

**COLLIER COUNTY COASTAL STORM RISK MANAGEMENT FEASIBILITY STUDY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 8, 2023 -- REVISED

LET IT BE REMEMBERED, the Collier County Coastal Storm Risk Management Feasibility Study Advisory Committee in and for the County of Collier, having conducted business herein, met on this date at 2:30 PM in REGULAR SESSION at the Growth Management Community Development Department Building (GMCDD), 2800 N. Horseshoe Drive, Naples, FL.

MEMBERS:

Scott Schultz, Chairman
Joe Schmitt, Vice Chairman
Joshua Maxwell
Matthew Nolton
Miles Scofield (Rocky)
Kenneth Humiston
Alex Garland (excused)

OTHER MEMBERS:

Christopher Mason
Howard Critchfield
William Lang

1. Roll Call

2. Approval of previous meeting minutes from July 26, 2023

- **Scott Schultz:** Motion made to approve the minutes as written.
- **Matthew Nolton:** Seconds the motion. *Approved unanimously.*

3. Open discussion regarding the status of the CSRM Feasibility Study

- **Chris Mason:** Slide show presented.
- When we last met in July, we had six planning areas that were being looked at as primary study areas for providing a more resilient coastline. Those areas of study have been reduced down to four areas because some of the proposed projects within the Marco Island jurisdiction have been removed from the study and it had to do with funding in the Coastal Barrier Resource Systems. And that is a product identified by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, that's also applied to FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps. Typically, with Coastal Barrier Resource Systems, when flood insurance is involved, these areas are delineated on the Flood Insurance Rate Maps because of the ever-changing shape of barrier islands. And so, the federal government dating back to

1983 decided to establish these areas and say we will no longer offer flood insurance for these properties located in these areas that are built after 1983. With that being said, the same applies to the use of federal dollars for projects such as this in these areas, so this is one of the reasons you have a reduction in planning areas. Marco Island still has a small portion of beach that's going to be looked at for re-nourishment in the Tiger Tail area, but there were other potential CSRMs associated measures located in these Coastal Barrier Resource System areas and therefore funding is not available in these areas. So that is why we are down to four planning areas – the North County beaches; Marco Island is still in there, but again it is the one planning area of Tiger Tail; the Naples planning area; and the Goodlette planning area.

- When we first talked about the analysis of scope, there were structural measures incorporated into the study. After the planning charettes that occurred in April, it was evident that participating charette attendees preferred structural measures be removed from the study. The Army Corps removed those and now we're looking more at these nature-based solutions being vegetated dunes, beach re-nourishment and the potential mangrove restoration. That is what the Corps is actively pursuing. One of the best ways for the public and the committee to stay in tune with developing news or developing our potential changes in the process or in this study is to join what we call the recurring monthly call every fourth Wednesday of the month, and it occurs between 3:30 and 4:30 in the afternoon, and I've got the information here for the public and the community. It's a virtual setting that's going to be through something like Zoom.
- **Joe Schmitt:** Staff to send a reminder to members and the public a week prior to the upcoming meeting.
- **Chris Mason:** The TSP (Tentatively Selected Plan) has been pushed back to mid-June of 2024 to release the TSP briefing the County Commissioners. In July 2024, will be the Milestone (USACE) meeting and then we look at the public release of the draft report tentatively selected for September 2024. Between July and September, this Committee will be reviewing the TSP.
- So what's very important here is when we receive the Tentatively Selected Plan, that's when this committee comes into its own and has a lot of details to focus on, that's going to be the primary focus of this committee – to review that documentation to see if it makes sense, and then report back to Collier County leadership on the findings and any particular details that really should be pointed out that may cause concern or favor. That is how this scenario is going to work.
- **Chris Mason:** Staff and I will take recommendations from the Committee, create a presentation or any documentation based on input from the Committee. Staff will act as the gatekeepers to the Board of County Commissioners.
- When February 2025 rolls around, we have an agency decision. That's when the agency is going to decide if this report will still stand based on input back from the community and this committee. In May 2025, you would have the final report released. If we make it to that point, you'll be looking at August 2025 where the final report would be signed.
- **Joe Schmitt:** It goes to the office of the ASCW, Assistant Secretary Civil Works. Then it is put into the program and eventually we'll go into a bill for authorization

into Congress. But that's just for the authorization of the project. And then it has to go all the way back again for appropriations.

