

October 15, 2018

The Bladen County Board of Commissioners held a Special Meeting regarding ongoing recovery efforts related to Hurricane Florence. The meeting began at 4:00pm on Monday, October 15, 2018 at the Powell-Melvin Agricultural Building, 450 Smith Circle, Elizabethtown, NC.

Members present were:

Ray Britt, Chairman

Michael Cogdell, Vice Chairman

Charles R. Peterson

Arthur Bullock

Dr. Ophelia Munn-Goins (arrived at 4:09pm)

David Gooden

Russell Priest

Ashley Trivette

Daniel Dowless

ITEM 1. Call to Order:

Chairman Britt called the meeting to order at 4:08pm.

Chairman Britt provided an invocation. County Manager Greg Martin led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ITEM 2. Emergency Services: (Bradley Kinlaw, Director)

Mr. Kinlaw expressed appreciation to the Board and others in attendance who supported Bladen County during and immediately following Hurricane Florence. He introduced representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), North Carolina Emergency Management (NCEM), and the US Small Business Administration (SBA).

- A. Mr. Kinlaw summarized Bladen County ongoing activities, along with input from General Services Director Kip McClary and Division on Aging Director Kelly Robeson. Mr. Kinlaw stated that county damage assessments completed by FEMA and the Red Cross has just been received and will be included with County information collected through Building Inspections and Planning departments to be submitted to the State. He indicated that currently there have been 1002 homes identified with minor damage, 581 with moderate damage and 153 with major damage or completely destroyed. However, assessments continue and the numbers will likely be revised.

Mr. McClary provided information related to storm debris, and ongoing county-owned property damage assessment. He stated that the Courthouse suffered a good deal of water intrusion and damage. He affirmed that moisture/mold remediation will continue, as well as developing plans for mitigation. He also shared that he had met with representatives of two firms to assist in developing mitigation plans. He shared that the county's insurance adjuster has been working through the county to document damage and assist in processing the insurance claim.

Captain Jeff Singletary provided information regarding water damage to a Four County Electric-owned location adjacent to Natmore Road in the Kelly community. He stated that the radio equipment and generator, which supported the first responder paging system, was underwater for a period of time. He stated that Four County Electric Membership Cooperative allowed the county to use the substation site free of charge. He stated that arrangements have been made to provide radio/microwave coverage to the area until more permanent arrangements have been completed.

Mr. McClary addressed questions regarding debris removal throughout the county. He stated that in the near future the NCDOT, by order of the Governor's office, will be contracting to remove vegetative debris, construction and demolition debris, and brown goods. The State must request bids and complete the necessary steps to properly award a contract to provide debris removal services. He indicated his understanding that it may be early

October 15, 2018

November before the contracting process is completed and removal services are secured.

Mrs. Robeson provided information regarding coordination of donations and volunteers, and disaster assistance sites throughout the county. The designated site for receipt of donations remains to be the former Paul H. Sessoms building adjacent to the county administration building. She stated that donations were being distributed from the Centerville Baptist Church, Natmore Baptist Church and the Kelly Community Building/Nutrition Site. Ongoing distribution will be transitioned to the Kelly Community Building. She shared information regarding a Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) program recommended by FEMA representative Jack Payne. She stated that the VOAD program could assist a lengthy recovery process. She stated that she had been working with Emergency Management Director Bradley Kinlaw's office to receive maps of the flooded areas so that home to home visits can be completed to assure that residents are receiving the assistance needed.

- B. Mr. Kinlaw provided a brief overview of state activities as well as resources which provided Meals-Ready-to-Eat (MRE's), water, and tarps. He stated that approximately 1,000 tarps were recently distributed following Hurricane Florence in preparation of Hurricane Michael.

Chairman Britt reminded those in attendance that having been in contact with the White House in the past, it was communicated that the White House views County Commissioners as direct partners in dealing with issues and challenges. He shared that he had made contact with individuals in the White House to assure that Bladen County residents would receive the assistance needed in relation to temporary housing assistance, and direct housing assistance.

North Carolina Emergency Management representative Robin Lorenzen shared her research regarding temporary housing assistance as well. She stated that there are thirty-one (31) rental properties showing available within the county. However, of the fifteen (15) low income rental properties available, ten (10) have received applications. She also stated that Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has been contacted, but that organization has its own process. She stated that she has not yet received information from HUD. She is working to obtain actual numbers of rental properties available in Bladen County. She plans to verify that the summer rental private properties located in White Lake are not being included for this purpose.

- C. Mr. Kinlaw addressed those in attendance to provide clarification regarding the FEMA Transitional Sheltering Assistance (TSA) and Direct Housing Programs. TSA provides temporary assistance for residents who are not able to return to their homes with assistance for hotel accommodations. The Direct Housing program could provide mobile units for displaced residents. He stated that efforts will continue to secure these two programs for Bladen County residents.

