

Cultural Resources – Lee County Recovery Task Force

Meeting Minutes

8:30 – 10:00 AM | MAY 10, 2023 | COLLABORATORY | 2031 JACKSON STREET, SUITE 100,
FORT MYERS, FL 33901 | PUBLIC MEETING

Call to Order

At 8:30 AM on May 10th, 2023, Terry Mazany convened the Cultural Resources Branch meeting. The following members were present:

Branch Members:

- Lydia Black
- Matt Johnson
- Janel Trull
- Marco Villalobos (on behalf of Cory Demmel)
- Charles Barnes
- Will Prather
- Liz Bello-Matthews
- Selynto Anderson
- Michael Flanders

Facilitators and Branch Support:

- Terry Mazany, Collaboratory
- Harrison Newton, Hagerty Consulting
- Robbie Heere, Hagerty Consulting
- Jaesa Rogers, Hagerty Consulting
- Ilani Fernandes, Hagerty Consulting

Introductions

Terry Mazany, facilitator of the Cultural Resources Branch, provided an overview of the Recovery Task Force (RTF) structure and the Branches structure. He emphasized the priority of the Branches: to identify emergent issues and bring them to the RTF to resolve. Mr.

Mazany reviewed the timeline for the RTF, emphasizing that the Branch is moving towards the action phase of the plan.

He noted the purpose of the meeting (i.e., determine if initial community engagement feedback aligns with Branch priorities; review initiative development framework; and review and validate workshop design).

Recovery Task Force (RTF) Updates

Harrison Newton provided a review of the RTF meeting held on April 28, 2023. The RTF meeting focused on: a discussion of capital improvement projects (CIP), emergent issues, resiliency conversation, and next steps.

CIP priorities that emerged were septic-sewer conversions, hardening water infrastructure, hardening power infrastructure, hardening infrastructure of schools, and special needs populations.

Emerging issues that were highlighted were the slowness of the permitting process and the closure of SalusCare. In response, RTF support staff are pulling together a permitting dashboard and a case study from Bay County than can be referred to as SalusCare is examined.

The resiliency conversation stemmed from Kevin Ruane, who engaged the RTF by asking “what are you willing to move forward on resiliency?” Mr. Newton said that this question was aimed toward density across communities.

Community Feedback

Mr. Mazany reviewed the community engagement process, noting that there have been several Town Halls so far, with more coming up.

Mr. Mazany reviewed initial survey feedback from the ResilientLee.com website, noting top priorities that have emerged (i.e., housing and homelessness, environmental issues, crime, violence, public safety, mental health, and hunger and food insecurity).

Mr. Anderson proposed partnering with community organizations to present surveys at respective locations to reach populations that are not being reached through the online survey.

Mr. Mazany reviewed initial Town Hall feedback from members of the community, highlighting the priorities that have emerged (i.e., nonprofit network needed with

communication and training, increased access to working waterfronts, incorporation of local artists in the rebuild efforts, and fisheries).

Ms. Black suggested a Town Hall specific to arts and culture with cultural leaders across the County.

Mr. Villalobos reflected on the efforts that were made during the Christmas season that allowed the public to get a sense of temporary relief following Hurricane Ian.

Mr. Johnson said part of the expedition process is hard when you look at making things bigger and better. He underscored the importance of the arts and cultural industries having a lens on the infrastructure taking place to help avoid potential downfalls of projects.

Mr. Mazany asked how to amplify these concerns in the Recovery and Resiliency Plan. Ms. Black said that art experts tend to be brought in after the plans have been built, which can make it a bit difficult. She stated that arts and culture should be a part of infrastructure and health and social services post-disasters plans. She said if the community does not recognize the efforts, arts and culture gets lost in the shuffle. She asked how the arts and cultural facilities can be considered in CIP plans.

Ms. Trull said there should be an agreement with cultural and non-profit organizations for disaster management. She stated that oftentimes, community centers are used as distribution centers for emergencies, but they are ill-equipped. Mr. Johnson said that churches and other non-profits would be willing to sign a partnership as an emergency management facility. Ms. Trull suggested hardening buildings that are multifunctional and can be used pre-during-and post-storms. Mr. Johnson said that the Collaboratory was a great example of this.

