

MINUTES OF  
SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA FLOOD PROTECTION AUTHORITY-EAST  
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD ON FEBRUARY 13, 2008

PRESENT: Larry McKee, Chair - SLFPAE  
David Barnes, SLFPAE  
Timothy Doody, SLFPAE  
Louis Wittie, SLFPAE  
Ricardo Pineda, SLFPAE (via telephone conference)  
Jerry Colletti, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)  
Larry Ardoin, LA Department of Transportation & Development  
Robert Turner, SLFPA-E Regional Director/LBBLD Exec. Director  
Stevan Spencer, O.L.D. Executive Director  
Fran Campbell, EJLD Executive Director

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The Operations Committee met on February 13, 2008 in the Second Floor Hall of the Lake Vista Community Center, 6500 Spanish Fort Blvd., New Orleans, LA. Chairman McKee called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

**Opening Comments:**

Mr. McKee reiterated comments offered by Governor Blanco at the Authority's initial Board meeting relative to the importance of its flood protection mission. Two essential components of flood protection are (1) assuring the best flood protection components are used and (2) operation and maintenance. Because of the enormous maintenance responsibilities of the levee districts, he called upon the public to provide assistance by reporting potential problems and commented on the districts' responsibility to investigate these problems to the extent necessary.

**Adoption of Agenda:**

The agenda was amended to include a presentation by Mr. Mark Schexnayder. The Committee adopted the amended agenda.

**Public Comments:** None.

**Presentation: Riverfront Project--Reinventing the Crescent Development Final Plan**

Mr. Sean Cummings, Chief Executive Officer of the New Orleans Building Corporation, explained the goal of the New Orleans Building Corporation is to put latent real estate holdings into use and that this proposed development of six miles of riverfront is both ambitious and practical. This presentation is to acquaint the Authority with the project. A six minute video entitled "Reinvesting the Crescent" was shown which provided information on the design team and delineated the design goals, including removing barriers to the riverfront, access and providing gathering places. Slides were shown that depicted "before and after development" conditions of various areas along the six

mile stretch of riverfront and Mr. Cummings described some of the proposed design components. It is anticipated \$3.6 billion of development activities would stem from this project. Information is posted at the web site "neworiverfront.com". The plan is contemplated to be built over an eight year period of time and completed by 2016.

Mr. Cummings explained the Corporation's attorneys are doing title research and it is believed some portion of the land under the Mandeville Street Wharf is owned by the Orleans Levee District. The Port of New Orleans has a maritime service over the riverfront property.

**Presentation: Status of Mitigation Projects - Mr. Mark Schexnayder.**

Mr. Schexnayder reported a presentation was made to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Mitigation Team on the three mitigation projects (Parish-line Canal Freshwater and Sediment Delivery, Orleans/St. Bernard Freshwater and Sediment Delivery, Lake Pontchartrain Lakeshore Restoration) that were addressed at the Board's last meeting.

**Presentation: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Emergency Response.**

Mr. Michael Lowe, USACE Emergency Manager, provided a presentation on the New Orleans District Flood Operations. The Mississippi Valley Division of the USACE is made up of six districts. The New Orleans District covers 30,000 square miles. Authorities under which the USACE operates are Public Law 84-99, Public Law 93288, Project Authorizations and Emergency Authorizations. He spoke on hurricane and flood threats and the protection system, and explained in the emergency operations process (local, State and Federal response), once local response capability is exceeded, State response would be called upon, and once the State response capability is exceeded, Federal response is called upon.

The following areas were also reviewed and discussed:

- Planning responsibilities, which include personnel safety, executing civil works missions, Support of State and local governments, and support of DHS/FEMA response operations.
- Flood control emergency operations, which are phased responses in accordance with forecasted flood elevations. These operations include notifying levee districts, requesting daily inspections, establishing liaisons, spot checks and addressing on-going construction projects.
- The Hurricane Plan, including Personnel issues (staffing and evacuation), executing civil works missions, support of State and local governments, support of FEMA missions and issues regarding the support structure.
- The National Response Plan with FEMA being the coordinating agency for federal support response.

Mr. Turner requested a copy of USACE emergency contacts. Mr. Lowe announced a Flood Fight exercise is planned to take place on March 11<sup>th</sup> at the New Orleans District.

It was pointed out that the levee districts provide initial response. In a flood situation the levee districts would be requested to perform more frequent or perhaps daily inspections, and USACE personnel would join, as required, with local response personnel in inspections.

Staffing at the temporary structures at the three Orleans Parish outfall canals was discussed. During storms events where the surge is not expected to overtop the protection system, the operators would remain in the control houses of the structures; however, during a major storm should it be felt the surge will exceed the protection system, two teams would be moved out and one team, who would be capable of operating all three structures, would be brought back to the District and later airlifted back into the structures.

