HARRIS COUNTY
COMMUNITY FLOOD RESILIENCE TASK FORCE

CFRTF Special Meeting—Prioritization Framework

Tuesday, February 8, 2022 | 5:30-7:30pm CST on zoom
Virtual meeting via Zoom

1. **Welcome** – Kenneth D. Williams, CFRTF (0:56 – 5:27)
    - Kenneth welcomes everyone to the CFRTF Special Meeting, which has been called in order to vote on the final recommendations on the Prioritization Framework that the committee will be sending to the County.
    - Kenneth briefly talks about the creation of the Ad Hoc Committee, which has looked into the proposed revisions, evaluated options, and brought back recommendations for the full group to consider.
    - Kenneth then gives a shout-out from member Mary Anne for significant conservation acquisitions across the region: 1,000 acres on the Katy Prairie and Matagorda County and 4,700 acres in Galveston and Brazoria Counties.
    - Kenneth also introduces new member Mashal Awais, as the new Precinct 1 appointee, replacing Dr. Earthea Nance.
    - Mashal introduces herself, and briefly shares her work experience.
    - Kenneth turns over to Leah Chambers for facilitation.

2. **Overview of the Process** – Leah Chambers, CFRTF Facilitator (5:28 – 11:45)
    - Leah introduces herself, and the remaining facilitation team: Vanessa Toro Barragan, the Flood Resilience Senior Planner of HCFCD, Alan Black, Interim Executive Director of HCFCD (who will be joining if possible due to on-going Commissioners Court), Peter Key from the Office of the County Administrator, Selena Palacios from Facilitation Team providing technical support, and several IRT members.
    - Leah then reviews committee norms, and thanks public members for attending the meeting.
        - Submitted written comments have been shared with the CFRTF members before the meeting.
    - Leah goes over the timeline of the Prioritization Framework.
        - Last Week: Ad Hoc Committee developed recommendations for the full Task Force.
        - Today: Task Force will be voting on final recommendations to send to the County.
        - Friday 2/11/2022: Recommendations will be sent in a letter to the Office of County Administrator (OCA) and Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD).
    - The agenda for the meeting is:

- Welcome, Facilitators
- Overview of the Process, Facilitator
- Four Questions + Key Takeaways, Facilitator
- Public Comment, Facilitator
- Committee Findings + Task Force Discussion, Facilitators
- Next Steps, Facilitator

3. Four Questions + Key Takeaways – Vanessa Toro Barragan, HCFCD (11:53 – 24:02)
    - Vanessa provides a brief overview of the Prioritization Framework, which includes the four questions the CFRTF was asked to comment on.
        - Question 1: People vs. Structures
        - Question 2- Partnership Funding
        - Question 3- Assigned Values
        - Question 4- Level of Service
    - Vanessa then introduces key takeaways for each question.
        - **Question 1: People vs. Structures**
            (1) Use a number of structures to measure people benefited.
                - Primarily a decision of centering people over structures.

            -OR-

            (2) Use a new formula to measure the number of people benefited.
                - Counting people instead of structures could provide some finer grained differences, BUT the three big variables (project cost, committed partnership funding, structures/people) combine to make the impact of using people less definitive.
        - **Question 2: Partnership Funding**
            (1) Include committed partnership funding as a factor in the Benefit Efficiency metric.
                - Including committed funding matters if it's a BIG contribution.
                - Projects with BIG amounts of committed partner funds do "move up" closer to the front of the line.

            -OR-

            (2) Don't include committed partnership funding in the Benefit Efficiency metric.
        - **Question 3: Assigned Values for Projects Without Direct Benefit to Structures**
            (1) Keep the values as proposed.
                - Could overvalue operations and maintenance projects over capital projects.

            -OR-

            (2) Request alternate values.

- Looks to balance projects that benefit lots of people with projects that benefit overall resilience goals.
- Prioritizes capital projects.

- **Question 4: Level of Service**
  (1) Use FEMA claims, wet carpet counts, and permit requests since 1977 to be able to compare subdivision drainage level of service with channel/detention projects level of service.
    - Combines several sources of data to give a proxy for the level of service that an area has.
    - Like all data sets, it likely is an undercount of impacts.

