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FYSA- Media Monitoring Report for DR 4241 SC 02/17/16

NEWS CLIPS

SOUTH CAROLINA-DR-4241

Wednesday, February 17, 2016

Issues:

- None.

Summary:

- Information regarding various recovery efforts and after action recommendations.
- Richland Co. advisory committee recommends property acquisition.

Analysis:

- None.

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Floods

[Advisory Group Says Richland Should Use Federal Flood Grants To Buy Out Damaged Homes \(SCSTATE\)](#)

By Sarah Ellis

[Columbia \(SC\) State](#), February 16, 2016

Government buyouts of homes badly damaged by October's floods are the top priority on a list set by a local stakeholders group created to advise county leaders on how to use some expected disaster relief funds.

Richland County Council on Tuesday got a first look at the priorities list set by the county's newly formed "Blue Ribbon Committee." The group is charged with advising county leaders on which projects the county should tackle using federal hazard mitigation grants meant to prepare communities for future disasters.

Richland County will be competing for a portion of an estimated \$36 million in federal hazard mitigation grants to be distributed throughout South Carolina. The county's application for those grant funds likely will identify buying homes and tearing them down as a high-priority project. Non-residential property acquisitions will be further down the priority list.

Sixty-three residential structures and 15 non-residential structures in the county would be eligible for government buyouts if the county receives the money it's requesting and if the property owners agree to sell.

Properties qualify for buyouts if they lie in a special flood hazard area and have been determined by Richland County or FEMA to have been more than 50 percent damaged by floodwaters from the Oct. 4 rains. Buyout participation would be wholly voluntary on the part of property owners and the county.

The county has decided it will consider paying up to 75 percent of the pre-flood value of qualifying properties for homeowners who decide to participate in a buyout program. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) says homes can be bought out for up to their pre-disaster fair-market values, or, if communities choose, for the current assessed value of the homes.

The Blue Ribbon Committee's priority list ranks 10 types of hazard mitigation projects ranging from stormwater drainage management and housing reconstruction to flood studies and replacing the county Emergency Operations Center.

FEMA's hazard mitigation grants will be awarded to local communities through a program facilitated by the state. They can be used to pay for 75 percent of an individual project's cost. Communities would have to come up with the other 25 percent.

The county plans to submit a pre-application for hazard mitigation funding by early April, and funds could start being awarded on a rolling basis by late April. However, it could be up to 18 months or longer before the county receives its share and can start work on projects, including home buyouts.

Leftover Flood Trash More Than an Eyesore

Columbia, SC ([WLTX](#)) -- Leftover flood trash is not just an eyesore, it could be an ecological problem in the future.

If you drive cross some bridges in and around Columbia, you may notice trash from the October flood in and along the streams and creeks

"There's a lot of impacts that we are still seeing play out right now in trying to figure out," said Bill Stangler.

Stangler is the [Congaree Riverkeeper](#), he is concerned about the natural leftover debris that could cause more flooding.

He said, "How do we recover and rebuild from this event, to make sure that we don't suffer the same types of problems and issues down the road."

Stangler is also worried about water quality issues after the flood. He said, "We saw some terrible things being washed around, we saw dumpsters and porta-potties."

According to Stangler, "Things like paint, household cleaners, pesticides and fertilizers. A lot of that stuff got washed out of people's homes and out of businesses and into our streams and creeks." USC Geography professor, Dr. Allen James shares that concern with Stangler.

James said, "The water quality has direct public issues to public health, but it also has a lot of relevance to aquatic ecosystems and the health of the environment."

That is why it is important to get the trash out the waterways as soon as possible, even though it has been a challenge to this point according to Stangler.

He said, "It is a little tough, because of the cold weather. The water has been particularly high, which makes it difficult too, so when things calm down a little, warm-up a little bit more, we are going to have a much better effort to get out there and find where some of this stuff is and remove it."

He hopes people will see the issue of trash leftover from the flood and help out where they can. He also hopes citizens will appreciate the natural resources that run through the area.

Stangler said, "It is a part of the quality of life here in the Midlands, so many people use these for recreation, we've put a lot of investment in it. It is also just the unique identity of Columbia and the Midlands. We were built around these three rivers, it's part of our history and a big part of our future."

According to Stangler, one of the constraints he and his organization has, is he has to do most of the cleanups on public property.

He says if there are private property owners that need post-flood clean-up help, he and his organization, [Congaree Riverkeeper](#), is willing to help.

Annual 5K to aid nonprofit, families affected by October flood

By [Rachel Ham](#) on February 16, 2016

[ColaDaily.com](#) is your source for free news and information in Columbia and the Midlands.

