

## **MINUTES**

### **DISASTER RELIEF AND RECOVERY SPECIAL COMMITTEE**

September 6, 2007  
Coffeyville and Independence, Kansas

#### **Members Present**

Representative Lee Tafanelli, Chairperson  
Representative Louis Ruiz, Ranking Minority  
Senator Derek Schmidt  
Representative John Faber  
Representative Dennis McKinney

#### **Members Absent**

Senator Ruth Teichman, Vice-Chairperson  
Senator Janis Lee  
Senator Roger Pine  
Representative Richard Carlson

#### **Staff Present**

Amy VanHouse, Kansas Legislative Research Department  
Jill Shelley, Kansas Legislative Research Department  
Bruce Kinzie, Office of the Revisor of Statutes  
Judy Swanson, Committee Assistant

#### **Conferees**

Jeff Morris, City of Coffeyville City Manager  
Paul Sasse, City of Independence City Manager  
Rod Holter, Cessna Aircraft  
Ron Denny, Four County Mental Health Center

#### **Others Attending**

See attached list.

**Coffeyville Session**

Chairman Tafanelli called the luncheon meeting to order at 12:15 p.m. in the Coffeyville Regional Medical Center. Prior to the meeting, Committee members and staff received a driving tour of the flood damaged areas in Coffeyville, narrated by Jeff Morris, City Manager of Coffeyville. Chairman Tafanelli welcomed all in attendance and thanked City officials for the tour and their hospitality to the Committee. He stated the Committee's mission was to see where they were in the recovery process, and how the recovery process works; and to analyze the disaster preparedness of the state. Long-term positive recovery is the goal of the State of Kansas. State Senator Dwayne Umbarger and State Representative Virgil Peck also joined the Committee meeting.

Mr. Morris made a PowerPoint presentation giving an overview of the disastrous flood, rescue efforts, recovery, and follow up (Attachment 1). He recapped the first few days of the flood. Flash flooding began on June 29, 2007. Flood Zones A and B were affected on June 30, 2007. In addition, Mr. Morris gave an overview of the horrific event and explained the search and rescue efforts. There was one fatality, a man who had been warned to leave the area twice, but failed to leave. Mold had removed oxygen from some structures, so buildings had to be opened before rescue personnel could enter the buildings. Residents were kept out of their homes for 12 days. There is no exact count of the number of individuals who were evacuated, but approximately 1,000 had to be moved, approximately 300-400 individuals were in the Red Cross Shelter, and others were assumed to have gone with families and friends.

The citizens received excellent assistance from the Incident Management Teams (IMT). The IMTs had assistance from 140 National Guard members and over 40 Highway Patrol personnel. The flood affected 497 structures for habitability, and 71 percent (351) were determined unsafe. Approximately 10 percent of housing stock was affected, but that does not include homes affected by the flash flooding on June 29. Many city facilities were damaged, including streets, signage, levee pumps, animal shelter, water treatment pump house, sewer lift stations, and park facilities. Approximately 70 businesses were impacted. Six of the seven hotels in Coffeyville remain closed as of the date of this meeting. Approximately \$15.8 million appraised value for buildings in affected areas was lost, which equates to roughly \$2.1 million in assessed valuation. The total assessed valuation in those areas is \$39 million.

Clean up has been painfully slow, due to the oil release from the refinery during the flood which has complicated the process. Volunteers are willing to work, but they are unable to be utilized due to the Federal Workforce Investment Act. The city is in need of a building inspector. There is an issue with the Kansas Department of Health Environment (KDHE) as far as property demolition. Coffeyville wants to treat all homes as if they have asbestos, and is working with KDHE to make that happen quickly. Mosquitoes are a problem as West Nile virus has been detected. North Carolina officials were brought in to assist with the mosquito treatment.

The biggest issue is the housing crisis. Before the flood, there was a housing shortage, and since the flood the shortage has risen to the crisis level. Many of the residents affected by the flood were economically challenged, even before the flood. Rental housing is unavailable. Over 43 percent of the housing affected by the flood was rental housing. It has been frustrating to work with FEMA, according to the city staff, especially in trying to secure temporary housing in a timely manner. Finally, there is a huge gap between what residents can afford and the cost of new construction.

FEMA does not provide much business assistance, and SBA loans are not always practical for businesses already in debt. Some businesses will be forced to close.

During Committee discussion, Mr. Morris said there was no legal counsel offered to homeowners when they were offered home buyouts. Everyone was “on their own,” without legal assistance. There are several community foundations available to help with recovery. The last time Coffeyville’s emergency response plan was updated was six months prior to the flood. The plan did not work exactly as it should have worked, according to Mr. Morris. The response team members were not familiar with ICS forms, and that created a big problem. Area command should be doing planning and finance. When asked where the delay was in IMTs, Mr. Morris responded there was a disconnect somewhere. The city did not receive any feedback from the IMT representative.

Senator Umbarger testified that a big problem was the city was expecting help, and no help showed up after the requests were made. Senator Schmidt noted this seemed to be a common theme throughout the disaster, no answers or information; or, the request was answered and no one responded with assistance. Chairman Tafanelli said the purpose of the Committee is to look at the process and procedures and see what did and did not work. It definitely appeared IMT team support was a big problem. In addition, it took almost three weeks for finance people to come to the area. Because the IMT request was unflattering to the community, it discouraged people from helping.

