

Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council

Meeting for Public Comment on Method of Distribution For Disaster Recovery

5:30 P.M.
Thursday, August 12, 2010
Cameron County Courthouse
Exhibit Room – 1st Floor
1100 E. Monroe
Brownsville, Texas

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

A public hearing was held by the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) at the Cameron County Courthouse Exhibit Room- 1st floor, Brownsville Texas on Thursday, August 12, 2010 beginning at 5:30 p.m. A total of 20 people attended the hearing. Present were LRGVDC Executive Director, Ken Jones, Cecil Pennington and Chance Sparks 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) 2nd 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 2nd 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 1st 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.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Steve Brewer, (Mayor of La Feria):

The second round funding is so critical because the Valley has the opportunity to be able to do repairs for our future and for our children's future on drainage that we can use throughout the Rio Grande Valley. In La Feria and Santa Rosa area two weeks before Hurricane Dolly hit we had about 12-13 inches of rain; Hurricane Dolly brought us 30-35 inches of rain. I had never seen flooding like we had; the highway between La Feria to Santa Rosa was closed for 90 days it was a tremendous devastation. The City of La Feria is right in the center of where the big problem was and we have taken the lead to be the direct recipient because it affects our area, and our neighbor Santa Rosa. Working with the government through Development Council we have a really good program and La Feria has got the expertise to really make it happen. This is a really great project. Thank you.

Javier Mendez, (City of Primera):

The City of Primera would like to administer the funds allocated under the MOD. The city has many years of grant administration experience.

Allen Moore, (Cameron County Drainage Dist#5):

Basically, I just want to comment on project #4, Tio Cano. All the meetings that have been held to try to put a plan together to fix that area and the cooperation between the Cities of La Feria, Santa Rosa, Harlingen, the county, Drainage Dist #5, La Feria Irrigation, Harlingen Irrigation and all those within that area are very supportive of this proposal.

Ben Medina, (City of Brownsville):

For the City of Brownsville we would like to add project #17 and have submitted proper information for this project.

Ken Jones:

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

Ended the Public Meeting at approximately 6:30 PM