

**MINUTES OF  
SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA FLOOD PROTECTION AUTHORITY-EAST  
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD ON APRIL 9, 2009**

PRESENT: Louis Wittie, Chair  
Dave Barnes, Committee Member  
Timothy Doody, Committee Member (left meeting 2:05 p.m.)  
Stephen Estopinal, Committee Member  
Tom Jackson, Commissioner  
George Losonsky, Commissioner (left meeting at 3:00 p.m.)

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The Operations Committee met on April 9, 2009 in the Second Floor Hall of the Lake Vista Community Center, 6500 Spanish Fort Blvd., New Orleans, LA. Mr. Wittie called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

**Opening Comments:** None

**Adoption of Agenda:** The agenda was amended to add Item VII.C – discussion of seismic evaluation of levees. The agenda was adopted as amended.

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the March 5, 2009 Operations Committee meeting were approved.

**Public Comments:** Public comment on the proposed floodwall mural was received during the discussion of the item.

**Old Business:**

**A. Presentation on Orleans Levee (O.L.D.) District safe house.**

At last month's meeting the Committee recommended the inclusion of additional restrooms in the safe house build out. The revised plan was reviewed. In addition to safe housing for employees, the build out will also house the district's IT department, which is currently housed in a trailer located in the warehouse, and Emergency Operations Center. Gerry Gillen, O.L.D. Executive Director, explained that consideration is being given to the addition of an elevator at an estimated cost of \$60,000 for moving equipment and files and to meet ADA requirements.

Mr. Jackson recommended that Mr. Gillen and Mr. Tabb with Murray Architects visit the West Jefferson Levee District's safe house facility, which has a commercial kitchen, for additional ideas.

This item will be brought back to the Committee next month.

## **New Business:**

### **A. Discussion of NOLA Rising Mural Project and policy for Authority on floodwall art.**

Mr. Gillen explained that the Orleans Levee District received a request to paint a mural on a floodwall. He recommended that the Authority establish a policy for art work on floodwalls before proceeding with the consideration of this request. The district's former Board had allowed concrete cast artwork on some floodwalls. Mosaic tiles were placed on a French quarter floodwall. Representatives from NOLA Rising were invited to tell the Committee about their proposed mural.

Jerry Colletti with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) pointed out that the USACE will want to provide input for the federal floodwalls. In the past the USACE has had strong concerns relative to art work, in particular mosaic tiles, which could inhibit the levee district's ability to see cracks and potential problems during levee inspections.

Mike Dingler, President of NOLA Rising and a resident of New Orleans, provided a brief overview of the organization, which has been involved in a number of mural projects around New Orleans. NOLA Rising began in 2006 as a post-Katrina arts project and has recently become a Louisiana non-profit organization dedicated to reviving New Orleans culture through the arts. The organization's goal is to paint a mural on the protected side of the Lower Ninth Ward levee floodwall. The purpose of the mural is to remember the City's collective struggle, to reassert New Orleans' position as a City of the arts and to honor those individuals who were lost in the storm. The proposed 3,900 foot long mural would be the Nation's longest mural. Crista Rock, Project Manager, explained that the mural would stretch from North Derbigny Street to Florida Avenue. Sixty-five local artists would be invited to participate. The artists would submit proposed designs to NOLA Rising, and the designs would then be submitted to the Authority and other entities as required for approval. A packet of information was presented to Committee, which included samples of murals on other federal walls. Mr. Dingler commented on his proposed efforts to prevent the wall from becoming the subject of graffiti tags. The Philadelphia mural arts organization provided dimensions and safety data for the panes that they recommend being used. He described the paint, sealer and graffiti remover to be used. The paints are anticipated to last about 25 to 30 years.

Mr. Estopinal requested that NOLA Rising provide additional data on the effectiveness of murals on the reduction of graffiti.

Mr. Doody asked about artist liability issues. Mr. Dingler explained that NOLA Rising is currently working with the Joan Mitchell Foundation, a major arts funding foundation based in New York, to secure bonds. In addition, the artists will sign waivers.

Fred Radtke explained that Operation Clean Up is a non-profit organization and in the past ten years has eliminated over 10,000 graffiti tags, in addition to helping the New Orleans Police Department by taking over 4,000 calls concerning graffiti. Before the graffiti is removed it is photographed to document gang related graffiti and graffiti by

other groups. He described the damage that occurred post-Katrina to the murals painted under former Sherriff Foti. He stated that he was not at the meeting to discourage art work, but to make the Authority aware of the situation. He discussed the current graffiti problem in downtown New Orleans and in other areas of the city and the inability to control the problem. He advised that a permit must be obtained from the City of New Orleans and that the City has a mural ordinance which mandates that a mural must go through a committee process. He pointed out the sensitivity concerning the proposed floodwall and greater problem that could be created post Katrina.

