

Meeting Summary
H-GAC REGIONAL FLOOD MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

RFMC 4/15/2009

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sidney Lewis (Chambers County); Michael D. Talbott (Harris County); Andrew Isbell (Walker County); Monica Martin (Wharton County); Cruz Hernandez (City of Baytown); Sarah Metzger (City of Pasadena); Dale Rudick (City of Sugar Land)

Mark Vogler (Fort Bend County) was represented by Juling Bao
Mike Marcotte (City of Houston) was represented by Carol Ellinger
Scott Elmer (City of Missouri City) was represented by Jing Chen
Mark Jordan (Lower Colorado River Authority) was represented by Heidi Carlin

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Kelly Hamby (Brazoria County); Ron Chastain (Colorado County); Mike Fitzgerald (Galveston County); Louis Bergman (Liberty County); Lisa Krobot (Matagorda County); Phil Jones (Montgomery County); Cathy Dominguez (Brazos River Authority); Blake Kellum (San Jacinto River Authority); Troy Toland (City of Conroe)

VACANCIES:

Austin County; Waller County; City of Galveston; Trinity River Authority; Lower Neches Valley Authority; three "At Large"

H-GAC STAFF PRESENT:

Carl Masterson; Rachel Powers; Erin Livingston; Jeff Taebel; Amy Boyers

OTHERS PRESENT:

John Grounds (TFMA); Yancy Scott (Waller County); Narciso Lira (City of Pearland); Larry Boles (City of Nassau Bay); Shannon Watson (Harris County); Annette Arriaga (City of Piney Point Village); Tom Wilks (City of Alvin); Lori Jaquez (City of Wharton); Shashi Kumar (City of Sugar Land); Larry Mayberry (City of Sealy), Frank Manigold (City of Friendswood)

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was called to order at approximately 1:33 PM. Dale Rudick welcomed the Council, followed by self-introductions.

APPROVAL OF JANUARY MEETING REPORT

On a motion by Carol Ellinger and a second by Sarah Metzger, the meeting summary was approved by all.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Dale Rudick and Andrew Isbell agreed to serve as Chair and Vice Chair as there were no other nominations for officers.

MEMBERSHIP

Carl Masterson reported on membership status. There are currently twenty filled positions and Carl is working with Commissioner Beckendorff to have Yancy Scott appointed as the official representative for Waller County. Sandra Vrabec, of Austin County, has moved on and the spot needs to be filled. Cruz Hernandez has taken over for the City of Baytown. Troy Toland, of the City of Conroe, was approved as a member in January. Carl also explained there are three vacancies in at-large appointments. H-GAC board members who represent small cities have been asked to nominate representatives and the board will act on those nominations in May, the usual time for appointing representatives to board committees.

PRESENTATION ON THE CITY OF FRIENDSWOOD'S CRS PROGRAM

Frank Manigold, the Floodplain Administrator for the City of Friendswood, reported on the NFIP and CRS programs and Friendswood's experiences with both. Due to the flat topography and predominance of clay soils, Friendswood has a long history of riverine flooding, with 29 flood events occurring over the last 22 years. Much of the City lies within the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA). Friendswood joined the NFIP Emergency Program in 1970 and moved to the Regular Program in 1972. Approximately 20,000 communities across the nation participate in the NFIP, but only 1,049 participate in the CRS program. It would be beneficial for communities to share information, what has worked and what hasn't, and assist one another with joining/progressing in the CRS program.

In 1991, Friendswood entered the CRS at a Class 9 and moved up to a Class 8 in 1993 as a result of improvements made in the city's drainage. In June 2001, Tropical Storm Allison hit the region and caused massive flooding. In Friendswood, 530 homes were damaged and the City decided more must be done to prevent flooding in the future. The City bought out 147 homes at an average cost of \$22,500. These properties are being maintained as open space by the City, Galveston County Consolidated Drainage District, or adjacent homeowners. The City then developed a mitigation plan. In October 2003 the City moved from a Class 8 to a Class 5. The City is currently working to improve their standing.

Q: Is money collected on the leased property?

A: No. Those leasing the property are required to maintain it, although they are not permitted to build on it.

Harris County Flood Control District has three types of legal agreements that allow adjacent landowners to use buyout property at different levels, some of which require insurance or fees.

Q: How much money is being saved by residents as a result of CRS?

A: I'm not sure of the exact numbers, but I can get the information.

Q: Did it take long to enter the CRS program?

A: It was a much quicker process back then. Now they are scrutinizing everything more and it has gotten

stricter. In the beginning they just wanted to get communities in. They want a lot more detailed information now that wasn't available in the past. Lots of documentation steps are involved.

John Ivey reported that a community can get CRS credits for TSARP work. Equations are involved, but it is worth the effort. Janine Ellington could help.

Q: Does H-GAC have a running inventory of CRS ratings for the region?

A: Yes

Q: Does H-GAC have a copy of all of the applications and an inventory of the points awarded for each category?

A: We don't currently have that information, but we can certainly get it.

REPORT BY H-GAC STAFF

Status of the Flood Management Handbook

H-GAC staff did not present the handbook as previously promised. Jeff Taebel stated the content is good, but that the document needs further editing and reordering.

Concern was expressed that much work went into the document and it should not drag on out of respect for those who worked hard on it.

Q: Are we looking at changing the content? The product that we have seen is way ahead of where we have been.

A: Flow and consistency and the look of the document will be changing, even if the content and the policy do not. The committee will be able to review the draft prior to release.

A suggestion was made to change the picture on the cover. The handbook should not have a picture of vehicles driving through a flooded street. It would be better if the vehicles were stalled.

