

Lee County Recovery Task Force

Meeting Minutes

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM | SEPTEMBER 29, 2023 | COLLABORATORY | 2031 JACKSON STREET, SUITE 100, FORT MYERS, FL 33901 | PUBLIC MEETING

Call to Order

On September 29, 2023, Commissioner Kevin Ruane, Chair, convened the meeting at 10:04 AM with the following members present:

- Commissioner Kevin Ruane, Chair
- Councilman Bill Veach
- Mayor Jon McLain
- Mayor John Gunter
- Chief Robert Dilallo
- Councilwoman Holly Smith
- Board Chair Armor Persons
- Rep. Jenna Persons-Mulicka
- Councilman Chris Corrie
- Mayor Kevin Anderson

County Liaisons:

- Dave Harner, County Manager
- Christine Brady, Assistant County Manager

Welcome to the Recovery Task Force (RTF) and Minute Approval

Chair Ruane opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and member introductions. He thanked members for their commitment to the recovery of Lee County, providing opening remarks and marking the anniversary one-year post-landfall of Hurricane Ian. The approval of the meeting minutes from August 25, 2023, was delayed until the next RTF next meeting. The submission of the ResilientLee Recovery and Resilience Plan (Plan) was moved to February 2024.

Recent Efforts

Harrison Newton, Senior Subject Matter Expert, Hagerty Consulting, reflected on the recent efforts of the Recovery Task Force. A strategic project pause was taken to address feedback and align draft Initiative Profiles with the County Administration and municipal stakeholder perspectives. One-on-one meetings were conducted with county and municipal stakeholders to achieve feedback and alignment. Additionally, two full series of Branch meetings were held in August and September. An online Survey Form was circulated for feedback to draft Initiative Profiles by Branch members.

Plan Outline

Mr. Newton introduced the Plan Outline to allow members to see the organization, structure, and key content of the Plan; create a vision for the final Plan and Initiative Profile integration; and focus on establishing a strategic vision for the Lee County area. Mr. Newton noted the outline is subject to changes during the development process. He described the framework of the plan and how it would be applied with a regional approach.

Tessa LeSage, Facilitator, Collaboratory, provided background information on the supporting components of the Plan, including potential funding sources. Mr. Newton described the alignment of the Initiative Profiles to potential funding sources to meet the needs of the community impacted by Hurricane Ian. Ms. Smith asked if best practices from other planning processes were incorporated into the proposed outline. Mr. Newton responded by stating that the ResilientLee Support Team (Support Team) reviewed over 15 different recovery plans. The regional approach and funding stream identifications are new and innovative delivery services identified specifically for this Plan.

Ms. Smith emphasized that each stakeholder had the opportunity to meet individually with the Support Team. Members discussed the unique needs of each stakeholder and municipality and questioned if the annex of projects will include the municipality-specific approach as it aligns with the Initiative Profiles.

Mr. Veach stated the housing Initiative Profiles are specific to private development, and he expressed his hope that a municipality-based developer or non-profit would not be excluded from the process. Members discussed potential partnerships and municipalities' potential role in housing development. Mr. Veach stated that the complex needs of the economy of Fort Myers Beach includes the repair of housing and requires flexibility of programs to meet the need. Ms. Smith supported the points made by Mr. Veach and

suggested the exploration of off-island opportunities for development to build below-market rate and workforce housing, creating opportunities for municipality-developer partnerships.

Plan Development Overview

Mr. Newton described the timeline of the Recovery Task Force and Branches moving forward. He detailed the interaction with stakeholders on the path to adoption of the Plan. Chair Ruane stated that the updated February 2024 Plan delivery provides stakeholders, including the County Administration, more opportunity to review the Plan with their respective governing bodies to increase understanding and bolster support for adoption.

Initiative Profile Feedback Summary

Recent efforts to update draft Initiative Profiles include Branch member review and feedback, and separate meetings between the Support Team and 13 RTF members and 12 county and municipal Subject Matter Experts to obtain perspectives.

Mr. Newton summarized the feedback that was provided by Branch members, RTF members, and county and municipal stakeholders. Ms. LeSage described a high-level feedback example from the draft Initiative Profile related to Hardening Critical Infrastructure.

Emerging Themes and Interconnections

Mr. Newton introduced the objective of the consolidation of draft Initiative Profiles to make the Plan more impactful and powerful. Ms. LeSage described the strengthening of draft Initiative Profiles to create a powerful regional approach. Mr. Newton described emerging themes in topical areas. Ms. Smith stated that economic recovery should be highlighted as the Lee County area recovers. Ms. LeSage described the interconnections of economic recovery and other topical areas. Members discussed economic recovery and the forces that drive the recovery of businesses in Lee County.