Mr. Losonsky stated that he failed to see the connection between a controlled art project and graffiti. Mr. Jackson commented that both NOLA Rising and Operation Clean Up have provided a good service to the community. He pointed out that the Authority's primary purpose is flood protection and that information is needed from the USACE on what would be allowed.

Mr. Estopinal offered a motion that the USACE officially be requested to provide its position on mural paintings on floodwalls. The motion was adopted by the Committee.

## **B. Discussion of responses to Request for Qualifications for professional surveying services.**

Mr. Estopinal reported that ten Statements of Qualifications (SOQs) were received for surveying services. The selection committee will meet immediately after the Committee meeting to determine which respondents will be invited to provide presentations. After hearing the presentations, the selection committee will present its recommendation. At least three firms will be recommended for ID-IQ contracts.

Mr. Wittie reported that the East Jefferson Levee District received five SOQs for consulting services relative to its safe house study. The two short listed respondents will be interviewed by the selection committee on Tuesday. Mr. Jackson commented that the selected consultant will need to look at the district's operational needs, potential real estate sites that can accommodate those needs and then make recommendations.

## **C. Discussion of seismic evaluation of levees.**

Mr. Losonsky introduced a possible project that the Authority may wish to consider; i.e., seismic evaluation of levees. He explained that Dr. Lorenzo, a professor at LSU, in his research using standard geophysical tools is able to see the structures in the natural sediments underneath the levees. His work has shown that some of the breaks and possibly some of wet spots that have been seen may be related to inherit weaknesses in the natural subsurface soils. A research proposal by Dr. Lorenzo and his LSU research team proposed to study two miles of west bank levee. This project had a funding level of approximately \$60,000 to \$65,000. The project was voted down by the West Authority. As the geologist on the Board, Mr. Losonsky explained that the Authority should take a serious look at this technology for the following reasons:

- The problem of structural weaknesses exists and can lead to wet spots and breaks.
- The traditional approach for investigating and characterizing the break or wet spot areas is using geotechnical borings. The cost of doing a traditional geotechnical

boring based investigation runs into hundreds of thousands of dollars. The cost of this type of investigation is lower.

- This technology is used in water well drilling and is a proven technology.

Mr. Losonsky stated that at some point he would like to put before the Board that the Authority consider picking up Dr. Lorenzo's proposal for the seismic evaluation of two miles of levee. The two miles of levee can be spilt. Mr. Jackson suggested that the East Authority partner with the West Authority on this proposal.

Mr. Colletti pointed out that the USACE's seismic restrictions for outside permits do not allow activity within 300 feet of a levee. He noted, however, that some of the restrictions have been re-evaluated. Mr. Losonsky explained that the USACE would need to look at the technology as proposed. He stated that Dr. Lorenzo will submit the proposal to the East Authority, if there is an interest.

Mr. Losonsky advised that he would find out whether the West Authority had discussed this proposal with the USACE and that he would obtain a copy of the proposal to provide to the USACE for comment.

#### **Levee District Reports:**

**East Jefferson Levee District:** Jonnell Blowers reviewed the highlights of the EJLD monthly status report (copy appended to minutes).

The Committee discussed the erosion problem on the 17<sup>th</sup> Street Canal. Stevan Spencer, SLFPA-E Regional Chief Engineer, advised that the USACE is taking another look at the safe water elevation in the 17<sup>th</sup> Street Canal. The Authority has requested a copy of the review which is currently at the 95% level.

**Orleans Levee District:** Gerry Gillen reviewed the highlights of the O.L.D. monthly status report (copy appended to minutes).

Mr. Jackson commented on a recent meeting with Congressman Scalise and USACE representatives concerning the outfall canals, in which the Congressman indicated he would introduce a new authorization naming option 2.

**Lake Borgne Basin Levee District:** Peggy Sembera reviewed the highlights of LBBLD monthly status report (copy appended to minutes).

Mr. Colletti brought up the issue of levee access in high security areas such as the ports where levee district personnel are required to obtain TRIC cards. He reminded Committee members that the Association of Levee Boards may wish to address this statewide issue.

There was no further business, therefore, the meeting was adjourned at 3:10 p.m.