

**MINUTES OF  
SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA FLOOD PROTECTION AUTHORITY-EAST  
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD ON SEPTEMBER 3, 2009**

PRESENT: Louis Wittie, Chair  
Timothy Doody, Committee Member  
Stephen Estopinal, Committee Member  
George Losonsky, Commissioner  
Thomas Jackson, Commissioner

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The Operations Committee met on September 3, 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 9:45 a.m.

**Opening Comments:** None.

**Adoption of Agenda:** The agenda was amended to add Item E – discussion of an easement in New Orleans East with the U.S. Wildlife and Fisheries Service, and Item VIII.C.1 – discussion of the liquidation of assets at the Lake Borgne Basin Levee District. The agenda as amended was unanimously adopted by a roll call vote.

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the August 7, 2009 Operations Committee meeting were approved.

**Public Comments:** None.

**Old Business:**

**A. Discussion of US Army Corps of Engineers' reports on levee inspections.**

Jerry Colletti with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) informed the Committee that the USACE has requested the Association of Levee Boards of Louisiana to make the levee inspection reports and other levee safety program initiatives the primary topic at its round table discussion at its Annual Meeting in December.

Mr. Colletti reported on the USACE meeting concerning levee inspections reports that was held subsequent to the last Committee meeting. The USACE meeting was attended by Mr. Wittie, Mr. Doody, Robert Turner, SLFPAE Regional Director, Larry Ardoin, OCPR Operations Administrator, and David Miller, OCPR Director of Implementation. The primary issue was the strict criteria established by USACE headquarters for national use, which cannot be changed locally. Mr. Colletti recommended that Mr. Turner address the issue of flexibility in the criteria with the National Levee Safety Committee. Another issue is the terminology, such as the term “minimally acceptable”, which means that there are minor deficiencies that can be easily corrected. The local USACE recommendation is that the criteria be changed to allow flexibility and the use of engineering judgment, and to perhaps change the terminology.

The cover letter and the time frame for transmitting the reports were also discussed at the USACE meeting and improvements will be made by the USACE.

Mr. Colletti explained that the Engineering Division must input the inspection data into the system by using a new engineering tool. The USACE expects that the timeframe for data input and issuing the reports will be greatly improved. Reports issued by the Engineering Division will be reviewed by the Operations Division and the ambiguities, such as the identity of the entity responsible for correcting a deficiency, will be clarified. The possibility of issuing an advanced or draft copy of the report was also discussed at the USACE meeting.

Mr. Turner explained that the Authority has downloaded the USACE's levee inspection tool program. The Authority is also beginning a pilot program with the Dutch on a levee information system. He anticipated that in the future the levee inspection tool program could be used to input the inspection data into the levee information database system. In addition, the Authority could use the USACE's levee inspection tool program to obtain and update USACE data.

Mr. Estopinal asked whether the USACE could provide a copy of the inspector's initial rough notes to the Authority. The Committee discussed the electronic input of the data by the inspectors during the levee inspection.

Amy Powell, USACE Operations Manager Completed Works, advised that a senior level engineer is assigned to each levee inspection. In addition, Ms. Powell, Mr. Colletti or Chris Accardo from the Operations Division would be at each levee inspection. The experienced staff will provide oversight and assist less experienced personnel that are learning the system.

Larry Ardoin commented that the inspection reports provide only negative observations and not positive observations on well kept levees.

Mr. Losonsky asked whether other USACE's districts have expressed the need for flexibility. Mr. Colletti responded that the New Orleans District has checked with its counterparts within the Mississippi Valley and the opinions are consistent.

Mr. Turner remarked that this is an issue nationwide. He explained that the USACE embarked on the revised program after Hurricane Katrina; therefore, the program is still evolving. Ultimately, the data will be fed into the National Levee Database. He discussed the issue of long term funding for the program and its maintenance.

The Committee discussed the type of information that would be included in the National Levee Database. Mr. Doody requested that the USACE advise the Authority when it transmits the data for the levees under its jurisdiction to the National Levee Database.

Mr. Jackson commented on the national risk assessment system that was initially proposed by USACE leadership at the timeframe of the IPET investigation. He asked, why start the system if there is no commitment financially and technically to maintain it?

Mr. Turner explained that the initial population of the database with the basic data will be accomplished by the USACE and has been funded for all levees in the federal levee system. Due to numerous factors, including the uncertainty of future funding, the database would be placed into a Levee Safety Program. The Levee Safety Program was envisioned such that each state would have its own levee safety program. Levee districts are required by law to do quarterly inspections of federal levees. If the USACE's levee inspection tool could be slightly modified and used by all levee districts, there would be consistency in the collection of data and the tool could be used to upload data directly into the National Database. Grant funds would be needed for states to initiate the program. After the program is initiated, funding will be sought through Federal cost share or State funding. He discussed the need for a safe central location to keep historical data on levees.

Mr. Jackson commented on past attempts to initiate and maintain various types of databases and expressed concern about future funding for the National Levee Database. He commented that the collection of data on levees in the federal system should be the responsibility of the USACE; however, the basic data should be collected and maintained locally. Mr. Turner advised that information would be kept locally in the pilot levee information system program.

#### **B. Discussion of soils testing.**

Mr. Wittie stated that he received the revised turf specifications dated July, 2009. He discussed the testing and treatment of soils in order to reach the proper PH for grass growth.

