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## FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

June 7, 2019



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

**Meeting.** The Workforce and Housing Working Group of the Governor's Flood Recovery Advisory Board met on June 4, 2019, in Glenwood, Iowa. The Workforce and Housing Working Group is one of six working groups within the Advisory Board and is being supported by Iowa Workforce Development (IWD).

**Members.** The members of the Working 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

**Tour.** The Working Group members and other participants viewed a video of aerial footage of the levees deteriorating and giving way during the original flooding. Following the video, the group toured the area, viewed some of the most recent flooding, and visited two homes in Pacific Junction, where all the homes were affected by the first wave of flooding.

**Working Group Discussion.** The Working Group reconvened in Glenwood, and Director Townsend asked the group to identify the most pressing needs. Members identified FEMA rental assistance and the need for volunteers to help residents gut flooded homes as the most urgent needs.

The problems identified with FEMA rental assistance include:

- Residents must reapply for rental assistance every three months and are supposed to be eligible for up to 18 months. Some residents are reapplying and finding that they qualify for less assistance or that they don't qualify at all.
- Residents are not receiving consistent information from the federal government, and the reapplication process is too cumbersome and time consuming.

Representatives of several State agencies shared information and explained that a resident's financial status is reviewed with each reapplication for assistance. If the resident's financial status has changed, it can change the amount of assistance they receive.

Regarding the need for volunteer assistance, local representatives were especially concerned for older residents who are unable to gut their homes themselves and have no one to call upon for help. There was a discussion of the role of AmeriCorps and its need for additional resources. Agency representatives explained the role of State Disaster Case Management Services and the importance of residents registering with that program.

**Report from Hamburg.** Mayor Crain joined the meeting by telephone and shared information on the current situation in Hamburg. She reviewed the progress the community has made and said the main concern now is the threat of new flooding due to recent heavy rains. Mayor Crain said that people and

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businesses had just begun moving back into the town and are now having to move out again because the temporary levees are not likely to prevent additional flooding. The Mayor identified hiring a professional fundraiser as another key priority to raise funds to purchase ground north of Hamburg to move the town out of the floodplain.

**Other Topics.** The participants discussed the privacy protocols that can make it difficult to share information with residents. The formation of long-term recovery teams is underway. Once those teams are formed, they will have access to additional information that cannot currently be shared with the local community.

The participants also discussed the U.S. Congress's passage of [HR 2157](#) (Additional Supplementation Appropriations for Disaster Relief Act, 2019). The agency representatives explained the likely process and timeline for that funding to reach local communities and residents.

**Next Meeting.** The next meeting of the Workforce and Housing Working Group has not been scheduled and will be a telephonic meeting to develop recommendations to the Governor and the Flood Recovery Advisory Board.

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