

**RESTORE LOUISIANA TASK FORCE**  
**February 3, 2017**  
**Youngsville Sports Complex, Recreation Center**  
**801 Savoy Road**  
**Youngsville, LA 70592**

*Approved*

**MINUTES**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

**Mr. Jimmy Durbin** called the meeting to order at 9:30 AM. A special thank you to Mayor Ritter for hosting us today in this beautiful city of Youngsville. We recognize the strength of this Youngsville area community and commend them for their commitment and devotion to bringing their community back stronger. Governor Edwards is specifically working with members of Congress and with HUD to be able to fund additional reimbursement for homeowners who have already started work on rebuilding their damaged homes; the Governor is also planning to ask for the LMI waiver to set that at 50% instead of the federally mandated 70%, as well as other areas where common sense flexibility can be extended to helping Louisiana citizens recover, and we'll get an update on those efforts today. Since his original request to the President immediately following the August flood event, as part of his overall CDBG request, Governor Edwards has consistently sought \$600 million specifically for strengthening infrastructure, for things like drainage improvements that will make a real difference in this community. We, the task force, are here to listen to the community and specifically incorporate the concerns of this community in our recommendations for recovery across this state as we go forward. I have just been requested by the executive assistant to allow her to call the roll of the task force, pardon me for stepping on top of that, so please listen up and recognize when you are called.

**II. ROLL CALL**

**TASK FORCE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Mr. Johnny Bradberry  
Mr. Roland Dartez  
Mr. Jimmy Durbin  
Mr. Michael Faulk  
Mr. John Gallagher  
Mayor Dave Norris  
Mr. Michael Olivier  
Mayor-President Joel Robideaux  
Dr. Shawn Wilson

**TASK FORCE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Mr. Randy Clouatre (non-voting, ex-officio)  
Representative Edward "Ted" James  
Mr. Raymond Jetson  
Mr. Adam Knapp  
Senator Dan "Blade" Morrish  
Mr. Don Pierson  
Representative J. Rogers Pope  
Mr. Sean Reilly  
Dr. James Richardson  
Representative Rob Shadoin  
Commissioner Mike Strain  
Mayor Ollie Tyler  
Ms. Jacqui Vines Wyatt

**Ms. Dupont:** 9 members are present. Sir Chair, we do not have a quorum.

**SUPPORTING STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Patrick Forbes, Executive Director, Office of Community Development  
Rowdy Gaudet, Office of Community Development  
Dan Rees, Office of Community Development  
Lori Dupont, Office of Community Development  
Kayla Westmoreland, Office of Community Development  
Pat Witty, Louisiana Economic Development

### **III. CHAIRPERSON OPENING REMARKS**

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

**Mr. Durbin:** Members, please keep in mind that your microphones remain hot so please make sure to keep conversations among yourselves to a minimum or push your chairs away from the microphones. We would like to remind everyone here today or who have suffered from these events to sign-up for updates on the Restore Louisiana Task Force website, [restore.la.com](http://restore.la.com)

**Ms. Dupont:** .gov

**Mr. Durbin:** Excuse me, [restore.la.gov](http://restore.la.gov) and you will be able to keep up on a daily basis of what's going on with the funding and upon receipt of the funds from the federal government what is going on. The approval of the January 20, 2017 meeting minutes will be voted on at our next meeting since we do not have a quorum here today. Upon adjournment of this meeting, the Youngsville Public Meeting on the March and August 2016 flood action plan amendment will immediately begin. We will take a 5-10 minute break and the Executive Director of the Office of Community Development, Mr. Pat Forbes sitting on the front row to my right, will then begin the public comment meeting, so any members of the public can come forward and speak. A 2-page summary and the PowerPoint presentation that will be given can be found under tab 11, task force members, of your binders. Public meetings were a request of this task force as community outreach for public comment on the action plan. I strongly encourage our members to stay and observe this public meeting. I now ask Ms. Julie Baxter Payer to come take the mic up front and give the public and the task force members the update from the Governor's Office. Welcome, Ms. Payer. Remember the mic needs to be really close.

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

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

**Ms. Payer:** Good morning. I feel like I'm facing the wrong direction, I'd like to be able to talk towards you so please forgive me for facing this way but I will speak respectively to the task force members. I want to thank Youngsville so much for hosting us. When I think of Youngsville I think of you, I think of pride in community and I think of neighbors who welcomed me personally onto their streets days after the flood. It was very hot that day, not cold like today, but I remember folks who, amazingly, it was one of the first areas I remember seeing debris picked up quickly in terms of the day that we visited and there was so much pride in the neighborhood and folks trying to give me a bottle of water on a hot day from an RV that was parked outside nearby their house and they were working so hard to come back. I was here with Governor John Bel Edwards who was here that day with a number of his cabinet secretaries and local representatives and senators and we were so well treated. I do remember one subdivision that we walked through is called Highland Ridge and I remember walking through there and meeting a young couple with a baby who had just moved into the neighborhood maybe two weeks before, so it was devastating to them and their mother who lived with them. I remember walking in another nearby subdivision and hearing a lot of anger for people who didn't have flood insurance, for people who were frustrated by development and listening to several moms as we talked to them as we walked through the subdivision. I want to assure everyone here and everyone who may be watching online or on television that Governor Edwards has never forgotten Youngsville, and I have never forgotten Youngsville, and if you could see in our office every day you would see that we have never lost the urgency for knowing that we have to bring more help on the ground to people who went through the floods in August and in March. We are coming up on 180 days since the August floods but you know it is still just as urgent as it was when we visited here in Youngsville. Governor Edwards has been to DC four times and we are going back next week and we go there every time to impress upon the federal government not to forget Louisiana and that we still need literally hundreds of billions of dollars to help people in Louisiana to come back. Today you will hear that the Governor has worked very hard to bring home, with the congressional delegation, \$1.6B. It is not here yet because of a very time consuming, frustrating, federal process that we nevertheless have the most experienced team in the country working in our Office of Community Development to make sure that every time in that process, when it comes to the state, there is absolutely no delay and that we meet every deadline on the state side responding along that time march that we make trying to bring home community development block grant dollars, and I know that a lot of folks that never thought they would intersect with HUD in their lives perhaps and now we know that disaster recovery dollars come to Louisiana through HUD, through the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Community Development Block Grant and that is why we have so much discussion on low to moderate income and how do we take that into account as we distribute these dollars because it comes through HUD and one of the national objectives of HUD is to make sure the most vulnerable and low to moderate income folks are served when you have a disaster. Governor Edwards wants to make sure that we serve all the people who were impacted by both of the floods. We have 193,000 families, we have 56 parishes that were declared a federal disaster as a result of the March and August floods. The fourth costly flood event in the United States history and Youngsville is a very important part of