Freeboard Survey

Many have already responded to the Texas Floodplain Management Association freeboard survey. Three additional responses to the survey were received as a result of the email effort by H-GAC staff. Results will be helpful for all in the region.

Training Opportunities

Since the last meeting there have been four training opportunities hosted by H-GAC.

- Introduction to GIS and Flood Data
- Introduction to HAZUS: Riverine
- Introduction to HAZUS: Coastal
- One day CRS class

H-GAC is currently working to offer a five-day CRS class in September. As soon as the plans are final notifications will be sent out.

Update on H-GAC Foresight Panel on Environmental Effects

At the end of 2007, the H-GAC board established a panel to examine the effects of climate change and to identify adaptation recommendations. The panel realized they were not prepared to come up with global recommendations and began to focus on the broader categories:

- How do we manage?
- How do we grow?
- What do we reinvest in?

Priority capital expenditures would go where there is the intersection of importance and risk.

Additionally, the Community and Environmental Planning Department and the Transportation Department are working on a project that will identify conservation priorities. Hopefully, when roadway projects are being developed in the future, the value of ecological services being preserved or removed through the project will be evaluated.

Reports are available on the website: <http://www.h-gac.com/community/livable/fpee/default.aspx>.

Q: Where could we get the actual data of the effects sea level rise and the other criteria would have on individual communities?

A: H-GAC has that data. The GIS layers can be made available to any that are interested. Maps are currently available on the H-GAC website.

Q: Did the data used come from effects already experienced or from projected effects?

A: Projected effects. The numbers were derived from the average of many models. If no projection was available then the panel looked backwards at past experiences, such as the worst drought on record.

Q: If the environmental effect being looked at in the study has an impact on the frequency of flooding or the level of flooding, then you are talking about affecting, essentially, the 100-year floodplain.

A: Right. The problem is we don't really have a number that can be used to do that. The model predicts a stable annual rainfall with more intense events interspersed with droughts. It didn't give an actual number. The work being done at Rice University at the SPEED Center is really going to be of more use on the flooding side. They are looking at risk zones.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION BY MEMBERS

Sarah Metzger reported the City of Pasadena received its CRS application back after three years, along with a request to update the information in the application. They hope to resubmit within 60 days. Classes and knowledgeable experts that would give practical data to put the application together would help quite a bit.

Shashi Kumar reported the City of Sugar Land found the process difficult as well. Maybe H-GAC could help with the process in some way. Two years to get into the program is too long.

Mike Talbott agreed H-GAC participation in CRS would be helpful, including a library of successful applications. Mike also reported that HCFCD is entering into a formal agreement with FEMA on model maintenance. It designates HCFCD as the official keeper of the models. They already have a web-based system where a group can check out the model and check it back in. The next step is LOMR delegation, in which HCFCD would keep track of LOMRs.

Chambers County just went through a Community Assessment Visit. Sidney Lewis wondered whether it was even worth it. The county cannot get better than a Class 8 rating because of the building code requirement. We need to look at whether there are changes that could be made to the program to make it easier.

Monica Martin, from Wharton County, agreed that the benefits from CRS are not worth the hassle, especially for small counties. The only policy holders that do receive a benefit are the property owners within the Special Flood Hazard Area. The county is working to adopt a drainage criteria manual and to start a drainage district. They have decided low-water crossings need to be inspected and permitted. Due to the absence of a county engineer, there are details that need to be worked out.

Sarah Metzger reported the City of Pasadena is organizing a regional Earth Day event on April 25, along with its twenty sister cities. The focus is on green living, such as electric cars and green products from Home Depot and Wal-Mart. The hope is that people will learn from the behaviors of their neighbors. Many people making small changes can make a big difference.

Heidi Carlin reported that the LCRA had a presentation regarding legal issues in the floodplain workshop the previous day. It was a great success and very useful. They did say they were interested in doing the workshop again and so maybe the Houston area could take advantage of this fact. Interest in this was expressed by council members. Heidi also reported that the Texas Colorado River Floodplain Coalition would be having its spring conference in Lakeway on Friday, April 17.

Prior to the meeting H-GAC staff sent out a survey regarding the RFMC, topics of interest, and reasons for attending meetings or not attending meetings. Rachel Powers reported on the results of the survey. Ten individuals responded. Generally, there was strong interest in training opportunities. There was also support for continuing the RFMC. Jeff requested that, over the next year, members consider what the best path for the RFMC would be. What is the best use of time? What should the focus of the Council be?

Andrew Isbell stated that the meetings of this group and the opportunities for personal interaction provided by the meetings are very valuable to him and probably to other small communities. He didn't fill out the survey, but that does not reflect a lack of interest or commitment. He also did not support the idea of participating in the meetings via phone as it would remove much of the meetings value, the discussions before and after.

Q: How is the funding for the Council?

A: The current funding levels appear to be sustainable. If there are staff-intensive efforts or consultant needs, the Council could identify those should be discussed soon so that necessary funding could be sought.

Dale suggested that the next meeting should include a planning discussion to answer questions such as:

- Where does the Council want to be in one year?
- What kind of speakers?
- What does the group want to produce?

Monica Martin of Wharton County echoed Andrew's support for the Council. While she couldn't speak for other small communities, the group is a great resource for her and she expects it would be valuable to other small communities. Like Andrew, she did not fill out the survey, but that oversight should not be considered a lack of support. She also suggested that the Council consider changing the by-laws to make a quorum the majority of *members present* instead of a majority of filled positions.

Q: Giving credits toward maintenance of a CFM certification for meeting attendance would likely increase attendance.

A: This is already done.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting will be July 15, 2009, at 1:30 PM, in Conference Room A of the H-GAC offices.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:25 PM.