

Lina Hidalgo Press Conference Transcript

[00:00:00] **Lina Hidalgo:** Over the past few weeks to really hone in on the information that I needed. And really, I felt that the community needed to understand what the status is of the flood control projects and verify that we're doing everything possible for that funding to remain here in Harris County, and for those projects to be done, as far as I'm concerned, the information necessary. I did receive it last week. I received the report that I needed. We went over it. I understood everything that said, now that I have that visibility, I don't feel any more confidence than I did going forward. Um, first, there's been a lapse of communication when it comes to projects. Um, I don't, I can't take a gamble that lapse in communication will not continue taking place, I don't know. I don't know the future. Right? None of us do. And so I don't know if having a different leader at the helm will be better as I as I think it will. Um, in terms of, you know, am I hoping that somebody will change or am I going to am I hoping that there will be somebody that, that already, uh, presents things the way I need them presented? I believe that the second option is better. That's my best guess on behalf of the community in wanting these projects done. Look, I'm not going to be in office when these projects either meet the deadline or don't meet the deadline. So, I have no political incentive on this. But, um, I'm trying to do my best for the community. The programs are behind the programs naturally run long because of federal guidelines and regulations.

[00:01:54]: Those kinds of projects. But the more I've dug into it at all levels of government and with the right people. There have been a large number of unforced errors when it comes to delivering these projects on time. And then finally, we need to be able to have that confidence, not only us but also for the General Land Office and for HUD, the Housing and Urban Development, to have confidence in our department. It's not about me. It's about having the confidence at all levels as well as confidence from the public, obviously. But the folks that stand to take the money away from Harris County are the leaders of the federal and state level. If they're anything like me, they will want to see a change as well. So that's where I'm coming from. I. I'm one vote. Um, I was very proud to appoint Director Peterson to that role. I think she's done a great job overall. I think when it comes to these projects, it's been lacking, and I don't think she's the right person to continue to see this through. I don't think that gives us the best shot at inspiring the confidence that the other levels of government will need to bet on Harris County, because if they bet on us and we don't deliver, it's a big headache for them.

Um, so so that's where I am on that. And I know that we took no action today, but that doesn't mean that there will not be action in the future. Um, but again, I'm only one vote and three votes are necessary.

[00:03:35] **Reporter:** Do we have any questions in regards to the flood control district judge, are you planning to call for a change in leadership in the flood control district?

[00:03:43] **Hidalgo:** I mean, I think that's what I have been doing, um, essentially since last time when I felt that I lost my confidence in the district. It's hard to come back from that. And as I said, I did get the information I needed, but I don't know if it's going to take this much effort to get it later. And with this kind of an issue, you know, they're the experts. We knew something was wrong, but we couldn't really figure out what. And for the longest time, you know, it seemed actually things were okay. So I can't risk going through that again.

[00:04:21] : Any additional questions, Nick?

[00:04:22] **Speaker 3:** Yeah. You, uh, I guess, you know, I looked at that report. You have six projects that are going to be behind the deadline. One of them maybe 13 months beyond the deadline with her staying there as the executive director. Do you think that they're going to meet this deadline? Where do you see these projects going? Because I know a lot of people are counting on that work. Yeah, especially Longwood Golf Course up there in northwest Harris County. There are people out there furious that they weren't going to meet the deadline. So what do you think's going to happen?

[00:04:54] **Hidalgo:** Of course. I mean, and that's what I tell my team and I tell myself right, is just put myself in the shoes of the person that lives in a neighborhood next to one of these projects. And what am I expecting, right? And, and of course, we have these conversations with constituents. And I think it's, you know, how can you demonstrate to us that these projects are going to be done on time? Look, things happen, right? There's structural delays. There's this, there's that. But what I can promise is to give us the very best shot to do the project as quickly as possible, and to not have to give any money back to where any of the projects lose funding. Right. And the best I can do after looking at everything, the best I can do is place my trust in somebody else that might bring a different kind of energy, um, sense of Urgency and a

new relationship with our partners at other levels of government. That's the best that I can do. I think that's the way to give us the best shot. Uh, I really, I really do.

[00:06:09] **Reporter:** So if you were so adamant about this, I mean, the other members of the Commissioners Court just don't see eye to eye on this with you.

[00:06:15] **Hidalgo:** I can't share that. So we did discuss this in session. We were in there for a while. And I'll tell you, you know, 90% of time was discussing this and, um, so, you know, I, I will see, you know, what happens at the next, next court meeting. I certainly intend to make sure there's an item on the agenda to, to make a final decision. But because it doesn't help anybody, not the director, not the team, not not us or our partners at the state or federal level to not be sure who is leading the district. And every day that passes is a day in which perhaps we're not working as quickly as we could be working in it's hurricane season, right? Um, so look, I, I'm not happy with where we are either. And, and I, and I do ask myself and ask my staff like, gosh, why didn't we sound the alarm earlier? Why didn't we pick up on this earlier? And we didn't. I mean, we've been getting our reports, we've been kind of having a sense. But the fact of the matter is there were communication issues and we shouldn't be in this situation. Could I have done better? Probably. I mean, I've been doing the very best that I could. But at this point, the status quo, I don't think is how we're going to get there.

[00:07:24] **Reporter:** Do you know if the county is planning to ask for a deadline extension for the flood bond? And if so, do you think they'll be successful in getting one?

[00:07:33] **Hidalgo:** I don't think we're there yet. I think if I'm being honest, um, we'll likely be there. Right. Just looking at where these project timelines are, I'll say we're meeting daily, um, with the department and you know, the engineers to, to understand. Okay, so we're really not missing anything and okay, could, could you more efficiently use, you know, one nail instead of two or whatever, you know. Yes. Um, we're doing that. And so that'll help us determine whether there, there was a way to speed it up and maybe not ask for an extension or to ask less for less of an extension. But it's that sense that we might need an extension. That's why I'm thinking about what kind. What do we have to do to earn the confidence of the folks that are going to ultimately decide whether or not to give us an extension? I don't want us to need an extension. Right? I want for the programs and to be done for the projects to be delivered. And realistically

given where we are and given the reports we have so far, I don't see how they they will be done on time. I don't I wouldn't say it's likely, but, but possibly, but possibly. So you know, that's what we're working on.