

Meeting Summary
H-GAC REGIONAL FLOOD MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

RFMC 10/15/2008

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mark Vogler (Fort Bend County); Michael D. Talbott (Harris County); Andrew Isbell (Walker County); Monica Martin (Wharton County); Scott Elmer (City of Missouri City); Dale Rudick (City of Sugar Land); Cathy Dominguez (Brazos River Authority)

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Sara Metzger (City of Pasadena) represented by Daya Dayananda; Mark Jordan (Lower Colorado River Authority) represented by Heidi Carlin; Sandra Vrabec (Austin County); Sidney Lewis (Chambers County); Ron Chastain (Colorado County); Mike Fitzgerald (Galveston County); Louis Bergman (Liberty County); Mark J. Mooney (Montgomery County); Kevin Byal (City of Baytown); Mike Marcotte (City of Houston); Reed Eichelberger (San Jacinto River Authority); Penny Goode (Brazoria County); Lisa Krobot (Matagorda County); Troy Toland (City of Conroe)

VACANCIES:

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

H-GAC STAFF PRESENT:

Carl Masterson; Rachel Powers; Erin Anderson

OTHERS PRESENT:

John Grounds (TFMA); Shashi Kumar (City of Sugar Land); Burton Johnston (BJE); Kris D. Prasad (Kenall); Jing Chen P.E., CFM (City of Missouri City)

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 PM. Dale Rudick welcomed the Council, followed by self-introductions.

APPROVAL OF JULY MEETING REPORT

On a motion by Cathy Dominguez and a second by Monica Martin, the meeting summary was approved by the six Council members present at the time. It was decided that to obtain the votes needed for a quorum, members not present would be requested by email to submit a vote stating whether or not they wished to approve the July meeting report.

MEMBERSHIP

Carl Masterson referred to a handout of the RFMC Roster to point out the current vacancies. H-GAC will be working with local governments and River Authorities to obtain appointments. When a list of proposed members has been made, the Council will be asked to pass it on to the H-GAC Board as a recommendation. Andrew Isbell said he would contact the City of Huntsville to see if they have a recommendation for the list. He also mentioned that Waller County has a County Engineer who may be a likely candidate. Carl additionally reported that there would be the election of officers for the Council at

the first meeting in 2009. He requested that members think about whether or not they would care to be an officer.

PRESENTATION ON CITY OF SUGAR LAND'S RECENTLY ADOPTED DRAINAGE PLAN

Shashi Kumar, the City of Sugar Land's Drainage Engineer, gave a presentation on the city's Master Drainage Plan (MDP), adopted in 2007. Shashi stated that the MDP is a conceptual planning document. It identifies the number of watersheds in the City, studies done in the watersheds, and future studies. It also establishes policies and is used to formulate the Capital Improvement Program. The MDP does not show areas of inadequate capacity or design details.

The update of the MDP was conducted in two phases:

During the first phase, the goals and responsibilities of the various groups involved in drainage in the City of Sugar Land were examined. Five entities are involved in drainage within Sugar Land: Levee Improvement Districts, Municipal Utility Districts, Water Control and Improvement Districts, the City of Sugar Land, and Fort Bend County. A coordinating committee of the different entities was formed and multi-jurisdictional issues were examined. Some groups had overlapping responsibilities which creates gaps and duplications. These were identified. The committee prepared an inventory of drainage facilities, streamlined operations, determined ownership of properties in question, and identified areas that require future coordination.

During the second phase, ranking criteria were developed to be used in determining the order in which drainage projects should be addressed. Previously, project prioritization was based on frequency of complaints. Now, a prioritization method would be used. Threshold limits were set to answer the question, "How deep is too deep and how long is too long?" Priorities were set as follows:

1. Structural flooding from 1% to 50% events.
2. Significant ponding during a minor event (less than 10% event).
3. Quality of life impacts.

This prioritization allows the City of Sugar Land to address critical drainage projects while remaining fiscally responsible.

Q: Is the methodology for scoring in the drainage plan?

A: Yes

Q: Do the actual property values factor into the scoring?

A: Yes

REPORT OF AD HOC COMMITTEE RE: BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Rachel Powers provided an outline of the Flood Management Handbook. The document still needs to have some sections filled in and some examples added. Once everything has been added to the handbook, the editing will begin.

Carl Masterson stated that, in order to present the handbook draft to the H-GAC Board during the November meeting, the Council's provisional approval was needed. The goal is to get final approval from the Board in December and then present the handbook to the public in January.

Q: What is the deadline for comments? Comments by the end of October?