- Just to clarify, it goes then into what is called the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). And WRDA is every two years. Once it's authorized then it competes for appropriations and it could be in two or three years later, before monies are appropriated. At any given time, there are probably at least 800 projects on the authorization list that have yet to be appropriated. If there's a real push in the County to get this done, then you really need the Board of County Commissioners to start pushing their Congressmen and their Senators to get this out of the appropriations bill. In Florida, it's going to compete against all the other big money things, for example the Everglades Restoration. So, it depends on the political support to get the project funded. That's a major hurdle.
- **Chris Mason:** When we receive the Tentatively Selected Plan from the Army Corps, we will then distribute it to the community and at that point in time we will start scheduling more frequent meetings to review this documentation. I don't know how large the report will be but based on the original report being 1600-1700 hundred pages, it potentially could be that long. We will need multiple meetings and a strategy on how to work through that, but we have time because this is going to be occurring tentatively in the third quarter of next year. They give us about a 60-day review period that can potentially be extended.
- The Tentatively Selected Plan is going to be all modeling – variables from socioeconomic information to actual physical scientific information based on coastal morphology, structure inventory at that time.
- **Joe Schmitt:** Beach access is technically public; there must be accommodations made to get to the beach.
- **Chris Mason:** Lastly as we move through this process, there have been areas that the Corps have been studying that are inland and they are called Environmental Justice areas. The Justice 40 is a whole government initiative that 40% of all overall benefits flow to marginalized, disadvantaged, and overburdened populations. This information is gathered using the Army Corps software. They are taking into consideration, Census data and numerous other data points to come up with these areas, and so they delineated within Collier County what they call two environmental justice areas,
- At the airport, some of this boundary is within the City of Naples – south of the airport called Holiday Estates or Holiday Harbor; east is Flamingo Estates; and then further southward into the Bayshore area. The Village of Goodland is also considered an environmental justice area, and it's based again off census data and numerous other data points that take into consideration the socioeconomic landscape. What is being proposed for these areas is anything from repairing failing sea walls to elevations on existing structures that are in the very low areas. A lot of this construction is older. It sits low and with current storm surge and rainfall some of these areas are often challenged with local drainage problems. What seems to be the overriding idea of what type of mitigation could take place seems to be the wholesale elevation of these structures.
- Mr. Lang, some of these areas challenged are with local drainage problems and elevation of structures. The question to you is with wholesale elevation of homes in

this defined area – what process or vehicle would the Corps do – possibly some type of hazard mitigation assistance, flood mitigation assistance?

- **William Lang:** If it is specific to FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Assistance it could be an option. Generally, when you look at grants, they're categorized as either an income-based grant or a grant based off benefit cost analysis. FEMA is strictly BCA, Benefit Cost Analysis, and their entire HMA program is based off that or their Hazard Mitigation Assistance program. Those grants include disaster grants under your HMA, that's hazard mitigation grant program that's disaster specific. If we have a hurricane tomorrow, they'll do a 30-day estimate based off damages we report and then they will allocate a certain amount of money. An example, HMGP (Hazard Mitigation Grant Program) for Hurricane Ian was roughly \$36 million for Collier County and we've used all that money for public assistance mitigation and one residential project. There are other annual grants that are non-disaster. They are competitive nationally and that includes building resilient infrastructure in communities or FEMA's BRIC Grant, a newer grant that's popular right now. They're allocating a lot of money for that specifically for infrastructure in communities. And then the final one is the Flood Mitigation Assistance program, or FMA, and this one is specific to Repetitive Loss Properties, which is a category under FEMA National Flood Insurance Program when you put in so many claims you get put on a list. So that one is the most advantageous at the individual property owner level because it provides a better cost match with the federal government versus those other ones that I just mentioned which are historically at a 75% federal cost share and a 25% local cost share. They would probably look at FEMA grant opportunities, the income-based grants are generally out of U.S. Housing and Urban Development (US HUD), which comes down through the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (Florida DEO), and then ultimately gets distributed locally in different ways. One example is our Community and Human Services Division within our Public Services Department. They historically help manage those funds in some capacity, but again that gets a little limited because of the annual median income percentage associated with those grants. Generally, it's around 80% Annual Median Income (AMI) for the jurisdiction, or sometimes at 120%. To give you an example of that, we have monies coming down from the federal government generally after a disaster, long after the FEMA monies, and that is Community Development Block grants, or CDBG funding in different categories. The HMGP monies for Ian, for example, are tapped out. Not only are they tapped out in Collier County, but the deadline for submitting those projects has lapsed for that disaster grant. So, anyone that comes forward to us, for example on a daily basis and asks for FEMA assistance we try to prepare them for one of those annual non-disaster grants.
- **Joe Schmitt:** Any project that the Corps looks at is a benefit cost ratio, or the other way around, cost benefit ratio. The project must be justified based on the properties protected. A study is going to recommend measures to prevent future damage, and they may cite FEMA, but typically FEMA is a separate entity and have their own programs so that that if they're looking at these areas, they're going to come up with whatever engineering designs they think that they need and that again gets into economic justification for the project. But second, then, is the cost benefit or the pressure of the non-federal sponsor which in this case is Collier County and how

much more they can take. That is based on the call for all costs. All those other types of programs are always available. FEMA manages the federal response plan. The Corps is one entity under engineering.

