

**MINUTES OF
SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA FLOOD PROTECTION AUTHORITY-EAST
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON JULY 15, 2021**

PRESENT: Jason P. Latiolais, Chair
Richard G. Duplantier, Jr., Committee Member
Herbert I. Miller, Committee Member
Herbert T. Weysham, III, Committee Member

The Operations Committee of the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority-East (Authority or FPA) met on July 15, 2021, at the Franklin Avenue Administrative Complex, Meeting Room 201, 6920 Franklin Avenue, New Orleans, Louisiana. Mr. Latiolais called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m.

Opening Comments: None.

Adoption of Agenda: The Committee approved the agenda as presented.

Approval of Minutes: The Committee approved the minutes of the Operations Committee meeting held on June 17, 2021.

Public Comments: None.

Safety Minute:

Jacinta Gisclair, Levee Safety Engineer, Engineering Department, advised that she has been with the FPA a little over two years and that her background is in Civil Engineering, predominately Geotechnical. Ms. Gisclair oversees the Inspection Team and supervises one Engineer and three Engineering Technicians that perform all of the inspections throughout the flood defense system on a day-to-day basis.

Ms. Gisclair explained that the obvious goal is the safety and integrity of the levees; however, while the team is doing its job to ensure the safety of the levee system, it must also consider the safety of the public, as well as its own personal safety. The team performs the quarterly inspections required by the State, high river inspections as needed, permit checks by visiting construction sites and talking to contractors, and covers ICC high tides by phone monitoring. When the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is activated, the team coordinates gate closures, provides information to stakeholders and tenants, and covers phones providing information to the public. The team handles and assists Engineering with post storm damage assessments.

Ms. Gisclair further explained that since there are only four personnel who must cover many miles, members must team up and are assigned to specific regions so that their location is always known. On-going contact is maintained throughout the day to check

the status of personnel. Radios became even more instrumental during COVID-19 since trucks could only be occupied by one individual instead of two as was the practice pre-pandemic. Team members ensure that they have contact at any time that they are out of the line of sight with each other, especially if one person is driving on the flood side of a levee and the other person is driving on the protected side.

Ms. Gisclair advised that weekly reminders (meetings) take place that include information related to on-going weather changes, updates on environmental conditions due to recent rains or other conditions, and reminders regarding potential hazards (such as snakes) since team members must walk substantial areas and regarding areas frequented by the public. The team coordinates with Maintenance so that they can do their inspection while Maintenance crews perform their checks of the area.

Ms. Gisclair explained that when the EOC is activated, the team performs gate verification checks across the system and must ensure that the crew returns to the facility before tropical storm force winds. Team members talk to stakeholders and tenants when doing gate closure notifications and ensure that everyone is where they are supposed to be and that there are no public safety concerns (e.g., that all private vehicles are moved from the area prior to closing a gate). Double checks are done on closures to ensure that gates are closed and secured as required.

Ms. Gisclair advised that once a storm has passed, the Inspection Team, as part of the larger assessment team, starts planning its assessments, which includes determining which roads may be blocked by debris, checking on downed power lines, and coordinating with stakeholders in order access various areas.

Mr. Latiolais asked are JSAs (Job Safety Analysis) or safety meetings conducted daily by the Inspection Team prior to going into the field. Ms. Gisclair explained that the team typically conducts weekly meetings.

Kelli Chandler, Regional Director, advised that the Maintenance, Facilities and Operations teams have daily safety meetings. In addition, language regarding safety has been added to the Performance Evaluation Planning for all employees. Rusty Kennedy, Safety and Facilities Director, explained that the FPA is considering JSAs to promote safety awareness. Also, as of July 14th, the FPA advertised one of the positions being promoted as a safety position.

New Business:

A. Update on Lakeshore Drive closures and triggers for when Lakeshore Drive is closed.

Ms. Chandler advised that decisions about Lakeshore Drive are driven by safety. She explained that there are two different types of closure: first, due to flooding, and second, implementing a different traffic pattern. She emphasized that Lakeshore Drive is not closed, the FPA just implements a different traffic pattern. She explained that, partly,

this is due to safety; however, there are unique things about Lakeshore Drive that she recently figured out. She stated that she and Chris Humphreys, Director of Engineering, rode with an officer up and down Lakeshore Drive attempting to understand how traffic is diverted. When going east to west from Seabrook, the roadway by the boat launch dog legs and if there is too much traffic, a police officer cannot get to the boat launch should anything happen. Therefore, this is closed due to the configuration of the road and the need for officers to have access to the boat launch area. The FPA also sometimes diverts traffic at the Bayou St. John Bridge and going forward this will be done in both directions. She explained that this is how the FPA makes decisions as far as Lakeshore Drive is concerned: first, safety and making sure emergency vehicles can respond, and second, that people can access Lakeshore Drive and enjoy the lakefront. They just may have to go around.

Mr. Latiolais asked, did staff respond to the letters and comments that were received at the Board's April meeting in St. Bernard? Ms. Chandler replied that staff did not issue a formal response; however, it can do so. One of the items brought up pertained to insufficient notification. Going forward the FPA will ensure that it sends out notifications far in advance so that the public is made aware. She stated that the FPA only diverts traffic about three times a year, with the exception being during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the number of vehicles on Lakeshore Drive. In addition, the FPA diverts traffic when needed due to flooding.

Mr. Miller stated that he was advised that this would be the appropriate time to discuss a resolution on the Board agenda (Item XIII.A.3). He stated that there is nothing in this resolution that appeals to him. Relative to the first part of the resolution, he was unaware of any intention by anyone on this Commission to sell off any of its assets. This is pretty much a foregone conclusion; however, he did not feel that the Board should unilaterally limit itself to that, as an issue may come that it finds that it is in the best interest of the Commission and the public to sell that property. He reiterated that he was not aware of any such intention and would be very cautious before supporting anything like that; however, he did not think the Board should limit itself and unilaterally say it is never going to sell any property it owns.

