

Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council

Action Plan for Hurricane's Ike and Dolly Disaster Recovery



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Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA)

Texas Department of Housing
and Community Affairs (TDHCA)

Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council

Method of Distribution for Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery Funding

February 26, 2009

Modified March 30, 2009 within the Resolution Authority granted to the Executive Director

The Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA) along with the Texas Department of Housing & Community Affairs (TDHCA) have been designated by the Governor's Office, to administer \$1.3 billion in disaster recovery funding provided by the U.S. Department of Housing (HUD) for recovery from damages sustained from Hurricane's Ike and Dolly.

The State's Action Plan identifies the Councils of Government as the entity that will develop the Method of Distribution for their respective regions and allocated \$55 million to the LRGVDC region.

Summary Information

Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) - Region: 21

Principal Contact: Kenneth N. Jones, Executive Director, knjones@lrgvdc.org; Phone: (956) 682-3481

Regional Allocation: **\$55,000,000.**

Committee Make-Up

Advisory Committee	Active Regional Review Committee (RRC) Members	Representation of Entitlement Cities Members	Urban County Program Members	Total
	7	8	2	17

After the LRGVDC Board of Director's Meeting on January 28th, 2009, the committee make-up was expanded to include all LRGVDC Board Members.

Public Notification & Input Process

The LRGVDC conducted several meetings with the Advisory Committee to inform them of the funding and to seek input on the Method of Distribution.

LRGVDC has scheduled two formal public hearings to receive input from the public on the proposed method of distribution. The public hearings are scheduled as follows:

Tuesday, February 17, 2009 = 5:30 pm
Cameron County Courthouse
Commissioner's Courtroom
1100 E. Monroe
Brownsville, TX 78520

Wednesday, February 18, 2009 = 5:30 pm
LRGVDC Transportation Center
510 S. Pleasantview Dr.
Weslaco, TX 78596

LRGVDC has posted the notices in the three local newspapers within the Cameron, Hidalgo & Willacy Region, on the Secretary of State's Texas Register/Open Meetings webpage and on the LRGVDC website at lrgvdc.org. Individual notices to all eligible communities were also mailed, faxed and e-mailed.

LRGVDC staff presented the Method of Distribution recommended by the expanded Advisory Committee at their February 4, 2009 meeting. Staff received testimony and listen to concerns from the Public on the distribution of funding and community needs related to the Hurricane Disaster Recovery. (Comments received, documentation of compliance with the required public participation process, and a summary of the Public Hearings are included in **Appendix A**).

Long-Term Planning & Recovery

LRGVDC strongly believes that many of the housing needs will be addressed through infrastructure activities. Much of the damage to housing resulted from drainage facilities failing to function or sustaining damage during Hurricane Dolly. Given the emphasis on sustainability and long-term planning (desire to avoid repeat damage), LRGVDC feels in prudent to address the cause of the housing damage and make efforts to harden the damaged neighborhoods. The Region received major flooding in specific areas of Cameron and Hidalgo and Willacy Counties and drainage projects will address the majority of those needs along with improving and ensuring the health and safety of those communities during a disaster.

Method of Distribution

Split of Funding Between Housing and Non-Housing

LRGVDC split funding between housing and non-housing programs based upon input from individual counties from their respective county MODs, aggregated to a regional level. The results were as follows:

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

Direct Allocation

At their final meeting held on February 4th, 2009 at Weslaco City Hall, the expanded Advisory Committee agreed on the following formula:

Cameron County	45%	\$24,750,000
Hidalgo County	45%	\$24,750,000
Willacy County	10%	\$5,500,000
	100%	\$55,000,000

The distribution between the three counties was based on FEMA PA totals as of 12/01/08, Low-Moderate Income data for the respective counties, and presence of coastline within the county. Following distribution to the three counties, LRGVDC will directly allocate 50% of the County allocation shown above by population among incorporated communities and the rural portion of each county utilizing the January, 2008 Texas State Data Center Population Estimates. (Direct allocation figures are shown on **Appendix B** and the Method of Distribution Detail Worksheet). Population was selected because of the regional nature of the disaster affects and similar impacts throughout the region. Only 50% was allocated in this manner to allow for a county set-aside distribution allowing each county to adjust to their unique needs, while assuring each eligible unit of government to receive assistance.

The remaining 50% will be allocated to each county area. The County Commissioners' Court for each county will be responsible for preparing a County Method of Distribution consistent with the guidelines prepared by the Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA).