St. Lawrence Place provides shelter and financial planning for Columbia families who need a little help to reach self-sufficiency. Following last fall's historic flood, the nonprofit became a haven for families with unique needs, making an upcoming fundraiser supporting St. Lawrence Place vital to the shelter's mission.

The seventh annual Race for the Place 5K and Kids' Fun Run this Saturday will allow St. Lawrence Place to continue its mission of helping families break the cycle of homelessness and poverty. CEO Lila Anna Sauls said each dollar raised Saturday is vital after a year when the budget was affected by the October floods.



"I'm a little stronger than I thought I was," LaTonya Johnson said. (photo by Rachel Ham)

Sauls said families arriving at St. Lawrence Place in the days after the flooding had different and immediate needs like new mattresses and furniture, and she said funds had to be used to purchase items instead of waiting on gently used donations. She said the extra hours staff put in to run the children's program during days schools were closed and the staff's time to prep housing for flood victims, instead of relying on volunteers, increased the strain on the nonprofit's budget.

Even with urgent situations like families living in their cars when their homes were flooded, St. Lawrence Place was able to step up to the plate. Sauls said this was the first time a natural disaster led people to call on them for help.

"The definition of homelessness changed on us," she said.

Three families affected by the flooding are currently living in the St. Lawrence Place community, and an additional six were helped with housing searches and rental assistance when St. Lawrence Place was at maximum capacity.

One family staying at St. Lawrence Place was relocating to Charleston when the flooding hit. LaTonya Johnson is now making a fresh start in Columbia with help from the nonprofit.

"We've been in a whirlwind," she said.

Johnson and her children, Tyiania and Tyler, were on their way to Charleston from Birmingham for Johnson's new job. They stopped in Columbia the first weekend of October and found themselves stranded when the Charleston company, Sunward Steel, was severely damaged by the flood and Johnson was left without a job.

The family stayed at a Red Cross shelter in the immediate aftermath and then received financial assistance to stay at a hotel until a room at the Family Shelter became available. Johnson, who had never been homeless before the floods hit, decided to remain in Columbia and enrolled her children in school.

Race for the Place

When: Saturday, Feb. 20

Time: 5K at 8 a.m., Fun Run at 9 a.m.

Where: Behind St. Joseph's Catholic Church at 3600 Devine St. in Columbia

"I knew I had to pick up the pieces and roll with it," she said. "There's a reason why God wanted me here though I probably don't know what it is yet."

Johnson's family lived at Family Shelter until the end of January when St. Lawrence Place had an opening. Johnson found a job with Wells Fargo and already is planning for the future. She said she's saving up for a house with room for her children to "run free" and also wants to go back to school to obtain her nursing license for South Carolina.

"You can't stop just because tragedy happens," Johnson said.

Sauls said part of St. Lawrence Place's holistic approach is to provide career and financial planning for families during their stay. Race for the Place proceeds support all the nonprofit's programs, including the life skill classes, career center, teen program with mentoring and college prep and year-round children's programs.

Learn more about how St. Lawrence Place puts families on the path from homelessness to home and [register for Race for the Place online](#).

Floods exposed Berkeley County communications glitches (Post & Courier)

MONCKS CORNER — Coordinating information among emergency responders as well as that given out to the public turned out to be the biggest frustrations of the people who handled the October floods.

A final review of that response was held Tuesday among officials from Berkeley County and other agencies, a thrash-it-out session of pros, cons and takeaways from the disaster caused by 30 inches of rain in five days. Flooding led to more than 70 water rescues, the loss of 30 homes, closed roads and bridges.

Officials described the incident as chaotic and more intense than training could prepare for. At one point, as water rose a foot high at a crucial intersection on U.S. Highway 17A, officials worried they might have to evacuate some 2,600 people from nearby subdivisions.

The flooding struck on a weekend night, complicating the situation. In just one example, Moncks Corner Fire and Rescue crews rescued 12 people from three flooded homes by tying lines from truck bumpers around their waists and wading into swift running water waist deep, Fire Chief David Miller said.

Even the county's Emergency Preparedness Center wasn't spared. Staff in the basement facility worked as flood waters seeped out of the floor and rose an inch.

People in the field knowing where to turn for real-time information turned out to be the biggest glitch, Emergency Preparedness Director Tom Smith acknowledged. The department is working to improve that.

But overall the response was "one call, that's all," said County Supervisor Bill Peagler. "We learned a lot. I want everybody to know, we will get better."

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