



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
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Department Name: County Executive
Office
Department No.: 012
For Agenda Of: January 30, 2018
Placement: Policy
Estimated Time:
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer
Director(s)
Contact Info: Matt Pontes, Assistant County Executive Officer
SUBJECT: Update on Thomas Flood Disaster Recovery Efforts

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form:

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Update on Thomas Flood Disaster Recovery Efforts; and
- b) Provide further direction to staff as appropriate.

Summary Text:

Last week, the rescue and response effort to the January 8, 2018 flood and mudflow disaster formally transitioned to a recovery effort. The Type I Cal Fire Incident Management Team departed on January 22, 2018. County staff, supplemented by CalOES, FEMA and mutual aid partners is leading and managing the effort. This report provides an update since the verbal report provided at the January 23, 2018 Board of Supervisors meeting.

Background:

Full recovery of the Montecito area from the mudflow disaster will take several years. Unlike a fire, this event is significantly changing topography, flood areas and creeks in several areas. In addition, this disaster has resulted in a Long Term Exclusionary Zone which will require a different approach to recovery, complicated by the need to prepare for the next rain event and possibility for more debris flows. Staff is continuing to work through these impacts in the short, medium and longer term, and will be discussing these with your Board with other government agencies, residents, and community partners as we proceed with recovery.

The overall recovery objectives are:

1. **Return** residents and businesses as soon as safely possible
2. Repair and **rebuild** homes, businesses and livelihood as soon as possible
3. Develop **resiliency** in the community, through disaster preparedness, mitigation and improvements, as well as social and individual resiliency.

These activities will involve

4. A **community** process coordinated by the First District to involve stakeholders.
5. Implementation of recovery objectives by County staff, assisted by CalOES, FEMA, mutual aid, special district staff, and other community partners. The County's **recovery organization** is attached to this Board Letter.

Discussion:

1. Return Residents and Businesses to area as soon as safely possible

A Long Term Exclusion Zone has been created of most the damaged areas with long term impacts. Residents and businesses outside of this zone began returning to their homes as of January 23, 2018 in a phased approach. All residents other than those in the Long Term Exclusion Zone were allowed back to their residences as of Saturday January 27, 2018. Residents in the Long Term Exclusion Zone are able to gain access to the area to view and assess their properties.

2. Repair and rebuild homes, businesses and lives as soon as feasible

Planning and Development are assigning case managers for every property owner in the impacted area that may seek advice and service; in addition, our existing codes allow expedited processes and quicker time frames for replacement of like structures to assist residents following a disaster. Due to the changing topography and proximity of the stream channels to some private properties, additional cautionary planning will be required as part of the rebuild process. Information will continue to be provided at the Local Assistance and Recovery Center, which will transition to a recovery center focused on community specific needs.

A significant issue is clearing private properties of mud and debris. Staff is providing information to homeowners on options for how to clear and clean their properties. For those with significant mud and debris removal, this effort will require case by case attention.

Private truck trips may need to be limited, as our first priority continues to be removal of debris from debris basins before future storm events. The haulers are working diligently 24/7 to clear these basins that help protect the community from debris flows. At this time, the basins have only 20% of the material from the last storm event cleared. Adding additional private truck trips to the already heavily congested area could jeopardize the progress in cleaning the basins and thus the community's safety in the next rain storm. Staff is monitoring the situation and brainstorming on how to achieve both very important projects. If the situation develops where we have competition for roadways and unsafe traffic within the community, staff may return to the board for future policy direction. Also, new watershed models are illustrating higher

vulnerability and risk, largely in the Long Term Exclusionary Zone areas. Staff is still processing this data and how it relates to the private parcels' set back distances from creek channels and how to safely mitigate hazardous conditions to owners wishing to rebuild. Final decisions regarding rebuild in these areas will be made on a case by case basis and require different tools and approaches.

Public repair and rebuilding of structures will continue but all temporary repairs needed for repopulation and service are scheduled for completion by January 31, 2018. This includes temporary or permanent repairs on the water system; sanitary system operations; passable roads; electricity and gas service.

Assistance to individuals and businesses include FEMA and State payments ("Individual Assistance" or IA) and SBA loans. FEMA counselors have been available at the Local Assistance and Recovery Centers (LRAC); individuals can also sign up on FEMA's website at fema.gov. The LRAC will remain open through Saturday, February 3. As of Monday, February 5, a Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) will be established near or within Montecito to continue to support all in their ongoing recovery needs. The DRC will continue to house many critical state, federal and local agencies central to community recovery needs such as FEMA, SBA, and EDD.

In addition Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) has been actively working with the EOC and community nonprofits as part of the County emergency preparedness programs for many years. They are now actively engaged in the long terms recovery efforts.

A Long Term Recovery Group Structure is being developed in which local community nonprofits ultimately take on key roles to support case management efforts rather than state and federal agencies. Long term recovery structures typically include agencies that provide assistance to address unmet needs beyond what state and federal agencies provide (food, clothing and shelter), as well as mental health supports, financial support from nonprofits and philanthropy, volunteer coordination to assist clean-up of homes, etc. Staff is working closely with FEMA and Cal OES in the development of the Long Term Recovery Group Structure. These types of service and supports were also available through the LRAC initially.

3. Develop Resiliency measures and prepare for future disasters

The most immediate issue is ensuring storm readiness and preparing the public for future mudflow incidents. A new study drafted by the CalFire Watershed Emergency Response Team (WERT) and National Forest Service's Burn Area Emergency Response (BAER) team, working with the Department of Water Resources and the California Geological Survey, indicates lower thresholds for debris flows, indicating storms of lesser magnitude could cause significant damage. Public information efforts are underway to educate residents of these dangers and develop awareness as to this new reality.