Detailed calculations and explanations of the factors used to develop each allocation are included in **Appendix B**.

Verifiable data used included the following:

- Public Assistance Information from the FEMA Hurricane Dolly and Ike PA IA totals (as of 12-1-08)
- HUD Low-Moderate Income Estimated for All Texas Block Groups, FY07, which is available at <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/systems/census/tx/index.cfm>
- Presence of coastline in each county (to adjust for storm impact)
- Texas State Data Center Population Estimates, January 2008

Reallocation of Unused Funds

Should a city within a county fail to submit an eligible project to ORCA or use all of its direct allocation from LRGVDC, the city will have 10 working days to submit a substitute eligible project to ORCA. Should the replacement project not be eligible, the unused funds shall be automatically reallocated to the direct allocation for unincorporated portions of the county in which the city is located. Should the direct allocation to the unincorporated portions of the county go unused, or a project be declared ineligible, the county shall have 10 working days to submit a substitute eligible project to ORCA. Should the replacement project not be eligible, the unused funds shall be automatically reallocated to the LRGVDC, which will then redistribute the funds to the remaining counties for placement in the unincorporated direct allocations for those counties.

This formula was subsequently presented at the public hearings and meetings of the LRGVDC Board of Directors.

Signatory Authority:

Kenneth N. Jones
Executive Director
956-682-3481
February 26, 2009

Signature of Authorized Representative

Agenda

Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council
Distribution of Disaster Recovery Funds

Public Hearings

Tuesday, February 17, 2009
Cameron County Courthouse
Commissioner's Courtroom
1100 E. Monroe
Brownsville, TX 78520
5:30 pm

Wednesday, February 18, 2009
LRGVDC Transportation Center
510 S. Pleasantview Dr.
Weslaco, TX 78596
5:30 pm

Subject: Public Hearings Regarding Supplemental Disaster Recovery Funds for Hurricane Ike and Dolly Impacted Areas

1. Introductions
2. Disaster Recovery Funding Orientation
3. COG Method of Distribution
4. Public Comments
5. Adjournment

SUMMARY

LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL DISTRIBUTION OF DISASTER RECOVERY FUNDS

February 17, 2009 = 5:30 PM
Cameron County Courthouse
Commissioner's Courtroom
1100 E. Monroe
Brownsville, TX 78520

RRC Chairman: The meeting was opened by Mayor David Winstead, City of Los Fresnos, Regional Review Committee Chairman at 5:44 PM. Mayor Winstead informed the audience the nature and purpose of the hearing. He introduced Mr. Kenneth N. Jones, Jr., Executive Director of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council and began the Public Hearing at 5:44 PM.

LRGVDC Staff: Mr. Jones informed the audience of the potential funding opportunities for local government that would soon be available by the state and federal government for disaster relief for counties designated as disaster declared counties and impacted by Hurricane Dolly and Ike. He identified them as Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy County. The Governor designated the Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA) and Texas Department of Housing Community Affairs to provide the \$55 million in disaster recovery toward meeting unmet housing, non-housing, and other eligible community and economic revitalization needs associated with the disaster.

It was determined that the best venue for allocation would be thru the Councils of Government (COG). Mr. Jones explained the role and duties of the COG. The COG was tasked to determine a method of distribution for the \$55 million dollar. The initial advisory committee consisted of 17 members and was expanded to 43 members to include the LRGVDC Board of Director's. The expansion of the committee was necessary for better representation of the region.

The unanimous recommendation of the committee for the method distribution is represented in the handout to be as follows. The amount of funding available approximately \$55 million is to be divided amongst the three counties, 45% to Cameron and Hidalgo Counties, totaling \$24,750,000 for each. The remaining 10%, totaling \$5,500,000 would be allocated to Willacy County. Of each of the percentage for each county 50% will be allocated by population and the remaining 50% will be distributed by each County Commissioners Court for authorized projects approved at the state level.

Mr. Jones informed the audience that the nature of the meeting was to hear public comments. He also announced that there would be another public hearing tomorrow in Weslaco at Rio Transit Building. The consensus will be presented at the next LRGVDC Board meeting next Thursday, February 26, 2009. Mr. Jones also mentioned that the recommendation deadline to the state was February 27, 2009 and that the turnaround timeline was very short. Once the recommendation is submitted to the State, they would let us know the outcome of the allocations.

At this point, the first public comments were heard. They were called in the order they were received.