  -OR-

  (2) Request a new metric to measure level of service.
    - While there can be problems with the data, there is not a more accurate data source currently available.

- Vanessa opens up the opportunity for clarifying questions.
- Task Force Clarifying Questions:
  - A question is asked on how wet carpet counts are determined, is it based on the windshield damage assessments?
    - *Vanessa: That is correct*
  - A question is asked on the 1977 data, Can we have a subset of something more recent?
    - *Vanessa: Yes, the task force can consider an earlier subset of the data.*

4. **Public Comment** – Leah Chambers, CFRTF Facilitator (24:03 – 36:25)
   - Leah reviews previous public comments that have been shared on Ad Hoc Committee Meetings.
   - Leah then opens up the floor for public comments, giving 2 minutes to each speaker.
     - Comment 1: We do take into account the historic disinvestments when we count structures. It is not addressing the worst first, since there's no equity in it. You cannot equate a structure with a person. Social vulnerability index, it does not take into effect equity. Our communities are left out of the equation, especially using FEMA 1977 data. People do not use FEMA for the simple reason that FEMA is set up for failure.
     - Comment 2: Does this project include the Hunting Bayou Project that is on the way now? I didn't see it on the list, so I'm wondering about that?
       - *Vanessa: I do believe that this project has met all the partnership funding. I can double check for you offline for a clear response.*
     - Comment 3: The formula distribution for relief seems quite complicated? When you talk about partnership funds my first question is who is involved in the partnership fund? Are there restrictions on the funds? Next, where is the allocation of the funds. The community is not looking into the

equations, they are looking at results. When you use confusing formulas it becomes hard for individuals to understand, which then lacks transparency. Make things as simple as possible.
    - Comment 4: I continue to have a concern that by not adequately considering potential partnership funding the prioritization process will not optimize the benefits that local funding can provide.
    - Comment 5: I really think the SVI needs to be weighted a little higher on this equation. The reason is that it factors in an area's ability to recover from a storm. It may help identify some relief and help bring mitigation support to some areas that need it more, which feels more equitable.

5. **Committee Findings + Task Force Discussion** – Leah Chambers, CFRTF Facilitator and Vanessa Toro Barragan, HCFCD (36:26 – 2:13:00)
    - Leah goes over members of the Ad Hoc Committee who will walk the members through current recommendations and the reasoning behind those decisions.

    Question 1: People vs. Structures Discussion and Vote (Starts on 36:48)

    - Leah introduces Iris Gonzalez from the Ad Hoc Committee who will introduce Question 1: People vs. Structures to the Task Force.
    - Iris reminds committee members that in order to relieve the pressure on what is being accomplished today, there needs to be a consideration that the steps taken today are focused on moving in the right direction rather than having all the questions answered before making a decision.
    - Iris then introduces where the Committee is leaning towards, which is Option 2 — Using a new formula to measure the number of people benefited by projects.
    - Iris lays out the reasoning behind those decisions:
        - We want to center people in everything we do going forward & our language & data points matter.
        - Risk reduction to people should be more heavily considered than avoided damages to structures.
        - There was debate about multi floor or multi unit structures and how to consider who benefits from flood projects. The County put forth a potential new formula to consider, which involved calculating benefits for people whose homes would be affected, and partial benefits for people on upper floors of buildings that could be affected. The committee had some questions on that and are ultimately leaning towards making some more general recommendations rather than specifying the exact formula at this time.
    - Iris then reads the proposed recommendations:
        - Recommend changing the name of the “Benefits Efficiency” metric to “Project Efficiency” to be more specific about what we really mean. What we want to know is the benefits (flood risk reduction) to people, not the bang for our buck.