The study also indicates the need for further mitigation in high risk areas of flooding, which have expanded outside of historical areas. Mitigations will need to be evaluated and prioritized given

safety community needs. Potential mitigations strategies such as evaluation of rebuilding along creek buffer zones, constructing deeper channels, adding additional catch basins or adding capacity to the current basins are examples of ideas that may be evaluated. Each option and strategy will have to be understood in context of how much protection they add, cost, legal framework and what implications each may have to planning and rebuilding efforts.

The Montecito Fire Department, the Santa Barbara County Fire Department and our Sheriff's Office will continue resiliency efforts, which may also include expanding wildfire protection methods such as defensible space, adequacy of water supplies for firefighting efforts, adequate roads for access, and communicating pre-emergency evacuation information to ensure the community remains resilient and prepared. Other ideas have also been suggested such as a siren alerting system, and dedicating areas within the Exclusionary Zones as open space buffer areas. Some concepts relate to general community improvements while others to mitigating future disasters and other threats. Recovery efforts funded by the FEMA and CalOES need to be directly related to those mitigations and recovery ideas.

4. Community engagement, for physical, as well as social and individual resilience.

FEMA specifically refers to a "Whole Community" approach to recovery. Whole Community is a means by which residents, emergency management practitioners, organizational and community leaders, and government officials can collectively understand and assess the needs of their respective communities and determine the best ways to organize and strengthen their assets, capacities, and interests. By doing so, a more effective path to societal security and resilience is built.

Key points of the "Whole Community" approach to recovery are:

- Understanding community complexity.
- Recognizing community capabilities and needs.
- Fostering relationships with community leaders.
- Building and maintain partnerships.
- Empowering local action.
- Leveraging and strengthening social infrastructure, networks, and assets.

In addition, information from FEMA and Cal OES indicate the following actions are critical as lessons learned from other communities across the nation recovering from disasters:

- Act quickly
- Actively plan
- Engage the whole community
- Develop partnerships, networks and coordinate activities
- Make decisions locally

First District Supervisor and Chair, Das Williams, initiated a stakeholder process on January 26, 2018 to begin developing a framework of community input, engagement and priority of actions

related to recovery and resilience. Some of the objectives of this process are to ensure coordination of activities that will be occurring in the private, nonprofit, philanthropic and government sectors and ensure community ownership of the recovery efforts.

County staff will also ensure continued convening community meetings on the recovery efforts and progress; a dedicated website with links to resources is also being developed. County staff will also provide regular updates to governing bodies such as the Board of Supervisors, Montecito Planning Commission, and partner agencies including the City of Santa Barbara, City of Carpinteria, Montecito Water District; Montecito Fire District; Carpinteria-Summerland Fire District, Montecito Sanitary District, school boards and other organizations. In coordination with these and the community stakeholders, staff will develop metrics and timelines for recovery efforts. Issues requiring policy decisions will also be brought to the Board of Supervisors and Montecito Planning Commission, as appropriate.

5. Recovery implementation and the County's Recovery organization

The effort will be managed by County staff and agency partners. In this phase of recovery, a Unified Collaborators Group (similar to Unified Command Group in an incident model) is forming to coordinate activities and providing guidance to the Director of Recovery, Assistant County Executive Officer Matt Pontes. The UCG consists of the key operators and financial partners in the recovery effort: County Executive Office, Public Works, Montecito Fire, Sheriff's Office, FEMA and CalOES. ACEO Pontes will have oversight of all recovery operations, supported by Rob Lewin, Director of the Office of Emergency Management, coordinating the primary functions in recovery: debris management; watershed-flood control; health and human services; infrastructure; public safety and rebuild/planning and permits. As we enter into further phases of recovery, these functions may just be incorporated back into our regular departmental organization. The Office of Emergency Management with its Public Safety partners will also be focused on Storm Readiness, ensuring that the communities impacted by the Sherpa, Whittier, Alamo and Thomas Fire are especially prepared for winter storm events.

The Board of Supervisors will continue to provide direction on policy and financial issues under jurisdiction of the Board; Montecito Fire District, Montecito Water District and Montecito Sanitary Districts will be consulted on issues as they arise. Community stakeholders, coordinated by the First District, will provide advice to the First District Supervisor and input on the recovery process.

6. Other Issues

Over the course of the Thomas Fire and Flood Event, our first responders and support agencies were been focused on life safety for our community members. We established debris clearing and transportation for Search and Rescue operations and the clearing of Highway 101 in conjunction with and adhering to all local, state and federal agency protocols and permitting. As we transition to the recovery phase, we are evaluating mitigations taken during the life safety

phase to ensure that all actions are in alignment with environmental safeguards, best practices and regulations of local, state and federal agencies. We will continue to ensure that our operations are in alignment with our community and environment. We will update your board if we encounter challenges

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

The total cost projected to be incurred by County departments in connection with the response, recovery and rebuilding efforts, from the start of the Thomas Fire in December, is expected to exceed \$37 million. While much of this cost is expected to be eventually offset through the receipt of federal and State funding, not all of the costs will be eligible for reimbursement. Preliminary estimates of the County portion of these costs is anticipated to range between \$7 million and \$9 million between all operating funds.

In addition to the costs by the County incurred during the response and recovery process, the loss and damage to privately owned residences and businesses, as well as the long term and temporary interruption of hotel and motel availability in the impacted areas, will result in the reduction of property tax and transient occupancy tax revenues received by the County in both the current fiscal year and beyond.

The CEO's Office is currently working with County departments to provide the Board with a more comprehensive report on the expected fiscal and budgetary impacts related to our response, recovery and rebuilding efforts. The initial report is expected to be presented to the Board within the next 30 days.

Authored by:

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Attachments:

Map of Long Term Exclusion Zone