that is doable. We need to work with you to make sure we do it right so that we can do that but there is that opportunity.

**Question 8:**

**Ms. Elkins:** I have a question on the reimbursement. If you guys are going to do reimbursement then you only have that one year according to the HUD guides, you only have one year from the date of the flood to the date that you actually put on the streets an application package to apply for it. So, as soon as you get that application out, which may take 6 months, then you can only be reimbursed for that 6 months period. And the reason why I say that is we asked for a waiver for that in North Dakota, and HUD would not b/c FEMA would not give us that.

**Mr. Forbes:** Yeah I'm not necessarily proposing that we do a reimbursement program, I'm just saying that it is an option and that is one of the sticky parts of using that approach.



**Ms. Elkins:** And one other thing is on the small businesses, you know ag businesses, I don't know if and how it impacted the agriculture businesses, but one thing I think if the task force is going to put money in that area we will have to ask for a waiver for the ag.

**Mr. Forbes:** Actually we have done it before without asking for a waiver, as long as it is not crop replacement because that is what US Dept. of Agriculture does, as long as it is business assistance or just businesses so we can approach it in that way.

**Ms. Elkins:** I understand because they call me the waiver queen at HUD because I ask for so many waivers, but there is this regulation that now says that you cannot fund a small business unless it meets the definition of SBA. Well under SBA, Ag businesses do not qualify due to the size, so you are going to need a waiver to fund your Ag businesses.

**Mr. Forbes:** We plan to put in a waiver request, on the size of the business.

#### **Questions 9 and 10:**

**Mr. Knapp:** First I'd like to take the time to say thank you to the Office of Community Development and its staff. All of you have been hard working at this since Katrina and it is rare that we actually have the opportunity to thank all of you publicly. Just as a comment for the Mayor, there was a bridge loan program from CDBG dollars for business recovery to financial institutions after Katrina. It will be hard to due until those dollars are available. The state launched one prior to the availability of CDBG but did so with state sources and the state was the backstop. Two questions for you: Is the state making application for low income housing tax credits related to the disaster? It is referenced in some of the memos that are in our binder that CDBG and low income tax credits can be used together but it wasn't clear if there is an application going forward to legislation on that. And second question is similarly to the economic development administration & whether there is an expectation of appropriation through the EDA for business recovery in addition to CDBG dollars?

**Mr. Forbes:** We have, as the Governor said, been working very closely with the congressional delegation and Rep. Boustany has legislation for not only low income housing tax credits but also new markets tax credits for us. There are also some other IRS issues in the legislation that he is working on, so yes there is work ongoing to get additional tax credits for the recovery areas. As Mr. Knapp knows we have successfully used CDBG funds with these other tax credits programs to piggyback and build housing and infrastructure projects, hospitals, things that otherwise would not have been fully funded without that combination of funding. The EDA question: I do not know whether that is in the current request but it is absolutely something we should include.

#### **Questions 11 and 12:**

**Rep. Shadoin:** Mr. Forbes I want to go back to portion of your answer to a previous question by Ms. Elkins and that is about agriculture. Now we are talking a lot about CDBG funds I know but over in another frame you said types of economic development programs and I see agriculture, agri-business grants, is that part of what you do to coordinate? Because back in the March floods, all across north Louisiana, Caddo Parish all the way to Madison & East Carroll that use to be farm land, when I flew over it with the Governor looked like a massive lake. So we have 100s of 1000s of acres that went under and crops, soy bean, etc. I'm just trying to make sure that the agriculture industry of Louisiana is also addressed. So, we coordinate all of that with you and your office?

**Mr. Forbes:** Yes, but I'll defer to Commissioner Strain on this one. But we have planned on having CDBG funds in this for farmers and agriculture business and Commissioner Strain has been right there with us, not only to assess the damages and needs but also work through what is the best way to help.