    - Request that HCFCD use the finest grain possible to capture the number of people most accurately
    - Request that HCFCD make the formula as simple as possible, with the fewest number of assumptions
    - Request that the formula capture direct/first floor benefits and partial benefits for upper floors. Capture benefits for everyone in the structure.
- Leah opens up the floor for Task Force Members to discuss.
    - A question is asked on ensuring that everyone in a building benefits. Are we talking about percentages or is this something we will continue to study?
        - *Iris: "My understanding is that we would want the formula to capture those benefits, and do some work to make the math work. We might not have a specific percentage at this time, but that is the recommendation that we are moving forward with."*
    - A point is made to include impacts to non-residential but essential structures eg. schools, grocery stores, hospitals, clinics, etc.
    - A point is made that a water treatment plant is a structure, but having no water impacts a large number of people.
    - A point is made that the added complexity of critical facility structures + people may not be needed to allocate funding.
        - Direct vs. Partial Benefits are to be determined.
    - A point is that simplicity is preferred when it comes to allocating flood resilience funds.
    - A point is made on how this framework is not just for the projects selected in this Flood bond, but looking ahead on what are the other elements that will get us ahead to the future.
    - A point is made on other tools needed for Beyond the Bond projects, and at multiple stages of projects.
    - A point is made to be consistent with data and use most recent data.
- Leah directs Task Force on the final proposed recommendations:
    (1) Recommend using a new formula to measure the number of people benefited.
        - Request that the formula capture benefits for all people—first and upper floors.
        - Request using the finest grain & most recent data possible to capture the number of people most accurately.
        - Request making the formula as simple as possible, with the fewest number of assumptions.
    (2) Recommend centering people over structures
        - Request changing the name of the efficiency metric to "Project Efficiency."
- Leah guides the Task Force on the following two consensus.

- **Task Force has built consensus on using the formula proposed for just population, not factoring in critical infrastructures.**
- **Task Force has built consensus on measuring population over measuring direct and partial benefits.**

Question 2: Committed Partnership Funding Discussion and Vote (Starts on: 55:47)

- Leah introduces Robert (Bob) Rehak from the Ad Hoc Committee who will introduce option 1 on Question 2: Committed Partnership to the Task Force.
- Bob then introduces where the Committee is split on this decision, he focuses on Option 1 — Include committed partnership funding.
- Bob lays out the reasoning behind the first decision:
    - HCFCD does need partnership funding to accomplish more projects; it's important for HCFCD to continue pursuing federal money and other funding opportunities.
- Vanessa clarifies that the data information Bob shared is not from a source that the Ad Hoc Committee looked at together. In addition, she emphasizes by not considering included committed partnership funding in the formula the committee is not telling the County that they cannot pursue partnership funding.
    - *"All projects that need partnership funding will still be pursuing grants, and the County can still leverage local money to pursue those grants. It's about when we do have local money and we use this equation to look into how to allocate that local funding. Should we consider committed partnership funding in our prioritization of local money?"*
- Bob verifies that Vanessa is correct that the data information was not shared with the full committee due to the data being recent.
- Leah clarifies questions and comments shared on the chat:
    - Partnership funding is defined by anything that is not from our local government eg. state, federal, private funds.
    - MUDs can contribute money as partnership funding.
- Task Force Clarifying Questions:
    - A point is made that the graphic shown previous, included a gap in partnership funding.
    - A question is asked if the committee is prioritizing those projects that still have funding? Is that what is being solved for?
        - *Leah clarifies that the question is "Should we consider committed partnership funding as a factor in the Benefits Efficiency formula?"*
    - A question is asked that if the trust money is not considered partnership money, does that mean we are playing against those projects that lost partnership funding?
        - *Vanessa: "By playing against you are referring to being compared against projects?...We have projects that did not receive partnership funding, and we are trying to use the prioritization formula to allocate funds from the Flood Resilience Trust to*

projects that don't have partnership funding. As part of that equation we are asking, "should we include partnership funding?"