that. I have two letters here with me today that I just wanted to report to Youngsville and to the task force on. One is to President Donald Trump and one is to the congressional delegation. These are not the first but these were sent this week and as you know when Governor Edwards was here, I mean when President Trump was here Governor Edwards met with him and President Trump in December committed to Louisiana and committed that he loved Louisiana and reaffirmed that he would help Louisiana once he got into office so Governor Edwards would like to hold him to that and has sent him a letter detailing that we are \$2B short of the money that Governor Edwards has asked for and that is based on the need in Louisiana. We have \$1.6B that's been appropriated through two appropriations. \$438M, which the action plan that we have to, under federal guidelines, submit to the federal government, we hope is very close to being approved. The \$1.2B, the second part of the action plan, we are right now today having the public comment period for that and we will hear a lot about that and together, that \$1.6B, is a good start, but we have \$2B more that we need. Part of that \$2B is \$600M, as you mentioned Mr. Chairman, for infrastructure. I know that there is a lot of frustration, the Governor knows it, and there is a lot of frustration about trying to improve drainage, trying to make communities stronger and not having the funds to do it, and thinking that perhaps sometimes it appears that funding goes to larger areas and not smaller communities or perhaps growing communities and I'm here to assure you that is not the hope or the direction of Governor Edwards. He has specifically asked for the \$600M from the federal government because we want to have a regional planned approach that includes community input in the approach to be able to go forward and be stronger. We can't just assume we won't have another disaster at some point. God forbid it's too soon from now but we want, we appreciate the Acadian region, the part that Youngsville and surrounding areas in Lafayette Parish are playing for being a part of making smarter plans and stronger plans for flood protection, drainage protection going forward together so that we do not have to depend on individual house elevations or all of the headaches that go along with that and the heartbreak that go along that in the future. We want to be strong as a state and build forward. But we are fighting some very frustrating and at times almost mind boggling if you try to look at it through a commonsense filter federal regulations. They're slowing down Louisiana, they're slowing down Youngsville. As people try physically to get back in their homes, as people try financially to get straight. If you had flood insurance, federal regulations under Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, are making mortgage companies hold part of your check. That's a delay in rebuilding. Specifically in these letters, both to the president and to the congressional delegation, we have asked them to look at some particular fixes for those mortgage delays that are being caused, those flood insurance check delays being caused for some folks who hold these federally controlled mortgages. If you've got federal SBA loans, which we know FEMA asked you to go apply for as part of your process for recovery, now you are hearing the federal rules mean these community development block grant dollars cannot be used to pay off those SBA loans. We know that your life took a direct hard turn at this flood and now that you may have cleared up debt, you may have been ready for retirement, you have had to dip into savings, dip into retirement accounts, and now hearing that you are not going to get help in terms of SBA loans, in these two letters, to the president and to the congressional delegation, the Governor specifically asked please consider what is happening to folks that are having this dilemma, because of this federal process, please consider allowing us to use community development block grant dollars to help people pay off SBA loans. Please consider a SBA Loan Forgiveness Program, so that somehow we can provide some relief for people who got ahead and worked very hard. We recognize that there has been an oil field downturn, we recognize there is a big concern about the low to moderate income, the middle income, the high income, how is the help that is coming in the Homeowner Assistance Program going to be spread about. You need to know this, the Governor absolutely recognizes that there is no discrimination by flood waters and so we do not want and discrimination by the distribution of assistance to homeowners trying to recover from the flood waters. We do have some very strict requirements under the federal programs about how much money has to go low to moderate income and which of that population needs to be served and we definitely want to help all of the most vulnerable citizens, the elderly, the disabled, those in low to moderate income to be able to come back just as we want to help all segments of the population because we want the community to come back stronger and that is the governor's goal and always the focus. How do we plan better? How do we recover quickly? How do we decide with educated, scientific and community based planning to come back stronger and quickly as a community? If we are going to do that we need businesses, we need schools, we need those homeowners that got in and were able to rebuild first, we need those that are still struggling and don't know how they are ever going to get back in their house, we need all parts of our community. So, we are fighting this every day and I want to reassure folks, and I know Pat will touch on this later, that when we open the homeowner assistance program, the Governor specifically said I want the reimbursement piece in there. I want somehow to try to help the families who were able to get ahead and scrape together family money, savings money, IRA money, retirement account money, SBA loans, and got ahead. But I want to say that we are still \$2B short, so I ask everyone watching today, everyone listening, please contact your congressional delegation, urge them to work with those folks who are with the rest of Congress from around the country to please help us to bring home more money in the next appropriation. We'll be working on that very hard, we do every day. We'll be there next week and we will be working towards a decision about the next budget or the next continuing resolution at the federal level but when we open the homeowner assistance program, we will be determining the income of the people who qualify to be helped according to what their income is at

that time, at the time that they apply, so please rest assured that what has happened to you in and around and during and after the flood will be taken into account. As we look at a three pronged homeowner assistance program, a program that will offer a state managed contractor option for folks who say, which I would probably fall in this category, I just don't want to manage my own homeowner contractor, I'm not comfortable doing that, folks who are elderly or living with some disabilities and will need some help managing contractors. The second option would be a homeowner managed contracting option where if you think I would like to hire my own contractor and I would like manage them with the state financial assistance, we want to help that way. The third option would be reimbursement for those who are 62 or older, who had major or severe damage, who may have a person living with disabilities and didn't have flood insurance, there is a component of that that would provide 100% reimbursement. For many people outside of that category with major severe damage, no flood insurance, right now because of the limited funds that we have been allocated by the federal government, we are looking at 25% of your cost. We know that is not enough, we want to do more than that and that's why we continue to work and we ask for your support and your calls to congress to help us go get more money so we can continue to increase that reimbursement. We have difficult environmental reviews that HUD requires, and we have talked about this before at public meetings, as much as \$3500 a house for an environmental review of a house that perhaps the footprint won't change, putting sheetrock in and rehabilitating the house, and Pat will talk about that, but in these letters that we have sent, and these are not the first, we have specifically laid out in these letters a request to HUD to waive the environmental review and to allow us to put all of that money that we know is not really necessary for the environmental reviews towards homeowners, and helping more homeowners come back. We have asked the congressional delegation help with that and to help us with the agencies, if we need waivers from inside the agencies. We are specifically asking for a waiver of the low to moderate income requirement of 70% the money go to low to moderate income and want to bring that down to 50%, so we can continue to spread out this help. And we know that is something that would help more homeowners and we are working very hard to do that. I want to thank everyone who is here today and I want you to rest assured that the fight against the slow response time that comes with these long time consuming federal regulations is one that we never stop fighting in the Governor's office. We need your help on it. We recognize your frustration. We also know that communities who are smaller communities who are growing don't have the extra staff to suddenly learn all of these federal bureaucracy regulations and how to work these programs and how they all fit together and how to most quickly distribute the dollars and so we want to, at the Governor's office, we are looking at right now how can we help supplement the community resources, come help train the folks in communities, so all the folks on the mayors staff and the folks in the city government can have help, so we realize it is frustrating trying to figure out, on top of your regular job of running a city and running a community, how do we also find a way while we are losing tax revenue because we've got some downturns and businesses and everyone to build back up and there will be a point where they may be an influx of some federal dollars, how do we weigh all that and keep our cities going forward, stronger, we want to provide and help you for that, and so we are looking forward to doing that. I want to let you know that we have a special session coming up in the legislature that begins on February 13. I don't think I'm giving away any secrets but it hasn't been officially called but February 13 to the 23. The reason we're having that special session is that we have a very difficult budget time in Louisiana. And so that is something that I say is not insignificant and while we also try to recover from the flood, and so that is why we're so dependent on needing the additional \$2B in federal money that we need to bring home because we have a long way to go. We came out of eight years of some very difficult budget situations that hurt our state and we did a whole lot of heavy lifting and work last year to begin to rectify the issue, but we have a ways to go and we need your support for that. It's not pleasant. It's called stabilizing the budget and we would ask you very sincerely to support the Governor's efforts because we strongly believe that if we go forward as a state in Louisiana with a stabilized budget, if you are in business you want predictability, you want to tax code that is broadly based that is not going to fluctuate from year to year like certain industries we don't want that, we want to stay stronger. I can drive into this community today and see that this is a community that has built a whole balanced area of facilities for its families. These beautiful subdivisions, there's sports arenas and complexes. There is a community center and this is a strong community and we need to be just as strong at the state level. We need your help to do that, we recognize that you want to be supported and we want your specific input today and I'll end on that. We really want to hear specifically from you what we can do to help you. Know that we recognize a lot of the problems and we wish we had a way to pull the federal assistance down here more quickly than we can under the federal process that requires action plans and approvals and all sorts of things that take too much time frankly. But we ensure that on the state side there's never been a delay. There's never been a delay and we are very close and we ask you to save hope and know that we're coming with some homeowner assistance programs and we want to make it available to as many people as we possibly can. We want to thank you for your incredible strength. We want to honor you for your commitment for your strong families and we just want to let you know that anything that we can do to help you in this recovery, we're here to do it.