Public Comment #1: Father Albert Lelo of Valley Interfaith Baptist Church wanted to express his concern for the families affected by Dolly of El Ranchito in Cameron County. He was joined by members of his

congregation and the first to address the audience was Maria Valdez of El Ranchito, with the aide of a translator.

Public Comment #2: Maria Valdez said that during the hurricane, she received damage to her car when parts of her roof blew off. She was then unable to use her car and when she spoke to FEMA, they denied her claim for repairs to the house. She still to this date does not have a roof on her home. The area behind her house, where it flooded, caused mold and mosquitoes. When she asked for help with the debris and the pollution in the surrounding area of her home, she was told that other places were worse, so FEMA did not provide assistance.

RRC Chairman: At which time the Chairman asked where Ms. Valdez lived. She clarified that it was in Cameron County “county rural area”

Public Comment #3: Maria de Carmen Barrera testified by interpreter that she had to leave her mobile home. The roof and floor were damaged. During the storm she had to stay with relatives. When she returned to her house the floor was almost gone. All the families in that area did not get help from FEMA. By the time she was able to get back into her home, she did not know how to reach FEMA, and when she had returned to her house, she was told that FEMA had already been there.

Public Comment #4: Father Lelo stated that after many days of water standing in the house it was covered by mold and had other issue related to the water damage. Many can not afford to leave their houses and have no insurance to repair them. He also stated what FEMA had provided him as the Classes of damages. They were described by him as follows:

- Class 1: Minor damage from \$0 to \$8,000
There were 7,600 families in this category
- Class 2: From \$8001 to \$15,000
There were 660 in this range
- Class 3: Major damage from \$15,000 to \$28,800
- Class 4: Catastrophic damages from \$28,000 and up
There were 88 families.

Father Lelo is the pastor to 1500 families. Father Lelo stated that this should not just be a concern of El Ranchito residents; it should be a concern to all and it’s also a potential health related issue. El Ranchito residents work in our community. They serve our food when people go out. Without these people it affects our entire community. It affects all of us. He asked the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council to se 50% of the money to help the communities fix their homes and 50% to fix the drainage issue that effect people like his congregation. He also contacted Judge Cascos for help.

RRC Chairman: Mayor Winstead thanked Father Lelo for his comments. He then said that this would be handled on a case by case basis. Unfortunately 50 percent of the funds were not enough to fix all the problems or issues. The last direct hit hurricane was in 1967. They would do the best they could.

LRGVDC Staff: At that time Mr. Jones did address the audience and Mayor Winstead to inform them that public comments were also welcome and due to the COG no later than 5:00 PM on Friday, February 20, 2009. He gave his personal e-mail address of knjones@lrgvdc.org to the audience.

Public Comment #5: Father Lelo asked if all the money was to be used for infrastructure and again mentioned that 50% should be highly considered for families and their homes.

LRGVDC Staff Response: Mr. Jones stated that public comments were welcome and the recommendations were being taken into consideration based on the public comments. Johnny Cavazos was on the phone with the County Judge of Cameron County and invited people to attend the Commissioner's Court on Thursday @ 8:30 AM and would hear further comments from the public. Mr. Jones also stated that he would be present at the COG Board to present the concerns and comments of the public.

Public Comment #6: The next speaker was Gabriel Gonzales of the City of Harlingen. He expressed his concern that population should not be the only means of determining the allocations of funds. Harlingen was without power for 6 to 7 days and sustained catastrophic damage. He also asked that any other available funds or unused funds should be reallocated and redirected into this area.

RRC Chairman: Mayor Winstead did inform him that the COG Board would be able to make "small" changes to the plan, based on public input. He addressed the importance of being present at the Board meeting and speaking to the county judges and having your voice heard.

Public Comment #7:

Mr. Jones then called Remi Garza. Mr. Garza was there representing the Town of Combes. His first question was if the Commissioner's Court on Thursday was going to be a special meeting in the morning and asked that they consider moving the meeting to the evening so that more of the public would be able to attend and have their comments heard. Secondly, the rapid redistribution of available funds should take place so that they are not taken back by the state, redirected to the valley where needed.

Cameron County Staff Response: Johnny Cavazos commented that comments are welcome at the meeting schedule for Thursday evening.

RRC Chairman: Mayor Winstead stated that even though it was not on the agenda, public comments were welcome then.

Public Comment #8: Jared Hockema was the next speaker to address the audience. He was there representing Mayor Garcia, Town of Combes. Mayor Garcia was concerned over the method of distribution of the funds. He asked whether the distribution going to be determined by damage and was it verifiable? The other concern was for the small cities and not to forget the rural areas which do not have the resources to repair drainage, road repairs or housing.