- Leah introduces Michael Bloom from the Ad Hoc Committee who will introduce option 2 on Question 2: Committed Partnership to the Task Force.
- Michael then focuses on Option 2 — Don't include committed partnership funding.
- Michael lays out the reasoning behind the second decision:
    - Reliance on external funding sources will require us to conform to benefit cost ratio (BCR) requirements and other eligibility criteria which drive towards inequitable outcomes.
    - Use of 100% local funding will allow us to pursue projects that achieve our desired outcomes rather than the outcomes desired by Austin or Washington DC.
    - If we consider external funding sources (and the associated eligibility criteria) when developing project proposals for a future bond program we will be forced to propose projects that meet Austin and Washington DC goals rather than our own.
    - There was some discussion about how the decision might be different if the framework is being used solely for the existing portfolio of bond projects or for future new projects. After clarifying, most of the ad hoc committee were leaning towards not including committed partnership funding in the formula since the decision now would be the basis of the formula for future projects..
- Michael then shares that after talking about option 2 more, that for existing portfolio projects that are trying to get done, it makes sense to leverage the partnership funding money.
    - *"Let's include it if there is an existing portfolio on these existing projects, but not include it if we are trying to decide where new projects are going."*
- Leah explains that Michael was to focus on option 2, but changed his mind.
- Leah opens up the floor for Task Force Members to discuss option 2 — Don't include committed partnership funding.
- Task Force Clarifying Questions:
    - A question is asked if a project has committed partnership funding, but gets excluded from the prioritization framework, how does the project get done faster? How does it rank in priority within other projects?
        - *Michael: "If it's in an existing portfolio of projects that has been agreed to it will get done…especially if it's committed it does not change the project it's still consistent with the outline of a portfolio. This is different from future projects that have yet been defined."*
- Leah refers back to the key takeaways from Question 2, and redirects the discussion. She then apologizes to Michael, for not embracing his evolving thinking as we discuss.
- Task Force Clarifying Questions:

- A point is made if we include partnership funding in this prioritization calculation it is further limiting watersheds like Greens Bayou from being prioritized. As a committee we are reinforcing the problem we already have. There is no change to dis-enforce the investment that has been at play for a long time.
- A point is made that at this stage, it makes sense to include partnership funding to inform the committee how efficient this project is.
- A point is made that there is a need for tools that help in multiple stages of project creation, design, etc.
- A point is made that the committee is using the current tool on the list for projects (2018 Bond) but that there is strong opposition to using partnership funding for future projects.
- A point is made that we must be grounded in data when discussing disinvestment.
- A point is made that if no partnership funding is included in the project, it may create a lack of incentive to pursue external grants/funding sources, and do more harm than good.
- A point is made that it should be considered to use partnership funding at the moment, and if it does not work consider looking for more money elsewhere.
- A point is made that there is a wanted assurance that the County will still pursue partnership funding.
- A point is made that there is a need to also consider drainage infrastructure at street level.
- A point is made that all projects will be funded.
- A point is made to seek a timeline that the County is required to seek partnership funding.
- A point is made to recommend that the County still strongly pursue as much partnership funding with the goal of completing all projects as soon as possible.
- A question is asked on an example shared previously where it was shown that projects with or without partnership funding did not seem to change the priority as much. Is that correct?
    - *Leah: “Unless the contribution was very big, then it kinda shifted some things.”*
    - *Vanessa: “I’m trying to remember, and it's hard to say significantly, because of the calculation...the reason why you need a big partnership fund is due to it pushing it out of the bucket into the next score. The score makes a difference.”*
    - *Vanessa answers another point brought up during the discussion: “Yes, we are trying to prioritize projects right now for resilience trust funding. These projects primarily have a partnership gap.”*

- Vanessa directs to Peter Key for more clarification on why the partnership funding was included.
    - *Peter: "The County is going to continue to pursue partnerships funding. The County has a long history of doing so, much of what has been built out from the Flood Control infrastructure involves some type of partnership funding. It is one of the reasons it is included in the prioritization framework."*
- Leah directs Task Force on the final proposed recommendations:
    (1) Recommend NOT including Committed Partnership Funding in the formula
        - Request that the County strongly pursue as much partnership funding as possible until all projects are completed.
    (2) Include minority view point:
        - Don't want to leave it out because we do not want to disincentivize pursuit of partnership funding.
- **Task Force has built consensus on the final proposed recommendation of not including committed partnership funding. Only two members oppose this recommendation.**

Question 3: Assigned Values Discussion and Vote (Starts on 1:36:08)