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

**Mr. Faulk:** Julie, do you all have the contact information for the legislative congressional delegation on the website?

**Ms. Payer:** Yes, we will put it up today.

**Mr. Faulk:** Second, it is my understanding that Congress is going to be in session in April, and that there is going to be a move to amend the Stafford Act to allow some waivers by our congressional delegation, similar to some things that were done after Katrina. Flood insurance, schools, I know schools are being hit with a \$500,000 insurance bill per building, not per site but per building, so I think it's very important that our congressional delegation hear from the people that they represent about the needs that they have so that they can work and help us relieve the longevity that we are facing.

**Ms. Payer:** I just want to point out that we specifically, in these letters to the president and the congressional delegation, next is from the Governor. I am specifically requesting your help to improve the Stafford Act and assist in the following critical fixes to the referenced federal laws, rules and regulations that are making it difficult for the people of Louisiana to recover in a timely manner. We specifically list a number of different things we need help from that you are referencing. We specifically talk about legislative language specifically waiving the \$500,000 per building deduction for school campuses and we have a suggested language fix that we attached there so that the congressional delegation has our suggestions to start with. Now, we urge them to work in the way that they can with other congressional members and with federal agencies to find fixes that maybe we haven't thought of but we do suggest some fixes in here as a start and I certainly hear you and know that we will continue to push that.

**Mr. Olivier:** Julie, many of us will be there next week and so we had a conversation after the last meeting about getting some bullet points so those of us could be on point and not all over the place on those specific requests, some of which are listed in those letters that the Governor has to the new administration. Most of us are leaving on Tuesday or Wednesday, if we could have that before that date because we are all going to have contact with the congressional delegation, and others.

**Ms. Payer:** You will get those this weekend.

**Mr. Dartez:** Julie, and for the audience, one of the biggest things we're hearing on these road shows is the SBA forgiveness and I know it's going to help a lot of you folks out there. So, we are going to be totally supportive of the Governor, Julie and Pat on the congressional ask for the waiver or at least some relief on that program. What we are learning is a lot of good people out there took the initiative on their own, like Julie talking about, and not only rebuilding their homes but their communities, and this is really hitting a lot of folks. These loans, from what I understand, go as far out as 30 years, so it is really good to see that in the letter. One thing I'm curious on is SBA forgiveness and we have talked about Matthew, Hurricane Matthew states, are they facing the same issue and are those states going to ask for the same waiver?

**Ms. Payer:** We are very hopeful that the fact that we have some other states that went through Hurricane Matthew is going to help us. Obviously these numbers sound like a lot but the nation has got to understand the extensive need that remains here in Louisiana. So, in terms of an SBA forgiveness program, it is not an easy lift, it is not something that is done very often. I don't know if there is a particular precedent for it. There is precedent for allowing SBA, I'm sorry Community Development Block Grant money to sometimes be allowed to pay off SBA loans so we will have some language that we can suggest and let Congress look at it and allow in this particular situation but it's going to have to take a lot of input from the public and from our elected leaders and other folks to say please this is very, very important for Louisiana.

**Mr. Durbin:** Julie, I do have a question and a comment. I have read the letter from Governor Edwards to the President, Donald Trump. I think that is one comprehensive letter to the President of the United States from our Governor. I've also read the letter dated February 2 to our US Congressman and two US Senators, that is an excellent letter. For the public in attendance today, anyone watching on TV, are these two letters going to be posted anywhere?

**Ms. Payer:** Yes.

**Mr. Durbin:** On [restore.la.gov](http://restore.la.gov)?

**Ms. Payer:** Yes. We will post them.

**Mr. Durbin:** Anyone in the audience can read these comprehensive letters, they give you a very good update on what the Governor is requesting of Congress and the President. You will find them on [restore.la.gov](http://restore.la.gov).

**Ms. Payer:** They are not there quite yet but we will get them on the site. They were sent out just yesterday.

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

## **V. LOCAL OFFICIALS**

~ **Mayor-President Joel Robideaux, Lafayette Parish Consolidated Government and RLTF Member**

~ **Mayor Ken Ritter, Youngsville**

~ **Parish President Guy Cormier, St. Martin Parish**

**Mr. Durbin:** At this time, I would like to recognize our task force member and co-host of this meeting since we are in Lafayette Parish Mayor-President Joel Robideaux with the Lafayette Parish Consolidated Government.

**Mayor-President Robideaux:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Julie, thank you, I thought that was a really good, comprehensive explanation of the frustrations that folks are feeling in every one of these meetings that we are having and that I know is also being felt in Lafayette Parish. Let me say to Pat and his office, Pat Forbes with the Office of Community Development for the state, I can't tell you how appreciative we are when you reached out to say that you would like to host a meeting in Lafayette Parish because all of the municipalities in Lafayette Parish were affected, so I thought it was a great opportunity for our residents to be able to address the task force in a way that would be meaningful to them and then further when I asked for it specifically be held in Youngsville because they were the most impacted municipality in the parish that they were more than happy to do that and so for Pat and his group, thank you, and obviously to Mayor Ritter, thank you for agreeing to host this event. Again, the frustrations are statewide and it's certainly not limited to Lafayette Parish but a lot of the things that I heard you talk about I don't want the audience to sit back and say okay, they know about it. We're trying to get the requirements too low to moderate income lowered to the 50%, which is important for not just Youngsville and Lafayette Parish but I think for a lot of the flood victims throughout the state and so if you feel that way make sure and express it to us because ultimately the voices we hear from the public are both to validate what we do here as a task force, the recommendations that we make, but it will also validate for our congressional delegation the really extreme need that exists, and it's not just hearing from the Governor and just hearing from elected officials, they're hearing from the people and so I can't encourage those in the audience enough to make sure that your voices are heard. I appreciate the fact that you are going to put on the website the contact information for the congressional delegation because as you're sitting in the audience or when you leave this meeting today, there's really nothing more important that you can do then to contact the congressional delegation. They need to hear from everyone, not just the task force and the Governor's office and the elected officials, they need to hear from everyone, it will help tremendously. I'm going to keep it brief because there is a lot of ground to cover and so at this point I'd like to turn it over, if I could, to Mayor Ritter to come and present to the task force and to the constituents that are here today and thank him and former Representative Champagne, his right-hand person, thank you all for your hard work, thank you for putting this together and I look forward to your presentation.

