

# **Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council**

## **Meeting for Public Comment on 2<sup>nd</sup> Round Disaster Recovery Funds**

10:00 A.M.  
Tuesday, August 10, 2010  
Willacy County Courthouse  
576 W. Main St.  
Raymondville, Texas

**LRGVDC Staff: Kenneth N. Jones, Executive Director  
Marcie Oviedo, Director of Regional Planning  
Ludy Saenz, Program Administer  
Valerie Ramos, Technician**

A public hearing was held by the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) at the Willacy County Courthouse, Raymondville Texas on Tuesday, August 10, 2010 beginning at 10 a.m. A total of 13 people attended the hearing. Present were LRGVDC Executive Director, Ken Jones, Judge Aurelio Guerra (host), Cecil Pennington and Monica Bosque from Texas Department of Rural Affairs (TDRA), Kevin Hamby from Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA), translator Julio C. Trevino, and LRGVDC Staff.

**FREEDOM of INFORMATION ACT:**

Advertisements and Public Service Announcements were sent to all local media (newspaper, TV, radio, etc.) plus housing groups, social services entities, water groups, and non-profit organizations. The notice was also posted on the LRGVDC website and on the Secretary of the State.

**PUBLIC HEARING - DISASTER RECOVERY FUNDING ORIENTATION:**

Mr. Jones welcomed everyone present and reminded them that written comments were due on Friday, August 20, 2010 by 5:00 p.m. at the LRGVDC Office. He then summarizes the Method of Distribution (MOD) 2<sup>nd</sup> Round of Funding referring everyone to the presentation handouts. He mentioned that the timeline has been approved by TDRA as part of the Citizen Participation Plan. He stated that the total allocation for the 2<sup>nd</sup> round was approximately \$185 million. The total housing amount was \$122,034,387. and out of that total amount there was approximately \$107 million for general housing and \$15.1 million for the affordable rental program. Mr. Jones added a reminder that the affordable rental program (\$15.1 million) was funding dollars allocated to the three (3) county COG region for that program, but in this case those that anticipate being eligible are to submit applications and apply directly to the state, TDHCA. Those dollars and applications will not be going through the council governments for review. The \$107 million is different; the Development Council in the proposed MOD is the grant recipient. Recap on HUD Disaster Recovery funds, Round 1 and Round 2. \$55 million was used in Round 1 and if added to Round 2 it equals to a little over \$240 million for both rounds. In December, the MOD was submitted and met the state deadline and from that time to now the State has been awaiting HUD's final approval. Changes have been made, but the Rio Grande Valley fared well by not losing dollars from the recommendation from the TRDA. The changes that did occur resulted from the requirements that transpired in the conciliation agreement executed by the State and housing advocate groups. As outlined in the Conciliation Agreement the State was able to release 33% of our allocation and a balance should be available once TDHCA completes and announces the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Study. HUD and the State would like to know how we would allocate the 33%. What is being recommended and is out for public comment, is that out of the \$61 million currently released that \$58,981,527. be allocated to Regional Drainage Projects that were identified back in December which are essentially a priority that was approved by the COG Board. Mr. Jones then referred everyone to the Project List and said that 100% for drainage is still available. Also mentioned that the MOD has a description of each project and is available on the website.

**NON-HOUSING ALLOCATION FUNDS:**

Mr. Jones also explained the non-housing funding category. The difference between the \$58 million allocated for the non-housing and the \$61 million available for the 1<sup>st</sup> Phase, the LRGVDC is recommending that remaining amount be applied to housing components so it can give the LRGVDC an opportunity to move forward to procure a management firm to assist us in managing the approximate \$107 million. This would allow the LRGVDC to get preliminary activities out of the way in terms of developing a process to do an assessment of need as a result of Hurricane Dolly, provide recommendations to the COG Board of Directors in terms of recommending allocations on distribution of \$107 million. The specifics of that distribution would be a part of the next Phased MOD, also requiring public participation process.

**NO PUBLIC COMMENTS AVAILABLE BUT QUESTIONS WERE AS FOLLOWS:**

**Dan Reyna, (Willacy County):**

How will that firm be hired, rated or scored? Mr. Jones stated the board has gone through a statement of qualifications process that is consistent with TDHCA, nine (9) proposals were received and the Board pre-qualified seven (7) to receive an RFP. The request for proposals once approved by the COG Board could be on the Board Agenda by August 26<sup>th</sup>, with the MOD. Mr. Reyna then asked if they were from the Valley or out of the Valley. Mr. Jones mentioned they are from in and out of the Valley. Some of the management firms have put together teams that include local people and some non local people, it varies from proposal to proposal, but there are local entities involved in each of those.

**Cecil Pennington, (TDRA):**

The one thing is that there will be training on both the application process as well as affirmations for fair housing process, so we ask the people not to launch into those applications until you go through the training, scheduled for Monday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Mr. Jones then stated that only the housing would be going thru the COG. The proposed non-housing projects would be an application from the designated grant recipient to the State. Our role upon the complication of the MOD for the non-housing part will essentially be complete, other than helping provide technical assistance for those project applicants.

**Ricardo Gomez, (RGA Consultants):**

Who is going to be the sub-precipitants, the three (3) counties, or the City Rio Hondo, Pharr (Referring to the Project List Form)? Mr. Jones explained that for the 1<sup>st</sup> project it would be Hidalgo County with an inter-local agreement with Hidalgo County Drainage #1. Currently the MOD #4 indicates Cameron County being the recipient, but the City of La Feria has shown interest in being a direct recipient. If it does go through then we will be working with La Feria and the County to make what should be the finally recommendation to the board. #8, Cameron County is currently indicated as the grant recipient for projects within Primera, Combes, and Rio Hondo. We have only received verbal comments at this time for these local governments to be direct grant recipient.

Mr. Reyna asked that on #9, Delta area, if Hidalgo County will be in charge, will that project extend into Willacy at all. Mr. Jones said no, will mostly affect La Villa, Edcouch Elsa because it was a badly flooded area with Hurricane Dolly (referring to the map).

Mr. Gomez then asked if there would be possibilities for revisions, minor revisions, and stated Willacy County lateral connections and what it runs thru an example. Mr. Jones stated that in the detailed descriptions for Willacy County, it includes a connection for Raymondville to assist them. Mr. Gomez asked if there is more than meets the eye from looking at the map. Mr. Jones said hopefully the MOD can show a more detailed description. If there are any refinements that need to be made to the description would have to be brought to us by August 26<sup>th</sup> Board meeting because what the board approves will be submitted to TDRA. The only thing that cannot change is the dollar amounts.

**Allen Essex, (Valley Morning Star):**

East of Los Fresnos it's all clay, there are houses where the septic tanks won't work there, what good will it do? The biggest housing problem that has been identified is flooding. It is hoped that these project will minimize the occurrence of this happening again.

**Ken Jones:**

There being no further questions or comments, Mr. Jones adjourned the hearing.

**Ended the Public Meeting at approximately 11:00 AM**