

# **Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council**

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

5:30 PM  
Friday, December 11, 2009

TSTC CORPORATE COLLEGE  
1902 N. LOOP 499 BLDG. B  
HARLINGEN, TX

**LRGVDC Staff: Kenneth N. Jones, Executive Director  
Manuel Cruz, Director, Homeland Security**

A public hearing was held by the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) in the TSTC Corporate College, Harlingen Texas on Friday, December 11, 2009 beginning at 5:30 p.m. with Executive Director, Ken Jones. Also present were Homeland Security Director, Manuel Cruz, Program Analyst, Chance Sparks (TDRA) and Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, Kelly Crawford.

Mr. Ken Jones called the public hearing on the Method of Distribution for the Supplemental Disaster Recovery Funds.

**FREEDOM of INFORMATION ACT:**

The Monitor and Valley Morning Star were both notified of the public hearing. The meeting notice was published with both newspapers and posted on the LRGVDC website as well.

**PUBLIC HEARING- PROPOSED METHOD OF DISTURIBUTION**

Round one as most of you may know, the total for the three counties was 55million and for Round two, it was a little more. Round one the state received 1.3billion, round two received 1.7billion so the total for both of them would be \$3billion. If you look at the total for both rounds we did fairly well. On the Round one scenario that's essentially how the dollars were allocated among our three counties within our planning region. The following is the breakdown for the 185million. Out of that total the larger portion which was 105million, was allocated for housing. If you add those 105million with the Round one dollars that were allocated for housing, it gets us close to the 50% of the total of Round one and two. Affordable Rental Program, was a little over 15million and Healthcare Facility was 1.4million. We've got a specific regional allocation for those two categories within our three counties but it's competitive through the state. It is really important to make the effort to get the word out to let people know the availability of those dollars. Especially with affordable housing program, if there is not enough applications submitted to utilize 100% of these funds available whatever is left on the table is going to get spent elsewhere in the state.

**Non-Housing Allocation Funds:**

There are almost 63 an a half million that's left in the non-housing category. And all of those make that 185million. The housing and the non-housing are the two categories that the Development Council is charged with determining the MOD. How we actually come up with that is that there are some changes in the criteria requirements from Round one to Round two on what is eligible as far as MOD and what is encouraged by the state for us to consider. A couple of changes are that, we can't transfer responsibility for doing the MOD to anybody else. Round one we had two. The COG had one which was 50%, and the counties were allowed to come up with

their own MOD. This time we are not allowed to do that. Everything needs to meet the LMI objectives, no local competitions; the state is encouraging that we take a strong look at direct allocations for specific regional projects. The deadline is Next Thursday, December 15, 2009. We sent a housing survey out to all the cities, all local entities, that we knew of and the responses we received were low. For repair, it was between 8,000 to 40,000 per unit. There is a wide range of need. After we best decide a process to be sure to target those most in need, the short timeline we have and meet the states requirement in that housing MOD. What is being brought forth is to leave that allocation at a regional number that the Development Council is the recipient for those dollars, and terms of implementing that, we are still looking for alternative funding. The method is to determine what those needs are, provide recommendations back to our board and make it part of our public process. The Priority for non-housing that was discussed in the November Public meeting is drainage. With the storm the biggest problem was flooding. The biggest cause of the housing damage was flooding. The whole MOD for the non-housing at this point, for public comment is focused on dealing with some of the larger drainage situations that we have for all the three counties. The drainage project has to meet the 50% LMI requirement. One of the revisions after the meeting that we had and Cameron County was looking at some additional need that existed on the four Communities, Santa Rosa, Combes, Primera and Rio Hondo. The Santa Rosa additional improvement with them and the Tio Cano Tamm Lane is specifically for some connections that they need there for drainage. With project specific that we have, in case the situation, there are some unexpected costs on any of the projects, there is money on the table. If there is something unforeseen that the state may say when the applications are actually submitted for those dollars something is not found eligible there could be some more money left on the table. In order to insure that the money stays in that county, there has to be another project to capture those dollars. Which is why the money runs out but we still have other projects to take over. If for some reason we go through all the projects and there is still money left on the table we need to have another safety net as such that if we still have a housing need that the non-housing goes over to the housing, but also, we need to have the same deal with the housing. If for some reason out of 105million everything is done properly and could be proven with the state verification, in the three counties and there is still dollars left on the table, we could move those dollars to the non-housing.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

**Hilario Rincones**, (Regional Advisory Bd. – Community Resource Group Inc.):

I have worked over thirty years in the public sector. I'm here as a volunteer for an organization out of Arkansas that has been doing some phenomenal work in South Texas particularly. Here in the region we've been addressing some of the housing needs in rural, communities and colonias too. The funding for the program that I am about to share with you comes from some of the major foundations in America. One of the things we saw when working while working with the region, there is a tremendous lack of a solution to our housing. All of us appreciate the tremendous amount of effort that goes into a lot of the state and federal funding programs that do a phenomenal job. But because we are a fast growing region, we just felt that we could never catch up with the housing needs. We feel strongly that we should do everything for people that want help. We don't believe everyone wants a grant. We came up with a concept for people to

improve their money. We believe particularly for there is a sense of urgency now, 18 months later we were there with FEMA while they were handing out checks to the people. I can also assure you that we definitely need the trust relief. But we also need to get the faces of people that are still living in our region. Right now, what we've done, in Starr County and Western Hidalgo County we've given a \$2,500 and go through an application process, out of three loans, one is suspended. 70% of the loans in the county are going to single moms. What we're looking for is how we can provide the outreach.

