

HOUSING STRATEGY WORK GROUP MEETING

NOVEMBER 30, 2011

1:30 to 3:30 P.M.

RENAISSANCE CENTER, 1ST FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM, TALLAHASSEE

Attendees: Cynthia Valencia (Capital Area CAA), Wanda Carter (Leon County Affordable Housing Advisory Committee), Larry Strickland (Capital City Builders), Katie Sherk (American Red Cross Tallahassee), Sandy Lanier (Florida Division of Emergency Management), Joyce Olavez (City of Tallahassee Housing Division), Robby Powers (City of Tallahassee Emergency Management), Lamarr Kemp (Leon County Housing Director), J.B. Clark (Leon County Housing Advisory Committee), Jeri Bush (Big Bend Community Organizations Active in Disasters), Steve Hodges (Tallahassee-Leon County Planning Department), and Denise Imbler (Apalachee Regional Planning Council).

Introduction and Discussion of Process, Roles And Responsibilities

Denise Imbler with the Apalachee Regional Planning Council opened the meeting by describing the process for disaster plan implementation. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is the place for physical presence and coordination/oversight. In a disaster situation, the board could activate housing team. Somewhere in the mix the Governor may declare a state of emergency and also there may be a disaster declaration. American Red Cross (ARC) will be in EOC and will be identifying and housing need. Katie, with ARC, would notify the disaster housing coordinators. Housing coordinators would be contacting providers to begin ramping up services. Communication is key, many conference calls and other communication will be occurring, to identify issues and needs.

The Red Cross does initial damage assessment. There is a role for a building inspector. A request was made for any other planning assumptions to be considered. Some discussion of being a pilot for housing strategies occurred.

Sheltering as a host county function was discussed. Information on sheltering was presented to the group. The group discussed the Regional Evacuation Study and the information contained therein including surge information. Flooded areas show surge heights which impact surrounding counties and Leon County. Populations in "risk" zones were discussed – they are higher for Franklin and Wakulla. Some populations from Jefferson and Gulf may also seek shelter in Leon as a host county.

Roles, Responsibilities and Available Resources of Housing Team

Housing Coordinators are Lamarr Kemp [County Housing] and Joyce Olavez [City Housing]. Joyce's City programs have an emergency care program and would look for the stock that could be returned with minimal work. For those that are more catastrophic they would require additional resources such as the federal government tarp program and building construction agencies. Temporary fixes between ARC, COAD and state could be handled.

For those homes that are not habitable, i.e. 100 homes that are not habitable, the question was posed as to what approach to take. Temporary shelter could be provided at extended stay facilities, such as mobile homes. For those that are poorest of poor without insurance there is a question of how to provide those facilities. Those with insurance may exhaust insurance and/or face insurance issues. They may need federal assistance.

Renters versus homeowner issues were discussed. For Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) \$30,000 is limit for homeowners. The renter does not get that type of assistance. Issues for renters are placement and public transportation. FEMA becomes a much more important source and it is funding oriented but not temporary housing oriented. The funds can be used for temporary housing.

With regard to transportation, StarMetro has a role to play and they should be coordinated with regarding providing services.

With regard to uninsured, ARC covers life, health and safety issues. They use qualifying income not based on HUD (Housing and Urban Development), but AMI (Average Median Income). Leon County housing programs use HUD. The programs take into account HUD properties and can register available properties for housing. COAD (Big Bend Community Organizations Active in Disasters) is trying to make Florida housing part of SERT (State Emergency Response Team) process so that housing inventory can be covered. There is no mechanism to waive security deposit and FEMA will not cover. Community Development can work with providers to see if deposits can be waived.

Hotels are not a necessarily viable source because variability during the year depending on the season.

Communication is a key. The 211 system can be used to get eligible clients into the system. Clients can register with FEMA on-line. Also, computers are made available at Disaster Recovery Centers (DRC) to register clients. Choice of the physical locations for centers can influence those registering; commonly used areas such as Walmart parking lots can facilitate participation.

The group discussed continuation of basic services. With regard to continuation of mass care, coordinative efforts are used to provide services and transition from immediate recovery. The group agreed that there is an understanding of basic service provision and to write into the Housing Strategy how they will meet and coordinate upon activation. The group agreed to articulate that they will meet at a central location, the EOC, to coordinate efforts upon activation of the Red Cross. The RPC will use the Florida Division of Emergency Management housing field guide, as well as local input, to craft the coordinative and roles section of the strategy. The strategy should mirror the state efforts on coordination and recovery.

DEM commented that county providers should have a task force that performs a dual role of long-term recovery and housing recovery. County staff should be identified and positioned to complete necessary coordination and functions. The long-term recovery team should stand ready to activate the housing task force as necessary. Denise commented that the intent was to do so.

Significant discussion occurred regarding timing and coordination of the Housing Disaster Task Force. The Red Cross will be in the EOC and upon assessment determine need for activating the disaster task force. There will be a number of conference calls as the determinations occur and then decision to activate the housing disaster task force.

Some discussion of the transportation system and service provision occurred. It was explained that StarMetro does coordinate service for transportation disadvantaged, etc., and that infrastructure is coordinated through the MPO.

The discussion returned to rental housing: Dorms are not available. DEM has as part of their strategy to use the universities. DEM commented that aside from use of dorms, part of the

strategy is to get access to land for temporary and transitional housing. Insurance can provide for temporary housing such as travel trailers. PIO (Public Information Offices) and PSAs (Public Service Announcements) can be used by DEM to facilitate identification of allowable housing options and to provide reminders such as remembering to bring your homeowners policy when evacuating.

The discussion returned to uninsured. It was unclear if HUD or CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) funds would cover a travel trailer as temporary housing for individuals/families. DEM did not know but will try to find out. DFS (Department of Financial Services) does have outreach for communities to determine need; and FEMA has outreach as well.

Denise indicated she would be meeting with the housing coordinators to put together a “Jobs/Aid” sheet that identifies participants roles and responsibilities in long-term disaster recovery. Red Cross will also be part of it as they have a central role in transition from short term to long-term recovery.

With regard to leadership decision-making in a disaster, County commissioners have certain restrictions. The plan should ensure the ability of decision-makers and local programs to address needs in a disaster. Therefore, it should identify resources, needs and available variances in those situations, i.e., local affordable housing trust fund should have ability to be shifted to meet needs through local authorization including the annual action plan. This item should be included in the list of PDRP recommendations for future actions. DEM recommended that local permitting fees not be waived because can be a resource for clients and FEMA won’t pick up that particular cost. Construction fees may be waived as may be covered by some other source. County housing commented that the uninsured cannot receive local funds. The group had some discussion regarding establishing a threshold for waiving fees.

The TBA (Tallahassee Builders Association) representative commented that staff at the city and county should be consulted. The planning department representative indicated he would find appropriate contacts to discuss the issue of fees, waivers and “fast tracking”. Some discussion occurred regarding insurance review and payments; insurance goals are to minimize costs and in most cases only cover 80% of replacement costs.

Denise indicated she will coordinate the next step for the plan development and meet with the Housing Coordinators and ARC.

Next Meeting

The group is targeting January 11th at 1:30 to meet at the Leon County Emergency Operations Center on Appleyard Drive. Denise will meet with Joyce, Lamar and Katie in the next few weeks [December 12th or 13th] to finalize the “Jobs Aid” document. Then Denise will prepare a “Jobs Aid” sheet and draft housing plan, and distribute by January 10th.