

City of Bellaire
Flood Hazard Mitigation Task Force
Meeting Notes
December 5, 2017

Mr. Hofmann thanked all of the Task Force members for allowing staff the extra week to prepare for the meeting, as well as for taking the opportunity to contribute their ideas to the working draft of the matrix that was described at the last meeting. He then reviewed the agenda and stated that there would be a lot of opportunity for input during the meeting. Mr. Hofmann explained that comments that are listed on the matrix in red are comments that came from the Task Force, and comments in green reflect comments that came from staff and at least one member of the Task Force. He urged the Task Force to concentrate on the middle two columns of the matrix, and gave them three key words to guide them:

1. Clarity
2. Common understanding
3. Consistency

Millie Hast-Do we have an overarching goal for the City regarding flooding?

-Mr. Hofmann stated that at the first meeting of the Task Force, a presentation was given on City Council's charge and what the City is trying to accomplish. He referred the members back to that information and stated that if staff is still missing something, he is happy to hear a suggestion.

David Roylance-He would like to gain a better understanding of the expectations of the Task Force. He doesn't think that no flooding is a realistic outcome. What should we, as citizens of Bellaire, expect and what actions can be taken between now and then to accomplish those goals?

-Mr. Hofmann stated that he anticipates that as the Task Force goes through the process and carefully listens to each other, the end result will be some consensus on thematic messages to send forward to City Council. He added that this will include necessary discussions on what is predictable and what is not predictable, and what's feasible and what is not feasible. Mr. Hofmann felt that the final report in March will identify and recommend some ongoing efforts that the City Council will then need to decide to allocate money towards.

Millie Hast-What is an acceptable amount of flooding in Bellaire? 2,000 homes? 100 homes?

-Mr. Hofmann stated that he doesn't anticipate that any of the recommendations will be worded in such a manner. He asked the Task Force to trust in the process, and added that the overall/general goal of the Task Force is to mitigate flooding in the City of Bellaire.

Council Member Pollard-Is it to mitigate flooding, or to mitigate the damage caused due to flooding?

Mr. Hofmann felt that the Task Force is running the risk of getting too precise.

Mayor Freidberg-Reminded the Task Force that it was initially formed prior to Harvey in an effort to complete the requirements of the CRS program. He added that there is a timeline associated with the completion of those requirements. Mayor Freidberg also mentioned that in getting deeper into the CRS process, answers will come on how to mitigate flooding within the City.

Shawn Cox then went through the Public Communications section of the draft of the Hazard/Risk Assessment Matrix.

Comments and questions from this section of the matrix were:

Council Member Montague-Agreed with everything that was said, but feels that it is too complex. He stated that reverse 911 would cover all of the bases.

Mr. Hofmann stated that the residents have to be open to receiving the information and therefore there is no system that is fool proof.

Millie Hast-There is nothing that talks about what to do if there are power and cell phone failures. She added that normally electricity is one of the first things to go in an event like Harvey, and that residents will not be on the computer during a natural disaster.

Win Frazier-You are never going to be able to reach every resident within the City, but the Task Force should attempt to address these issues within the action implementation goals.

David Roylance-The Task Force should have realistic expectations about who will be reached depending on the avenues of communication used.

Mr. Hofmann stated that consistency is the key with regard to communication, and ensuring that the same message is being sent out across the board, whether it be via email, Facebook, Next Door Bellaire, etc.

Brian Sanford-Suggested that the City utilize an “opt out” system, where resident emails would automatically be entered into the notification system through the Utility Billing Department and they would have to unsubscribe in order to stop receiving the messages.

Fire Chief Darryl Anderson then reviewed the Mobility section within the matrix.

Comments and questions from this section of the matrix were:

Chris Canonico-A mitigation option that should be added to the matrix is improving the drainage capabilities within the City, which will then improve the mobility issues.

Yana Kristal-Was the City able to effectively segregate and rank the issues in terms of emergency, and/or identify priority houses?

Mr. Hofmann stated that he feels as though the City did an excellent job with that on the fly, but that the point is that there should have been a plan put into place beforehand.

Millie Hast-It is important to have adequate equipment in the vehicles, life jackets, waterproof bags, etc. Why can't Bellaire have a shelter?

Mr. Hofmann asked how a shelter located in Bellaire would be beneficial.

Ms. Hast explained that it would allow people to stay closer to their homes.

Mr. Hofmann pointed out that the shelter would not be limited to just residents of Bellaire.

Ms. Hast asked that it at least be looked into as a possibility.

Mr. Hofmann stated that ultimately the decisions regarding the opening of shelters are made by individuals other than City staff.

Mayor Friedberg stated that he felt as though the City could improve on taking a proactive approach with regard to communication, and anticipate some of the issues prior to the event taking place.

David Roylance-Asked if the City is comfortable with the call system during an event of this nature, in terms of capacity.

Mr. Hofmann explained that the 911 system operated fine through Harvey, however, the regular phone lines went dead for approximately one hour during the event. He added that Mr. Roylance had identified a risk.

Council Member Montague-Doesn't feel that residents, especially new ones, understand what happens and/or how to prepare during a flood event in the City of Bellaire. He suggested that the City find a better way to educate the citizens on this topic.

Chris Canonico-Made an observation that not all risks are created equal.

City Engineer, James Andrews then reviewed the Infrastructure section of the matrix.

Comments and questions from this section of the matrix were:

Chris Canonico-Mentioned that Harvey changed the standards of the 100 year flood event. A risk that should be assessed for the City of Bellaire is how those changes will impact the life safety issues and structural flooding issues throughout the City. Do residents need to be made aware that they are at more risk of flooding in the future?