Communication was difficult with the rural water districts. When messages were left on answering machines, they went unanswered.

Chairman Tafanelli directed the staff to check on the Emergency Management Team size as compared to EMTs in other states, and also to check on how many were still deployed in the Greensburg tornado area when the flooding occurred. He suggested the creation of a quasi-official group to maintain disaster training.

The Chairman thanked Coffeyville officials for their hospitality, and asked them to make any recommendations or concerns in writing to their State Representative or Senator, and their legislator will get them to the Committee for consideration.

The Committee recessed at 1:30 p.m. for their journey to Independence.

### **Independence Session**

The Committee reconvened at 2:20 p.m. in the Independence Memorial Hall. Chairman Tafanelli thanked Independence and surrounding area officials for their hospitality and attendance. Representative Jeff King joined the Committee meeting.

Paul Sasse, City of Independence City Manager, expressed his empathy to Representative McKinney on the Greensburg disaster and sent his best wishes for their recovery. Representative McKinney thanked Mr. Sasse for all the assistance Greensburg received from the City of Independence.

Mr. Sasse said the Independence flood disaster was one of the best kept secrets in Kansas. From June 29-30, Independence was an “island paradise.” No one could get out of the city. There were 190 residences with more than one inch of water, and six businesses affected with flood damage. They lost their water treatment plant, waste-water treatment plant, and lift stations during the flood. Housing remains the main concern.

Rod Holter, Cessna Aircraft, testified to the housing crisis. Cessna Independence employs 1,142 people. Thirty of their employees had flooded residences, and 11 of these residences were a total loss. Several of the Cessna professional employees are moving to Bartlesville, Oklahoma, rather than stay in Independence. Bartlesville is a 40-mile commute. Cessna is the largest employer in Montgomery County, and the city wants to continue to grow, but needs to have housing to accomplish growth. The three reasons their employees are not locating in Independence are: available housing; taxes are less in Oklahoma; and Bartlesville is a larger town with more amenities. In 2002, 40 percent of Cessna employees had an Independence address. In 2007, only 21 percent of Cessna employees have an Independence address. Their average wage is \$16 per hour. Mr. Holter said Cessna chose to locate in Independence because of the work force and the work ethic in Southeast Kansas.

Mr. Sasse showed a video of a fly-over of the flood, which showed the devastation of the area, followed by a presentation of the disaster (Attachment 2). It will take 12 years to rebuild the houses that were damaged or destroyed. He proposed five initiatives to the Committee for consideration:

- State authorization to share a percentage of sales tax for development of new workforce housing;
- Fund a state version of the CDBG program with fewer restrictions and reduce the qualification requirements for participating beneficiaries;
- Provide funding for infrastructure improvements;
- Provide incentives for developers/contractors; and
- Provide state funds for redevelopment of the flood-impacted areas.

Mr. Sasse said they are not asking the state to just hand the money over, but to provide money so Independence can meet its own needs.

During Committee discussion, he pointed out that in over 30 years, they have only had three developers. The City does not have platted lots and subdivisions available so contractors will not come in and build spec homes. There are 85 structures damaged by the flood, most of which will not be re-inhabited, which leads to concerns about affordable housing. Over 25 percent of the population is age 62-plus. Workers who lived in \$25-\$50,000 homes must now move to \$125,000 homes, and several cannot afford the move.

In response to disaster recommendations, Mr. Sasse said the process in place may be a good process, but it does not respond to getting things done. For example, the request for equipment was never met. People were very cordial, but not helpful. There was a disconnect between what they expected to be delivered, and what was actually delivered. This was the same problem Coffeyville experienced. State agencies did not seem to respond well to the citizen needs. The Incident Command Center was not quickly helpful. There is no tracking of people in Montgomery County who need emergency housing. The system provided very poor delivery. The shuffling of people created a very difficult process among various emergency agencies. Mr. Sasse believes that there has to be concern on the structure of the process; however, there has not been enough on actual delivery of services and resources.

Senator Schmidt said one of the challenges in Montgomery County and in other areas was that there was not a single emergency manager to take care of the areas. An example was the flood gauging station was stuck, but it took almost six hours for the Corp of Engineers to realize that fact, even though local officials were aware of the problem. Representative McKinney said the Incident Command System in Greensburg was not there to be used at Greensburg's disposal and needs, but seemed to have its own agenda. Resources had to be requested, but they were not offered.

Ron Denney, Four County Mental Health Center, presented a summary of assistance provided to his Center during the flood ([Attachment 3](#)). He urged the Committee to think about affordable housing for the mentally ill patients. They are currently looking for housing in this region for their clients.

Chairman Tapanelli again thanked everyone for their participation and hospitality. He requested suggestions be sent in writing to their state legislator, and they will be considered by the Committee. The meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m., followed by a tour led by Mr. Sasse to flood-affected areas in Independence.

Prepared by Judy Swanson, Committee Assistant  
Edited by Kathie Sparks

Approved by Committee on:

September 24, 2007

(Date)