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

The situation was that the top of the city was implemented to provide the support. We tried to get all the help that we could. We even brought trucks to help with the water and the damages. That was our main problem, was trying to get rid of the water. We need to drain the town into the Arroyo Colorado because all the drains go to the Arroyo Colorado. The issue is not only that we need to drain but we need to drain it fast because all the water that goes over there, takes 24hrs. I think that problem is something that we could all do together and put this plan in effect. We are ready to start working.

**Brenda Heredia**, (Family Crisis Center, Inc.):

First I want to stress my thanks and appreciation for the LRGVDC. We were unfortunate to get that rain and damage to our shelters and nobody wanted to give us any money even though we had the insurances. We are very grateful we received \$330,000 for the replacement of the shelter and buildings. If there is any money left over, my concern is, what if, some of that money isn't used, and couldn't you also open it up for something like Fire Protection Facilities and equipment or Community Center and Emergency Shelters. Even though we received those 330,000 dollars, I can't put in anything like an Emergency Generator because it wasn't covered. So if there is anything left could you use it for those categories. I'd like the idea that you had those people in line so that they could also get drainage improvement. By the way, 7 out of my 24 employees and some of them lost their home. But yet, they did not get much from FEMA at all. After looking this over it's great to have those projects lined up. But if there still is money left, I just ask that the money remain in the county and if it's not for drainage improvement, then towards some of the other items that are eligible if the cost will obtain it. Also, as a private citizen I also want to say that I have seen that the state tends to ignore us and I also want to remind the people that we are the poor among the poorest, we are the ones that are neglected. What I want to say is when and if the next round of money comes that we also get those other various that are listed as eligible for funding. We need the economic development and the planning and urban environment, sewer facilities and water facilities and so on.

**Terri Brown**, (Valley Interfaith):

Please see attached comments provided by Ms. Brown.

**Ken Jones:**

I just want to thank everyone for coming and sharing your comments with us. Also, thank the men from the state for coming.

***Ended the Public Meeting at approximately 6:30 PM***

# VALLEY INTERFAITH

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December 11, 2009

Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council  
Attn: Ken Jones, Executive Director  
311 N. 15<sup>th</sup> St.  
McAllen, Texas 78501

Please find below Public Comments related to Second Comment Period for Method of Distribution on Additional Disaster Funding for use of CDGB Disaster Recovery Grants submitted by Valley Interfaith, 1508 E. Highway 83, #C, Weslaco, Texas 78550.

Valley Interfaith states- Hurricane Dolly devastated numerous communities in Cameron, Willacy and Hidalgo County. According to FEMA 27,425 homes received damage, 26,607 homes received damage up to \$8,000, 616 home received damage between \$8,001 and \$15,000, 114 homes received damage between \$15,501 to \$28,800 and 88 homes received over \$28,000 in damage.

Using the FEMA damage calculations for homes at their lowest damage range or no less than \$4,000 the total potential unmet need could top \$169,587,730. To date you will find the current dollars from Round I funding set aside for housing and unmet needs totaling:

Cameron County Housing		\$4,729,068
Hidalgo County Housing		\$2,209,638
Willacy County Housing		\$541,287
LRGVDC Regional Housing	13.5%	\$7,479,993

Based on these calculations there could be over \$162 million dollars in unmet need for housing repairs, rehabilitation or reconstruction. **Valley Interfaith supports the recommendations made the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council, the Office of Rural Community Affairs and the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs that 50% of hurricane recovery dollars be allocated to housing in the three county region of the Rio Grande Valley.** This would ensure that an additional \$104,925,787 would be allocated to housing from the Round 2 Funding slated to the LRGVDC.

Additionally, as these housing dollars are intended to assist families with unmet housing repair and rehabilitation, **the counties and municipalities should be required to implement aggressive outreach strategies to recruit some of the 27,425 homes and families that were damaged in the hurricane.** Counties and other municipalities should be required to provide evidence of their efforts not only to the state but to local community organizations and non-profits detailing their efforts beyond the minimum of newspaper advertisements, and postings in public spaces.

Outreach efforts should include, but not be limited to, door to door canvassing in hardest hit areas, radio and television PSA's, cooperative meetings with local social service providers, recruitment fairs in local churches and schools, mail outs to all FEMA applicants regardless of claim status, and any other aggressive measures that will identify those who have thus far been left to their own resources. Additionally, local municipalities should develop or modify existing qualifying standards to meet the least punitive methods available to ensure families in need receive the assistance available to repair their lives and their homes. Additionally, Valley Interfaith requests that local non-profits be used to administer these funds and make repairs not the local bureaucracies that will create barriers to housing repairs for residents of the Valley.

Valley Interfaith has worked to ensure that interests of families in the Rio Grande Valley are represented and will continue to monitor the local municipalities to ensure compliance with the requirements that at least 50% of the hurricane recovery dollars serve communities at or below 80% of the area median income.

Should you have questions for need further information please call 956-968-3900 between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm.

Sincerely,



Rev. Albert Lelo  
Executive Committee Co-Chair