Commissioner Cogdell inquired regarding mold issues in areas which experienced flooding. He stated that he had been informed that in one instance a FEMA rejection letter had been received and the individual had no knowledge of available alternatives. FEMA Intergovernmental Affairs representative Elisa Roper addressed the question. Ms. Roper stated that a "denial" letter may indicate that an application may be incomplete or additional information may be required in order to make a determination. She recommended denial letter recipients call 1-800-621-FEMA or to visit the Disaster Recovery Center to find out how to quickly provide any missing information. However, if an applicant is, in fact, denied assistance, the next step would be to contact the Small Business Administration (SBA) to apply for a loan. If the applicant is denied a SBA loan, the applicant could return to FEMA and apply for a different assistance program. SBA representative

October 15, 2018

Vivian Santos-Rodriguez shared information as well regarding the loan application process. She stated that if the application is approved, the applicant is not obligated to activate the low-interest loan. She stated that a successful applicant has up to six (6) months to accept the loan.

Commissioner Munn-Goins inquired regarding clarification for those residents who have insurance and who have filed initial claims. Ms. Roper indicated that as soon as the homeowner files a claim with insurance, they can immediately contact FEMA for assistance as well. Ms. Santos-Rodriguez with SBA indicated that a loan application could also be initiated before any final determination from either insurance or FEMA.

Commissioner Gooden inquired regarding homeowners who opened claims with FEMA two years ago because of Hurricane Matthew and who have experienced damage from Hurricane Florence. FEMA representative Ms. Roper indicated that the applications would be treated as two separate incidents. However, if the home is located within a floodplain and the homeowner did not secure flood insurance following the first occurrence, the second application would not be approved. She stated that it would have been a requirement following the first incident to secure flood insurance on the home.

FEMA representative Wayne Smith stated that legal assistance is available through a FEMA program. If an individual need legal advice, they can contact 800-621-3362 (FEMA) and request legal assistance. Ms. Roper indicated that she would send Mr. Kinlaw additional contact information as well.

Mr. Kinlaw reminded those in attendance to contact the Disaster Recovery Center located in the Powell-Melvin Agricultural Building for information and assistance.

Mr. Kinlaw continued with updates regarding FEMA activities and the fact that Disaster Assistance Teams have been in the county since the storm moved out. He stated that approximately 1,600 homes flooded, located in the Clarkton, Bladenboro, White Oak, and Kelly areas. He stated that currently there are 2,750 individuals who have registered for FEMA assistance.

- D. Mr. Kinlaw provided an overview of Red Cross activities. He shared that the shelter located in the former Booker T. Washington School location had closed on October 3 and that providing meals had ceased. However, Red Cross can assist in providing mental health services, health service, and spiritual guidance.
- E. Small Business Administration representative Vivian Santos-Rodriguez had addressed a number of options during the previous portions of the meeting, but encouraged individuals to visit the Disaster Recovery Center for information.
- F. Soil and Water Conservation Director Dean Morris provided a brief update regarding the Kelly Dike. He stated that the dike was breached during Hurricane Florence and exacerbated flooding in the Kelly community. Mr. Morris stated that the project was developed by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). He stated that plans are to submit an application to the USDA for funding to develop an engineering study and plan of action. Mr. Morris introduced Chip Campbell who works with the Natural Resource Conservation Service. He stated that correspondence from the Corps of Engineers stating that USACE would not fund dike engineering and repairs, could benefit an application to USDA for funding. However, if USDA would approve an application, those funds could be used to repair the dike to “pre-storm” condition. He indicated his opinion that USDA funds would be a

October 15, 2018

“band aid” but additional funds would be required to restore the dike and maintain its proper condition.

Chairman Britt inquired regarding possible provisions in paperwork, easements, etc., which would support the Kelly Dike District Committee an opportunity to address issues directly to landowners who may have caused harm to the dike’s integrity.

Bladenboro citizen Dawson Singletary addressed the Board to share his view of the Bryant Swamp Drainage District and the flooding in the Bladenboro area.

For clarification, County Manager Greg Martin shared that the Kelly Dike and Drainage District is a political subdivision of the State, similar to county-status.

Ms. Sylvia Davis, longtime resident of the Kelly community, addressed the Board to share her frustration and her personal experience of losing her home and her belongings. She stated that she knew the dike is the primary reason her property flooded.

Chairman Britt thanked those in attendance for their input, efforts, and presence in the County to assist Bladen County and its citizens. He also expressed appreciation to the Bladen County residents and citizens for their input.

By acclamation, the meeting was adjourned at 5:18pm.

ATTEST:

Maria C. Edwards, Clerk to the Board

Ray Britt, Chairman