**Mayor Ritter took the witness table to address the task force.**

**Mayor Ritter:** Thank you, Parish President Robideaux. It's a pleasure to be here this morning with all of you. Good morning, Chairperson Durbin and members of the Restore Louisiana Task Force. Welcome to Youngsville. On behalf of our residents that were affected by the great August flood, welcome to our city and we appreciate your service on this task force and your willingness to come to Youngsville to hear our story and meet with our residents. We realize you have an extremely important role in our recovery and we are very grateful for your time this morning. Before I begin I would like to recognize a few of our local city elected officials that are here with me today. We have Police Chief Ricky Boudreaux here with us today. We also have Mayor Pro-Tem of our Youngsville City Council Diane McClelland, Councilman Mat Romero, Councilman Ken Stansberry, and I'm also glad to see some of our other local mayors here with us as well. Carencro Mayor Lynn Brasseau, Scott Mayor Purvis Morrison, our neighboring parish president Guy Cormier, with have Eraff Mayor John Earl LeBlanc, State Representative Stuart Bishop, our school board member Jeremy Hidalgo, our predecessor former Mayor Wilson Viator, and LCG Councilwoman Liz Webb Hebert. So, I apologize if I missed anybody but with having my back to them I'm not sure if anyone else walked in after me and as Mayor-President Robideaux said, I'd also like to just compliment the members of my team that have helped navigate this worst natural disaster that we've had in our city's history and that is led by our CAO Simone Champagne who, unfortunately, has some experience with disaster recovery work after Hurricane Katrina and in her district when she was a member of the state legislature. Our City Clerk Sally Andrews, we also have our Public Works Director Terry Borg, and our City Engineer Pamela Gonzales Grange here with me today. I recognize it's probably some of your first times to the city of Youngsville and in listening to Julie's introduction to the city of Youngsville I couldn't have done a better job myself. I would like to tell you a little bit about the city of Youngsville since it may be your first time here to our city. You have the PowerPoint that we can start?

**Mayor Ritter began his PowerPoint presentation. The PowerPoint can be found on [restore.la.gov](http://restore.la.gov) website.**

**Mayor Ritter:** You know, bottom line is we don't want to be forgotten. We are a resilient community that took care of itself and is now being left behind. It's been alluded to already but I really feel that the perception, it's been touched on, is that there is a lack of urgency and empathy with recovery funding. I think that the system is flawed in my opinion if a self-reliant community is penalized because I can't help but think what would have happened to the debris had we left it out for longer than we did? I would assume eventually someone would have come picked it up but for the sanity and safety of our residents, we've moved rapidly to pick it up and get the job done quickly because that is consistent with how our residents to rebuild and move on with their lives. Bottom line, we do not want to become the Hurricane Rita after Hurricane Katrina. What I mean by that is, and I'm sure most of you probably get the reference, we don't want to be forgotten about and be the community that didn't get any attention because there were so many other greater needs. I empathize with all of my fellow citizens across the state that have had worse damage than we've had but Youngsville is a community that's vibrant, that has a lot to offer, and we certainly want to do our share as evidenced by what we've done so far. We've taken the bull by the horns in having increased development standards, we are not

waiting for someone to come clean the drainage in our community, we are doing it ourselves and I think that is indicative of the youthfulness and the resiliency of our public. What I would ask for you to do is to continue to champion the cause for us, the income waiver is imperative. I understand that it's only been done, that it may have been done, after Hurricane Katrina and Rita at 50% of the funding was spent on low to moderate income, but I think now, with the new administration, new HUD secretary, I think that we have a great platform to make the argument that regardless of what the circumstances or criteria has been in the past, our residents are suffering due to the economy and we cannot use lagging indicators because those lagging indicators of income do not show the reduction of hours that our residents are struggling with. We've got to do more to help our people and while I'm proud, in one sense, that when you drive through our community the residents and the neighborhoods look phenomenal, it's a façade. There's still a lot of heartache and pain going on inside those areas, so I look forward to working with you. I'm available for anything that I can do to help you advocate for the residents of not only Youngsville but Acadiana and for the residents of our state. I appreciate your service and certainly thank you for your time and for being here today.

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

**Mr. Olivier:** I have a comment. Excellent presentation. As secretary of economic development during and after Katrina this is not my first rodeo, not the first rodeo for many of us, but one of the things that pains us the most is not being able to help those people who are not in the low to moderate income classification. Youngsville is the example. It just pains us that we don't have any capacity this time until we get more funding. Believe me, this Governor has stressed over and over, and this board as a whole, we're looking for that opportunity to be able to bring some relief to people who have no insurance, had no insurance, even if they did have insurance, realize that those things that you need so that there is some relief for other people besides low to moderate income.

**Mayor Ritter:** I really appreciate that and I want to be realistic in my requests but I think that it's fair that we need both, we need assistance for those residents that beyond what looks good on paper for their income because I know that's not the story of their last few years. Everyone I know that's worked in that industry or ancillary in the industries, they've made less money and I don't think that we would be looking at that type of income level if we were to be pulling current stats for today but secondly we've grown very rapidly, albeit by choice, we've allowed it to happen but you know every community has got aging infrastructure but we have aging infrastructure coupled with damaged infrastructure because of sewer lift stations, as a great example, roads that were under water and that's where we really need the most help with. The roads, the Southside High School, this new schools opening in August of 2017 and it does not take a 25-year storm event to shut that road down. It takes probably a couple of inches of rainfall in two hours before our public works and police department are putting down barricades to close that road and while we're very grateful for the school system placing that road where it is, we've got to do a better job of finding funding for a safe route to school and that's something that will benefit the lives of a lot of our flood affected residents because they live directly across the street from Southside High School so I appreciate the comments.

**Mr. Faulk:** Mayor, did the assessor do a reassessment of the property values in your community because of the flooding?

**Mayor Ritter:** It's my understanding that if you were affect by August flooding, you could ask for a freeze. I don't know the details but yes, I do know that there was a program that was implemented by the assessor's office if a homeowner would call the assessor's office and ask for that, I believe it was a one-year freeze. I'm being told that there was a discount applied if you could show a FEMA claim.

**Mayor-President Robideaux:** Thank you. Just jumping ahead, a little, Mayor Ritter mentioned lagging indicators a couple of times, so Pat during your presentation if you could address for us what period of time is going to be used when they are analyzing someone's income? Is it when we get the line of credit issued, at the flood event timeline, is the lower of the two or the higher of the two, so if you could just address that for us so that Mayor Ritter and the rest of those will know here is the income test that's going to apply to.

**Mayor Ritter:** I believe that Parish President Guy Cormier would like to make a few comments, and he is the only one I know of at this time.