- Leah introduces Mary Anne Piacentini from the Ad Hoc Committee who will introduce Question 2: Assigned Values to the Task Force.
- Mary Ann then introduces where the Committee is leaning towards, which is Option 2 — Use alternative values.
- Mary Anne lays out the reasoning behind those decisions:
    - Projects that don't reduce flood risks for people and structures are not as immediately impactful valuable as projects that do reduce flood risks for people and structures.
    - The operations, maintenance, and regulatory costs associated with projects (desilt, sediment removal, wetlands mitigation) should be incorporated in the full cost of each flood risk reduction project. They should not be separately scored.
- Mary Anne then reads the proposed recommendations:
    - Recommend keeping assigned scores for Investigation and Floodplain Preservation.
    - Recommend removing wetland mitigation bank projects if they are part of Operations and Maintenance work, since they should be built into the projects.
    - Request that HCFCD clarify what projects fall under "Stabilization."
        - If projects are actually doing "Natural Channel Design", then recommend renaming it "Natural Channel Design" and assign it a 6.

        - Stabilization projects that are maintenance-related should stay a 1.
- Leah clarifies that the Wetland Mitigation Bank is kept due to those projects already being included, but the recommendation will be to be scored at a 1.
    - *"Anything that was operational or maintenance got moved down to a lower score. Then we added Natural Channel Design to a score of 6."*
    - A point is made that the Mitigation Bank probably does not have it' own funds. It is part of the projects in the future.
- Leah emphasizes that the Ad Hoc Committee talked about balancing reducing flood risk for people in structures with projects such as floodplain preservation that keep things from getting worse.
- Task Force Clarifying Questions:
    - A question is asked on the dual purpose of a facility. Where does that fit in the recommendations?
        - *Michael: "Normally that would be a detention facility that will serve a direct flood risk reduction purpose, and then the Precinct adds the recreational piece."*
    - A point is made to emphasize on a question - Does this create deficiency with O&M? We are here at this moment because we had that in the past.
    - A point is made to have broader goals regarding nature-based and resilience solutions.
    - A point is made that the funding of $5B is a good starting point, but there is a need of $60B for long-term resilience. There is a need to prioritize locally, and also identify enough funding.
    - A point is made for investigations: there is a need for study projects and efficacy so that decisions are made based on those metrics.
    - A point is made that these are based on studies going into the future
        - *Leah: I can put this on key questions moving forward.*
- Leah directs Task Force on the final proposed recommendations:
    (1) Recommend keeping assigned values for Floodplain Preservation and Investigation.
    (2) Recommend changing some values to prioritize projects that go beyond operations and maintenance.
        - Request that Wetland Mitigation Bank be scored at a 1.
        - Request that Stabilization projects as maintenance stay scored at a 1.
        - Request adding a Natural Channel Design category, to be scored at a 6.
    (3) For "beyond the bond" projects, recommend building Operations and Maintenance costs into the District budget, rather than listing them as separate projects. Ensure that this doesn't create an O&M budget deficiency.

(4) Request that the County clarify their goals regarding flood risk reduction and nature-based solutions.
(5) Request that the County start to identify the funding sources for the $60B total price tag.

- **Task Force has built consensus on using the final proposed recommendations.**

Question 4: Level of Service (Starts on 1:51:16)

