

# **HARBOR BRIDGE PROJECT COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

July 12, 2018

*The following notes are the Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT) summary of the meeting and are not designed to be an exact representation of proceedings. The responses to questions posed during the meeting included in this document may be abbreviated and not constitute the full and appropriate responses for individuals' situations. Community Advisory Board (CAB) members and the public should contact the appropriate agency for complete and personalized answers to their questions.*

## **Opening of the CAB Meeting, 6:00 pm**

CAB Chair Pastor Adam Carrington opened the meeting and welcomed the CAB, partner agencies, and the public. Christopher Amy, TxDOT went over the purpose of the CAB and the ground rules, encouraging everyone to be respectful during meetings.

## **Del Richardson & Associates (DRA) Update**

- DRA reported on progress on the Voluntary Acquisition and Relocation Program (VARP).
  - 161 parcels have been acquired.
  - 336 property owners have expressed an interest in selling.
  - 275 property owners met the eligibility requirements.
  - 239 offers have been made.
  - Need to close on a little under 60 parcels.
  - A total of 83 property owners have relocated.
  - Issued 99 relocation letters to tenants of which 76 have relocated. The rest are in the process of searching for replacement homes.
- Christopher Amy, TxDOT asked how many tenants had received relocation assistance. DRA responded that seven tenants have purchased homes and an additional three have scheduled loans. These are first-time homeowners.
- Christopher Amy asked where people were moving to in general. DRA responded people are moving all over Corpus Christi – there is not one specific area.
- A CAB member questioned a DRA report from May that showed different program numbers. DRA explained that the numbers change from month to month. Average is 10 to 15 properties a month that shift the numbers.
- A CAB member asked if DRA was still finding homes. DRA responded yes, there are currently many homes on the market. DRA encouraged VARP participants to reiterate they have a cash offer to increase their competitiveness.
- A CAB member asked what happens to the program funds that are not used. TxDOT replied that the program was initially funded with a \$20 million contribution from the Port of Corpus Christi Authority (the Port). Federal dollars backfilled gaps. The program is exceeding the allotted funds and they are having to backfill.
- A CAB member asked if the funds go to contractors. DRA responded it includes program participant purchase of properties, relocation benefits, appraisals, title reports. It also pays

DRA staff salaries. The CAB was reminded the \$20 million is the Port's contribution, and not the entire VARP budget.

- Public comment: A member of the public stated that lots are not being maintained. The Port said they have a dedicated crew that maintains the lots, but they had not been out lately due to heavy rains. The Port will mark which lots are owned by them. Someone suggested marking the sidewalks.
- The CAB Chair asked if any of the program participants had acquired a new construction home. DRA stated there had been one or two participants that had bought newly-built homes. One property owner was looking into building a new dwelling.
- A CAB member asked when maintenance of homes and lots starts. The Port stated as soon as the property is acquired, and within two weeks of demolition.
- A CAB member asked if the Port was giving mowing business to small and disadvantaged business enterprises (SBE/DBE). The Port said they would take that into consideration. The Port stated both Requests for Proposals will contain the same recommendation for SBE/DBE minority-owned business participation. DRA pointed out they have been using SBEs.
- A CAB member asked if houses were being refurbished and pointed out that there should be governing factors that don't allow people to live in "80-year old houses that could have asbestos contamination". DRA responded that is one of the reasons they do not use foreclosures, since many times they need work. They utilize what's on the market. Christopher Amy pointed out the dwelling must be decent, safe, and sanitary. They cannot dictate where people move.
- Public comment: A member of the public asked how many families are renters vs. homeowners and if there were relocation services for renters? DRA responded there are 83 homeowners and 76 renters and that yes, renters receive relocation benefits.

