

Housing Branch – Lee County Recovery Task Force

Meeting Minutes

12:30 PM- 2:00 PM | MAY 9, 2023 | COLLABORATORY | 2031 JACKSON STREET, SUITE 100, FORT MYERS, FL 33901 | PUBLIC MEETING

Call to Order

At 12:30 PM on May 9th, 2023, Gary Griffin, the Housing Branch lead, convened the Housing Branch meeting. The following members were present:

- Gary Griffin, Lead
- Jan-Erik Hustrulid
- Marion Briggs
- Richard F. Durling
- Bradley Alix
- Sharon Ralston
- Malaina Mote
- Dan O'Berski
- Diana Giraldo
- Marcia Davis
- Amy Yearsley
- Chris Simoneau
- Lee Ford

Facilitators and Branch Support:

- Terry Mazany, Collaboratory
- Tessa LeSage, Collaboratory
- Jon Romine, Collaboratory
- Harrison Newton, Hagerty Consulting
- Robbie Heere, Hagerty Consulting
- Jaesa Rogers, Hagerty Consulting

Introductions

Jon Romine provided an overview of the Recovery Task Force (RTF) structure and the Branches structure. He emphasized one tool of the Branch: to identify emergent issues and bring them to the RTF to resolve. Mr. Romine reviewed the timeline for the RTF, emphasizing that we are moving towards the action phase of the plan. Mr. Romine told the Branch that the only vote they will make is to approve the priorities of the Branch in December.

He noted the purpose of the meeting:

- 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. Mr. Romine provided an update on the work of the RTF over the last month. He provided a review of the timeline of the Recovery and Resiliency Planning process. 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). Mr. Newton reviewed the RTF meeting in April including the discussion of capital improvement projects, emergent issues, and the conversation about resiliency. The emergent issues discussed at the RTF meeting included the reopening of the regional behavioral healthcare provider, SalusCare, previously discussed in the Health & Social Services Branch.

Community Feedback

Mr. Romine reviewed the community engagement process, noting that there have been 11 Town Hall meetings thus far, with more coming up. Mr. Romine reviewed initial survey feedback from the ResilientLee.com website, noting top priorities that have emerged (i.e., housing and homelessness, environmental issues, crime, violence, and public safety, mental health, and hunger and food insecurity).

Mr. Romine reviewed initial Town Hall feedback from members of the community, highlighting the priorities and housing needs of the community. Mr. Romine reviewed initial feedback from On The Table, highlighting the top issues identified. Mr. Griffin noted

that the top priority that came out of each type of feedback is housing. Mr. Romine asked the Branch members to discuss how community feedback aligns with branch priorities.

Richard Durling pointed out that there has been increased conversation around resilient building codes, which is counterintuitive to affordable housing because more regulations increase housing costs. Mr. Durling noted that new construction does exceedingly well, so there is no need to increase the building codes.

Mr. Durling responded to the permitting issue by noting that this does indeed need to be a priority. Mr. Griffin called out that this is an emergent issue and that people need help now on this process. Mr. Newton explained there is a process underway to understand the issues that are bottlenecking the permitting process on a more granular level. Mr. Durling recognized that there are many types of permits, and each type of permit needs to be looked at. He called out screen enclosure permits specifically, pointing out that they are simple and can be given out immediately. Mr. Romine said this is a good point, that certain permits can be streamlined as opposed to other permits, and those need to be identified. Mr. Durling said we want to incentivize people to pull permits to do repairs, not deter them, which is what is happening because of the slowness of the process.

Mr. Griffin requested that the code terminology being used is specified to not include building codes. Ms. Giraldo responded, saying that infrastructure needs to be mixed-use, and promote transportation in a way that alleviates traffic. She said this must be addressed at the zoning level, and form-based code must be used. Mr. Griffin asked if it should be called “land-use code.” Ms. Yearsley said the terminology that should be used is “removing regulatory barriers.” Mr. Romine validated that this aligns with the emerging themes that have been identified (i.e., reducing regulatory barriers to reduce housing costs).

Initiative Design

Mr. Newton 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 initiatives are as follows: projects, prioritization, and policies.

Mr. Newton 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 reviewed the special nature of the Planning & Capacity Branch, which is in the process of developing a resilience overlay. The overlay will combine the priorities of all the Branches, and in turn develop a model plan overlay. The Housing Branch needs to make sure that they can provide the Planning & Capacity Branch with the policies that need to be included in the overlay.

