

**MINUTES OF
SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA FLOOD PROTECTION AUTHORITY-EAST
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON APRIL 11, 2024**

PRESENT: Thomas G. Fierke, Chair
Herbert I. Miller, Committee Member
Derek N. Rabb, Committee Member

The Operations Committee of the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority-East (Authority or FPA) met on April 11, 2024, in the Franklin Avenue Administrative Complex, Meeting Room 201, 6920 Franklin Avenue, New Orleans, La. Mr. Fierke called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Opening Comments: Mr. Fierke advised that Item B relative to the Human Resource (HR) Employee Handbook would not be discussed at this meeting.

Adoption of Agenda: The Committee approved the agenda as presented.

Approval of Minutes: The Committee approved the Minutes of the meeting held on March 20, 2024.

Public Comments: None.

Report of Director of Engineering:

Chris Humphreys, Director of Engineering, provided the following report:

Mississippi River: As of April 11th the river was under 6 feet at the Carrollton Gage. It was projected to approach 11 feet (flood stage) in the next two weeks, which would trigger additional inspections.

LPV – 146 Monolith Replacement: Scheduled completion date is May 13, 2024. A working slab and both base slabs were poured and the stem wall was being reinforced.

Lakeshore Drive – Bayou St. John Bridge Approaches – The contractor, Barriere Construction Co., LLC, was ahead of schedule. Removal and replacement of the existing asphalt will be completed in early May 2024. The curb and gutter replacement and drain pipe and catch basin installation have been completed.

Hayne Boulevard Drainage/Grading Project: The contract, which was awarded to Cycle Construction Co., LLC, has been completed. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is currently tying in the relief wells. The USACE's contractor will be completed by mid-May.

Levee Slope Paving Project: The contract, which was awarded to Durr Heavy Construction, will be completed by July 1, 2024.

17th Street Canal Erosion Mitigation (Veterans Boulevard to Old Hammond Highway): The contract was awarded to Cycle Construction Co., LLC. The notice to proceed was issued on May 13th.

London Avenue Canal North-West Erosion Mitigation: The contract is anticipated to be awarded at the April 18th Board meeting.

Permanent Canal Closures and Pumps Status Report:

- Paint thickness for Pump 1 at the 17th Street PCCP will be revisited. The inspection found that the paint was not to the specified thickness.
- Pump parts have been delayed, which will impact the schedule. Therefore, the Joint Venture (JV) is electing to move to a seven day per week schedule.
- Reassembly of the four currently disassembled pumps at the 17th Street and London Avenue PCCP will probably take place concurrently and should be completed by end of May.
- Discussion was ongoing regarding the JV's suggestion that work on the pumps continue during Hurricane Season. The FPA's position is that work should not continue during Hurricane Season.

2024 Hurricane Season Preparations:

- A coordination meeting is scheduled for May 2nd with the USACE and Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA)
- The Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) update was nearly complete. It will be presented to the Board on May 16th for approval.
- A Hurricane Tabletop Exercise will be held the week of May 20th. Notice of the date will be provided to Commissioners so that they can attend if they wish.
- In house meetings were taking place regarding readiness of the flood protection system and FPA staff, river and hurricane forecasts, prestaging equipment and supplies, and any know issues.
- Two currently onboard emergency contractors are being engaged.
- On March 21st the Board approved advertising Requests for Qualifications for Debris Removal Services and Debris Removal Monitoring Services.

Mr. Fierke asked relative to the LPV – 146 Monolith Replacement Project, would the concrete have enough time to age before Hurricane Season. Mr. Humphreys replied that concrete should be poured in sufficient time to meet the specification (28 days) for strengthening.

New Business:

A. Discussion of the proposed IH-NC Surge Barrier Multi Use Complex (International Center for Storm Surge Barrier Research, Public Education and Satellite Maintenance Facility) and recommendation to the Board on the scope of the project.

Mr. Humphreys explained that the FPA has been searching for grant funding for a number of years for the International Center for Storm Surge Barrier Research, Public Education and Satellite Maintenance Facility (referred to in this presentation as the Multi Use Complex). On February 22nd the Board approved advertising the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Architectural Services subject to Board approval of the scope.

Mr. Fierke asked was a matrix for potential grants developed. Mr. Humphreys responded that staff worked on the matrix; however, it was not ready for this meeting.

Ryan Foster, Engineering Manager, provided the presentation on the Multi Use Complex. He advised that Malay Ghose Hajra, Chief Engineer, did a lion's share of the work on the presentation with input from Darren Austin, Operations Director, and Stacy Gilmore, Public Information Director. The proposed Multi Use Complex will be located on the protected side of the north end of the IHNC Surge Barrier on land owned by the Orleans Levee District.