Millie Hast-If we prepare for a 100 year flood event, the City will be inadequately prepared.

Mr. Andrews stated that the 2015 Memorial Day flood was a 75 year event, whereas Harvey was obviously much worse. He added that with the increased rainfall intensities, he isn't sure that it will be physically possible to mitigate against a flood event of that size.

Chris Canonico-Goal is to minimize the potential for structural flooding under any event.

Council Member Montague-The City is putting a lot of faith in the fact that Project Brays will be completed in 2021. Is there anything that the City of Bellaire can do to ensure that it is completed on schedule?

Mr. Hofmann agreed that the completion time of Project Brays should be listed as a risk.

Win Frazier-There is only so much that the City of Bellaire itself can do to mitigate; regional partners also need to be involved to obtain the desired outcome.

David Roylance-Felt that it is important to address the fact that a lack of cooperation from the surrounding cities is a hazard for the City of Bellaire.

Michael Ling-City of Houston developments are negatively impacting downstream areas, such as Bellaire.

It was determined that the risks are a lack of influence and a lack of cooperation from regional partners.

Chris Canonico-Are the engineers for the City of Houston running a series of tests to determine if drainage is adequate?

Mr. Hofmann stated that the City of Houston will not diligently review that model/analysis, even if the City of Bellaire were to go to the City of Houston and prove that the analysis that was completed was flawed.

Yana Kristal-Are areas where the City has worked to improve the drainage, such as Baldwin, doing their job?

Mr. Andrews stated that very recently the City has begun replacing those backbones of the system. He added that there is still much more that needs to be done, but major improvements in flooding have been witnessed in areas that have improved drainage.

Win Frazier-Is subsidence within the City an issue?

Mr. Andrews explained that originally it was an issue, but it has stabilized since.

Mayor Friedberg-Pointed out that the City is only about 30% done with drainage improvements throughout the City. He added that the full benefit will not be realized until the branches that

feed into that system are completely developed. How many more decades out is that? The risk is whether or not the City will ever actually get there.

Mr. Hofmann agreed that continuing to build the laterals into the Baldwin spine is a way to get certain areas of the City out of the flood risk area.

Mr. Andrews stated that the completion of Project Brays is an integral part of the puzzle, and the City then has to get the water to the Bayou.

Mr. Cox then explained that another risk is that residents will not be adequately prepared for natural and manmade disasters, and that the goal is to utilize community outreach to increase preparedness/awareness.

Chris Canonico-Mentioned that the risk isn't necessarily that the resident is not prepared, but more so that they are then taxing the City's system with calls. He added that he feels as though the hazard is that residents are not prepared and they in turn create the risks.

Public Works Director, Michael Leech then reviewed the facilities and equipment part of the matrix.

Brian Sanford-Asked Mr. Leech to quantify how close the public works facility came to being overtaken during Harvey.

Mr. Leech stated that it was very close. He added that the reason that operations were able to be continued had a lot to do with equipment that was not designed to be underwater but actually continued to work once it was, as well as members of staff staying on site to help alleviate the issues. He mentioned that once the computer system goes down then it becomes a manual operation, and as equipment would go out, employees would go to the site to try to triage the equipment to get it back up and running.

David Roylance-Are there financial incentives or other avenues that the City is not aware of with regard to relocating, upgrading, or even terminating service at that facility?

Mr. Leech stated that the City of Bellaire is plugged into many organizations and programs that could potentially offer a variety of options.

Win Frazier-At what point will the Task Force be in the position to prioritize the goals?

Mr. Hofmann explained that he doesn't feel as though the Task Force is missing any deadlines in terms of identifying projects. He added that right now the focus is on identifying projects and creating lists; in terms of prioritizing, that will all come through in the Task Force's final report.

Millie Hast-A risk that is not listed is the possibility of pollution in the event that the public works facility fails.

Mr. Hofmann explained that during and after the event, the City is in contact with TCEQ regarding that possibility. During those types of events, the City will not be held accountable.

Mr. Hofmann then stated that although the Task Force did not get through the entire matrix, they were pushing the two hour mark and he would like to open the floor up to the public. He added that the next version of the matrix, based on the discussion that was held during the meeting, will be brought back to the December 19th meeting. Mr. Hofmann mentioned that they may be able to start a conversation about the actionable items at that meeting as well. He asked that some of the members of the Task Force take a few minutes to list a few of the overarching theme or goal statements and email them to Shawn Cox by December 14th. Mr. Hofmann stated that eventually a narrative will need to be prepared that covers the matrix and pulls all of the information together.

Public Comments included:

James Burrough-Wanted to emphasize that time and time again the Task Force has referred to the needs and benefits of good advanced planning. He asked that this idea be included as part of the plan. He also mentioned that improved under the street mitigation is a great idea to help alleviate flooding and asked that it be included in the final report as well.

Roxanna Ward-She urged the Task Force members to attend the Brays Bayou Association meetings that are held on the third Monday of every month.

Charles Platt-Would be helpful for members of the public if documents were available on the website. Need to consider different scenarios than just the 100 year flood event.

Millie Hast-Could models be prepared to help the Task Force get a better idea of which actions would be beneficial and which wouldn't, such as turning the sewer plant into a detention pond?

Chris Canonico-Stated that answering all of those questions could potentially take a significant amount of time. He suggested that the Task Force focus more on setting the direction of the level of service that they would like implemented.

Mayor Friedberg-Nothing prevents the Task Force from, in its report, making specific recommendations for Council to look into, with the disclaimer that they do not know whether it would ultimately be an effective solution.

Mr. Hofmann thanked everyone for coming and reminded the Task Force that the next meeting will be held on December 19th, at 6:30 pm.