### **Port of Corpus Christi Authority (the Port) Update**

- The Port of Corpus Christi provided an update on the status of demolitions. Sarah Garza, director of environmental planning at the Port, stated they were in the process of letting several contracts for demolition. There will be five interim companies to continue to make progress on demolition until the board September approval of new contracts. Work would include clearing utilities, asbestos abatement, and waste disposal. They are working on the best way to sort out the contracts. With asbestos, you need to have an independent contractor doing abatement, and you need a work plan. They are working on figuring out whether abatement would be handled better through environmental oversight. Multiple companies will be in a program management role through abatement, then demolition contractors will conduct demolitions.
- A CAB member asked for the breakdown of the \$20 million for the VARP that has been spent to date.
- A CAB members asked if someone could buy a house for \$44,000 stating that is what the available amount of funds would be when you divide the \$20 million by the people in the neighborhood. The Port stated the average cost was \$77,000-\$80,000 for relocation. They reminded the group the \$20 million is the Port's cap, but not the entire program amount.
- A CAB member stated someone needs to oversee the demolition work and noted that it was currently not being conducted properly, causing dust contamination near his home. He

stated he thought this is how the contractor was getting away with the improper demolition and asbestos contamination - due to the fact no one was monitoring the work.

- The CAB requested water trucks be present at every demolition job.
- Public comment: A member of the audience asked who will maintain the properties after next year. The Port replied it would be their responsibility. The audience member stated that currently, even with the Port and the CAB being involved, the neighborhood still had problems with properties not being maintained properly. Sam Esquivel, with the Port, asked that people call him directly to inform him of any issues.
- A CAB member asked what plans the Port has for the properties it has acquired. The Port responded they do not have plans for the properties. The CAB member contended the area is being rezoned to light industrial and would like to know if the Port's plans would increase the value of his property since this would be something he would base his decision to sell or not on. The Port again declared it has no plans for the properties.
- A CAB member asked why the Port does not follow City ordinance regarding tree removal when they are demolishing properties.

### **Flatiron Dragados, LLC (FDLLC) Update**

- FDLLC gave an update on construction activities and closures.
  - Construction, specifically column work, is taking place in the North Beach area.
  - On the south side crews are working in the salt flat area.
  - Robstown precast yard is storing up to 500 bridge segments. Eight molds are being used. Six of eight were commissioned. There will be a total of 2600 segments. Gantry crane will be erected in September and the segments will then be transported.
  - 40 drill shafts have been completed on the cable stay bridge.
  - Construction is taking place on the SH 286 interchange.
  - Completed demo of Port Avenue bridge.
  - Completed demo of Nueces Bay Boulevard bridge.
  - I-37 traffic switch was completed.
  - Winnebago Street will not close until construction at Lake Street is complete (about two to three months).
- A CAB member requested police to conduct traffic control after Hooks games.
- A CAB member asked if FDLLC has job listings by area. Lorette Williams, FDLLC, responded she was not sure if the job listings would be by area.
- A CAB member asked what happens if drivers have wrecks in work zones? Lorette responded people can report a claim if a wreck happens in the project work zone. A CAB member asked for statistics regarding accidents on I-37 within the construction area.
- A CAB member requested a model showing traffic and the bridge visualization. TxDOT reminded the CAB that FDLLC had an open house prior to a CAB meeting where a video animation of the project and traffic flow was shown. FDLLC said they can produce a rendering of the project from different views. FIGG has also shown the group where the stopping points would be, and access points from the parks to the bridge. FDLLC offered to keep showing the traffic model with detailed view of traffic movements. Lorette reminded the group the 4D animation of the project is on [harborbridgeproject.com](http://harborbridgeproject.com). It shows the interchange, loop ramps, and more.