**Commissioner Strain:** In the aftermath of Hurricane Gustav & Ike and Tropical Storm Faye we were successful in getting almost \$850 million for the southern states to assist in agricultural purposes. We had administered to the agriculture finance authority, working with HUD and OCD over \$80 million dollars going to agriculture, agribusinesses, and also in the fisheries. It was the first time in the United States that any of those funds had been used for those types of purposes and we created a program, we did low interest loans, forgivable portions of the loans, we did grants, and a number of other things. So if you look at the losses for the March floods and combine them with the losses from the August flood our losses are between \$375-\$400 million to date. When you see the uninsured losses, our goal is with these funds is to meet a portion of the uninsured loss needs. And we have asked for \$50 million dollars to be allocated to agriculture in the initial package. That's what we have been working on in Washington and our Governor has graciously agreed that we have that as part of the package. We are working together in a single package. So that is what we intend to do and it will be administered very similar to the previous program from Gustav/Ike. All those mechanisms in place so it would be administered working with our finance authority and our office in combination with OCD. So that is all in play.

**Question 13:**

**Sen. Morrish:** So I can understand and the general public and individuals can understand, it seems to me that from your presentation that CDBG funds are much more flexible and more attuned to what this task force can actually direct CDBG to fund or to decide the direction we want to go with those funds. And that immediate recovery generally would come from FEMA and SBA, and that the task force is really charged with immediate recovery, no doubt about that, but that we have more flexibility with CDBG funds and to how that can affect the long-term recovery so I think as a task force it would seem that our charge is to work with FEMA & SBA on immediate recovery, like getting people somewhat back to normal, and then we have this flexibility going forward with CDBG to enhance that recovery and make it a whole lot better down the road.

**Mr. Forbes:** Yes it is, but I will give one exception, that the Governor asks you to also direct the investment of the Hazard Mitigation funds which are also for long-term recovery. So that's another \$250 million.

**Sen. Morrish:** I certainly agree with that.

**Ms. Wesley concluded the questions.**

## VIII. NATIONAL DISASTER RECOVERY FRAMEWORK

- Wayne Rickard, Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator, FEMA

Ms. Wesley introduced Mr. Rickard and mentioned that we were low on time and asked for a summarized version of the NDR framework.

**Mr. Rickard:** It is a pleasure to address the task force and I just want to let you know that my role with FEMA is not FEMA's traditional programs. I think you heard Mark Riley, Jim Waskom and Casey Tingle providing information about FEMA's traditional programs and how those are administered here through our partners with the state. In that the discussion, Mark Riley, the State's Disaster Recovery Officer, mentioned that FEMA had approximately 2600 people on the ground, my role as a Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator is to work on things not Stafford Act, in other words, it is not actually a program, it is a framework, one of 5 frameworks the nation has under presidential preparedness 8, so the recovery framework is what I'm referring to. So of those 2600 people, I have about 100 people here to be a force multiplier to work with Director Jim Waskom from GOHSEP and Executive Director Forbes from OCD across the support functions. So I'm just going to give you a high level overview of this framework and what it is, not a program, it's a process. In addition to those 100 staff members I have, we also have the force multipliers of federal agencies. So you won't see any FEMA or federal logos on this brief because if we were to put those

on there, there would be more than 42 federal agencies that are part of the national disaster recovery framework that can be leveraged to provide long-term assistance.

*See attached PowerPoint for overview of presentation.*

Ms. Wesley opened the floor for questions.

### **Question 1:**

**Secretary Bradberry:** On your recovery core capabilities you mention infrastructure and the US Army Corps of Engineers as, I guess, the partner. Can you describe for me what is the scope of infrastructure we are talking about b/c when you think of the Corps you think of river water ways, those responsible for those, but not roads and bridges and so forth. So can you give me an indication of what that means?

**Mr. Rickard:** Yes, and that is a very good question. When I mention the Corps and I mention the other 5 federal agencies they are the coordinating agencies of what is a much larger group that deals with those things, so in this case Corps of Engineers coordinates the recovery support function but they are working with the US Department of Transportation and anyone that has a transportation role or an infrastructure role, if it is land based vs. water ways. Water ways we may bring in the Coast Guard as part of that. So it's about all the federal agencies that have a role to play based on their authorities and their resources that might be brought to bear based on what we have learned in the post disaster environment.