POTENTIAL PROJECT BENEFITS:

1. FPA Operations Support:

- Support critical off and on season operations and maintenance activities.
- Field office for crew meetings – pre and post storm events.
- Equipment storage – during normal and emergency operations (quick access during reopening of navigation gates). Potential items for storage at the facility include a boat (an existing boat launch is located nearby), portable generators to provide redundancy, a skid steer and a side-by-side vehicle.
- Parts and miscellaneous supply storage for equipment.

2. Community Outreach and Tour Support:

- Meeting place and support FPA's tour activities.
- Static and short video display of FPA's storm fight efforts for tour attendees and the general public .
- Observation deck of FPA's storm protection system components.
- Host I-Storm events (international group) to promote hurricane preparedness expertise (in collaboration with USACE, CPRA, and GOHSEP).
- Rental of meeting/conference space to organizations/ universities/ government agencies that are interested in hurricane, flood and other coastal issues.

- Host and/or rental of space to local high schools and community partners and facilitating coastal education within the community.

3. Research and Education Support:

- Support innovative scientific research in storm prediction, urban flood reduction, and other coastal issues (beneficial to FPA) through direct partnerships with Louisiana State University (LSU), the University of New Orleans (UNO) and Tulane University. Mr. Ghose Hajra scheduled meetings with Tulane University and UNO to review ideas for the facility. Discussions will also take place with LSU and other potential partners. Partnerships help when applying for grants.
- Act as staging ground (research boat launch, student/faculty meeting room, temporary research equipment storage space, coastal instrumentation data collection and monitoring space, etc.) to aid in coastal research.
- Organize educational workshops/short courses (with help from USACE and CPRA) related to the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS).
- Create world class “center of excellence” in storm protection and urban flood management.
- Potential University Research Topics
 - Storm surge prediction
 - Relative Sea Level Rise (RSLR) monitoring
 - Coastal hydrodynamics
 - Hydrologic and hydraulic (H&H) modeling
 - Levee and floodwall stability
 - Urban flood management
- Potential Educational Events on Coastal issues
 - Workshops and conferences
 - University course offering
 - High school and university field trips
 - High school hands on teaching
 - Organizational events
 - I-Storm events (international)

Mr. Foster explained that at this time there are no restroom facilities at this location and tour groups are exposed to the weather with no place to seek shelter.

Mr. Foster pointed out that the Golden Triangle Marsh, the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) and the Bayou Sauvage Wildlife Refuge are located near the proposed facility. Numerous universities, colleges, schools and agencies (e.g., USACE and CPRS) are located within the Greater New Orleans area that may wish to partner with the FPA.

Mr. Fierke suggested that the FPA also consider renting the facility to the private sector for special events to offset operational costs. He noted that the USACE is involved in a number of public facilities, such as parks and campgrounds; therefore, their involvement in the facility should be solicited. In addition, money could potentially be available from high school STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) programs. Wilma Heaton, Director of Governmental Affairs, suggested that the Water Institute of the South be contacted for their support.

Mr. Rabb asked about fees charged by the FPA. Mr. Foster advised that the FPA has a structured fee for levee safety permits. FPA's tours are open to the public and no fees are charged. Staff organizes tour requests to provide tours as efficiently as possible. A fee structure for renting conference/meeting rooms in the facility could be developed.

Mr. Fierke asked would the presentation be a part of the package that goes to the Architect. Mr. Foster replied that it could be part of the package. The RFQ will include aspects of the presentation. A spreadsheet was distributed that included a breakdown of functional space, square footage and talking points for the proposed complex.

Mr. Miller asked did staff have a projected breakdown of what should be built first, second, third, etc. Mr. Foster responded that the maintenance needs should be addressed first. Components of the facility can provide for crossover usages. For example, if a first stage provides for maintenance needs, it could also include a small meeting room, restroom and a large area for tour groups to congregate. The Architect will look at the FPA's needs and develop conceptual drawings and options for the Board. The Board could then further define priorities. Mr. Humphreys added that the project can be phased and scaled. Additional interests are anticipated as the project is developed. The first stage should include the base need (maintenance) and to an extent the other two needs (Outreach and Research/Education). An Architect would refine and optimize the square footages and usages.

A motion was offered by Mr. Miller, seconded by Mr. Rabb and unanimously adopted to recommend that the Board proceed with the advertisement of the RFQ.

B. Discussion of Human Resource Employee Handbook and recommendation to the Board.

Mr. Fierke asked the Regional Director to send copies of the Handbook to all of the members of the Board. He advised that he would meet with the HR Director prior to the next Committee meeting in order to finish his comments.

