

Lee County Recovery Task Force

Meeting Minutes

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM | NOVEMBER 16, 2023 | COLLABORATORY | 2031 JACKSON STREET, SUITE 100, FORT MYERS, FL 33901 | PUBLIC MEETING

Call to Order

On November 16, 2023, Chair Ruane convened the meeting at 10:06 AM with the following members present:

- Commissioner Kevin Ruane, Chair
- Councilman Bill Veach
- Mayor Jon McLain
- Mayor John Gunter
- Chief Robert Dilallo
- Dana Souza (on behalf of the City of Sanibel)
- Board Chair Armor Persons
- Rep. Jenna Persons-Mulicka
- Councilman Chris Corrie
- Chief Tracy McMillion (on behalf of the City of Fort Myers)

County Liaisons

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

Facilitators

- Harrison Newton, Hagerty Consulting
- Tracey Phillips, Hagerty Consulting
- Tessa LeSage, Collaboratory

Welcome, Introductions, and Minutes Approval

Chair Ruane opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and member introductions. Mr. Collins moved to approve the previous meeting minutes from September 29, 2023. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gunter.

Overview of Recent Efforts

Harrison Newton, facilitator, summarized the efforts to draft the Initiatives of the Recovery and Resilience Plan (the Plan). Tracey Phillips, facilitator, reviewed the recent efforts for Plan development and described the upcoming community engagement strategy to gather a final round of public input.

Upcoming Community Engagement

Tessa LeSage, facilitator, outlined the upcoming community engagement and communications to gather public input through the ResilientLee website. Mr. McMillion inquired on the process to engage the public and how any edits proposed by the public will be included in the drafted Initiatives. Mr. Newton described that the previous round of community engagement informed the draft Initiatives that members were reviewing at today's meeting. Mr. Collins asked how community partners are involved in the review process. Ms. Brady responded that the County will be engaging stakeholders across the community and that members can assist in promoting the opportunity for community engagement through their communications teams.

Members discussed the upcoming opportunity for community engagement, the process for implementation of the Plan, and the adoption of recommendations in the Plan. Chair Ruane stated that the project time extension into February allows for the continued opportunity for collaboration and provides stakeholders the ability to engage in their adoption processes.

Branch Feedback on Initiatives

Mr. Newton described the Plan-wide feedback on the drafted Initiatives and asked members to provide input on the identification of key stakeholders supporting implementation (a key topic of feedback). Mr. McMillion agreed that the stakeholders should be generalized with

a global approach in the Plan. Members agreed to move forward and raise the stakeholder list to a strategic level.

Mr. Newton outlined the background to the Initiative on sheltering and asked members if the region wants to pursue non-school based shelters. Mr. Persons provided the School District's perspective and its willingness to be the sheltering partner with schools serving as shelters; Mr. Persons also emphasized the need for more capacity for future storms. Members discussed the need for additional shelters, locations, planning, and improvements to existing shelters. Members discussed that special needs shelters and the needs of pet owners should be considered for sheltering. Members discussed identifying hardened facilities that are not currently used for shelters but could withstand impacts for consideration as a potential solution to increase sheltering capacity. Ms. Brady provided information from the County's perspective on sheltering and the identification of various facilities during the response to Hurricane Ian including utilizing vacant retail spaces, Hertz Arena, and other converted spaces. Members discussed the complex issues of sheltering and how the County interacts with State partners to address local needs. Members discussed communication to the public on sheltering in place and acknowledged opportunities to improve the messaging to address the long-term sheltering needs. Chair Ruane expressed that solutions will need to be identified that can help all jurisdictions. Members discussed a regional approach and vision to solving sheltering needs issue and the impact that would have on economic recovery.

Mr. Newton described the Initiative related to the fortification of essential services and discussed re-framing this Initiative to recognize these services as "Community Lifelines." Members agreed that using the terms and concepts of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Community Lifelines would be useful in describing essential services in the Plan. Members discussed that implementation could also focus on those services provided to vulnerable populations, especially for emergency response.

Ms. LeSage introduced a discussion on Cultural Resources Initiatives and outlined the potential for a partnership of Arts and Cultural organizations. Mr. Corrie discussed the perspective of the City of Bonita Springs in support of their arts and cultural community. Members discussed that arts are essential to the region for the economic benefits these organizations provide. Members discussed the implementation of a partnership for arts and culture and the role of the private sector in accomplishing the goals of the Initiative to support arts and culture.

Members provided strategic feedback on the Initiatives and the Plan as a whole. Mr. Souza described that the City of Sanibel supports a Plan structure with the Initiatives grouped by the eight Branches of the Recovery Task Force to reflect the planning process. He further described that City of Sanibel would prefer the Natural Resources Branch remain separate (from the other Initiative groups) to emphasize the importance of natural resources to the community. Members discussed the importance of the Housing Initiatives to the recovery of the community. Chair Ruane discussed the regional approach to advocacy at the State level and the importance of working together as a region moving forward.

Plan Development Next Steps

The next meeting is scheduled in December. The dates of additional events will be made available in the future.

Public Comment

Marsha Ellis stated concerns with the timeline of the community engagement window. She commented that the Plan should include community rating systems to prepare for natural disasters and suggested that this is the time to galvanize the community. She requested that the Plan cross-reference similar Initiatives. She commented that boat and dry docking could be considered as a cheaper solution to prepare for the next storm. She commented that the community could work to identify places where infrastructure stays online to better serve one another post-disaster.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Chair Ruane thanked members of the RTF for their work. The meeting was adjourned at 11:51 AM on November 16, 2023.