Key Initiative Connection Examples

RECOMMENDATION 1

Consolidate CR02: Connecting with the Community and CR08: Cultural and Arts Working Group into one Initiative creating a regional cultural and arts group that promotes local arts

within communities and advises county and municipal activities. Members expressed support for this consolidation.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Consolidate H09: Finance Programs and H12: Homeownership Counseling Housing Initiatives into one Initiative that would market and make more accessible repair, recovery, and purchasing assistance programs at both the local and state level. Members discussed the challenges of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Small Business Administration, and the difficulty that residents had navigating federal programs. Members supported the consolidation. Mr. McLain suggested that the opportunities for funding should be clarified to help with implementation.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Consolidate H&SS03: Mental Health Resources and H&SS04: Crisis Intervention Centers Health & Social Services into one Initiative that considers mental and behavioral investments on all fronts while acknowledging planned initial investment of Disaster Recovery Funds. Mr. Persons suggested that funding could determine if these issues should remain separated. Mr. Corrie suggested that the plan development process can determine strategic objectives and supported consolidation to keep the strategic plan focused and tactical in nature. Members supported the recommendation to consolidate.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Combine three communications-related Initiatives, I01: Resilient Communications; P&C04: Communication Capabilities; and ER04: Technology Advancements, into one to include hardened communications infrastructure, enhanced communications technologies, and comprehensive communications planning for disasters. Mr. Corrie stated that in his role as a liaison to the Technology Advisory Board in Bonita Springs, he suggested these issues are related and should be consolidated. Members discussed communications and connecting communities effectively. Members recommended having a heading for communications Initiatives and then having subheadings to account for each element identified under communications.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Combine three sheltering enhancement Initiatives, I13: Diversifying Sheltering Strategy; I12: Sheltering Facilities; and H&SS05: Sheltering Strategies for Vulnerable Populations,

into one Initiative, combining all proposed improvements. Members suggested that the consolidation can help make Initiatives more powerful and supported the recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Stakeholders have noted the need to ensure a broad definition of natural resources and to understand and incorporate community differences in increasing access. Members supported the recommendation for combining ER08: Increase Public Access to Natural Resources and NR02: Assess Economic Impact of Natural Resources.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Stakeholders noted the experience of Hurricanes Irma and Ian, and the COVID-19 Pandemic suggests healthcare hardening be kept separate. Consideration is needed for combining H&SS06: Hardening Healthcare Facilities, H&SS07: Critical Facilities, I09: Harden Critical Facilities, and I15: Hardened Essential Services Facilities. Members agreed to table the consolidation discussion of this issue.

Next Steps

Members requested rescheduling the October RTF meeting due to a scheduling conflict. The Support Team recommended the RTF meet in early November to discuss draft Initiative Profiles. Members supported the recommendation to meet in early November.

Public Comment

Therese Everly commented on her appreciation of the work of the Branches. Ms. Everly supported the motion to table the discussion of consolidation of Initiatives related to hardening healthcare facilities. She stated the intent of Initiatives related to hardening healthcare facilities is to not move vulnerable populations in the event of disasters/evacuations.

Fred Forbes complimented members of RTF and the Support Team. Mr. Forbes stated that timing is everything and supported an Initiative to account for the need for a county-wide study of a new stormwater system. He supported the development of software to predict accurate flooding paths. Mr. Forbes stated the quicker that emergency management departments have effective tools, the more time allotted for reporting and warning residents of potential flooding. This would allow for more time for people to react and prepare for events.

Marcia Ellis commented that the inception of this process, which was a natural disaster, requires giving natural resources its due. Ms. Ellis stated this process provides an opportunity to galvanize the community and highlighted the current state of Bonita Springs is a result of the impact from Hurricane Irma. Ms. Ellis commented that it is premature to cancel Branch meetings. She would like the opportunity to address further concerns in and expressed interest in seeing the Plan Outline to provide feedback on it.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Representative Jenna Persons-Mulicka shared the details for the upcoming Lee County State Delegation Meeting. The meeting will take place on Monday, October 30, at 9:00 AM. She asked interested parties to reach out to her office for more information or for requests to present.

Chair Ruane thanked members of the RTF for their work. The meeting was adjourned at 12:06 PM on September 29, 2023.