- The environmental justice piece is more specifically geared towards preventing the Corps from ruling this area out because it may not meet the cost benefit ratio. Basically, it says we must consider there are very expensive areas in the county that are going to be protected. And you can't say we're not going to protect other areas because they don't meet the cost benefit ratio. It's just a mechanism to make sure you don't write these areas off.
- **William Lang:** You basically have a layer of BCA on the front end from the US Army Corps of Engineers that can complicate or help things. The way it can help things is that if it passes muster at this level, you may have a better argument with FEMA and those other programs because they do BCA. But they are different on how they analyze where the BCA can lock things down. There are a lot of layers to get to that final okay.
- Further discussion regarding:
 - What is the baseline elevation change for each individual property level? Every structure is different. Every homeowner's situation is different. Elevation of existing homes is cost prohibited.
 - Engineering challenges
 - FEMA does default property acquisition and that property goes into green space in perpetuity
 - Property acquisition is each individual homeowner who can make an individual decision at any given point in time and can convolute the process
 - May be better off selling your home/property on the private market and make a profit
 - Eminent domain; easement agreements for access and right of ways; contributions in kind; cost contribution
 - How long ago were these geographic areas identified? Post Ian.
 - It is mandated by that directive from the ASACW, Assistant Secretary of the Army Civil Works. What the court is going to say is to protect your infrastructure, raise your transformers and sewer treatment plants, homeowners below FEMA find a way to raise your home.
 - They are not going to raise our roads. They'll just tell us it's a good idea to make them barriers for storm surge. The study will say these are other really good ideas. And then it depends when we get down to the solution and it becomes a political decision whether they're non-structural alternatives or if you want to even include structural alternatives,
 - There are grant opportunities on a community scale, but grants can take up to 3-5 years
 - FEMA's mitigation grant program for Hurricane Ian was tapped out at \$36 million and that was a 30-day estimate. They recently did the 12-month lock-in and they increased it by \$10 million.
 - Everglades City is not part of this study

- Basic principles such as beach nourishment and non-structural measures, critical infrastructure, and nature-based solutions. That's the Corps focus.
 - The committee can recommend to the Board to look at other solutions that the public may want
 - The Corps is interested in growing their program and they operate it with OPM – Other People's Money through non-federal sponsors or congressional authorized projects
 - The debate between using invasive/non-native types of vegetation that held up better than other (native) vegetation regarding erosion. Example: sea grape hedges
 - Flood gates, structures for shore-wall and erosion control are no longer on the table
 - Open again the discussion for more aggressive solutions – hardening/shore protection systems. Have the Corps give us recommendations of federal vs. state/county funds, grants, etc.
 - Front-end costs, maintenance, back-end costs after a disaster and who's footing the bill
- Highlights from public comments:
- **Greg Janiec, Sovereign Consulting:** Crafted nature-based concepts that were submitted by the Environmental Defense Fund. Would like to volunteer at a future meeting to give a brief presentation on Clam Pass.
 - **Kathy, Conservancy of SW FL:** Regarding the annual maintenance on beach re-nourishment and the dunes, it likely will be no more than what we're already spending right now because the County does conduct beach nourishment and dune restoration. It probably would be a wash as far as what is currently spent. The Corps would help pay for the initial design of it. Question: Is there a mechanism in place so that the different groups know what each other is doing? It could perhaps save some time and resources. I'm referring to the vulnerability study that the County does for the State. Is there any overlap with the Corps with that study, and where the County is in the process of performing the vulnerability study and exactly what it would entail, would it help the Corps or is this totally separate? Is there any place for a crossover? One last question, if the Corps has as a part of its plan, recommending homes be elevated – if they come back with that in the study and the County decides that this is not feasible would kicking out one element of the plan trigger us to have to do a locally preferred plan to be able to take any other parts of the plan under consideration? Or can you pick out one part of their draft of what's feasible and do something else?
 - **Scott Schultz:** What is the budget for the sand?
 - **Andy Miller, Coastal Zone Management:** We lose about 50,000 yards of sand per year; equates to approximately \$3-4M/year.
 - **Judith Hushon, League of Women Voters:** Suggests to the committee to drive around the red areas on this map (speaking of Environmental Justice Areas delineated by USACE). What you're going to find is that it's not all houses. There are a lot of trailers/mobile homes and therefore, you have some potential for moving them to another location and raising them up, and that is something you should consider. There are several communities within this yellow region where it

would make sense. You may want to offer to move the whole community because these people are used to living together and they want their friends around them. The County does own some land. Move them to another place that is high and dry.

- **Scott Schultz:** Judy, would you mind putting pen to paper and outline the areas that you have the biggest concern with?
- **Natalie Hardman. City of Naples:** I am the Natural Resources (manager) at the City of Naples, and I just wanted to say that the vulnerability assessment with the City of Naples has completed their vulnerability assessment. It's on our website if you want to look at what one looks like and what Collier County will be working towards.

- Next date for the Army Corps recurring monthly meeting: Wednesday, November 22, at 3:30

There being no further business for the good of the County, the meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m. by order of the Chairman.



Approved by Scott Schultz, Chairman

These minutes were approved by the Board on 10/30/2024, (check one)
as presented, or as amended .