

Planning & Capacity Branch – Lee County Recovery Task Force

Meeting Minutes

2:00 – 3:30 PM | JULY 10, 2023 | COLLABORATORY | 2031 JACKSON STREET, SUITE 100,
FORT MYERS, FL 33901 | PUBLIC MEETING

Call to Order

At 2:05 PM on July 10, 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
- Stephanie Wardein

Facilitators and Branch Support:

- Tessa LeSage, Collaboratory
- Shanna Snider, Hagerty Consulting
- Robbie Heere, Hagerty Consulting

Introductions

Tessa LeSage, Branch Facilitator, provided a review of the work of the Recovery Task Force (RTF) and its Branches. Ms. LeSage 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) that includes identification and confirmation of Initiatives to align with Branch-specific Priorities.

Branch Initiative Discussion

Ms. LeSage reviewed the purpose of developing Initiatives to support Branch Priorities that will be incorporated into the Plan. She reminded Branch Members of their role in Initiative development including confirming the prioritization of current Initiatives, identifying gaps

in Initiatives that need to be addressed, as well as assigning Initiative leads, measures of success, implementation steps, and funding mechanisms, to achieve Branch priorities.

Mr. Farmer asked about a specific debris management Initiative and suggested a technical brief on what led to its submission. Ms. LeSage responded with a description of the purpose and feasible expectations of technical briefs and indicated it would be prudent to request additional information from the individual who submitted the debris management project in lieu of a technical brief.

Branch Members requested a visual representation of projects and facilities to identify gaps across the different jurisdictions.

Ms. Stilwell asked for the complete list of submitted projects categorized for review. Mr. Farmer suggested coding the data for facilities, infrastructure, and policies.

Ms. LeSage stated that the purpose of the meeting next week will be to review the resilience overlay.

Ms. LeSage described the Initiatives categorized under the first priority: plan for improved short-term recovery response (immediately post-disaster), including, but not limited to, public communications pre-, during, and post-disaster.

Branch Members discussed public communication regarding evacuation, and emergency communication that can include year-round preparation.

Ms. Stilwell suggested that data could be available within the Lee County Property Appraiser's Office to determine how to best communicate with parcels and people that reside in flood zones.

Ms. Wardein suggested that the Emergency Management departments and jurisdictions could be the lead for an orchestrated plan of emergency communications. Members agreed on the need for a coordinated effort pre-storm and across jurisdictions and organizations regarding emergency communications. This Initiative could incorporate a new layer of communication and relate to vulnerable populations.

Members discussed communication and engaging the communities during "blue sky days," to prevent delays during and post-disasters. Mr. Farmer asked about the possibility of a community-wide annual drill to have a coordinated response across jurisdictions utilizing existing resources.

Mr. Wirth added it's important to ensure people can access information, especially post-storm, and for emergency workers to have a central repository of information. He described the difficulty of identifying those that did not evacuate for Hurricane Ian.

Mr. Henderson stated that evacuations need to be considered and planned for, along with communication. Members agreed to discuss a communications plan that enhances the policy in place, not reinventing the policy.

Ms. LeSage described the Initiatives categorized under the second priority: increase inter-governmental coordination for long-term planning for resiliency factoring in growth. Members had no other suggestions for Initiatives.

Members discussed cross-jurisdictional sharing of resources for long-term planning and support. This could include equipment purchasing and sharing during “blue-sky days,” that could also be used during “gray-sky days.”

Mr. Henderson shared his experience of qualifying and approving locations for disaster recovery centers and stated that it could have been done before the disaster; he discussed the continued participation of the Disaster Advisory Council.

Tanya Shannon, Deputy Director of Recovery for Hagerty Consulting, was recognized to discuss the Disaster Advisory Council (DAC). She described the County’s role in the Council, specifically regarding mitigation funds. Mr. Henderson stated that the rubric created by the Council for determining the ranking of priorities is a fair process. Ms. Shannon asked if there were ways to increase the intergovernmental coordination within that Council. Mr. Henderson responded that the planning and updating of Emergency Operation Plans will work well with other plans as part of the Disaster Advisory Council. He stated that shared vested interest and participation are key across jurisdictions. Members asked to see the ordinance that created the DAC to consider expanding it to include implementation as an Initiative.

Mr. Henderson stated that proposing planning for those hardest hit does not prepare the region in a resilient manner. Areas that are hardest hit vary disaster-to-disaster. Resilience must be addressed County-wide. It may be prudent to review the areas hardest hit by Hurricane Ian to identify whether they are at a basic operational level and if not, what additional resources are required.

Ms. LeSage asked members to categorize the remaining Projects and Initiatives. Members provided explanations for sending projects to other Branches.

Finally, Members indicated that mental and behavioral health services should be addressed through intergovernmental coordination.

Branch Technical Briefs

No technical briefs were requested by the Members.

Questions and Next Steps

The next Branch meeting is scheduled on July 17, 2023, from 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM.

Public Comment

No request for public comment

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Ms. LeSage thanked the members for attending and then adjourned the meeting at 3:33 PM.