RRC Chairman Response: Mayor Winstead expressed that the most assured method for distribution was by population. He said that the people need to speak to the elected officials and they would access the damage by jurisdiction.

Mr. Hockema said that it would be an inequity to base it solely on population. Some areas where only county government assists those who have no other means of recovery.

ORCA Representative: The representative from ORCA said that the method of distribution allocation will be determined based on the public comments and by meeting the guidelines.

Johnny Cavazos, Cameron County EMC added that the infrastructure and individual funds distributed would also be determined by the Commissioner's Court.

Public Comment #9: The Mayor of Rancho Viejo then spoke and expressed concern that Cameron and Hidalgo Counties each were receiving 45%, since Brownsville was spared. The other smaller jurisdictions that were hit didn't seem to be getting a fair allocation when they were hit harder. He then asked about a split distribution. 50/50 discretionary: 25% based on population and 75% at the discretion of the Commissioners Court to the affected areas, then it might funnel funds to the people who need it most. He also stated that the loudest voice was not always the one that needed it most.

RRC Chairman Response: Mayor Winstead then stated that all comments would be taken into consideration.

Mr. Jones informed the audience that there would be an application process between March 20, 2009 to May 28, 2009. The application was not yet available. ORCA representative stated that the applications would be ready by March 1, 2009. Mayor Winstead stated that if there were no further questions or public comments, the meeting would adjourn.

Public Hearing adjourned at 6:50 pm.

SUMMARY

LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL DISTRIBUTION OF DISASTER RECOVERY FUNDS

February 18, 2009 = 5:30 PM
LRGVDC Transportation Center
510 S. Pleasantview Drive
Weslaco, TX 78596

LRGVDC Staff: Mr. Kenneth N. Jones, Jr., Executive Director of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) opened the Public Hearing at 5:30 PM at the LRGVDC Transportation Center in Weslaco, Texas. Mr. Jones informed the audience the nature and purpose of the hearing and instructed them on the procedure for having their comments heard. He then introduced attending LRGVDC Council Members Soyla Gonzalez, Commissioner of Weslaco and Steve Brewer, Mayor of City of La Feria. Also in attendance were representatives Oralia Cardenas, Director Disaster Recovery and Maureen Mahoney from Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA) and Candye Anderson, CDBG-DR Field Officer of Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA).

Mr. Jones informed the audience that at the Federal level funds had been appropriated for disaster relief for counties impacted by Hurricanes Dolly and Ike for those declared disaster areas. He identified Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy Counties in the Rio Grande Valley Region. The Governor designated the Office of Rural Community Affairs to provide \$55 million in disaster recovery to be used toward meeting unmet housing, non-housing, and other eligible communities and economic revitalization needs associated with the disaster.

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council is one of 24 Regional Councils in Texas which covers Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy Counties and is charged by the State to facilitate the determination of a funding distribution process for our three counties. The initial advisory committee consisted of 17 members and has now grown to 43 members, in order to ensure adequate representation for the three counties.

The unanimous recommendation of the committee for the method of distribution, represented in the handout, is as follows. The \$55 million is to be divided as follows: 45% (\$24,750,000) to Cameron and Hidalgo Counties each. The remaining 10%, (\$5,500,000) will go to Willacy County. Of that, 50% will be allocated by population and the remaining 50% will be distributed by each County Commissioner's Court.

Mr. Jones informed the audience that the nature of the meeting was to hear public comments on this proposed distribution formula. He also announced that there would be an additional opportunity to submit written comments and the deadline was Friday February 20, 2009 at 5 P.M. A final determination will be made at the next LRGVDC Board meeting on Thursday, February 26, 2009. The recommendations are due to the State by February 27, 2009.

Mr. Jones informed that audience that a translator was available if needed. Comments were then heard from the public and were called in the order they were received.

Public Comment #1: The first public comments were from Mayor Steve Brewer representing the City of La Feria who expressed his disagreement with the recommended break down as La Feria received 55 inches of rain in a very short span of time. Their community was without power for 10 days to 2 weeks. Mayor Brewer stated that La Feria is the fourth largest city in Cameron County, and expressed that he was very much against

the county 45-45-10 disbursement plan as written and will be petitioning Cameron County and emphasized the disbursement should be assessed by damage estimates.

