

Education & Workforce Branch – Lee County Recovery Task Force

Meeting Minutes

11:00 AM – 12:30 PM | MAY 18, 2023 | COLLABORATORY | 2031 JACKSON STREET,
SUITE 100, FORT MYERS, FL 33901 | PUBLIC MEETING

Call to Order

On May 18, 2023, Dr. Mike Martin, Lead of the Education & Workforce Branch convened the meeting at 11:00 AM. The following members were present:

Branch Members:

- Dr. Mike Martin
- Dr. Guido A. Minaya
- Dr. Aysegul Timur
- Dr. Denise Carlin
- Mike Wukitsch
- T. Sharon Woodberry
- Laura Sibenmorgan
- Katy Errington
- Phyllis Callaway
- John Roth
- Todd Everly

Facilitators and Branch Support:

- Jon Romine, Collaboratory
- Tessa LeSage, Collaboratory
- Robbie Heere, Hagerty Consulting
- Ilani Fernandes, Hagerty Consulting

Introductions

Dr. Martin opened with welcoming remarks and stated that these issues were around prior to Hurricane Ian and had been further exasperated since then. Dr. Martin underscored the

importance of continuing the efforts of the Education & Workforce Branch even after the Recovery Task Force (RTF) concludes.

Tessa LeSage, the Education & Workforce Branch facilitator, provided a review of the RTF and Branch structure and encouraged the Branch to think big. She emphasized that one of the Branches' tools is to identify emergent issues and bring them to the RTF to resolve. Ms. LeSage reviewed the timeline for the RTF, emphasizing that the Branch is moving toward the development phase of the plan. Ms. LeSage informed the Branch that the only vote they will make is to approve the Branch Action Plan.

Ms. LeSage encouraged Branch members to participate in other Branch meetings as a member of the public and noted that transportation issues have consistently come up in other branches and during community engagement events.

Ms. LeSage noted the purpose of the meeting is to determine if initial community engagement feedback aligns with Branch priorities, review the initiative development framework, and validate the design of the workshops.

Recovery Task Force (RTF) Updates

Mr. Jon Romine provided a review of the RTF meeting held on April 28, 2023. Mr. Romine summarized the RTF meeting which focused on a discussion of capital improvement projects (CIP), emergent issues, a conversation on resiliency, and next steps for members.

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

Emergent issues that were highlighted during the RTF meeting included the backlog of the permitting process and the closure of SalusCare. In response, support staff is creating a permitting dashboard and a case study from Bay County that can be referenced during the planning process around behavioral healthcare. Mr. Romine encouraged members to attend the RTF Meeting on May 26 to find out more information.

Community Feedback

Ms. LeSage reviewed the community engagement process, noting that there have been several Town Halls thus far, with more scheduled. Ms. LeSage reviewed initial survey feedback from the ResilientLee.com website, noting the top priorities that were identified by respondents. These topics identified include housing and homelessness, economic

development, environmental issues, crime, violence, public safety, and parks and recreation.

Ms. LeSage reviewed the initial Town Hall feedback from members of the community, highlighting the priorities that were identified such as, AmeriCorps for habitat restoration, promoting reading of items you disagree with to expand understanding, skilled worker programs/internships in high schools, advertised training for current and future jobs, support for social services agencies, incentivizing young workforce, affordable and quality daycare. Additional needs included affordable K-12 tutoring in reading and math, certification/job retention in the area with good wages, and affordable cost of living.

Dr. Minaya stated that one thing he saw included support structures for homeschooled children. Mr. Wukitsch included the need for career exploration and stated that there was a lack of exposure that aligns with interests. Dr. Timur noted that communication was important to relay the opportunities for students that are seeking to pursue higher education and the workforce. Dr. Carlin asked if the Branch needs to be more specific on these priorities and be more explicit on preparing for career preparation. Dr. Martin said top priority is to build an education and workforce starting from preschool and K-12. Ms. LeSage encouraged the Branch to think beyond career fairs, and perhaps policies that prepare the college and career readiness within the K-12 system.

Ms. LeSage 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).

The members were asked how the community feedback aligns with the Branch priorities. The members agreed that life skills and soft skills are missing from the community feedback, starting with K-12 and how that translates to the workforce.

Initiative Design

Mr. Romine encouraged the Branch to think big about the opportunities that the Recovery and Resilience Plan can address. He 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. Romine 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. Romine reviewed the special nature of the Planning & Capacity Branch, which is in the process of developing a resilience overlay. He noted the purpose of the overlay is to identify and address potential risks and hazards in a specific geographic area or to a set of plans and communicate priorities across planning processes and budget development. Mr. Romine explained that overlays often identify and visualize potential risk areas in advance to reduce disaster impacts. The Education & Workforce Branch should provide the Planning & Capacity Branch with the policy recommendations that need to be included in the overlay.

Workshop Design

Ms. LeSage began the discussion about the purpose of the workshops, 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.

Ms. LeSage encouraged the members to think about workshops and what initiatives could look like. She also stated that members can attend any workshop as themes and topics intersect across Branches.

Mr. Wukitsch asked the Branch to consider Brightline and other businesses that are building infrastructure across the state. Mr. Roth asked where environmental sustainability plays a role and said environmental engineers should be a part. Ms. Errington said the discharge of stormwater should be addressed, along with traffic needs. Dr. Martin suggested commute times be addressed and considered when it comes to education and the workforce. Dr. Carlin noted the new legislation that passed with delayed start times for middle and high schoolers.

Next Steps

Ms. LeSage asked the Branch to send their thoughts on workshop suggestions, subject-matter experts, and initiatives to info@resilientlee.org. Ms. LeSage said that the next Branch meeting is scheduled for June 15th, 2023, from 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM.

Discussion and Questions

No discussion or questions took place during this section.

Public Comment

Marsha Ellis talked about weatherstem.com which includes education and data on weather and hurricanes. She stated that riskfactor.com gives great models for an accurate analysis of what's going on in your own neighborhood. She said that building new infrastructure in a flood zone is questionable, but the Branch should look at water buffers and potential grants such as grants from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Ms. Ellis also brought up the issue of workforce housing, lack of affordability, and resiliency.

Roger Mercado said some developers that have expertise in mixed-use development should be noted.

Alex Breault commented that the Branch should consider adding someone from the early learning and childcare coalition for the Supporting Business and Workforce workshop.

Joey Sylla stated the importance of educating on stress management at a young age.

Betsy Haesemeyer thanked the Branch for using terms such as "vulnerability" and "underserved areas" to keep people feeling inclusive and involved during this process.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Ms. LeSage thanked the members for attending and then adjourned the meeting at 12:22 PM.