Mr. O'Berski asked for clarification on whether the municipalities and communities already have priorities and plans in progress. Mr. Romine said there may be an opportunity for the municipalities to leverage the financial resources available to speed up their plans and priorities. Mr. O'Berski asked if the Branch could receive plans from municipalities to identify where the alignment is with the Housing Branch, as opposed to fighting for the funding. Mr. Griffin confirmed that the municipalities are talking about similar things that the Housing Branch is discussing. Mr. O'Berski said data points on what those alignments are should be collected. Mr. O'Berski said there are a lot of housing programs used to fund right now, he wants to know which ones the municipalities find effective so that we can use that information to multiply the strengths of that finding. Mr. Newton said that these questions will be discussed in the upcoming workshops. Mr. O'Berski said that the workshops should be a place to discuss these data points, after already having reviewed them, noting that Branch members agreed to 12-16 hours of work a month.

Mr. Romine said that the plan that will be reviewed in December will include multiple funding streams. He agreed that one of the purposes of this committee is not to duplicate priorities, but rather to work together to align those efforts with the priorities.

Mr. Griffin asked if the changes to the land-use codes are affected by the passing of the Live Local Act, SB 102. This new law, which becomes effective on July 1, is already resolving some of the issues that are being discussed. Mr. O'Berski said he wants to get all the municipalities to abide by SB 102.

Workshop Design

Mr. Romine began 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 Workforce Housing; Critical Infrastructure; Community Resilience; and Supporting Business and Workforce.

Mr. Alix asked about where homelessness fits into the design of the workshops. Mr. Newton said attainable housing could focus on this, but asked if it should be included in a

different way. Mr. Alix said that someone who does not have a source of income cannot attain housing, so it needs to be addressed separately. He noted that mental health and substance abuse should be tied into the homelessness discussion, as it has emerged as a top priority. Ms. LeSage noted that this is also being considered by the Health & Human Service Branch. She noted that the topics covered in that workshop are short-term, and there may need to be a focus on longer-term priorities in those discussions. Mr. Griffin asked for feedback from the Health and Social Services Branch about what kind of housing is wanted (e.g., transitional, permanent). Mr. Romine encouraged Housing Branch members to attend the other Branch meetings.

Mr. Simoneau requested that the faith community be pulled in as community resilience SMEs, as they provided an incredible response in the wake of the hurricane. Mr. Simoneau requested CEOs of companies (e.g., Lee Health) to be included in the Business and Workforce conversation as well. Mr. Griffin clarified what is being asked from Branch members regarding SMEs. Mr. Newton said to forward names and contact details of experts they'd like to see added to the list.

Regarding the Attainable and Resilient Workforce Housing workshop, Mr. Simoneau asked why there is a focus on "workforce" housing, noting this excludes the homeless population and seniors. Mr. Griffin noted that "housing" is too broad. Mr. Alix noted that there needs to be affordable assisted living facilities for vulnerable populations, and that this is being excluded. The Branch members agreed that "Attainable and Resilient Workforce Housing" is too narrow and that the word "workforce" should be removed. Mr. Romine said that additionally, special populations should be added to the topic "incentivizing developers to produce attainable, multi-unit housing near centers of employment," which will be included in the workshop. Ms. LeSage said the Health & Social Services Branch will be a key player in this conversation.

Mr. Simoneau asked why there is a focus on "multi-unit" housing, as this is also restrictive. Mr. O'Berski said it should be "multi-unit," and Ms. Davis agreed saying that this scales the population being addressed. Mr. Simoneau noted that this does not include seniors or other vulnerable populations. Mr. Newton said that the conversations will probably be broader than what is exactly laid out. He encouraged the Branch members to keep thinking about the design of the workshops under the lens of what can tangibly be done.

Ms. Briggs asked if best practices and case studies should be brought into the workshops. Mr. Newton agreed. Ms. Briggs noted that Florida Housing Coalition would be a great partner and supplier of materials. Mr. Romine noted that Branch members can share information with the ResilientLee email, and they should continue to do so. Doing this in advance of the meetings helps to inform people what the initiative will look like. Ms. Davis

said that a subject matter expert for the Live Local Act, SB 102, should be integrated into the design of the workshops.

Next Steps

The next Branch meeting is scheduled for June 6th from 12:30 PM to 2:00 PM.

Discussion and Questions

Mr. O'Berski asked which week the workshops will be held in. Mr. Newton suggested that members clear their schedule for the weeks of June 5th and June 12th.

Public Comment

Therese Everly commented that a consideration for the workshop would be to invite an employer of workforce housing. She added that seniors are the fastest growing homeless population in the County. There should be an incentive for developers to get into the space of senior housing. Program of All Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) should be scaled with developers who are willing to house seniors.

Johnny Limbaugh, Chairman of the Lee County Homeless Coalition stated his appreciation and seconded the previous comments.

Betsy Haesemeyer commented that there is a lack of critical infrastructure as it pertains to transportation.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Mr. Griffin thanked the members for attending and then adjourned the meeting at 1:51 PM.