Public Comment #2: Rosalie Tristan and Maria Rivera, resident of Las Milpas, and representing Valley Interfaith were next to address the audience. She stated that there were also residents from Hidalgo and Willacy counties in the audience and asked them to stand so they may be recognized of which approximately 6 – 8 public members stood. Rosalie Tristan provided the LRGVDC with her written testimony as follows:

“I am Rosalie Tristan from Willacy County a leader with Valley Interfaith. I thank all the members of the Lower Rio Grande Development Council for holding this important hearing. I also want to first recognize the people that are here today and who have been directly affected by Hurricane Dolly. We will have Maria Rivera tell us her story.

Public Comment #3: I am Maria Rivera a leader with Valley Interfaith representing Las Brisas Subdivision in Weslaco. I am passing out some pictures of damages from Hurricane Dolly. My family had major damages to our home due to Hurricane Dolly. It is not fair that we were denied assistance when our damage was very evident. Our subdivision suffered flooding for many days. Our homes have mold.

Rosalie Tristan again: Hurricane Dolly hit Willacy County first. Damages were evident in our County. In Sebastian water remained for days. Home, businesses, schools, and churches were damaged. My brother has 5 children ages ranging form 4 to 16yrs. His home suffered major damages to the roof of his home during hurricane Dolly. Both him and his wife work and cannot afford home insurance. They applied for FEMA assistance and were denied assistance. They appealed the decision and were denied a second time. They cannot afford to repair their home and are living with the damages in their home. When it rains they have to set out pails inside the home. Luckily we have not had heavy rains in our area.

Valley Interfaith is here today to let you know that thousands of families whose homes were damaged and are still in need of repairs. There are tens of thousands of low and moderate income families who lack the personal resources or insurance to complete even minor roof repairs on their homes. I have here with me the FEMA report on how many homes were damaged Hidalgo, Cameron and Willacy. Minor damage of up to \$8,000 is 26,607; homes with moderate damage ranging from \$8,001-\$15,000 are 616; homes with major damage ranging from \$15,001-\$28,800 are 114 and catastrophic damage over \$28,800 are 88; grand total of 27,425 homes were damaged.

Valley Interfaith recognizes the work you have done in fighting hard to get additional money allocated for relief of Hurricane Dolly. Today there is a total of \$55 million granted to serve all three counties. We also know that the funds have been divided among the counties and municipalities and the recommendation is to use the funds only for infrastructure. **Valley Interfaith recommends that 50% of \$55 million should be allocated for housing assistance and not all for infrastructure.** Time matters when repairing hurricane damaged roofs.

Valley Interfaith also recommends to the State of Texas

- a. Lower Rio Grande Development Council must assure that any CDBG funded housing assistance program provides for: (1) ***quick repair*** of homes which have roof or minor flood damage in order to avoid ongoing deterioration which occurs from rain, mold and rot; (2) ***full rehabilitation*** of more badly damaged homes to meet local codes; and (3) ***replacement*** of homes which cannot be restored at a reasonable price. Valley Interfaith rejects any CDBG

funded program which has such low repair and rehabilitation limits that it results in wholesale demolition and replacement of damaged homes.

- b. LRGVDC must *move much quickly and effectively* to restore families to their homes. We must start outreach to identify families with damaged homes who will qualify for help under this program. The longer we wait to identify families, the more families will give up and homes will deteriorate. We need to get these programs up and running quickly. People in East Texas are still living in damaged homes more than 3 years after Hurricane Rita because they could not get their program in order. Don't let that happen in the Valley.
- c. Texas has received **\$219 Million in Social Service Block Grant funds** for disaster recovery. LRGVDC will receive some part of those funds. Valley Interfaith wants to see that 50% of the funds that are **“easy to use” are granted to Long Term Recovery Organizations** or other community organizations which are dedicated to helping families make “quick repairs” costing no more than \$15,000 per home in order to return the family as quickly as possible to a home that is “safe, sanitary and secure.” The Councils of Government in the Houston-Galveston area and Southeast Texas intend to grant some of these Social Service Grant Fund dollars to home repair. We want the Valley to do the same thing.