- A CAB member pointed out that the grasses in the neighborhood on demolished properties have grown tall and the demolition contractor should be careful when working out there with heavy equipment. Be careful and check for people. This will be discussed at the contractor's safety meeting.
- A CAB member stated that a lot of the land is contaminated. Lorette stated Blanton & Associates have been doing a lot of environmental testing and nothing has come out that is stopping the project.
- A CAB member noted that there are potholes in the area of Port that need to be checked and standing water on Martin Luther King Drive. Lorette said she would take the information back to the contractor so they can address it. The contractor will confirm construction schedule for MLK Drive until April of 2019.
- A CAB member asked if work had started in the salt flats area where there has been flooding and Lorette confirmed that work had started there.
- Public comment: A member of the public stated water had come in to the neighborhood after rains, saying there is no drainage and flooding was "like a river". Stated flooding is a concern for the neighborhood. Lorette noted there is construction on MLK through April 2019. The contractor has noted the flooding after the rains and put processes in place to address it.
- Public comment: A member of the public requested flashing signs alerting people to construction and closures because not everyone has a computer and can receive email or go on websites. They also suggested showing the information on the news. He said he had not seen anything about construction on the news. Lorette stated they do have Facebook and Twitter and the project website posts all the closures. She also let the audience know they can subscribe to emails. She stated they send out the news release to media and they choose whether to cover it or not.
- Public comment: A member of the public stated the fire department was not notified about closures. Lorette responded that all the emergency responders receive the notices.
- A CAB member asked why the Port and Nueces bridges were demolished during the day and commented it seemed it took a long time for the demolition to take place, citing a week. Lorette stated due to the traffic switch no one was using I-37 so that allowed the contractor to do demolitions during the day. It took four days for both demolitions.
- A CAB member asked if it's costly or difficult to deliver flyers with closures to people in the neighborhood. Lorette stated it's a challenge because the neighborhood is ever changing and information can change as well. If construction is taking place next to a home, crews will knock on door and notify the resident. FDLLC relies on TV, social media, and the website. A CAB member said they wanted flyers handed out to people in the neighborhood. Lorette stated they will deliver flyers to community hubs, such as the Oveal Williams Senior Center or churches. She asked the group to provide suggestions for where to leave flyers. The list developed at the meeting includes:
  - Oveal Williams Senior Center
  - Solomon Coles High School
  - HEB
  - Dollar General
  - Churches (Brooks Worship Center, St. Matthew Baptist Church, St. John Baptist Church, St. Paul United Methodist Church, Unity Chapel Funeral Home)
- A CAB member asked how far in advance they give info to the media. Lorette stated that if the closure lasts longer than 24 hours they get the details to the media a week in advance.

- A CAB member asked why they could not get a three-month lookahead at construction closures. Lorette responded they do quarterly traffic updates during open houses at the CAB meetings. The CAB Chair stated he would work with FDLLC to draw something up and see if it's what the CAB is looking for.
- The CAB requested help with the "back to school" drive.

### **Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Update**

- CAB Chair Pastor Carrington gave a summary of the park questionnaire results.
  - HJ Williams Park. It was suggested to add a bathroom.
  - TC Ayers Park. The question is whether to shut down the swimming pool and replace with either a pavilion or splash pad. The Chair noted time was running out to make a decision on this.
  - Washington Park. The question is whether the school should be demolished by the city so mitigation money does not have to be used. The group must decide how to preserve history in Washington Park.
  - The CAB Chair asked what else the community would like to see in TC Ayers and Washington Parks.
- A CAB member asked who is going to maintain the parks. Jay Ellington, director of the City of Corpus Christi Parks Department stated the City would maintain the parks.
- A CAB member asked where the park plans could be found. TxDOT noted copies of the park conceptual plans had been shared with the CAB on multiple occasions at the CAB meetings and the Livability Plan Subcommittee Meetings and stated they would make copies available to him.
- A CAB member stated it would be nice if the side of Washington Park where the bus station used to be could be made into a handicapped park.
- A CAB member proposed that at the next CAB meeting there be a bus ride to evaluate conditions of Hillcrest to see if progress has been made. TxDOT will evaluate if that is feasible.
- The CAB Chair informed the group a subcommittee meeting for the parks would be held on Thursday, the 19<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m. at Brooks Worship Center, located at 2101 North Port Avenue. An email would be sent to the group.
- TxDOT announced that the next CAB meeting would be on September 6.

### **Adjournment of the Meeting**

- The CAB Chair and TxDOT adjourned the meeting.