**Parish President Guy Cormier took the witness table to address the task force.**

**President Cormier:** You did a great job Mayor. First, let me just thank the members for taking time out of a busy Friday to be with us today here in Acadiana and hopefully you can get in the towns and experience the hospitality and our good food, especially in this particular area of Louisiana and especially this particular area in the parish. Secondly, I can't thank the city of Youngsville enough for allowing us to use his beautiful facility, gosh this is the first time I come here and you all have done a remarkable job. I know this dates back to the time of when Mayor Viator was here as well so and I know he's in the crowd so to Mayor Viator, Mayor Ritter and his council members of the fantastic job and such a beautiful complex. I heard time and time again throughout the day, two comments that were made by Chairman Durbin and Ms. Payer that the Governor was really focused on two separate things and I think that's your focus as well, well a few things but two things that I think have been made a priority and one is to

rebuild homes and get people back in their homes as soon as possible and I get that and that should be the number 1 priority but I think not number 2 but maybe number 1B would be that there's such a thing should be trying to get drainage and infrastructure taken care of, not only in each particular parish but throughout the region. I can't thank Governor Edwards enough for his leadership in this particular event. When I think about the year that he's had, talking about 2016, I reflect back on his first couple of days in office having to make a decision whether it was going to open up the Morganza Spillway or not, and if you remember that but we had a high-water event and they were trying to make some decisions of what they were going to do there. One of not opening but we had some high water at the very beginning of the year. Then and we all remember the two special sessions in the regular session that he had to deal with, the longest we've ever been in session in Louisiana starting on Valentine's Day and finishing around June. Then, in the middle of all that, had that Alton Sterling shooting, the police shootings, and then the high-water event in August. He's really championed us and been a leader for us in Louisiana and I tip my hat to him because he's done a remarkable job, especially in the August event where I got to see him really in action. So, I just want to thank him publicly for his leadership. My parish, which is much like a lot of other parishes that are placed on that board over there, but just to kind of give you some stats, according to your data, about 1450 homes were affected in St. Martin Parish. We probably have a little north of 20,000 homes, so 1450 of those affected only 240 people made insurance claims, so 83.5% of my people did not have flood insurance that flooded. Unlike Youngsville, the area that was affected in St. Martin Parish did not have a \$90,000+ average household income, they did hit low to moderate but it did hit some folks as well that probably had that as an annual income but for the most part it damaged a lot of areas in which people were on fixed income, so a lot of older folks and just trying to get things done. Our flood was a little bit different from the Youngsville flood and a lot different from a lot of Louisiana's flood in the fact that we've had back water flooding and so this rain event, which was unnamed by the way, dumped some thirty inches of rain in my parish. It came in and it did a whole bunch of damage in Youngsville and the surrounding areas of Lafayette, and in about three days after the rain event we started seeing a significant rise in water in our parish and I had seen this before because of my seventeen years of service and having to deal with lower St. Martin, which it happens there all the time, who started this experience what we call back water flooding. So, one rain event, two different types of floods, a flash flood and a backwater flood, and instead of the water staying in our homes, like in Youngsville, for two to three, maybe four, days, it stayed in for two to three to four weeks and so we made our way through that and fortunately we are rebuilding as best we can. Fortunately, no loss of life. I guess right after that, in the middle of the event from the time it had flash flood here in Lafayette Parish and surrounding parishes into where it was starting to back or flood, I got a group of people together and started having a conversation about regional drainage. We often talk about regional transportation issues, we have Commission set up to do that, to talk about how we're going to move people from point A to Point B. We have people, but we rarely talk about water and how it flows and we learned in this event that, and much like in other events, that water does not know if you're Republican or Democrat, no party or independent. Doesn't know if you're black or white, doesn't know if your household income is \$11,000 or \$150,000 a year. It finds its way to the lowest points, and when you have thirty inches of rain in a matter of forty-eight to fifty-six hours, you have some issues that come along with it. So, we start talking about how do we attack this from a regional approach. Wanting our residents to definitely rebuild their homes as best as they can and as fast as they can but it didn't make sense for me, as an elected leader, to sit back only to watch it possibly happen again if we didn't start communicating from parish to parish on how we drain our waters. I'll give you a good 'for instance'. Right where we sit, right here, there's probably a very good chance that the water that falls here, although the Vermilion River is just west of us, it has to travel all the way through St. Martin Parish, and believe it or not it has to travel north. Most people say water does not flow north, I disagree with them often, it depends on the part of the land. If you have a hill, the water is going to have to flow north to get back in the system somewhere else, it's going to have to flow north. So, all the water that fell here had to pass through my parish, and it did, and this is one of the reasons why we backwater flooded. Then had to make its way, almost like a complete 180 back into the Vermilion River system, which passes through Lafayette Parish and how do I know that, number one I have a farming background and I've farmed some of these lands in the past but I'm fortunate enough to have a brother-in-law with a helicopter, that's what he does for a living, and throughout the event, throughout the month or two that followed it, we were up in the air everyday just checking out the way the water was flowing and where it was going, which brings me to where I am today and talking about how do we possibly recover from a standpoint not only from getting our households repaired but our drainage and infrastructure repaired. I can't thank Acadiana Planning Commission enough, it's a group of folks made up of the seven parish presidents that make up a part of Acadiana, who have really come to grips with the fact that we need to take the lead on doing a regional drainage master plan of some sort and start talking about how we spend maybe this mitigation money. Not only parish by parish but also from a regional perspective. Having said that I think we're meeting next Tuesday morning to keep that conversation going and start planning on how we can possibly spend some money once that \$2B of extra money that Governor Edwards has asked for comes our way, and even some of the money that we currently have. I'm much like Youngsville in the fact that people took it seriously in December of this past year, we went to the polls and voted ourselves a tax to the tune of \$20M to do drainage work in my parish. We're going to do that drainage work, we're going to clean a lot of channels. We've never done anything of that magnitude in my parish, who have never bonded that much money at one time for one particular project, let alone one drainage project, but having said that my parish waters have to pass somewhere else. And so, because I'm not directly affiliated with the coast, I have a parish in between me and them and the coast and so we're going to be communicating with neighboring parishes just to make sure that we don't have a negative effect on them. I just want to thank you again, on behalf of Mayor Ritter, Mayor Morrison who is here, Mayor LeBlanc, Mayor Brossel, Mayor-President Robideaux. We have administrative authority to get drainage done and get infrastructure done