If granted to Long Term Recovery Organizations (LTRO), these funds would be used to:

- **buy materials** to be used in repairing homes that need new roofs, dry wall, flooring, cabinets and interior work as a result of wind or flooding damage. Thousands of volunteers working through LTRO's and other groups would use these materials to repair as many as 5,000 homes over the next three years if the materials were paid for out of this source; and
 - **contract with construction professionals for necessary professional services**—electricians, plumbers, levelers, that are needed to repair wind damaged or flooded homes. Tens of thousands of homes impacted by storm surge will need some electrical and plumbing work which certified contractors must provide in order for cities to grant permits.
- d. **Shape State of Texas policy regarding Hurricane Recovery:** Valley Interfaith believes that local communities must monitor and help shape legislation including efforts to improve the Texas wind storm program; develop a state managed program to provide rapid disaster housing; and actually funding the Texas Disaster Recovery fund.”

Public Comment #5: The third testimony was given by Linley R. Boone, Attorney for Texas Rural Legal Aid, Inc. (TRLA) in Weslaco. Ms. Boone informed the audience their office is working representing clients from Valley Interfaith and provides legal services to the Rio Grande Valley and has seen first hand, the damages to their homes. Their office has a team working on disaster related damages. Ms. Boone stated that being an attorney she is very familiar with reviewing regulations and guidelines very carefully; in the prior meetings, per the ORCA guidelines, the guidelines for the Council of Government (COG) must identify the funds for housing and non-housing by percentages equal to 100%. Once it has been submitted, it can not be modified at a later date. TRLA does not feel that this has been addressed. They feel that there is an unmet need in the Valley for assistance. Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy Counties have poverty rates over 30%. The Texas Department of Insurance has informed the law firm that 70% of the effected homeowners do not have flood insurance and FEMA has a policy for declining claims due to “deferred maintenance”. There were 10,000 applications denied by FEMA. Ms. Boone further stated that there is a need for home repair and rehabilitation as it poses huge health and safety issues

(mold, insects and rodents). Without this being predefined, the law firm fears funds would never be set aside. She further stated that Houston has set aside 56% for housing and stated that 50% should be set aside for housing.

Public Comment #6: Fire Chief, Shawn Snider was representing the City of Edinburg presented comments next. The City of Edinburg is there to be part of the process of allocating funds and has a CGVD Group that is very effective in distributing fund for housing. In relation to the County Commissioner's Courts, Hidalgo County, the City of Edinburg is very interested in the formula used for allocation of funds and they will be responsible with the distribution of funds. Chief Snider also stated that the eye of the hurricane came within 20 miles of downtown Edinburg and had sustained winds of 108 mph. The City of Edinburg is here to work with the LRGVDC and Hidalgo County in the use and distribution of funds.

Public Comment #7: Raul Lozano was present to speak and represent the Hidalgo County Judge J.D. Salinas. He stated that they were present and supportive of housing allocation; however, he did stress the importance of repairing the major infrastructure damage from Starr to Willacy Counties and there are millions of dollars of damage right now that need to be repaired and put back in order. For example, San Carlos, which is located northeast of Hidalgo County, was under water for weeks with water inside homes. The drainage infrastructure must be improved before the homes are improved to make sure it does not happen again. There are things already started and happening to take care of the problem, but they will need the construction dollars and that is where these funds come in.

LRGVDC Staff: Mr. Jones then stated that there were no additional Public Input forms presented for comment and asked if anyone else would like to address the audience.

Shawn Snider with the City of Edinburg Fire Department brought a typographical error to the attention of Mr. Jones, specifically page one of the Method of Distribution reflected the amount to be distributed to Hidalgo County as \$24,750.00 and actual figure is \$24,750,000. The error was noted.

Public Comment #8: The last public comment was made by Juan Gamez who is a Civil Engineer for Sigler, Winston, Greenwood, & Associates, Inc. (SWG) Consulting Engineers affiliated with Sebastian MUD and the Cities of La Feria and Weslaco. Mr. Gamez stated that the levees are critical to the Valley and the run-off that is generated from the Valley is really very little. The levees were constructed in the 1930's when it was largely agricultural in nature. The current drainage ditches and levees are very substandard and approximately 1/3 of the run-off is handled by the levees. The levees are there to handle 50 – 75 year flood type events. They must be re-evaluated by experts. He also stated that the biggest investment would be to repair the crossings at driveways and that more stringent regulations need to be implemented in the construction of them. Another issue that must be addressed is the illegal dumping in the drainage ditches which causes more localized flooding in the neighborhoods. There is no infrastructure in place and the public entities should consider investing in the purchase of flood zone prone area which would also not allow construction or development in those areas.

Mr. Jones asked if any other members of the public would like to comment. There were none. Mr. Jones then thanked the TDHCA and ORCA representatives for attending and for the members of the public for their investment of personal time.

Public Hearing adjourned at 7:28 pm.