

**MINUTES OF
SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA FLOOD PROTECTION AUTHORITY-EAST
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON JANUARY 11, 2024**

PRESENT: Thomas G. Fierke, Chair
Herbert I. Miller, Committee Member
Clay A. Cosse, President, Ex Officio Committee Member

The Operations Committee of the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority-East (Authority or FPA) met on January 11, 2024, in the Franklin Avenue Administrative Complex, Meeting Room 201, 6920 Franklin Avenue, New Orleans, La. Mr. Fierke called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Opening Comments: Mr. Fierke explained that the Board at its December 21, 2023, meeting, discussed holding Committee and Board meetings on separate dates. Some individuals had concerns about payment of per diems to non-committee members who attend Committee meetings. He requested clarification on this issue.

Mr. Fierke pointed out that he invited Commissioner Debbie Settoon to attend the meeting due to her interest in a subject on the agenda and that Commissioner Bill Settoon was in attendance because he provided transportation for Mr. Fierke to the meeting due to recent shoulder surgery. He added that neither Commissioner expected to be paid for attending the meeting.

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

Approval of Minutes: The Committee approved the Minutes of the meeting held on November 16, 2023.

Public Comments: None.

Report of Director of Engineering:

Chris Humphreys, Director of Engineering, reported that the Mississippi River level was expected to remain low through the first week of February. As of the date of the meeting, the FPA did not anticipate any issues due to the salt water wedge.

Mr. Humphreys provided an update on the following projects:

LPV 146 – Leaning Monoliths (Gate C-1 and C-2 located at Highway 46 in St. Bernard): The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) monitored and evaluated Monoliths T6 and T7 for a number of years and provided a letter each year stating that the monoliths were adequate for hurricane season. The USACE decided to remove and replace the monoliths after the 2023 hurricane season. The monoliths

were removed to the existing foundation and six additional new piles were driven for pile driving analyses (PDA) to determine and verify capacity. The evaluation will be completed by the end of January. The 24 existing piles that had been driven to elevation -110 feet will be cut off so they are no longer within the foundation. Forty new piles will be driven to elevation -145 feet. The floodwall will then be reconstructed to the same height as the adjacent monoliths. The project is anticipated to be completed prior to the start of the 2024 hurricane season.

East Jefferson Lake Pontchartrain Foreshore Protection Project (West Return Wall to 2,000 feet east of the Suburban Canal): The USACE project to reconstruct the East Jefferson Foreshore Protection is currently in design. The project is in response to a PL (Public Law) 84-99 request submitted by the FPA and Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA); therefore, it is 100 percent Federally funded. Topographic and bathymetric surveys were completed.

Franklin Facility Warehouse Office Renovations Project: The project is nearing completion. Occupation of the office space is anticipated in early February.

Hayne Boulevard Drainage/Grading Project (located at Hayne Boulevard and France Road): The FPA is responsible for maintaining the relief wells at this location; however, the wells are inaccessible due to drainage issues. Permits are required since the proposed work is located within the Norfolk Southern Railroad right-of-way. The FPA is working through some issues due to a conflicting water line and gas line. The project is anticipated to be completed by May. The USACE will then repair the relief wells and the FPA will monitor the wells.

Levee Slope Paving Project: The project consists of nine difficult to maintain sites each about 150-ft. in length: five along the London Avenue Canal, three along the Orleans Avenue Canal and one along Bayou St. John. The longest site (450-ft.) is located on the London Avenue Canal near I-610. A contract in the amount of \$702,472 was awarded to Durr Construction. The Notice to Proceed was effective January 8, 2024.

Lakeshore Drive – Bayou St. John Bridge Approaches Project (asphalt repairs): A contract in the amount of \$961,735.05 was awarded to Barriere Construction and work is anticipated to begin in February. The project includes all four lanes (both directions) from the traffic circle on the east side to the bridge and from the bridge to about 60-feet west of the old bus stop. The required traffic control plan has not yet been submitted. The contractor is required to keep one lane open in each directions at all times. The asphalt will be removed, the existing subgrade re-compacted, and the asphalt replaced.

17th Street Canal (Veterans Boulevard to Old Hammond Highway) East (Orleans) Side Erosion Control Project: The project was advertised, the pre-bid meeting was scheduled for January 11th, and bids will be opened on January 30th. Sheetpiles will be driven about 23 feet from the wall on the inside of the canal, the

slope will be rebuilt, and geo-cell filled with aggregate will be put in place. The project is about 6,000 feet in length. All work will be done from the canal.