and in the parts on which we serve and our folks come to us often because of rain events that happen, even a 30-inch rain event I was getting blamed for that much rain. Even though I was praying that it would stop, it kept going and people will blame the parish government because of the lack of a drainage system. So, I just want to challenge you as we restore Louisiana as a task force to be able to look beyond just lifting homes and repairing homes, we need to do those things, possibly repair more than lift, but we also need to make sure that what we do in the future as far as spending dollars that when we get another rain event like this magnitude that we can avoid some places from flooding because of what we did by taking care of our systems. I'll leave you with the story that some of you have heard because you have heard me speak about the flood on numerous occasions but kind of sums up where I was but we talk about being resilient and making sure that we can just live for another day right, and so in the middle of this rain event, it had just started, my very best friend, like a brother, you are going to recognize the name, Scott Angelle. I preceded Scott as the parish president, he was there before me, but he is also our Public Service Commissioner and so I guess 24 hours after the rain started falling we recognized that we were going to have some issues so he called me up, just like I would do to him, and said is there anyway I can help and I said I want you to just come, you've had some experience, you've sat in my chair, let's just see if we can maybe serve the parish itself and see what we can do to possibly help these folks. So, after spending a day or two with him, my son also works for Scott in the campaigns in which he ran, and so everywhere Scott would go a lot of them probably met my son, Micah. So, me, Micah and Scott went on the road and started surveying the damages and we often talk to folks about what it is that we could possibly do to help them and they were just panicking at that time because the water was rising and it wasn't raining, and we're doing our best to make sure that we can accommodate folks and rescue them and do everything that we could but there was one particular day where I had a council meeting, which was going to happen that night, I had a bunch of special resolutions to organize and I wanted to pass and make sure that we can recover pretty quickly and get some funding in place to start picking up debris like the mayor mentioned. So, I get called by the Commissioner Angelle that morning and he wanted to get back on the road and I said I can't make it today but want you and Micah to go out and survey the damages. So, they went in the community, which is not very far from where I live, where I was born and raised, and at that particular time there was two foot of water in people's homes, the roads were for the most part impassable, but they got there, they meandered their way around and they saw an individual in the yard and Scott recognized him so he told my son, who was driving the vehicle, why don't you slow down, I know this guy, let's see if he needs any help. So, when he puts the window down in the vehicle the guy says, man Scott it's you, thanks for coming to see what I need, and Scott says anything I can help you with and he said I'm going to tell you right now I'm glad you came, that Guy Cormier, that's a no-good SOB. I've been asking for my drainage to be dug for years and he did nothing. The last person to dig ditches was you and how long you've been out, and Scott immediately said I've been out twelve years. Well, it was about twelve years ago, they dug my ditches and they haven't dug anything since and he went on and on and on just kind of cussing me because I am in charge of parish government. So, he said come see, I want to show you all. So, they get out of the vehicle and they walk to the back of the house, and of course there is a ditch there. The ditch, my son tells me, the ditch and the bank is four feet under water, so you couldn't even see the ditch because they had so much backwater there in that area. He's still complaining about how nobody took care of this issue for him and I haven't done my job, so the guy immediately spins around to my son and says who are you, and very quick on his feet and being resilient like he needed to be and live another day he puts his hand out and says my name is Michael LeBlanc, I'm from Lafayette. He denied me and I felt like Jesus when he told me the story, but that was pretty much my life through that whole flood. The fact that I was trying to help people as best as I could but there was not much I could do, but now we have the opportunity to help and you hold the keys to that. This task force was put together by Governor Edwards. I think he did a remarkable job to immediately appoint some great members on a task force that will help us move forward. So, my challenge to you today is to do exactly that. Just hear us out and help us move forward. I'll repeat one more time what Mayor Ritter said and I don't like to compare myself to any other storm but it hurt when Hurricane Rita and Katrina hit. It hurt. I was the parish president of St. Martin Parish when Rita hit I saw it, I ran it. There was a lot more damage in Orleans Parish, and St. Bernard and Plaquemines, and that is all my friends. I'm the president of the Louisiana Police Jury Association, I remind myself of that often, but there was a lot of times where we were not being heard and it means the world to me to know that you came today to listen to us. Thank you so much.

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

**Mr. Dartez:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's not a question, it's a statement. All of things you talk about, I work for the Police Jury Association so he is my president, and I just want to tell these folks that while you were dealing with three, four inches of flooding in his parish, he is also helping me oversee the other fifty-five parishes and I can't thank him enough, working with the Governor and Riley, Pat and Julie, he is always here somewhere. Half his time was spent in his parish and the other half was spent helping me with the other fifty-five parishes. Of all the comments he made, one thing that stands out and I appreciate is working with President Robideaux and all the mayors of this area of finding a regional approach because unfortunately what we are dealing with is probably going to happen again. I think you made a point that eventually 3,000 year floods and you are only in your 50s but the reality is that is our main point that we have stressed with not only the state and with the congressional members, that we're not going to solve this problem just by rebuilding, we've got to restore and we have got to be smart about it. So, thank you Mr. President.

**Mr. Olivier:** I'd like to talk to you as the chairman of the Association of Police Jury. As an economic developer, one of the things we learned immediately after Katrina and Rita was there is no book out there so we were all in the same boat. Let's learn what we have to learn. We called on people from Florida to come in and help us, and after that and we got calls from all over the country on catastrophic events management, we still do today, in fact we brought a group from the Committee of 100 and other groups to New York and New Jersey to assist in that event. What we know is we've got too much experience. We don't like it but we've got it. In some cases, it's a good thing and Julie referred to Pat and his team have done a wonderful job because of that experience but boy we wish we didn't have to. One of the things we have, and I was talking to the Mayor here, we need to take that and enroll it into a program through not only your organization, the Police Jury Association, but Ellie Mae, so we can extend that because I'm hearing all the time, Mayor Durbin and I were talking on evening during one of these meetings about the same issues, you all have so much knowledge. Mayor, you were talking with an example of the lift stations. Boy if only you would have known, well you know now, I bet it's in your workbook now that you are going to do that, take photographs and be ready for the 'if' or 'when' there is another event. Those are the kinds of things that just don't get in the book, you have to have the experience. I'm just saying, we've got a lot of experience. We need to take that, chronicle it, put it down and start using it and you are going to get a lot of requests from all over the country, all over the world. David Dot is here, he is one of my economic development colleagues, he has turned it into a business as a result of my asking him when I was secretary of economic development to get involved in this catastrophic event management education and since then he's been to places like Japan. My point is, we've got a lot to offer and as president of an association like the Policy Jury Association, I urge you to get involved in that as one of your legacies since you experienced it, twice.

**President Cormier:** Thank you so much for that. I often think about taking my experiences and turning it into a business as well. You looking at a guy that has been through five major hurricanes, eight high-water events, five tornadoes, and two train derailments, in my twelve years of service. I never thought that I would have experienced all that as a parish president. I had five years as a council member, I'm not even counting that but I often think about maybe it's me. Maybe I just need to step out and Louisiana will just get back to where it is, you know. I am chronicling and documenting everything, I've done an outstanding job, I have to pat myself on the back at least on this last event, so that when I leave, the next guy or gal that sits behind me some documentation about everything that we've learned from this event. That is all we can really do with it now is learn from it. So, I appreciate your kind words, and I do plan on making that a part of my legacy so to speak as a president.

**Mr. Faulk:** One of the things you mentioned that a lot of people don't realize, and you said it and it's a fact, this was not a named storm so nobody outside of Louisiana realized what was going on. Hurricane Matthew got a lot of attention because it was a named storm, and this part of the thing that is hindering us is the fact that there is not a name associated with this event but it was an event that impacted fifty-six parishes in this state. So, we just have to keep that in mind and that's why it is so important for the citizens of this state to contact their congressional delegation.

**President Cormier:** Absolutely. Thank you for your time and I am looking forward to Mr. Forbes comments.

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

## **VI. LOUISIANA OFFICE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE** **~ Patrick Forbes, Executive Director**

**Mr. Durbin:** At this time we are going to invite to the table to speak, Pat Forbes, Executive Director of the state Office of Community Development-Disaster Recovery. Mr. Forbes has been heading that agency for over a decade. He is very informed and he is going to begin to inform everyone here today and also through the media, the component of an action plan that was passed and adopted by this task force at our prior meeting that took place in the parish of Livingston. This action plan is for you, whoever wishes to speak at the following public comment period to come forward and make your comments on the action plan. This is a step by step process as a disaster declaration by the president, a request for funding by our Governor to Congress, the appropriation in Congress, through the agency of the federal Housing and Urban Development, that funding then through appropriation by Congress to the HUD, then leads to a published guideline by HUD in the federal register, Office of Community Development works through those guidelines and puts together, with a lot of input, an action plan. The action plan, the most recent action plan, was involving an appropriation by Congress in December of \$1.218B to one day reach Louisiana. This is the next component after the adoption of the action plan is public comment period in various areas of Louisiana to receive those comments that has to be taken down. So, folks this is an important step of the process to get to eventually see money coming from the United States government to Louisiana. Hopefully this action plan will be on its way following these comments and a few other local jurisdictions to HUD for finalization and we will see money flowing to Louisiana and the Governor is doing back as Ms. Payer just testified to earlier back to Congress in Washington D.C. next week requesting another appropriation. Mr. Forbes, you have the floor.