Mr. Barnes said it's important to think about the parts of the communities that are often left out. He reiterated that gathering community input would be helpful. Mr. Newton said these ideas are imperative to the Action Plan.

Mr. Mazany reviewed initial feedback from On The Table, an event on March 30, 2023, highlighting the top 10 issues identified (i.e., housing and homelessness, mental health and substance abuse, healthcare access and cost, K-12 education, well-paying jobs and economic development, hunger and food insecurity, environmental issues, public transportation and traffic, early childhood development, and generational poverty).

Initiative Design

Mr. Mazany reviewed the purpose and approach of the Action Plan that the Branch will develop. The purpose is for the Branches to develop Action Plans as an initial step in

framing identified and approved initiatives. The Action Plan will: provide a prioritization framework for existing plans and projects; illustrate the planned approach for new initiatives; and identify key policy changes that can support community resilience. The three buckets that the Branch will be focused on when developing the initiative are projects, prioritization, and policies.

Mr. Mazany identified the responsibilities of the Branch members during this process, emphasizing that Branches are responsible for facilitating the design (concept and approach) of the initiatives and identifying a lead to facilitate initiative implementation. Branches will need to identify the lead, initiative description and progress, measures of success, and partners.

Mr. Newton stated that the initiatives are a result of Branch conversations and will be a more technical component of the Plan. He stated that projects, prioritization, and policies of the Branch are a look ahead of the Plan. Mr. Newton reminded the Branch members that the projects are due in August.

Mr. Newton explained that there are overlays between the branches. He stated that resources should not be a limiting principle; the Recovery Task Force can think about resources as well. Mr. Newton explained the difference between the Community Block Grant for Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) and the Recovery and Resiliency Plan.

Mr. Flanders stated that the city should look at IMAG History & Science Center, Alliance for the Arts, and other facilities, and go to them first to see what is on their master plan. Ms. Bello-Matthews said that the City of Fort Myers has conducted surveys and they hope to strengthen the locations already in place, looking to things that are still needed.

Mr. Mazany outlined the ideas of the Cultural Resources Branch and suggested actions (including convening a cultural Town Hall, reviewing master plans/capital improvement plans, etc.).

Mr. Flanders said there needs to be a stronger political will to help with the projects and prioritization. He said he'd like to see the comparison between Collier County and Sarasota plans of how they support the arts, along with their political will, be presented to Lee County.

Mr. Johnson said there's been a great lack of policy on the County level and the political dynamics have been a barrier. He said the County's political needs with policies is vital to make this a successful resiliency effort.

Mr. Flanders said he'd like to see counties with similar sizes to Lee County and see their allocations to the arts/policies.

Mr. Newton explained the Planning & Capacity Branch's Resiliency Overlay and the technique the Branch will use.

Workshop Design

Mr. Newton began a discussion about what the purpose of the workshops are, highlighting the themes, topics, and subject matter experts (SMEs) requested. The topics include Attainable and Resilient Housing, Critical Infrastructure, Community Resilience; and Supporting Business and Workforce.

Mr. Flanders and Mr. Johnson agreed with the idea that there's nothing in place for displaced children and food distribution like there is for debris removal and other forms of emergency services post-hurricanes.

Mr. Prather said that the Hurricane further exacerbated the artists and musicians and would like to be a part of a discussion of workforce housing on this topic.

Next Steps

Mr. Newton said that the next Branch meeting would be June 7th, 2023 from 8:30 am – 10:00 am, unless there is a workshop in its place.

Discussion and Questions

No comments or questions were put forward.

Public Comment

Betsy Haesemeyer thanked Mr. Mazany for his thoughts. She spoke about the diverse populations that are often left out of the conversations. She thanked the industries for stepping up and using the facilities but also feels that training is needed for staff and for what the capabilities are for their respective facilities.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Mr. Mazany thanked the members for attending and then adjourned the meeting at 9:48 AM.