In the event of a major failure, the USACE would turn to the State for access to military assets, such as helicopters capable of lifting large sand bags. Materials such as pre-filled sand bags and large sandbags are stockpiled at the structures and levee districts' facilities. The USACE would be working with the State and FEMA in response to a major failure. The rolls of the Federal Coordinating Officer (FEMA), Defense Coordinating Officer (Northern Command in the military area) and the State Coordinating Officer in the National Response structure was explained. The USACE would have access to resources available to its contractors, such as cranes and dozers; however, in a major storm event it may be difficult to locate equipment operators.

It was pointed out the National Hurricane Center forecasts have increased in accuracy over the past few years in terms of forecasting storm tracks; however, not necessarily in terms of intensity.

## **Old Business:**

### **1. Discussion of Levee Inspections.**

The Committee continued the discussion started at its last meeting of use of the term "deficiency", which suggests a repair is needed, as opposed to the term "monitoring", which would more accurately describe the required action. Mr. Colletti pointed out USACE inspection reports are reviewed by experienced personnel in the Completed Works program and should it be determined that there is a major deficiency requiring correction, the USACE's Engineering Division would be consulted and the repair coordinated. Mr. Ardoin advised the research description and task order were publicly issued for a research proposal to provide recommendations for improving DOTD's inspection program, with selection expected next month.

Mr. Doody commented inspection reports by the three levee districts are fairly consistent and conform to DOTD's requirements. State and Federal reporting formats were discussed. Mr. Doody noted that software has been developed that would allow

inspection reports to be retained in a large database and also allow inspectors to use this technology in their inspections and in identifying problems. He felt the use of this technology should be investigated by the Authority. Mr. Colletti commented USACE representatives would be traveling to St. Louis to learn more about the technology.

Due to time constraints the remaining items under Old Business were deferred to the next Operations Committee meeting.

### **New Business:**

#### **1. Discussion of USACE Phase II Final Design Report for Reach A and Reach B. (EJLD)**

Mr. Turner advised these document have been made available and a list of comments would be submitted shortly. In response to a question regarding the factors of safety used in the report, Ms. Rebecca Huffman, USACE Project Manager, explained the most current engineering criteria at that time was used when doing the report; however, the most current to date will be used in the actual development of plans. Mr. Colletti suggested Mr. Turner meet with USACE geotechnical personnel for additional information on this subject.

**Levee District Reports:** (Copies of individual levee district reports were distributed.)

#### **East Jefferson Levee District (EJLD):**

Ms. Campbell reviewed the EJLD report covering five reaches along Lake Pontchartrain, plus East Return and the West Return Levees. She noted the previously discussed Reaches A and B deal with a redesign of the West Return Floodwall—several alternatives were recommended; however, a decision has not yet been made. Construction is scheduled for award the second quarter of 2009. Reach 2 levee raising plans are being reviewed and requested changes are being discussed; advertisement is anticipated soon after finalization of the plans. Plans should be received soon on raising Reach 5 to the design elevation of 17-ft.; the USACE is being asked to consider replacement of the bike path, which is also used as an alternative haul road. The USACE is looking at shoreline protection to try to incorporate it into their plans.

#### **Orleans Levee District (O.L.D.):**

Mr. Spencer reviewed the monthly status of O.L.D. activities and the status report of on-going projects by reach. Repairs of some of the Task Force Guardian work, which was expeditiously done to restore protection for the upcoming hurricane season, was discussed. Mr. Spencer commented the O.L.D.'s First Quarter Hurricane Levee Inspection was held last week and this week with DOTD and USACE representatives, with only minor levee rutting noted, which will be repaired by the USACE. It was noted that 100 year elevations were included in the latest Engineering Alternative Reports (EAR) received on reaches 101 and 103.

#### **Lake Borgne Basin Levee District (LBBLD):**

Mr. Turner reviewed the LBBLD monthly status report. He noted access is available to data and soils investigations for the completed Task Force Guardian work. The USACE hired labor forces will begin work in March on the section of levee between Bayou Bienvenue and Bayou Dupre which has a significant amount of rills. Relative to the Back Levee Study for 100 year protection, the USACE is currently looking at refining the model to determine the necessary elevation for the 40 Arpent and Maxent Levees.

## **2 Discussion of SLFPAE responsibility for Independent Technical Review (ITR) of USACE designs and projects where the SLFPAE is the actual local sponsor or potential local sponsor or maintaining agency.**

Mr. McKee advised the question has come up as to whether the Authority should employ a technical firm to review plans.

