
FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

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Des Moines, Iowa 50319

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GOVERNOR'S FLOOD RECOVERY ADVISORY BOARD — WORKFORCE AND HOUSING WORK GROUP

Meeting. The Workforce and Housing Work Group of the Governor's Flood Recovery Advisory Board met on May 13, 2019, in Des Moines. The Workforce and Housing Work Group is one of six work groups and is being supported by Iowa Workforce Development (IWD).

Members. The members of the Work Group are:

- Beth Townsend, Director of IWD
- Cathy Crain, Mayor of Hamburg
- Shawn Kelly, Mayor of Missouri Valley
- Andy Young, Mayor of Pacific Junction
- Larry Oliver, Harrison County Emergency Management
- Sandi Winton, Volunteer for Mills County Housing
- Beth Freeman, former Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) staffer and affected resident
- Tammy Bramley, Monona County Supervisor

The mayors and county supervisor were not in attendance at this meeting. Others participating in the meeting in person or by telephone included:

- Fran Parr, affected resident of Pacific Junction
- Ken Sharp, Department of Public Health (DPH)
- Ann Schmid, Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA)
- Aimee Bartlett, Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division (HSEMD)
- Dennis Harper, HSEMD
- Mike Witt, IWD
- Michelle McNertney, IWD

Workforce. After reviewing the Governor's [Executive Order No. 4](#), which established the Flood Recovery Advisory Board and working groups, Director Townsend shared statistics from IWD regarding the number of people unemployed due to the flooding. A total of 133 unemployment claims have been filed related to the flooding.

Director Townsend suggested that the group focus on creating an inventory of efforts already underway, identifying gaps where the Governor's Flood Recovery Advisory Board could be most useful, and gathering community concerns and local input as part of the process.

Ms. McNertney discussed Iowa's National Dislocated Worker Opportunity Grant award of \$3.0 million. The grant program is part of Title I of the federal [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#) (WIOA). The funding will be available from May 1, 2019, through June 30, 2021. The first \$1.0 million has been allocated and will be used to place temporarily dislocated workers in jobs related to the cleanup effort. The effort will be managed regionally by the area's community college or the local workforce development board, which will become the employer of record for the temporary workers.

Eligible workers can receive wages for a maximum of 280 hours or 12 months, whichever occurs first. Up to 10.0% of the grant funding can be used for administration of the program locally, including the purchase or lease of needed equipment and provision of supportive services such as daycare.

Ms. McNertney noted that Iowa's low unemployment rate and the number of people likely to need these jobs were taken into consideration in determining the amount of the grant, and the State can apply for additional funds. She noted that there is no requirement for local match funding and said it will be important to ensure that other efforts are not duplicated.

Housing. Ms. Winton shared information on her efforts to find temporary housing for residents of Mills County and said help is needed quickly. She noted two problems that others concurred with:

- The cleanup crews need more help with gutting houses to the studs so the houses can be assessed and next steps determined.
- Residents are not receiving enough information about what is being done at the local, State, and federal levels.

Concerns about organization and coordination of volunteers were raised. Ms. Freeman noted the importance of keeping track of volunteer hours that can count toward required local match for federal funding. Ms. Schmid noted that the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service is part of the IEDA and suggested that an additional work group may be needed to address coordination of volunteer services.

There was a discussion of the types of information that residents are needing and how best to make that available. It was noted that homeowners are trying to preserve the option to rebuild but won't make that decision until they are confident that the levies will be rebuilt sufficiently. That information needs to come from FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers.

Director Townsend noted that the Governor's office will be scheduling town hall meetings next week.

Ms. Parr noted that residents who are gutting their homes are concerned about toxins in the water and the soil. Mr. Sharp explained that flood waters generally sufficiently dilute any soil contamination, but lead and asbestos are of concern as homes are being dismantled, and mold will become an issue as the weather gets warmer.

Ms. Bartlett reported that FEMA is working to identify sites for mobile homes to serve as temporary housing through the next winter. The sites must meet extensive criteria and have access to utilities. There was a discussion of how residents can qualify for these homes and the need to collect and coordinate housing data to avoid duplication of effort. Many homes are still inaccessible for initial assessment by FEMA, which is necessary to connect the homeowners with assistance and potential housing.

Ms. Bartlett also noted the availability of \$10.0 million in disaster funding under the Workforce Housing Tax Incentive Program, enacted in [HF 772](#) (Empower Rural Iowa Act) earlier this year. Administrative rules for the Program are being promulgated under emergency status to be in place within 30 days. The funding will provide tax credits to housing developers on completion of new construction.

Ms. Winton reported that the information she has collected thus far indicates 40.0% of Mills County residents are hoping to rebuild in place, 30.0% want to move elsewhere in the county, and the remaining 30.0% plan to move out of the county. There was a discussion of FEMA's home buyout. It was noted that city officials have to apply to FEMA for residents to participate. There is a local match requirement, but Ms. Bartlett noted that federal Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funding could be used to meet the match. Ms. Bartlett said the CDBG-DR funding is the most flexible recovery tool available; a percentage of the funding must address the needs of low and moderate income residents, but the remainder can be used to address "urgent need."

Next Meeting. The next meeting of the Workforce and Housing Work Group will be in June in Glenwood, Iowa.

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