It was pointed out that some of the contractors have not been cutting grass on levees still under USACE control. Mr. Turner advised that he instructed levee districts to cut the grass in cases where the care of the levee is under the auspices of the Federal Government and the height of the grass impedes the inspection of the levee or becomes a safety issue, and to use the maintenance as work-in-kind to be credited towards the local cost share. He added that these problems have been reported to the USACE project managers. Mr. Colletti advised that the USACE has begun withholding money on construction contracts for turf establishment.

The Committee discussed the composition of the materials that are being taken from borrow pits for the levee lifts and the blending of materials. It was noted that some of the projects under construction have earlier versions of the turf specifications.

#### **C. Discussion of seismic testing of levees to be performed by Dr. Juan Lorenzo.**

Dr. Lorenzo requested that he be provided the exact location of the study sites in order to begin the preliminary study. One mile of levee will be included in the study with each levee district having a segment several hundred yards in length. Mr. Turner advised that the Reach 4 site has been selected for the East Jefferson Levee District. He added that he would provide the requested information to Dr. Lorenzo for the Lake Borgne Basin Levee District and the Orleans Levee District.

## **New Business:**

### **A. Discussion of task order for Bayou St. John Maintenance Cycle Design and task order for Bayou Bienvenue Maintenance Cycle Design. (O.L.D.)**

Gerry Gillen, O.L.D. Executive Director, explained that two sector gate structures require cycle maintenance. The cycle maintenance for the Bayou St. John Control Structure will be coordinated with the USACE's dewatering and inspection of the structure. The O.L.D. may have to pay for keeping the structure dewatered during the sixty days estimated for the maintenance work. The O.L.D. will be responsible for dewatering the Bayou Bienvenue Control Structure. The estimated cost for maintenance of the Bayou Bienvenue Structure is \$500,000 and for Bayou St. John Structure is \$300,000 to \$350,000. Proposals have been received for task orders under an ID-IQ contract with Burk-Kleinpeter for design and project management in the amount of \$74,516 for Bayou Bienvenue and \$59,914 for Bayou St. John. Approval of the Board is required since both task orders are over \$50,000.

The Committee discussed the engineering and construction management fees. A resolution will be presented to the Board for the approval of the task orders.

### **B. Status of IHNC France Road telephone poles. (O.L.D.)**

Mr. Gillen reported on the status of poles located along several levee segments. The O.L.D. is trying to have several Sewerage and Water Board poles located at the south end of the London Avenue Canal removed. The removal of the AT&T lines on the poles belonging to Entergy along the IHNC at France Road has been scheduled. As soon as AT&T removes its lines, Entergy will remove the poles. The O.L.D. Maintenance Director will meet with Entergy on September 8<sup>th</sup> regarding the removal of poles on the London Avenue Canal at Mirabeau.

### **C. Status of Floodgate Repairs. (O.L.D.)**

Mr. Gillen advised that two groups of floodgates require attention. The Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) did the design for about 12 floodgates. The verbiage in the contract must be finalized before the project can be turned over to the O.L.D. An ID-IQ contracted consultant, AECOM, will visit approximately 12 additional floodgates and will prepare a proposal for a task order for those floodgates. He expected to report to the Committee in October on the AECOM proposal.

### **D. Discussion of demolition of existing slab at Mariners Cove. (O.L.D.)**

Mr. Gillen advised that he has received telephone calls concerning the removal of the tennis courts and West End Tennis Courts' building slab. The tennis courts and slab may be removed by the USACE if the new pumping station is constructed at this site.

## **E. Discussion of Easement with the U.S. Wildlife and Fisheries Service.**

Mr. Gillen explained that about 200 acres must be acquired from the U.S. Wildlife and Fisheries Service in New Orleans East at an estimated cost of \$60,000 to \$100,000. There is no agreement in place at this time between the Office of Coastal Protection and Restoration (OCPR) and the O.L.D. for the transfer of monies. He suggested that the O.L.D. make the initial payment in order to proceed with the project and then request reimbursement from OCPR.

The cost of \$300 per acre was discussed. Mr. Lacour pointed out that the O.L.D. would be purchasing an easement. Mr. Estopinal requested that he be provided with a copy of the documentation for the appraisal. Mr. Lacour was request to verify that the appraisal price of \$300 per acre was for the purchase of an easement and not fee title.

A resolution will be presented to the Board concerning this matter.

### **Levee District Reports: (copies appended to minutes)**

#### **A. East Jefferson Levee District:**

Jonell Blowers, EJLD Administrative Assistant, reviewed the monthly status report.

#### **B. Orleans Levee District:**

Gerry Gillen, O.L.D. Executive Director, reviewed the monthly status report

#### **C. Lake Borgne Basin Levee District:**

Tim Jarquin, LBBLD Executive Director, reviewed the monthly status report.

The recommended alternative for LPV 149 consists of re-aligning the protection system to the west of the existing alignment, which will require the construction of a floodgate across the Caernarvon Canal. Mr. Turner advised that there is a movement to change the proposed gated structure to a stop-log structure. A study comparing the costs of the two structures has been completed; however, a final decision has not been made. Mr. Doody requested that an official letter be drafted from the Authority in support of a gated structure and that a resolution be prepared to authorize the letter of support.

## **1. Discussion of the liquidation of assets.**

The LBBLD will hold an equipment action on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. Mr. Lacour advised that a resolution of the Board will be required, as well as an affidavit signed by the Chief of Maintenance stating that the equipment is obsolete or no longer needed. The auction is being advertised.

The Committee will recommend that the Board adopt a resolution to liquidate certain assets of the LBBLD.

There was no further business; therefore, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.