**Secretary Bradberry:** So it is using the Corps as a coordinator, not as a process driver.

**Mr. Rickard:** That is correct. They are the coordinators.

**Mr. Forbes:** The reason this is so important is that the NDRF is going to be a very important part of our planning process. Even if the task force had not been put together by the Governor, we were going to work with FEMA and all the federal agencies because it leverages all these other resources to our work. So, we think it is critical for you to understand the NDRF as that will be a large part of what feeds to all of you in terms of the ideas, resources available and the approaches we will want to take in the future.

### **Question 2:**

**Mr. Knapp:** In terms of the time line on that, given that point Mr. Forbes, is that something that is going to happen at the speed in which the Governor is asking us to make decisions?

**Mr. Forbes:** I'll let Wayne speak to this but I know that there have already been RSF meetings on the spring floods and we are ramping up the teams for the August floods.

**Mr. Rickard:** That's correct sir. We have already had not only a kickoff meeting but also 3 subsequent meetings, including a training session for the cabinet secretaries and their staff that had an interest in learning more about their role under the National Disaster Recovery Framework, but in addition to that we have stayed in touch with currently though GOHSEP and the Chief of Staff with the Governor's staff on what's the situation awareness for the things that we are doing right now under the spring flood event from a previous flood and as Pat mentioned we are working to kind of ramp up and get a collective, both Jim Waskom, Pat and myself, to get all recovery support functions federal/state in a room so that we can start working on this as a holistic approach across the state, the 56 parishes that were affected.

Ms. Wesley concluded the questions.

## **IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Ms. Wesley opened the floor for public comments.

- Ms. Angela G. Lorio, Trach Mommas of Louisiana (see attached House Witness Card)

Ms. Lorio started by thanking Madam Wesley and the Restore Louisiana Task Force members for their service. She is one of the founders of Trach Mommas of Louisiana. She explained that since the flood, her organization has been thrust into the role of serving the entire medically fragile, immune compromised and technology dependent population. That's a mouth full. It doesn't include just our trach babies anymore. That's from ped's to geriatrics that is the whole gamut. Cancer patients, people waiting on transplants, etc. Main reason I'm here is because like the Governor said, behind every number is a face. I am on a disability stack holder group. We have conference calls hosted by the Advocacy Center, 3x a week. Ms. Lorio next thanked numerous individuals. She explained issues that have come up with the flooding disasters. Housing, medical supplies, etc. She explained that this part of the specialized population really needs attention. It really takes a village to care for these individuals. Ms. Lorio then made a formal request to have Ms. Bambi Polotzola, Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs, who is here today, has a list of people that you can request from that are very amazingly qualified to be on this task force to help represent this population. And just like the Governor said, be bold and innovative for all of the people of Louisiana. Air quality issues like Rep. James mentioned. We have families that have had to leave already because they just can't wait any longer. We know there is a lot going wrong right now, but there is a lot going right as well.

- Ms. Charlette Minor, Louisiana Citizen/Housing Expert (see attached House Witness Card)

Ms. Minor started by applauding Louisiana. Two considerations: Often with federal funds we are in a position that they have to be reimbursed and that can slow down the long-term recovery. I ask you to give consideration to the private dollars or the foundation dollars or long loss as Pat has mentioned to consider other products outside of leveraging government dollars to move quickly. As Mayor Robideaux mentioned using a private investment to do so. Next consideration, areas of need income being based on how families will be benefited. Will you be staying with the 80% LMI as in past disasters, or can you move that to 120% area of need income so that families in need of help can be extended. Such as my husband, son and myself, we are on a 3 income, you know there are going to be a lot of families outside of that box. So we do have an opportunity to say you all can assess how many families are in Louisiana and you would be able to reach. There are waivers that you can start drafting now to consider that. The lower income and a lot of the middle class families in terms of income are hardworking Louisiana citizens who need to be helped, and have exhausted some of their savings to do so. Also, I know there are some challenges Pat but as far as the reimbursement program goes, that is one of the things that you all can do right now to help families who have already spent some of their monies that can be reimbursed. I know it's quick but what can we do now to set up a structure that those families can be reimbursed now. Question for Mr. Forbes and Ms. Elkins: I know in the past you could use existing or past disaster dollars, such as Gustav/Ike, that have been in some of the entitlement areas, is there some consideration in using those funds and starting the reimbursement program now with that funding?