After Hurricane Katrina, the USACE placed rip-rap on the west side (Jefferson) of the 17th Street Canal from Veterans Highway to Old Hammond Highway. Several years ago, the FPA placed geo-cell and stone surfacing on both sides of the 17th Street Canal south of Veterans Highway to Pump Station No. 6.

London Avenue Canal North-West Erosion Mitigation Project: The project is located north of the PCCP pump station. USACE, CPRA and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) permits were received. The project plans were being reviewed by FPA Engineering and were being finalized. The project is scheduled to be advertised for bids within the next several weeks. Rip-rap will be placed on the west side in the eroded portion of the canal bank from Lakeshore Drive to the pump station. Rip-rap was placed on the east side last year.

Darren Austin, Director of Operations, provided information to the Committee regarding the GIWW tripping dolphins. The tripping dolphins are aids to navigation for passage through the IHNC Surge Barrier. A set of five dolphins with three pile clusters is located at each of the two sites. In 2015 the temporary tripping dolphins were replaced by the USACE's hired labor group with pipe piles and tires for fendering. Several have mooring bits on top for barge fleets. Pictures of the damaged tripping dolphins were reviewed. In 2018 the FPA began investigating what should be place in terms of forces and mooring; i.e., larger, thicker piles, proper fendering, four-pile clusters and navigation lights. Discussions have taken place regarding which entity is responsible for maintaining the tripping dolphins. The replacement of the tripping dolphins has been placed on hold.

As part of the Director of Engineering's Report, Roger Colwell, GIS Manager, provided an update on the Levee View 360 initiative.

Mr. Colwell explained that the FPA's goal is to create a Google Street View type of product of the levee system. The first step was to determine the best method (in-house/outsourced) for the initiative and the resources needed. The in-house option was determined more palatable and cost effective. The FPA purchased an Insta360 Pro 2 Camera (8K) that can be mounted on any vehicle. Images are collected by six different cameras housed inside the 360 camera as the vehicle travels along the top of the levee.

Mr. Colwell further explained that the data is downloaded and processed at the office. About 15 minutes of field work equates to about 50 GB (gigabytes) of data. Stitcher software is used to create a 360-degree view from the six data sets. The resulting file is uploaded to Mapillary software. To-date, about 23 miles of levee data has been collected. Levee View 360 can provide easy visual access to levee sites for Levee Safety Permit reviewers and others. Images can be collected periodically (e.g., every year or two) and cataloged by date for historical purposes. Levee View 360 can be made open to the public.

Mr. Humphreys pointed out that the FPA budgeted over \$150,000 for the project; however, by doing the work in-house the only expense was \$6,000 for the 360 camera. He commended Mr. Colwell and the GIS group for their efforts.

Mr. Fierke inquired about requesting Google to do this work at no cost to the FPA due to the recreational aspect; e.g., runners who use the levee crown.

New Business:

A. Discussion of the proposed advertisement of a Request for Qualifications for architectural services, including project design and project management, for the International Center for Storm Surge Barrier Research, Public Education and Satellite Maintenance Facility, and recommendation to the Board.

Mr. Fierke advised that this item came up last month and that Commissioner Arrigo requested that it be placed back on the Board's agenda. Due to Mr. Arrigo's request and the tabling of the motion at the December 21, 2023, Board meeting for one month, the item was placed on the Operations Committee agenda.

Mr. Fierke explained that two different segments of the FPA were working on preliminary designs for the International Center for Storm Surge Barrier Research, Public Education and Satellite Maintenance Facility Project, and that neither seemed to know what the other was doing. Wilma Heaton, Director of Governmental Affairs, was working with one individual, and Commissioner Duplantier and Chris Humphreys, Director of Engineering, were working with another individual. After determining where things stood at this point, the Board needed to decide how it should move forward with the attempt to obtain grant funding and whether a project specific Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was needed.

Ms. Heaton provided the background for the project. The FPA has had numerous groups tour the IHNC Surge Barrier. A group of dignitaries visited the site in 2017, and the Board President at that time asked RCL Architects (RCL) to look into a preliminary rough design for a visitor's center. RCL worked pro bono on the first Louisiana Capital Outlay Program (COP) requests. The COP requests over the years evolved. A briefing paper was circulated for several years relative to the justification for the project. The proposed facility would be built on land owned by the Orleans Levee District (O.L.D.); therefore, the O.L.D. would be responsible for any local cost share for grants. The FPA in-house grants person at the time advised Ms. Heaton that the RFQ had to be project specific. Federal, State and other grants, as well as their requirements, differ and may depend on the type of project, regulations, costs and other factors. However, from day one it was represented that the RFQ for the project design would be advertised.

