

# **Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council**

## **Meeting for Public Comment on Method of Distribution For Disaster Recovery**

5:30 PM  
Thursday, November 19, 2009

LRGVDC TRANSPORTATION CENTER  
510 S. PLEASANTVIEW DR.  
WESLACO, TX

**LRGVDC Staff: Kenneth N. Jones, Executive Director  
Manuel Cruz, Director, Homeland Security  
Marcie Oviedo, Program Administrator  
Ludy Saenz, Planner**

**Mr. Ken Jones:** Good afternoon everyone, for the record my name is Ken Jones and I would like to introduce LRGVDC staff involved with the Disaster Recovery Method of Distribution, Marcie Oviedo, Manuel Cruz and Ludy Saenz. We are only required to have two (2) public meetings, but we are holding five (5) throughout the three county region. The first two meetings will be to let everyone know on the allocation for round two of this funding, what the LRGVDC is in charge of and to solicit comments on what to consider for the MOD. The other three (3) meetings will be held in January at which we should be getting comments from the M.O.D. that will be developed in December. He proceeded with the presentation.

The State of Texas Hurricanes Dolly and Ike Disaster Recovery Supplemental Funding (HUD Funds) were as follows: 1<sup>st</sup> Round \$55,000,000 was given for the three county regions and for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Round, \$184,920,160 for a total Allocation of \$239,920,160. Some have not received the Grant awards from round one (1). TDRA is anticipating that those awards should be finalized and in the system by November 20, 2009. In the first round Hidalgo County had 24,750,000, Cameron County had 24,750,000, and Willacy County had 5,000,000.

For Round two (2), the LRGVDC was allocated \$184,920,160 out of that amount \$104,925,787 is for Housing, \$15,108,600 was for Affordable Rental Program\*, \$64,885,773 was for Total Non-housing, \$63,481,528 is the General Non-housing and \$1,404,245 was set aside for Healthcare Facilities\*. The two asterisks means that in those two pots of money, although they're allocated to our region, those are competitive applications that will go from applicant to TDRA.

LRGVDC's MOD Must Include TOTAL housing \$104,925,787 And Non-Housing \$63,481,528. The LRGVDC MOD cannot transfer responsibility for developing an MOD to a unit of general local government (one MOD for each region); Priority to projects that meet LMI material objective; Program criteria that encourage long-term strategies for reducing the risk of damage from future natural disasters; No local competitions or county MODs; All allocations by COGs will be conditional until the state reaches the 50% LMI requirements for the entire allocation; Deadline for submitting MOD has been set for January, 2010; and TDRA Encourages COGS to make direct allocations to specific regional projects.

The four COG Regions affected have requested that TDRA extend the timeline and it has been approved. If we stick to our timeline, our MOD will go ahead, before anyone else and hopefully that should mean that whatever projects we identify with the MOD should be considered for funding before everybody else.

He then proceeded to explain the timeline; he mentioned that the next public meeting would be held on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at Harlingen Cultural Arts Center. Comments to be considered in the development of the MOD will be due on December 11, 2009. A meeting of the Disaster Recovery Advisory Committee to consider the developed MOD will be held on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Once the MOD is developed and approved by the DRAC, it will be made available for public comment with three additional public meetings scheduled for the first week of January, one in each county Raymondville, Weslaco, and Brownsville. If there are any modifications that need to be done, it will be presented to the DRAC with recommendation on January 13<sup>th</sup> 2010,

and then the final MOD will be submitted to the LRGVDC Board of Directors for final approval on January 28<sup>th</sup> 2010.

Mr. Jones then reviewed the housing portion of the MOD. He stated that a Housing Survey Questionnaire was developed and sent to all interested entities to see what the actual need on housing may be and where. Surveys were submitted, but it is still unclear as to actual need and how much it would cost to repair or reconstruct units. There are two avenues to take on the housing. The LRGVDC can either allocate the dollars by county or there is a potential to maximize the benefit of the housing funds and try to keep it on a regional basis, through the COG. The LRGVDC would hire a firm to do the housing solicitation, find the people, do the applications, take care of the environmental etc.

On the Non-housing we have received comments and a listing of projects from the drainage districts within the region to consider on the MOD for project specific distribution of the dollars for drainage. These projects still have to meet a 50% LMI requirement, so the projects must fit the criteria. The State is recommending we consider regional projects for the Non-housing dollars.

**Diana R. Serna, Hidalgo Urban County Program:**

Commented and acknowledged that we do need the money in the area. However, from her office there is no way to determine who actually got assistance from FEMA and who actually had insurance to pay for it. She would like to concentrate on drainage improvements. If Hidalgo County gets flooded, more than likely so will Cameron County and Willacy County. If the counties concentrate on the drainage improvement and join together as a Rio Grande Valley it will improve the living conditions of the people that live here. With housing a regional project, can provide more residents with what they need, since there are people who do need housing improvements. We need to have non-profits get involved so if there is a chance for them to apply for funding and if they have non-profits with good records they will be able to help more people. Drainage improvement is a high priority for Hidalgo County.

**Ken Jones:** Targeting regional projects is a good thing and encouraging to hire some assistance so the ultimate responsibility is not at the county level.

**Guadalupe Rangel Jr., City of Edcouch:**

Based on Diana Serna's recommendation, drainage improvements are needed. All the water from the main frame from the Hidalgo County drainage district, the City of Elsa, La Plante, La Villa, and Edcouch are not connected to the main drainage. They are connected to the Irrigation Drainage that was built to serve purposes for agriculture. La Villa, Edcouch and Elsa are the main sinking hole. Putting money into the housing is not going to solve the problem; the only way to fix it is to get all the water out of there. All the connections to the Northern part of Weslaco some from the Donna Irrigation Districts are all connected together. By the time they want relieve the water from these cities, they can't because there hasn't been great improvement. When Dolly hit it affected the City of Edcouch, there was raw sewage and water throughout the city in some of the subdivisions that were flooded. In 2006 every Delta city went through an issue, to this day there is nothing that has been done. Right now, if there are at 4 inches of rain, families still have homes that flood.

**Arturo Prida, City of Rio Hondo:**

We need to use a formula where everyone will benefit from the funds, small and large cities. Those 16 projects were too ambitious of the project. The Solid Waste, 6 or 7 entities were received out of 50. It's not just the population there are other factors like financial situations. We could use other orders to create a formula and not just concentrate on larger cities. We would ask that the formula could be obtained. Everyone will benefit from the regional project.

**Ken Jones:**

We would have specific projects listed. Wherever those projects are located, we would list x amount of money for the county or the Drainage District, and amount of people that would benefit from this particular project. Some drainage improvement in Hidalgo County may also have beneficial impact to Willacy County. There is regional impact even though the actual construction may be in one (1) County it could affect a big area and benefit the whole region. The 104 million for housing may be targeted on those areas of drainage improvement also. We can develop an MOD in such a way that if there is more funding from the state, they could leverage dollar per dollar. The LRGVDC is trying to maximize the resources by coming up with an MOD that would benefit more people or the region as a whole.