**Mr. Forbes:** When Congress appropriates funds for a disaster, they appropriate them for that specific disaster, so we are not in fact able to move any money from Katrina/Rita, Gustav/Ike, Isaac. What we can do however is use program income that was generated from those by passing it through our state CDBG program, which we are in the process of figuring out how to do right now. So, that is one thing that we could do with it, of many. It will be an important question for this task force to establish what is the most important and highest urgent priority for those funds. Hopefully by next meeting we will be able to tell you how much money we are able to do that with and what the timing is for that.

**Ms. Minor:** Adding to that, families need help now. So some of the monies they have expended they can truly be reimbursed for those eligible activities that we don't have to go back to HUD on.

**Ms. Elkins:** Pat, I'm wondering if the regular CDBG monies, the annual allocation the state gets, I know we

spoke to the head of entitlement, Steve Johnson, but we spent some of our regular CDBG dollars to fund the business loans because it was so important to get that money out real quick because we know that we are waiting, we are probably 4 months out. By the time we get an action plan, HUD allocates the money, the federal register I mean we are looking being at least 6 months out. We did do a bridge loan using our regular CDBG dollars to get that accomplished but I don't know what can be done for like housing or if there is any way to do that but it may be something that we need to look at.

**Ms. Minor:** On that note, because we do have home dollars available and also on the 11 entitlement, that consideration be given to use for some of those eligible activities be used now that are housed at the Louisiana Housing Corporation.

Ms. Wesley closed the floor the public comment period.

## **X. OTHER BUSINESS / NEXT MEETING DATE**

- Ms. Wesley opened the floor to other business.

**Ms. Wesley:** First, the committee schedule. Given that the need is very great the work needs to be swift we are proposing from a staff level that we meet every other week to begin the work and take action for those folks trying to get back into their homes and their communities. So we would like your thoughts on if an every other week schedule would fit, what timing would work and so forth. I will open the floor for suggestions. Maybe as a staff we can send out a doodle alert posing some additional time slots that may be available the week of October 10th, and then from that schedule the next meeting, if that is okay. That worked for the group with no objections.

**Ms. Wesley:** Second, we have also talked at a staff level of developing committees or sub-committees, so thinking through the framework that was just discussed in terms of those 6 recovery core capabilities would it be prudent as a task force to divide ourselves into sub-committees to focus on that specific framework? We have Community Planning and Capacity Building, Economic, Housing, Infrastructure, Health & Social Services, and Natural & Cultural Resources. So should we form sub-committees or have the co-chairs work with the staff and go through those and make decisions based on that framework?

**Mr. Bradberry:** I would encourage the task force to refer to Louisiana Recovery Authority that was formed by Governor Kathleen Blanco and go back and look at the committees that were formed there, to give us some insight. I mean we shouldn't be proud here and try to go back and invent the wheel. They did a lot of good things that were close to what we doing. A good example is the coastal committee they did. We have the same sort of situation here that I think we need to establish under Infrastructure a flood mitigation sub-committee to talk about those projects and those things to bring that flood plain down like the Governor was talking about to a manageable level and not just to raise everyone's homes. I think going back and reviewing what the LRA did and providing the task force with a summarized document of what they did. Again, I think that would be very beneficial.

**Ms. Wesley:** That is a great suggestion and Pat Forbes and I will work on that together to develop that document and submit that to the committee and from there you can make recommendations on what you think the best fit is for the task force.

Ms. Wesley closed the floor for other business and asked that the members of the RLTF leave their binders so they can be updated for the next meeting.

## **XI. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Erin Monroe Wesley  
Special Counsel (Policy Director/Legislative Affairs)  
Office of the Governor  
State of Louisiana

Date Approved: October 14, 2016  
Minutes were approved unanimously.

Resource:

- [624 RLTF-9-28-16-Meeting-Minutes.pdf](#)

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