Ms. Heaton further explained that the FPA advertises general RFQs every three years in order to enter into Indefinite Delivery-Indefinite Quantity (ID-IQ) Contracts for as needed services. A report is provided each month listing current ID-IQ Contracts and

Task Orders. In October 2021, after advertising RFQs, the Board selected firms for ID-IQ contracts. She advised that she was never told that the design of the project would be done under a 2021 ID-IQ contract and that a task order for the project's design had not been listed on the ID-IQ Contract/Task Order monthly report. In addition, she had been told by many grant professionals that the RFQ advertised had to be project specific.

Ms. Heaton advised that RCL recently changed the name on the 2017 preliminary budget and renderings that it originally developed to the International Center for Storm Surge Barrier Research, Public Education and Satellite Maintenance Facility to comport with the COP request submitted on October 30, 2023. Mercury stopped providing grants services several years ago for this project. The Regional Director entered into a contract with another firm for grant services. Ms. Heaton stated that since she did not have the opportunity to meet with the FPA's current grant services provider, the 2017 documents had not been used officially to apply for Federal grants. She said that she was not aware of any grant applications at this time since the Board first needed to decide what should be built and whether it should be phased. Committee members were provided with copies of the IHNC Surge Barrier information sheet and COP request.

Ms. Heaton stated that in 27 years she had never suggested that the Board hire a particular person for a particular job and that she was a resource for the Board. She suggested that it would be wise and prudent for the Board to consider advertising an project specific RFQ for the architectural services. The Board could then select whoever it wished and, if funding is identified, the individual or firm could be hired. If a grant requires a project specific RFQ advertisement, and the FPA had not issued one, then it would not be able to receive the grant.

Ms. Heaton pointed out that the 2017 preliminary design was based on the wishes of prior Board members. The current Board should decide whether the preliminary design should be changed and how the FPA should move forward.

Mr. Miller inquired about the selection of RCL. Ms. Heaton explained the President of the Board in 2017 was at the Surge Barrier with a group of dignitaries and saw the need for a tourist center. He discussed the development of preliminary documents with RCL. RCL did the work at that time so that the FPA could search for grant opportunities. Certain staff were not enthusiastic about the project moving forward. However, last year several Commissioners visited the Netherlands and suddenly enthusiasm for the project returned. RCL worked up the original documents as a favor so that the FPA could condition itself for grants. Mr. Miller asked was RCL paid for this work. Ms. Heaton was unsure of any payments. She noted that she worked and had meetings with RCL on the project for over five years.

Mr. Miller stated that RCL's pro bono work was fine. He advised that in his experience with Federal government work, if an engineering firm needed to be hired for a grant, the entity typically had to advertise for the contract.

Mr. Humphreys explained that, as mentioned by Ms. Heaton, some of the Board members, including Commissioner Duplantier, visited the Netherlands and became interested in the project. Mr. Duplantier was a champion of the project since becoming a Board member. The Board enthusiastically approved the COP request each year. Engineering's involvement had been to develop the COP requests. Mr. Humphreys stated that his understanding was that Mr. Duplantier, after recently speaking with some people, asked could some plans be developed, which he was told would help him and the FPA obtain grant money for the project.

Mr. Humphreys explained the process used to contract certain services on an as-needed basis [e.g., engineering, surveying and support services (includes architectural services)]. The FPA advertises the RFQs and conducts a quality based selection process to provide a pool of consultants for ID-IQ Contracts. When a task comes up, Engineering selects a consultant from its pool of pre-approved firms with ID-IQ contracts and issues a task order for the needed services. The process used for ID-IQ contracts precludes the need for conducting an RFQ process for independent projects.

Mr. Humphreys explained that Mr. Duplantier was anxious to have some plans developed that would better the FPA's chances for grant funding, so he advised him that a consultant from the FPA's pool of consultants could be used. Mr. Humphreys said that it was his understanding that, based on its approval of the COP requests, the Board was in favor of this action. Engineering picked Verges Rome Architects, met with the firm and asked that a proposal be prepared to develop the plans. When the item appeared on the agenda last month, he and Mr. Duplantier discovered that they and Ms. Heaton were doing the same thing. He stated that the work in 2017 was preliminary and not sufficient to develop plans; therefore, it needs to be updated.

Mr. Humphreys stated that as of last month's Board meeting, Verges Rome was advised to stop whatever research or other work they may be doing. He pointed out that at this point, Verges Rome had not presented a proposal, been issued a task order or started any work; therefore, the firm had not been paid for anything. The FPA's request for a proposal from Verges Rome was changed to just updating what was done by RCL in 2017 and providing an up-to-date cost. This would inform the Board regarding present day costs. Engineering had updated the costs provided by RCL each year for the COP request; however, he wanted an independent cost update.