C. Presentation on Easter Sunday on Lakefront Drive.

Mr. Fierke advised that he received numerous comments regarding traffic on Lakeshore Drive on Easter Sunday. He requested that Tom Harrington, Superintendent of Police, inform the Committee about the Levee District Police Department's (LDPD) anticipations, plans and the results relative to Easter Sunday.

Chief Harrington explained that the LDPD was doing an after action report, including lessons learned, in order to begin planning for Easter Sunday 2025. He provided the following information regarding Easter Sunday 2024.

Pre-event planning included:

- The requirement that all Officers work both Easter Sunday and Mother's Day
- Coordination with Engineering in reference to any ongoing projects
- Coordination with the Public Information Director
- Contacting the Lakefront Management Authority (LMA) in reference to Solar Camera rentals, Mounted Units from the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD), and Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

Mr. Fierke asked the reason the LMA was contacted to provide the above services. Chief Harrington replied that the LMA pays for the services. Kelli Chandler, Regional Director, added that she did not know the reason the LMA pays for the services. She stated that she spoke to Louis Capo, LMA Executive Director, and would take of them going forward.

Staffing and equipment included:

- Orleans Division – All full-time Officers and Reserve Officers and two Dispatchers (one overtime)
- East Jefferson Division – All full-time Officers (except Officers patrolling the Division) and Reserve Officers
- NOPD – four Mounted Units (2 p.m. to 7 p.m.)
- Two pre-positioned EMS units
- Portable video units to monitor crowds from the Orleans Division Police Station – One unit was located at each of the following locations: West End, 2000 Lakeshore Drive (Shelter 3), near Rail Street, the Mardi Gras Fountain and the Parking Lot at Shelter 1.

Easter Sunday:

Three Roll Calls were conducted (7:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.). Each Officer was given a copy of the Operations Order and LMA rules and then report to their locations. Concerns included traffic, crowds, 4-wheelers and reckless operation of motor vehicles.

As expected, there were large crowds. Traffic was especially heavy on the West End of Lakeshore Drive to Marconi Drive and, at times, on Allen Toussaint Boulevard, especially during egress. There were two points of egress when traffic backed up (Canal Boulevard and Marconi Drive). At times traffic moved slowly, but at no time stopped. Drivers who attempted to park in the bike lane were instructed by Officers to move their vehicles.

Even with the large crowds, there was less traffic congestion in the area between Elysian Fields Avenue and the Ted Hickey Bridge. The decrease in traffic was partially due to the Ted Hickey Bridge closure.

Incidents:

- One person was arrested for slashing tires at the Ted Hickey Boat Launch.
- One traffic stop resulted in the subject's vehicle being towed (false license plate and no insurance).
- Traffic was re-routed several times to Canal Boulevard and Marconi Drive due to gridlock.
- Throughout the day several parking bays after being filled were closed to keep traffic flowing. Officers were stationed at the parking bays to stop vehicles from entering after the bay was filled to prevent double parking. This also allowed continuous egress from the parking bay and ingress as space became available.
- Officers patrolled Lakeshore Drive and gave warnings (without incident) throughout the day to persons playing loud music both in vehicles and at gatherings.
- There were two incidents of reckless driving. Officers did not pursue the vehicles due to crowds.
- A group of 4-wheelers traveling down Elysian Fields Avenue were prevented from entering Lakeshore Drive.

After Action:

- No loud music complaints were received.
- Officers will continue to close parking bays after being filled, which keeps traffic flowing and stops the arguments that occurred in previous years.
- Portable signage relative to the ordinance prohibiting loud music was ordered and will be posted along the Lakefront prior to an event.

Mr. Rabb inquired about 4-wheelers on Lakeshore Drive. Chief Harrington explained 4-wheelers are not allowed on city streets; therefore, they should not be able to access Lakeshore Drive. The LDPD works with Louisiana State Police year round regarding identifying these drivers and how to deal with this issue. Mr. Rabb suggested that the FPA inform the public via the news media prior to anticipated high volume traffic days such as Easter Sunday that 4-wheelers are not allowed on Lakeshore Drive.

D. Discussion of the proposed award of a contract in the amount of \$1,099,000 to Vantage Contractors, LLC, for the London Avenue Canal – North-West Erosion Mitigation Project, and recommendation to the Board.

Mr. Humphreys advised that four bids were received for the London Avenue Canal – North-West Erosion Mitigation Project. Three of the bids were near the Engineer's estimate of \$1,098,050. The low bid was submitted by Vantage Contractors, LLC, in the amount of \$1,099,000.