- Leah introduces Kenneth Williams from the Ad Hoc Committee who will introduce Question 4: Level of Service to the Task Force.
- Kenneth then introduces where the Committee is leaning towards, requesting that data starting point be more recent, and ensure that the metric takes into account vulnerable populations.
- Kenneth lays out the reasoning behind those decisions:
    - FEMA data alone can be problematic, but when combined with carpet counts and other data sources, can give a more balanced view on level of service
    - A more current starting date would capture more outlying portions of the County, which were developed later than 1977.
- Kenneth then reads the proposed recommendations:
    - Recommend using the blended data set of FEMA claims and wet carpet counts, and other documented instances of flooding.
    - Request that data starting point be more recent.
- Leah directs the committee to the key takeaways that Vanessa shared earlier on FEMA claims.
    - *"Ultimately, there is not another easily accessible form of data that could be a better proxy at the moment. The current recommendation is to continue using the FEMA Claims, wet carpet count, permit requests, and other documented instances of flooding to put them all together to give us a most accurate representation of what we have at the moment."*
- Task Force Clarifying Questions:
    - A point is made that even if the data goes back to 1977, they can use more recent subsets.
    - A point is made that more recent data accounts for more development (last 20 years) and better data.
    - A point is that there are many concerns that people do not even apply to FEMA and trust more in local sources. Which then results in undercounting.
    - A point is made on personal work experience regarding FEMA claims.
- Vanessa clarifies on the definition of level of service.
    - *"The framing is that we have some subdivision drainage projects that don't have a level of service score. Since, we don't have data whether or not that subdivision drainage meets the needs of X amount of storm. But*

we do have that data on channel projects. What is being suggested is that in order to capture whether or not the community is receiving the right benefits in terms of flood mitigation we would look at this data reflective of the frequency of flooding."

- Task Force Clarifying Questions:
  - A point is made to change the term "level of service" as it may have a double meaning.
  - A question is asked on the reason why the subdivision drainage projects are in there is due to the responsibilities of the Precincts? Is it part of the bond issue?
    - *Vanessa: "I will get back to you on what Precincts are responsible for."*
  - A point is made to understand the reason to include historical data sets.
  - A question is asked on the choice of using most recent data eg. last 10 years. Is that due to limitations on analyzing data sets?
    - *Leah: "We are using multiple data sets, to put a collective picture. FEMA is the one that went back to 1977, but not all the others."*
  - A point is made that organizations use FEMA as a leverage, which could result in lack of undercounts in data collection.
  - A point is made that an organization has made an agreement with the County and City to have a joint survey after disasters. In the future, this type of data could be more accurate than a FEMA claim.
- Leah directs Task Force on the final proposed recommendations:
  (1) Recommend using the blended data set of FEMA claims/wet carpet counts/permit requests, and other documented instances of flooding to measure the extent and frequency of damage.
    - Recognize issues and flaws in the data and likelihood of undercounts.
    - Recommend not naming "LOS", use a name that captures the apple to apple comparison.

  (2) Recommend a data starting point that is more recent than 1977.
    - Consider all the data, but use the shortest period of record starting from today, in order to incorporate most accurate counts from all data sources.
- Task Force Clarifying Questions:
  - A point is made to consider the previous investments with the FMBI.
    - *Leah: "Does it make sense to include that as a next step? As we discuss the baseline conditions?"*
    - *Bob agrees.*
- **Task Force has built consensus on using the final proposed recommendations.**

6. **Next Steps** – Leah Chambers, CFRTF Facilitator (2:13:01 – 2:14:18)

- Vanessa and Leah, will be taking the final recommendations, and formatting it to a letter.
    - The letter will be sent to the CFRTF members for reference, and the executive committee will be signing it, so it can be sent to OCA and HCFCD.
- Leah, thanks committee and public members for attending multiple meetings in short notice.
- Leah then proposes working on an IRT workshop later on.

7. **Meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.**

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ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT
Submitted in the Q&A, but not answered live or discussed during the meeting

Overall

- Comment 1: Didn't the GLO leave Harris County without before on the equity bond. A lot of the watershed in LMI communities still are being flooded even during heavy rains.
- Comment 2: Is there anything in the priortization process that takes into account benefits of a project that will benefit areas downstream, or even in another watershed? For example, a project in the upper Cypress Creek watershed could benefit not only residents downstream in the Cypress Creek watershed but also residents in the Addicks watershed and in the Buffalo Bayou watershed above, within, and below the city of Houstonn?

Level of Service

- Comment 3: Comment on Q4. HCFCD provides extensively researched data on the location and number of homes flooded after major flood events (this info is included in the Lindner reports). For example, the report on Harvey took a long time to generate because of the extensive work done to identify and document which homes were flooded. It would be interesting to compare the FEMA flooding info with the Lindner report data on the number of homes flooded in a major flooding event. HCFCD may have already made that comparision.