

Planning & Capacity Branch – Lee County Recovery Task Force

Meeting Minutes

2:00 PM- 3:30 PM | MAY 8, 2023 | COLLABORATORY | 2031 JACKSON STREET, SUITE 100,
FORT MYERS, FL 33901 | PUBLIC MEETING

Call to Order

At 2:00 PM on May 8th, 2023, Sandy Stilwell Youngquist, the Planning & Capacity Branch lead, convened the Planning & Capacity Branch meeting. The following members were present:

- Sandra Stilwell Youngquist
- David Mintz
- Eric Pfeifer
- David Farmer
- Alvin Henderson
- Lisa Swinto
- Megan Strayhorn
- Steve Belden
- Matt Leger
- Stephanie Wardein

Facilitators and Branch Support:

- Tessa LeSage, Collaboratory
- Harrison Newton, Hagerty Consulting
- Robbie Heere, Hagerty Consulting
- Ilani Fernandes, Hagerty Consulting
- Jaesa Rogers, Hagerty Consulting

Introductions

Ms. Stilwell Youngquist, Branch Lead, introduced herself and went around the room introducing the Branch members and the public. Ms. Stilwell Youngquist reiterated Sunshine Law and gave a brief overview of the eight Branches of the Recovery Task Force.

Tessa LeSage, the Branch facilitator, began the presentation. Ms. LeSage went through the structure of the Branches and the timeline associated with the Long-term Recovery Planning process. She encouraged new members to watch the New Branch Orientation video and review material ahead of each meeting. Ms. LeSage went over Planning & Capacity expectations and assumptions and provided an overview of the solution process for the Branch.

Ms. LeSage said the Planning & Capacity Branch is a container for all the priorities, including the data from the community responses. She stated that information from the other Branches is still being collected.

Recovery Task Force (RTF) Updates

Mr. Newton provided an update on the Recovery Task Force that took place on April 28, 2023. He stated that a discussion was held regarding Capital Improvement Projects including hardening schools, septic to sewer conversions, and water and electric infrastructure. He stated an emergent issue that came out of the RTF meeting was permitting and the perception that the speed of processing permits was not preferred. He stated 6,000 more permits were processed compared to where things were in the previous year. More information would be coming out of the municipalities regarding this data. He said Commissioner Kevin Ruane, RTF Chair, posed the question about what we are willing to do for resiliency. Mr. Newton stated that more conversation would be needed at a community level to determine the proper approach and common ground.

Mr. Newton said that we would now be entering into Phase 2 of the Recovery and Resilience Plan, to determine what actions the Branches would identify moving forward.

Community Feedback

Ms. LeSage went through the community engagement process pertaining to stakeholders, particularly the initial survey that was conducted through the ResilientLee website. She reviewed the results of the ResilientLee survey so far, noting that in the over 1,400 responses, most respondents have been from Cape Coral, most respondents are interested in fixing or rehabilitating their property (i.e., 86% of respondents), and that the top priority that has come out of this survey is housing and homelessness.

Mr. Farmer asked that the survey be sent to those that were sent to the evacuation zones. Ms. Swinto asked if an end date could be added, to increase the sense of urgency.

Ms. LeSage went over the initial Town Hall feedback, including priorities that the public identified were missing from the initial priority list. She then provided feedback from the On The Table surveys, including the top 10 issues identified.

Mr. Newton invited the Branch to discussion.

Mr. Mintz said it's not just the Lee Plan that needs to be investigated, rather there should be an overlap that can be applicable to all the municipalities. Mr. Mintz said the support staff should provide the priorities of each of the Branches, take the results of the ResilientLee survey and Town Halls, assign them to their appropriate Branches, and remove the ones that are not doable in terms of the hurricane response.

Ms. LeSage reviewed that there are multiple aspects of the plan (i.e., short-term, immediate, and long-term). She also stated that each of the Branches are reviewing their own priorities during this phase. Mr. Pfeifer said there aren't short-term, immediate, and long-term build-back. He stated that some of the issues were subcategories. Ms. LeSage encouraged Branch members to think out of the box for future funding, as funding can be used for more than just things directly related to hurricane recovery.

Ms. Wardein asked if there was a way to get a line of sight about what the determinants were. She noted that there is a need to level-set knowledge, in order to help understand the scope of what should be included in the discussions. Ms. LeSage noted that this was a good point, and that the upcoming workshops are a good way to level-set knowledge, because they won't be Branch specific. She also encouraged Branch members to attend other Branch meetings.

Ms. Wardein asked if there was a plan for recapping how public comments have been addressed, and wanted to make sure that public attendees contact information is being tracked. Ms. LeSage said that there will be follow-up in the fall and confirmed that public attendees contact information is being tracked.

Mr. Pfeifer said he wants to focus on planning and building back resiliently to encompass the feedback at a higher level.

Mr. Henderson noted that there are subject matter experts (SMEs) in each of these areas, and it is the job of the Planning & Capacity Branch to incorporate these priorities into actions. Mr. Ledger asked about the collection of the data. Ms. LeSage said that the information from the Town Halls was different from that of the survey.

Initiative Design

Mr. Newton gave an overview of the Branch Action Plan and Branch member responsibilities. He stated that Phase 2 is the process of developing the Action Plan and discussed the overlay process.

Mr. Mintz distributed a suggested model overlay process. He asked staff for a list of the Branch and Town Hall priorities for short-term and immediate responses to prepare for the upcoming hurricane season. Following this, the Planning & Capacity Branch can determine how this could be implemented. Mr. Mintz also asked to identify funding priorities and opportunities to help the implementation process.

Mr. Belden said the Planning function needs to reconcile the County and the city/jurisdictional priorities. Mr. Henderson shared the business plan structure and suggested that Mr. Mintz's opening statement should be broadened to other emergency management events other than hurricanes. Ms. Wardein encouraged the Branch to think about the policy level.

Mr. Newton said that Branch priorities are continuing to emerge as they're being discussed.

Workshop Design

Ms. LeSage went over the workshop design and the topics that would be discussed.

Discussion and Questions

Mr. Mintz reiterated the ask to staff about creating a priority list per Branch.

Ms. Stilwell Youngquist said she'd like to hear from the cities about their already established priorities and how it relates to the ones identified by the public.

Ms. Wardein said leading up to June 30, there will need to be a review of the needs that came out of Session.

Public Comment

Jim Schwartzel asked about the survey and asked where the Lee Plan was online.

Johnny Limbaugh asked for Branch material to be posted on the website. He asked that the workshops be recorded and posted online, to hear what the experts are saying. Ms. Youngquist echoed this ask.

Scott Wirth stated that there was urgency from the December report that was tied to the \$1.1B Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding stream. He stated that 70% would be workforce housing and that it sounds like there's a struggle to figure out where the money is allocated, but it's important to narrow the scope down.

Ms. LeSage stated that there were two plans, which were the Recovery and Resilience Plan and the Housing and Urban Development Plan that are running simultaneously.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Ms. LeSage thanked the members for attending and then adjourned the meeting at 3:34 PM.