

Planning & Capacity Branch – Lee County Recovery Task Force

Meeting Minutes

2:00 – 3:30 PM | JULY 17, 2023 | COLLABORATORY | 2031 JACKSON STREET, SUITE 100,
FORT MYERS, FL 33901 | PUBLIC MEETING

Call to Order

At 2:01 PM on July 17, 2023, Sandy Stilwell Youngquist, Branch Lead, convened the Planning & Capacity Branch meeting with the following members present:

- Sandy Stilwell Youngquist, Branch Lead
- David Farmer
- Alvin Henderson
- Scott Wirth
- Matthew Leger
- Steve Belden

Facilitators and Branch Support:

- Jon Romine, Collaboratory
- Robbie Heere, Hagerty Consulting

Introductions

Jon Romine, Branch Facilitator, provided a review of the work of the Recovery Task Force (RTF) and its Branches. Mr. Romine reviewed the timeline for the RTF, indicating the project is nearly halfway complete and emphasizing the transition to Phase Two of the Recovery and Resilience Plan (the Plan) which includes identification and confirmation of Initiatives to align with Branch-specific Priorities.

Branch Initiative and Resilience Overlay Discussion

Mr. Romine reviewed the purpose of developing Initiatives and reminded Branch Members of their role in Initiative development including describing the considerations when discussing the Branches and Initiatives to include in the overlay.

Mr. Romine introduced the Initiatives suggested by the Natural Resources, Infrastructure, Housing, and Economic Recovery Branches to include in the overlay.

Mr. Henderson stated that a time element needs to be considered when discussing effective evacuation and density. Ms. Stillwell shared Governor DeSantis' ask for barrier islands to be off septic. The Members agreed that the process would be lengthy and require a changed referendum. They stated that the policy considerations and changes could be difficult due to the nature of competing interests; state intervention from the Governor may be the easiest way to change that policy via mandate.

Mr. Romine continued to introduce the Infrastructure and Housing Branches Initiatives for inclusion in the overlay. He discussed the connections between the suggested Initiatives and data sets available for mapping.

Mr. Belden asked if insurance was specific to property or flood insurance and suggested that the community ratings be included. Mr. Farmer suggested placing this on a map with shaded layers and asked how other recommendations would be included.

Mr. Romine gave an example of green infrastructure systems and suggested policies to be included. Ms. Stillwell asked about stormwater and how the overlay can be displayed. Mr. Romine responded by stating that a green infrastructure policy can look different across the County. Mr. Belden suggested the Water Management District needs to be brought in to discuss policies. Members discussed mapping the transit system and employment centers in the resilience overlay.

Mr. Farmer asked about existing utilities and plans. Mr. Romine stated that the prioritization of plans across jurisdictions could be a goal of identifying data sets in a visual tool to affect policy.

Mr. Henderson asked about sheltering capabilities and stated that using schools as shelters requires additional steps in the future. He additionally asked about hardening hotels as potential sheltering and temporary housing post-disaster. Members discussed resilient policies that could be amended for facilities. Mr. Romine suggested identifying a set of policies that could be identified as hardened with funding incentives. Mr. Farmer suggested mandating hardening might not work but suggested a certification for hotels to be resilient or designated as transitional shelters. Members agreed on reviewing policies around structural inspections in certain areas.

Members discussed the different barriers to implementation with varying local jurisdictions. They discussed housing-specific issues and suggested Initiatives around affordable housing and permitting. Mr. Belden spoke to the City of Fort Myers's expediting permit process. Members discussed coastal hotels and their support as an economic driver and as

potential transitional shelters. Members agreed that the Disaster Loan Fund could be included when discussing economic resilience.

Implementation Plan

Members reviewed examples of resilience overlay maps and discussed Geographic Information System (GIS) and the staffing and experts that would be able to produce the overlays. Mr. Leger asked about economic recovery Initiatives; Mr. Romine stated that the Disaster Loan Fund is one example of a suggested Initiative. Mr. Farmer asked if there were any opportunities to use a bed tax for economic improvement or a potential disaster loan fund.

Questions and Next Steps

The next Branch meeting is scheduled on August 7, 2023, from 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM.

Public Comment

Elly McKuen stated that the process for the overlay is predicated on power being available. She stated that there weren't a lot of comments on underground power lines and that could be a missing piece. She asked if the Infrastructure Branch would consider adding safe rooms to an Initiative to give a process for fire departments and cities to have the ability to construct or enhance safe rooms for essential personnel.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Mr. Romine thanked the members for attending and adjourned the meeting at 3:33 PM.