**Mr. Forbes:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the task force. Glad to be here. I will again give you the good news that this is a much shorter than normal presentation today. I also want to thank Mayor Ritter and Ms. Champagne for hosting us here

in this beautiful facility today and Mayor-President Robideaux in Lafayette Parish as well. It's a fantastic place and we are thrilled to be here. I'm just going to walk through what I will cover today in this fairly brief presentation. One, as Chairman Durbin said, that the action plan and action plan amendment updates, where we are in the timeframe of that, an update on the timeline for the request for proposals to get a contractor to help us with the program, and also an update on where we are, as you heard we are going to Washington DC with the Governor next week to seek additional funds and relief from some of things that are holding us back in this recovery and I will give an update on some of those items.

**Mr. Forbes began his PowerPoint presentation. The PowerPoint can be found on [restore.la.gov](http://restore.la.gov) website.**

**Mr. Durbin allowed questions during the presentation, therefore the floor was never officially opened for questions.**

**Mayor Norris:** With reference to the environmental reimbursements, on the March event, if you have rebuild and are hoping to get a reimbursement you probably didn't do any of the environmental things, is that going to be an impediment?

**Mr. Forbes:** It's not, in fact we can do the environmental review retroactively. So, how much sense does that make?

**Mayor Norris:** So, what do you do if the environmental review says

**Mr. Forbes:** If the environmental review says this project should not have been undertaken for environmental reasons, we cannot fund the project. That is a distinct possibility, it is highly, highly improbable. We have not had a housing repair rehabilitation project rejected for environmental reasons.

**Mayor Norris:** Okay.

**Mr. Forbes:** Now there are floodplain reasons and there are local ordinances relative to the elevation of the home, flood insurance and substantial damage and all those things and this doesn't change that but with respect to this house should not be rehabilitated here, we've never had that happen. It is a possibility.

**Mayor Norris:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Durbin:** I apologize for this question if you have already answered it. If there is a fix by Congress, is that going to be a proactive fix or a retroactive fix?

**Mr. Forbes:** Well, it would have to be retroactive back through the other two appropriations as would the language for the environmental review. We would want that to travel back through. If it were not, it wouldn't make sense, they are perfectly at liberty to do that but if it were not retroactive we would figure out ways to fund the SBA projects through the third appropriation to which the new language applied, or we can figure out ways around that, but it will be a lot cleaner and easier if it applies to the whole amount.

**Mr. Dartez:** Along those lines, we've talked about past disasters, have we ever dealt with this SBA issue before?

**Mr. Forbes:** We have, I think it was Ms. Baxter Payer alluded to it. After Katrina there was legislation in the past, and Dan please correct me if I'm wrong and come up here if I get this wrong, it was prohibited then and there was legislation passed to allow us to use Road Home funds to repay SBA loans, to replace them, but that would apply to that specific grant and disaster explicitly, so that does mean that the relief doesn't exist now. Dan, is that correct?

**Mr. Rees confirmed the information was correct from the audience.**

**Mr. Dartez:** Thank you both very much.

**Mr. Forbes concluded his PowerPoint presentation.**

**Mr. Forbes:** One last thing I want to cover is I think you all know that our Chief of Staff, Rowdy Gaudet, is taking a wonderful opportunity to assist the new mayor of Baton Rouge, Sharon Weston Broome, in her endeavors to make Baton Rouge a great city. I want to congratulate him on that. He's going to be the Assistant Chief Administrative Officer there. What you may not know, and what you may know, is what an absolutely critical role he has played in getting us to where we are. To watch him work and make sure that we get things when we're supposed to get them has just been an absolute pleasure and I hope you've had the opportunity to see at least some of that. He has been a great public servant for the state and he has been an amazing Chief of Staff for the Office of Community Development and he's been a great partner and friend to me in doing this work and I just want to say thank you and good luck. Unless there are other questions for me, that is the end of my presentation.

**Mayor Norris:** I agree with Pat, and Rowdy, where do you get your socks from? You always have cool socks on and I'd like to know where you get those. That's not my question though. Is there a way that your group could assist, for example let's just say me and the City of West Monroe, and I would like for us to plan some community meetings at City Hall or wherever and have people that were impacted by the storm, come in and for us to explain, and I know we don't have a group that would take applications yet that would administer the program, but are there some things that we could do? Informational, plus information gathering, from those people that would expedite the process of getting this done. I would like to start in my community. I think a lot of mayors and presidents would like to do that. We don't want to give out information that is inaccurate but I think we know enough of the bones of what is going to happen.

**Mr. Forbes:** I think that is a great idea. Every time we reach out and engage the public we get great information, and every time we can help people understand better. You are right, we feel that information void and getting real information is helpful and it can expedite the process and yes, we can absolutely do that. We are going to do some public comment meetings on the current action plan through next week, actually through the 15<sup>th</sup>, sorry, and we can look to start doing some other meetings that are just informational about the housing program. We won't have a contractor in place yet but we certainly could provide them with additional information

**Mayor Norris:** Well, one of the issues I see, maybe I'm getting this wrong in my head, is there's got to be some kind sequential process in processing applications because I know you have to make sure that meet either the 70 or the 70% low to moderate income. Are people, everybody that was impacted, going to be allowed to apply at the same time and then you rank those and then start working them in a certain order?

**Mr. Forbes:** Yes, sir, that's correct. There will be phases. What we expect is that we have budgeted adequate funding to serve everybody that's in our universe of eligible applicants, but we still have to phase, as we said last meeting, we can't engage 36,000 people in the first day so we are going to have to phase through and we can describe those phases not in the action plan but in the policies and procedures with the RFP and we are continuing to refine them and are continuing to seek your guidance on other approaches to that phasing but certainly we're going to have to phase the program.

**Mayor Norris:** I think a lot of local, either mayors or parish presidents, would like to have the guidelines for us to hold some of those meetings and it actually achieve some of the process or help people be ready when the actual administrator takes place so that we can speed that process up as much as possible. We'll start doing that in the next few weeks if we have gotten it so we don't tell them something wrong.

**Mr. Forbes:** Thank you. I think that will be a huge help.

**Mr. Forbes:** I wanted to jump in and hit one point that I missed while I was talking about the homeowner program. I heard several comments about incomes and income levels and of people being laid off recently and how we would establish low to moderate income or income levels for purposes of the program and I want to make sure that it's clear that incomes are determined at the time of application. We don't go back necessarily to previous tax statements or whatever, the real focus is on forward. The HUD's focus is on making sure that we're looking at what people expect to make, what they are making right now and what they expect to make in the near future whenever we look at those low to moderate income or area median income comparisons. So, for folks who have been laid off and their family income is dramatically reduce, that's the income we're going to be looking at in April when we are ramping this program up, not what they made in 2015 or 2016 necessarily. I wanted to make sure that was clear. Any other questions? Thank you.

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

## **VII. PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Mr. Durbin:** Audience, we will being the task force public comment period. Following the adjournment of this meeting we will convene a public comment meeting for Youngsville area residents. For this meeting we have one step we are going to go into right now and that is the public comment. Someone has signed requesting to come forward and speak, his name is Terry Ledet.