Mr. Miller stated that the bigger problem to him is a couple of things in regards to the transfer of Lakeshore Drive to the Lakefront Management Authority (LMA). There are a lot of problems with this transfer. First, there is no indication that the LMA has the funding to maintain that facility. Secondly, the way this is set up, the FPA would continue to police it, which it should, but the FPA would be paying for the police to maintain safety on Lakeshore Drive. There may be a situation from time-to-time where the FPA must close Lakeshore Drive. The FPA needs to have the ability to do that. During a hurricane, once the Governor declares an emergency, it is not an issue. At that point the FPA has full authority to close off Lakeshore Drive. However, there are other times throughout the year where high winds may cause flooding on Lakeshore Drive and the FPA needs to be able to shut it down. More importantly, from a safety standpoint, if something happens on Lakeshore Drive, such as criminal activity or an altercation and the area needs to be secured, as has recently happened, the FPA

needs to be able to do that without having to call the LMA. Therefore, there is a funding issue and there is a safety issue. The fact that the FPA would be turning Lakeshore Drive over to another entity would not remove the FPA from any liability if something happens and someone wants to sue the FPA. He stated that he did not see any reason to make this move at this time and asked that the Committee vote to recommend to the entire Commission that it vote no on this resolution.

Mr. Latiolais stated that he agreed with Mr. Miller.

Mr. Duplantier asked who requested that the resolution be prepared. Glenda Boudreaux, Administrative Program Director, responded that the resolution was prepared at the request of Mr. Arrigo. Mr. Duplantier stated that it limited the Board too much and that the important part is the liability. The FPA would still be responsible legally; therefore, why would it turn over operational responsibility.

Mr. Miller offered a motion that the Committee vote to recommend that the resolution not be approved. The motion was seconded and unanimously adopted.

B. Update and future plans for recent sinkhole located behind the 7500 block of Lakeshore Drive (Shelter 1), New Orleans.

Chris Humphreys, Director of Engineering, explained that on Friday, June 25th, in the late afternoon, the Maintenance Department received a call from the Orleans Levee District Police that a hole was discovered on the levee behind Shelter 1. Mr. Humphreys met with Officer Canfield, who had carried two barrels up the levee to the hole and was keeping the public away from the site. The hole was about five feet in diameter at the surface and larger at the bottom and about ten feet deep.

Mr. Humphreys advised that he called the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and was joined by Ryan Foster, Engineer, who provided assistance in investigating the potential reason for the hole. He pointed out that a hole such as this is very unusual in this type of soil condition and to his knowledge had never happened on a levee. He noted that in developed areas where there are a number of utilities, a potential cause could be a break in a utility line through which the materials could be transported.

Mr. Humphreys explained that public safety was the first concern. On Friday, a perimeter was placed around the hole using construction fencing and barrels, and on Saturday, Maintenance staff placed Type 3 barricades around the hole as an additional barrier. On Monday, Engineering staff continued interfacing with the USACE regarding a solution and path forward. Due to the public risk, a decision was made to do a temporary fix. On July 30th, Cycle Construction Company backfilled the hole with a sandy clay that was packed so that all the irregularities of the hole were filled. The backfilling was accomplished using an excavator to place thin 18-inch lifts that were compacted using a wide excavator with a pneumatic plate compactor. Survey points are taken each Thursday to detect any motion. To date, survey points were taken three times and no motion was detected.

Mr. Humphreys advised that the repair will be maintained. The area was seeded and would be sodded as soon as weather conditions allow. Weekly surveys will continue and, in conjunction with the USACE, a geotechnical survey will be done to determine whether there are any anomalies that may have caused the problem. He pointed out that the hole occurred at a utility crossing. He explained that after Hurricane Katrina, the USACE did a levee lift and the utilities were subsequently relocated on top of the levee and covered. A sewer force main, a water line and an electrical duct bank are located to the east of the hole; however, it is not believed that these utilities are contributing to the problem. A survey was done of all drain lines in the area that could be found and the drain lines were clear. The FPA is continuing its efforts, and in addition to the geotechnical survey, an analysis will be done to ensure the stability of the levee. After hurricane season, a more invasive search for utilities (e.g., an old catch basin that was not removed and could have collapsed) can be done, and work will be done on a permanent repair. Staff is looking at old plans and records attempting to find any potential abandoned utilities.

C. Discussion of proposed issuance and advertisement of Requests for Qualifications for operation and/or maintenance repairs of flood control structures owned and operated by the FPA in order to pre-qualify contractors to provide said services prior to and after a storm or other qualifying event in accordance with FEMA Guidelines on a Task Order basis.

Mr. Humphreys advised that, currently, the FPA has only one contractor (Cycle Construction Company) prequalified to respond to potential needs prior to and after an event. Contractors must prequalify in order to meet FEMA guidelines for reimbursement. Should a major event occur, one contractor, who may have additional contracts, would not be sufficient. Therefore, staff recommended that a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) be advertised in order to prequalify additional contractors.

The Committee will recommend that the Board approve the advertisement and issuance of the proposed RFQ.

D. Discussion of proposed adoption of a resolution to appropriate a temporary servitude at the appraised value offered to property owner Chad Phillip Blanchard in St. Bernard Parish for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' seepage control project.

The USACE advised that the temporary servitude is no longer needed.

There was no further business; therefore, the meeting was adjourned at 10:35 a.m.