Mr. Rabb asked about DBE (Disadvantage Business Enterprise) participation in the bidding process. Mr. Humphreys explained that construction contracts are advertised in

accordance with State law. Contractors are not required to be DBE. Some DBE companies have expressed interest in contracts and subcontracts.

Mr. Fierke asked had the FPA used Vantage Contractors, LLC, prior to this project. Mr. Humphreys replied, no. Vantage Contractors, LLC, had expressed interest in other FPA projects. This is the first project that Vantage Contractors, LLC, was the lowest responsive bidder.

A motion was offered by Mr. Miller, seconded by Mr. Rabb and unanimously adopted, to recommend that the Board award the contract to Vantage Contractors, LLC.

E. Discussion of the proposed award of a contract to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder for the 40 Arpent Sheetpile Wall Rehab Project Phase I, and recommendation to the Board.

Mr. Humphreys advised that the bid opening was scheduled to take place on April 10th, but was postponed seven days (April 17th) because of the office closure due to inclement weather. The consultant was requested to review the bids as quickly as possible so that a recommendation can be made at the April 18th Board meeting.

F. Discussion of the proposed issuance of a Purchase Order in the amount of \$183,900 to Fitness Expo for the purchase of fitness equipment for the Franklin Facility, and recommendation to the Board.

Mr. Humphreys explained that the FPA advertised for the purchase of fitness equipment for the gym, which was part of the Franklin facility buildout. Two bids were received and one was non-responsive and rejected. The lowest bid was submitted by Fitness Expo in the amount of \$212,800. The FPA elected not to purchase all of the equipment included in the advertisement. An in-house committee of staff members selected the proposed equipment to be purchased totaling \$183,900. The equipment was included in the budget for the buildout. Kirk Ordoyne, Executive Counsel, asked were installation and setup included in the contract. Mr. Humphreys responded, yes.

A motion was offered by Mr. Rabb, seconded by Mr. Miller and unanimously adopted to recommend that the Board approve the purchase of the fitness equipment from Fitness Expo.

G. Discussion of the proposed approval of (1) the Sole Source Purchase for the upgrade to the existing Low and Medium Voltage Switchgear manufactured and sold by Caterpillar Switchgear Americas, LLC, through its exclusive authorized representative Louisiana Power Systems, LLC, for the Orleans, London and 17th Street Canal PCCP pump stations; and (2) execution of a contract with Louisiana Machinery Co., LLC, in the total amount of \$868,506 for the upgrade to the existing Low and Medium Voltage Switchgear manufactured and sold by Caterpillar Switchgear Americas, LLC, for the Orleans Avenue Canal PCCP pump station, and recommendation to the Board.

Mr. Humphreys explained that the Permanent Canal Closures and Pumps (PCCP) pump stations were equipped with Caterpillar generators and switchgear. The programmable controllers for the switchgear are becoming obsolete. The first part of the request is to approve Caterpillar as a sole source provider for the three PCCP pump stations because their proprietary controllers communicate with the generators. The second part of the request is to award a contract in the amount of \$868,506 to update the switchgear at the Orleans Avenue PCCP prior to July 1st. Update of the switchgear at the 17th Street and London Avenue PCCPs is budgeted for Fiscal Year 2025 and the Board will be requested at a future date to award contracts for those updates.

Darren Austin, Director of Operations, explained that the main switchgear is not being changed out. The communications backbone (PLC) of the switchgear, which uses an old protocol (Modbus), will be changed out. The parts that communicate are becoming harder to obtain because Caterpillar no longer produces them. Caterpillar recommended that the FPA upgrade to the Ethernet based backbone.

Mr. Austin further explained that there are two SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) systems inside the PCCP. The SCADA system that controls the coordination of the generators communicates with the main station SCADA system. The communications backbone is required for synchronization and communication with the main SCADA system.

Mr. Fierke pointed out the conflict relative to the sole source provider as stated in the agenda item. There was a brief discussion regarding this conflict and the Caterpillar business structure. Mr. Humphreys advised that the issue would be resolved prior to the Board meeting.

A motion was offered by Mr. Rabb, seconded by Mr. Miller, and unanimously adopted to recommend that the Board approve the sole source request for upgrading the switchgear at the three PCCP pump stations, as discussed, and the execution of a contract to upgrade the switchgear at the Orleans Avenue PCCP pump station.

Ms. Heaton advised that House Bill (HB) 660 was filed in the current legislative session by Representative Mike Bayham. HB 660 names the IHNC Surge Barrier after President George W. Bush. The bill was passed by the House (95 yeas -0 nays) and was referred to the Senate Natural Resources Committee.

There was no further discussion; therefore, the meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.