Mr. Fierke asked had the Board ever discussed a scope for the project. Mr. Humphreys responded that the discussion of a scope should take place at this point. He advised that an architect is needed to work with Engineering and that Board input would be conveyed to the architect to ensure the desired result.

Mr. Humphreys commented that he thought that some grants did not require an independent (project specific) RFQ process; however, other grants do require an independent RFQ process. He stated that the FPA was in a position that, if desired, it can go forward with this process.

Mr. Cosse asked Mr. Miller was he in favor of advertising the RFQ. Mr. Miller responded, yes. Mr. Cosse noted that he supported the advertisement of the RFQ. He commented that anyone could do pro bono work. Mr. Miller pointed out that the ID-IQ contracts were not a guarantee that those firms would be used for every project. The proposed visitor center/research/maintenance facility is a unique project. The FPA may have a firm in its ID-IQ pool that has done this type of work in the past. However, by advertising a project specific RFQ, the FPA may find a firm that is an expert in this area. The FPA should ensure its lobbyist in Washington, D.C., who can assist with obtaining a Federal grant, is involved. He commented on the facility located in the Netherlands, which is a tremendous educational facility. Part of the FPA's charge is educating the public regarding flood protection. The proposed facility would provide a tremendous educational opportunity for the FPA. Therefore, he supported advertising the RFQ and going forward with the project.

Ms. Settoon stated that she understood the need for the restroom component of the facility, but questioned the need for a safehouse for an unmanned structure. She recommended that the Board come up with a relatively concise scope of work before advertising an RFQ. She pointed out that the project had not been vetted by the Board for scope. Mr. Fierke concurred and added that he did not think that the FPA could advertise an RFQ at this point and receive the desired product. Ms. Heaton suggested that an item be included on the Board agenda to discuss the scope and phasing of the project. She noted that the project name must be appropriate to attract Federal dollars. Kelli Chandler, Regional Director, suggested that it would be helpful for the staff to communicate their needs, such as equipment storage. Storing equipment at the IHNC Surge Barrier would eliminate the long transport of equipment to and from this location.

Mr. Miller pointed out that RCL provided a preliminary scope. Several Commissioners and staff members visited the facility in the Netherlands; therefore, they knew how an educational facility looked. He suggested that FPA staff review the RCL preliminary scope and develop a project scope to present to the Board. At that point, the FPA could advertise an RFQ for a consultant. Mr. Cosse concurred with Mr. Miller's suggestion.

The Committee briefly discussed the scope to be developed by staff. Ms. Settoon suggested that a cost justification for components of the project (e.g., safehouse and maintenance components) be included. Mr. Fierke pointed out that the Board could discuss what should be included in the scope. After the Board determines conceptually what it wants in the project, it can provide staff with more advice.

Mr. Miller offered a motion to request that the FPA staff present a recommendation to the Board of what should be built. The recommendation should include a preliminary estimate of costs for the various components. Mr. Fierke requested that the motion include potential deletions and additions. Mr. Miller concurred with Mr. Fierke's request. Mr. Fierke seconded the motion and the motion was unanimously adopted. A clarification was made that the staff would provide their recommendation to the Board at

its February meeting. Mr. Fierke clarified that this action was in order to move forward progressively; therefore, a final decision may not be made in February.

Mr. Cosse commented that the proposed facility had three components: 1) visitors, educational and research areas, which could be accommodated in one room; 2) restroom facilities; and 2) a maintenance building with office space.

Darren Austin, Director of Operations, suggested simplifying the name. The FPA was chasing grants with specific requirements, which led to the name change. He asked was there a broader way to refer to the facility and provide an idea of scope. He concurred with Mr. Cosse that the visitors, education and research areas should be located in one big room, which could be configured as needed. The facility in the Netherlands had numerous components requiring additional staff. Mr. Fierke clarified that the reason he included the phrase “additions and deletions” to the motion was so that the scope could be started and the Board could add and delete what it wished.

VIII. Executive Session:

1. To discuss strategy regarding Civil Service Appeal S-18902 filed by employee Jonathan Downing.
2. To discuss strategy regarding Civil Service Appeal S-18856 filed by employee Jerald Holmes.

Mr. Miller offered a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Fierke and unanimously approved, for the Committee to convene in Executive Session to discuss the items listed on the agenda. The Committee convened in Executive Session at 11:00 a.m.

The Committee reconvened in regular session at 12:12 p.m. Mr. Fierke advised that no action was taken in the Executive Session.

There was no further business; therefore, the meeting was adjourned at 12:14 p.m.