**Mr. Terry Ledet, Homeowner**

**Mr. Ledet:** Thank you ladies and gentlemen of the committee. Thank you for taking your time to be here today. We appreciate the fact that you have come to our community to see what we can do and what we have done thus far to improve our own lives. I would also like to thank the governor's office for the words of encouragement they offered to our community. And Mayor Ritter, awesome job. I don't live in your area or city but I wish I had bought my home here. I'd be proud to call you mayor. I live between Youngsville and Lafayette in the parish. The other night I was in the park walking and it was about 6:30 in the evening and a whole lot of folks out here, not working or setting up events, just people out taking exercises and such. I got a notice from you guys, and I appreciate the information I've been getting through the webmail that we were having this meeting at 9:30 in the morning, but there's a lot of folks in this community that were flooded that were unable to make it here today. I took time off of work. I'm not getting paid to be here. I'm losing income. I know you folks have jobs outside of your home lives in business that you are missing to be here as well, however, with that said I think there is a lot more people like me that would be interested in posing our questions and concerns and that you guys would hear a lot more information from the grassroots level, the people living here that were affected and I know some of you were personally affected by the rising waters. So, to move on to my remarks. My questions for you, Mayor Robideaux, where did he go? Well, does anybody know what the parish is doing thus far to improve, outside Youngsville, to improve drainage and are we seeking FEMA funds for drainage? Can anybody address that? The reason I ask is when I moved into my house eleven years ago my neighbor had a five year old son, I live next to a coulee. The water has never come out of the coulee into my yard, felt pretty safe to be honest, but over the years I've watched the sediment grow forming the five foot coulee into what is now a three foot coulee. Now, with that much displacement being taken away from the coulee

system adjacent to my home, I know that there are folks that got one inch of water in their homes and they are just as devastated as people like me who four or five and some folks who got 12 inches or 2 feet of water. Its devastation and I am confident that if the coulee systems were maintained and dredged at the appropriate level where they were initially that some of these people would have been spared the misery that we've gone through the last six months trying to get back into our homes. So, I'd like to know where that is. I see a lot of numbers going around, infrastructure programs, I guess a lot of that is for sewer lifting infrastructure, but more specifically what I'm concerned about is drainage. Is the \$600M that's being requested, has it been appropriated? It's been requested for drainage. Okay. Then I'd like to, and I certainly don't mean to disparaging to you but there are three words that when it comes to state administration of money that's been allocated by the federal government, there are three words that come to mind, and I don't mean this to be disparaging at all but it is only to say we need to be better stewards of our money that is available. As a personal homeowner, I've invested my life savings in getting my home back to a livable state. It's not complete. I was grateful in the fact that FEMA put dollars in my hands to rebuild my home and that was the most efficient use of money that could have been allocated, that has been allocated, but the three words, Shelter at Home. Now, when the Governor first announced this program I was thrilled because I'm thinking, and he's making this sounds like, we're going to get \$15,000, up to \$15,000, to restore a couple of rooms in the house. While doing the math in my head, you know I can put this together, I can finish and get back in my home in a reasonable amount of time. Well, as we all know, this was a very sad allocation of public money, of federal dollars, and it was poorly distributed and poorly implemented. I have put in numerous requests to the Shelter at Home program to find out exactly the amount of dollars that was spent in just my home. I want to know what was appropriated to spend on my home. I cannot get that information, but I assure you the value was less than \$600 but nobody will tell me. I would like to know. With that said, with Restore Louisiana, I pray that we want to be better stewards of the money, we want to find ways to get more money to the end user, and I pray that there is some sincerity in these efforts and if we can improve the way we get these dollars to the end user and do it in a better way, that it would have a much longer and far reaching affect than trickling down a few dollars here and there. Hopefully, with the new administration in Washington, there can be some streamlining at HUD that can improve the allocation of these funds and how they are spent. So, can anybody tell me about the drainage projects in Lafayette Parish? Mayor Ritter? Okay, well hopefully with the media representation the information will get out and we will see a little more effort.

**Dr. Wilson:** Mr. Chairman, I request that we get this gentleman's contact information someone from the parish will get back to you with their efforts. Either Tom Carol or Joel Robideaux, someone from their office.

**Mr. Ledet:** Thank you for your time.

**Mr. Olivier:** Isn't that a FEMA program? Shelter at Home. I want to clarify because he said HUD, so I wanted to make sure, it's a FEMA program.

**Ms. Payer:** The Shelter at Home dollars were coming through FEMA, which is why we had a lot of frustrations with the same issues I'm sure this gentleman had, which is how far those dollars could go, and that is the difference between the types of dollars that was used for Shelter at Home and the type of dollars that we are bringing home now under the Community Development Block Grant program, that is through HUD and those are dollars that can be used on permanent repairs, and as you know a lot of the frustration with the Shelter at Home program is FEMA kept saying you can only use these dollars for emergency repairs and so, we wanted to do sheetrock and they wouldn't allow that, we pushed really hard and we were denied that, and we wanted to do appliances and we were granted that because we asked to be able to help with some appliances. So, a learning curve on Shelter at Home but I know we have had a lot of calls and thanks for the folks that were able to get in but we understand the difficulties.

**Mr. Olivier:** I hope this explanation gets out better but we need for you to understand that we are very perplexed with it too and if you just heard that excellent commentary on how the program has disappointed all of us. You need to understand that it's another great example of those federal government bureaucracy nuances that we're trying to contend with. It takes a while, it took us a while, to understand it, but it is very dissatisfactory.

**Mr. Ledet:** And we do appreciate that, we do. But at the same time, the state misrepresented what the Shelter at Home program was going to be about.

**Mr. Olivier:** The state was, early on, telling you what they thought it was going to be.

**Ms. Payer:** Right, we were explaining what we were allowed to do with FEMA dollars. I think we were all frustrated that we weren't able to do walls for example, I mentioned the sheetrock, that's really frustrating for a homeowner trying to get back in and start up. The Governor pushed very hard on that and we worked a lot with FEMA on that and unfortunately we were denied but this has to do with some of these purpose limitations for federal dollars and when they come out of a certain department it's supposed to be for emergency, immediate repairs and these are some of the things that if you read the letters that Governor Edwards wrote to the president and the congressional delegation, these are some of the commonsense improvements that really we hope the new administration in Washington, and also the new congressional delegation, can help us improve. As you mentioned we have a lot of experience that we don't want to have in storm recovery and so we think we have a lot to be able to help improve and we certainly hear your comments and we want to do that.

**Mr. Durbin closed the floor for Public Comments.**

## **VIII. OTHER BUSINESS**

**Mr. Durbin:** Okay, task force members we are moving along on the agenda to other business. A glossary of terms can be found in tab 7 of the binders per a request at the last task force meeting. The glossary of terms will be included in the binders for all future meetings as a reference guide. GOHSEP update is tab 8. As an FYI, the next Restore Louisiana Task Force meeting will be held in East Baton Rouge Parish. Lori will send out the location and time next week for that meeting. We are confirming the date and location in East Baton Rouge Parish. I repeat, something I said earlier, for everyone in attendance today, this meeting is soon to adjourn, we are going to take roughly a ten minute break so we can shuffle some tables and podium over here for the Youngsville Public Comment meeting that will begin in ten minutes. So, we are just about to adjourn for a break outside and then we are going to come back in and start. Mr. Forbes will coordinate this public comment period so please bear with us, we are about to move forward into the Youngsville Public Comment meeting. Any comments from the task force?

## **IX. ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Durbin:** The meeting is here by adjourned.

**Meeting was adjourned at 11:51 AM.**

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

Date Approved: February 24, 2017

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