A: That's reasonable.

Q: What is this document to be used for?

A: The handbook is intended for floodplain managers in the region, particularly those with a small staff. It is intended to give floodplain managers a description of options and information about what is available to develop a good floodplain management strategy.

The idea was expressed that presentations need to be given at organization meetings to let elected officials and future suburban communities know there is a tool available for floodplain managers. Other avenues of promotion for the handbook include the H-GAC and the Community and Environmental Planning Department newsletters, the H-GAC website, and Envirocast.

Praise was given for the fact that each section of the handbook can stand alone. If an individual requests information on a particular topic, the two to three page write-up can easily be provided.

Dale Rudick called for a motion to provide provisional approval to take the handbook to the H-GAC Board. Cathy Dominguez made the motion and a second was made by Shashi Kumar. The nine members of the council present at the time of the vote all approved the motion. The members present decided that, to obtain the votes needed for a quorum, members not present would be solicited by email to approve provisional approval to take the handbook to the H-GAC Board.

REPORT ON TNRIS STRATEGIC MAPPING PROGRAM

Rachel Powers reported on the possible acquisition of LiDAR for those areas in the H-GAC region that don't already have it. TNRIS was identified as a possible collaborator and source of funding. TNRIS is looking for communities interested in obtaining LiDAR so that they could provide it. Rachel showed several maps of the H-GAC region depicting watersheds, digital orthographic quarter quads (DOQQs), and areas without LiDAR coverage. DOQQs not currently covered in the region would be selected for the acquisition. Additionally, watersheds that extend just outside of the region would be included in the request.

Monica Martin advised that Wharton County obtained LiDAR two years ago.

Q: Has there been a change in technology to improve LiDAR in the past years?

A: Yes.

Q: Are there some areas that would need improved/refined LiDAR?

A: All LiDAR for the region is fairly new.

Q: Should a standard be set for specifications?

A: Different specifications were used in each of the areas. Currently, the highest level of detail is in the H-GAC/HCFCD area. TNRIS will need to know the desired specifications for the request. The most recent LiDAR for H-GAC/HCFCD was a revision and so many of the previous problems were fixed. Their specifications would be a good starting point. One thing that will not be included in the LiDAR acquisition is two-foot contours. If individual communities want to pursue this specification they can.

TNRIS wants to know that there is support for the LiDAR acquisition. Communities can help improve the chance of funding by expressing support. This can be done through letter writing or a contribution. Letters should be sent to H-GAC where they will all be sent to TNRIS together. H-GAC will provide additional information about the letter. Contributions are not necessary, but they may help the chances of the project being funded. Contributions can be monetary or in the form of technical processing assistance.

Q: Where should letters of support be sent?

A: Send them to H-GAC. When all of the letters have been received H-GAC will send them all in together. H-GAC will create a form letter and will determine who letters should be addressed to. Rachel Powers will send out an email with a deadline for letter submittal.

Q: Did Hurricane Ike change elevations? Should this be considered? Should areas that already have LiDAR be flown again?

A: The coast has already been flown and this will be supplemented as needed.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION BY MEMBERS

During the roundtable discussion Carl Masterson requested that council members suggest project ideas for the RFMC to focus on during 2009. Ideas for projects during 2008 included obtaining LiDAR for the region and developing a flood alert system.

Potential project ideas for 2009 included:

- Helping small communities get many of the points needed to join the CRS by the provision of certain information, such as GIS maps, by H-GAC via community outreach.
- Periodically highlighting a section of the Flood Management Handbook by sending out a brochure or flyer
- Creating a chart of who is doing what in terms of freeboard and different regulations. HCFCDD did this in Floodwise, but it could probably be expanded. Debbie Cahoon might be tracking this kind of information. A freeboard survey was conducted, but not everyone in the region responded.
- Developing a repository of information on the H-GAC website.
- Beginning a broad community outreach/public awareness campaign--perhaps similar to what is being done by other MPOs, Floodwise, and the Texas Colorado River Floodplain Coalition--to address:
 - What citizens should do during a flood
 - Why streets flood during heavy rain events
 - Promoting the CRS
 - When individuals can and cannot obtain flood insurance, such as the day before a hurricane hits.

Other subjects brought up included questions about flood gauging technology and whether someone is knowledgeable on the topic. Harris County just evaluated and updated theirs, they wrote a detailed report that may be helpful. Additionally the City of Sugar Land is conducting a pilot study of a radar based flood alert system.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting will be January 21, 2009, at 1:30 PM, in Conference Room A of the H-GAC offices.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 3:01 PM.