Mr. Doody commented that engineers on the Board do not have the amount of liability insurance coverage or time required to properly review plans and specifications (P/S). A funding mechanism would be needed should the Authority hire a consultant for independent review. Ms. Campbell added, in discussions DOTD indicated none of their personnel has the amount of time necessary for a thorough technical review of P/S without delaying projects.

Mr. Turner felt the Authority must first decide the level of review it is capable of providing, keeping in mind the number of engineers and consultants employed by the USACE on these projects. The Authority could effectively provide a review of proposed P/S, looking in particular at maintainability, cost of maintenance and constructability, and for things out of the ordinary or that may need closer review. DOTD is required by statute to be the engineer of record for levee districts and is part of the local sponsorship; therefore, DOTD provides comments on P/S as well.

Mr. Ardoin explained DOTD is looking at the big picture items; i.e., constructability and operability, and does not have the staff to review engineering detail and design calculations. According to a schedule issued by the USACE, approximately 150 projects will be coming up in the next three years; DOTD does not have sufficient staff in house for review of P/S and has hired a consultant for assistance. Mr. Doody suggested that DOTD consider sending some of its personnel to the local area so they can familiarize themselves with projects and the area.

The Committee discussed local sponsor review of P/S at the 35% completion phase. Chris Gilmore with the USACE Hurricane Protection Office explained P/S will be sent to local sponsors and DOTD by the 60% point, if not 35% point as well, for St. Bernard and Orleans Parishes. At 35% there is an over the shoulder PDT (Project Development Team) review of concepts by all in house USACE personnel, A&E contractors, local sponsors and anyone who attends the USACE weekly or monthly meetings. At 60% plans will be drawn and a draft set of specifications prepared. Formal meetings will be set up for reviews at 35%, 60% and 95% for Orleans and St. Bernard Parishes.

Mr. Turner pointed out there should be an independent technical review once the USACE reaches each one of the percentage completion points. Mr. Gilmore explained the independent technical review can be from within the USACE by someone who did not have any direct input into the design. The USACE also has external peer review in place through the USACE Philadelphia District which has a contract in place with a firm called Battel who will bring in industry experts to look at certain typical projects. It was noted that comments and responses can be reviewed on a secured USACE web site.

Responsibility was briefly discussed. Under legislation that created the Flood Control Act the local sponsor must indemnify the USACE. Mr. Colletti pointed out all USACE engineering design plans for construction must be stamped by the Chief Engineer.

**3. Discussion of role and implication of SLFPAE and subordinate levee districts for operations, maintenance, repair and reconstruction of USACE projects in which SLFPAE is the non-federal sponsor, co-sponsor or maintaining agency. and 6. Discussion of operation and maintenance of new surge gates on Inner Harbor Navigation Canal. (IHNC).**

Mr. Pineda advised operations and maintenance (O&M) issues were previously addressed and pointed out the need to carefully evaluate O&M requirements and assure those requirements can be carried out both from a fiscal, as well as a personnel, perspective.

Mr. Turner advised the State is signing on as the local sponsor from the standpoint of review of plans and perhaps providing local matching funds, but has taken the position that the local levee district is responsible for operations and maintenance.

The IHNC project, which will be a design-build contract that could potentially involve a very large navigation structure on the GIWW with significant operations, maintenance and replacement costs for a local sponsor, was discussed. Mr. Turner advised he, as well as other State representatives, sit on a panel that reviews processes such as this contract procurement and can provide input, but have no vote. The IHNC project is 100% federally funded and the PCA provides that the local sponsor must be responsible for O&M; however, a section is also included that provides if Congress changes the rules down the line, then that responsibility will be taken away from the local sponsor.

**4. Report on award of contract for State Project No. 579-44-0001, Forty Arpent Levee (Phase I) Repairs to Floodwall Vicinity of P.S. No. 1 and 6, St. Bernard Parish.**

Mr. Turner advised notice of award has been sent and contract documents will be going out shortly and returned within 10 to 15 days; work would proceed shortly thereafter.

**5. Discussion of core samples on Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) levee.**

Mr. McKee advised the USACE has agreed to provide data on soil borings. Once that information is received it can be sent to a geotechnical firm to determine the extent of concern.

Mr. Turner announced the new Lake Borgne Basin Levee District Executive Director will be introduced at the next Board Meeting.

Mr. Barnes asked the probability of completing 100 year flood protection timely. Mr. Colletti replied the goal set of June, 2011, has not changed; however, there may be setbacks due to available borrow material, land/easement acquisitions and cost share.

There was no further items of discussion, therefore, the meeting was adjourned at 1:13 p.m.