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DATE

June 11, 2026

DURATION

1h 34m 39s

15 SPEAKERS

Hidalgo
Ramsey
Assistant
Speaker Mary Spec
???
Garcia
Speaker 7
Tina Petersen
Scott Elmer
Briones
Rodney Ellis
Speaker 12
Ramos
Assistant 3
GLO Rep

START OF TRANSCRIPT**[00:00:01] Hidalgo**

Yes, sir. Yes, Commissioner Ramsey.

[00:00:05] Ramsey

Recognizing the complexities of keeping everybody maintaining quorum today. I think there's been a couple of items we'd like to look at first. I think it's been mentioned 125 418 would be executive session item. 483 executive session item. So I would I would ask that we take 125 418 483, hear the speakers of those first, then take those items. Obviously 4125 will be a presentation by flood control, and 418 and 483 will be executive session. And take those before we take the remaining speakers because of. Commissioner Ellis is on virtual. I want to be sure that we don't lose him in the process. So that would be my asking.

[00:01:01] Hidalgo

Okay, so we have a motion and a second to take only the speakers for one, 25, 418, and 483. We'd have to take 419 also to executive session. I don't believe there are speakers on that. Um, but that should be brief. Is there there's a motion a second. All in favor. Aye. Aye. Any opposed? All right. I'm in favor of. Motion carries unanimously. So Tiffany, if you wouldn't mind please calling any speakers for items 125418419 or and 483.

[00:01:34] Assistant

The only speaker for those items is Mary Spec speaking on item 483, you have one minute.

[00:01:50] Speaker Mary Spec

Depending on the articles I've been reading, my Name is Mary Spec. Um, y'all have had seven years to do the 2018 flood district and the articles are saying out of 12. Only one is completed. You fired the person that was in charge when you took over. It took 18 months to hire a new person. Did you not take that into account when all these things are due? And according to article two days ago, you're saying you're going to be classified and put it under something for dated 2028. These are due 2027 in February. Your session ends in December 31st. The person you hired is February. And yet you gave her an \$80,000 raise last year for not doing her job. And you're failing the citizens. I mean, seven years in one project. Done. Come on. And it's all flood. Thank you. 14 sessions you missed.

[00:02:52] ???

Your time is up.

[00:02:53] Speaker Mary Spec

14. 14 sessions you missed. He missed eight.

[00:02:57] ???

Thank you. Your time is up.

[00:02:58] Speaker Mary Spec

How can you be accountable when you're not here?

[00:03:00] Hidalgo

Thank you, thank you, ma'am. Any other speakers?

[00:03:06] Assistant

That's all. Judge.

[00:03:07] Hidalgo

Okay. All right. So it is 921. We'll go to executive session on items 125, four, 18, four, 19 and 483 on personnel issues.

[00:03:18] Garcia

125 should be done now.

[00:03:22] Hidalgo

I thought I said 125.

[00:03:24] Garcia

No, but not to executive session. It should be done now. It's a presentation.

[00:03:28] Speaker 7

It's a public item.

[00:03:30] Hidalgo

So we're just going to do a public presentation. Okay. Okay.

[00:03:33] Ramsey

So we'll do 125 the public presentation.

[00:03:37] Assistant

Call Director Peterson.

[00:03:44] ???

They're on their way.

[00:03:58] Tina Petersen

Good morning, judge commissioners. We do have a presentation that has been submitted. If we could please.

[00:04:12] Assistant

Doctor Peterson. I don't have the presentation.

[00:04:14] ???

Okay.

[00:04:15] Tina Petersen

Give us just a moment. We will get that over to you. In the meantime, we will go ahead and start, um. And really, while we're getting the presentation pulled up, I'll just start with the bottom line up front. So we are making progress. We are delivering projects and this work is keeping our community safe from flooding. And we are here today to talk about a solution that will deliver the resolution of the Cdbg funding. It is a very complex program, and we are asking today for approval of this plan because failure is not an option. It requires a full court press, and the team is here with me today to demonstrate the commitment to get this work done. And so I will go ahead and hope that we will get the slides to go along with it. But in the meantime, I'll just continue to to speak to the issues that we want to cover. So one of the things that we have included in the transmittal that we submitted to court is a map and an outline of the different funding sources that are associated with these dollars. Certainly the Cdbg program, again, it's a very complex program, a lot of different rules and regulations. It is administered by HUD and it is administered locally in Texas by the Glo. There are two different funding sources, doctor, which is focused on disaster Faster recovery and mitigation. And it's very important to note that these dollars come with complex requirements. You have to follow environmental regulations, Nepa, and make sure that we meet all low to moderate income requirements.

[00:06:09] Tina Petersen

There are a total of 28 projects in both programs. We're going to be focused today on Cdbg. Now, one of the things and I see we're getting the slides. So if we could go to slide three. So as I said, progress is happening. We are making progress. Projects are under construction. And this slide shows you some of the work. There are a total of seven out of the 11 projects that are under construction. Three more are moving to moving to construction. By the end of this month. We have one project that is still awaiting environmental clearance. Now, the last time I spoke to court, we. Since the last time I spoke to court, we've had two additional projects move into construction. So again, projects are moving forward. And the goal of what we are going to be talking about today is to keep that momentum going, to make sure that these projects that we are working on are protected, and the benefits are provided to the residents of Harris County. So let's go to the next slide and let's talk about the plan that we have been executing in late 2025, the flood control district, the GLO. We sat down and agreed to a strategy for how we needed to move forward. We knew that the most critical step in this process was getting these projects under construction. And so we set goals. We set a goal to make sure that we got all of the projects out to bid by the end of the first quarter of this year.

[00:07:46] Tina Petersen

We set a goal to get all of the projects that were environmentally cleared out to construction by the end of June. That required acceleration that required moving faster than the schedules showed and the projects moved, and we are on track to get this done. The other thing that this included was an acknowledgement that we would be gathering data as a result of the information that we gained from the bids, to be able to fully understand the extent of what the opportunities were in this program and what were the constraints. And if we go to the next slide, we can talk a little bit about that. So we knew from the beginning this program had constraints in terms of very strict timelines. We knew that there were environmental regulations, Nepa regulations that had to be followed. The extent of the changes in those regulations could not have been anticipated. And yet we have continued to stay focused on delivering this work. We did realize as part of putting these projects out, to bid, that there was an opportunity. We had an opportunity because the market was coming in lower than our engineers thought it would. That is a good thing. That means we can deliver more for the residents of Harris County. With the information that we were able to gather from all of the work that we have been doing.

[00:09:08] Tina Petersen

We have been able to leverage the strong relationship that we have with the Glo to problem solve, to come up with a solution that wasn't going to be on the table previously, but based on the information we had, based on the knowledge we had, we were able to find a way to move forward and achieve multiple goals. So if we can go to the next slide. The the approach that we have laid out for court is one that involves three different steps. But at the end of the day, the outcomes are critical to achieve. We know that we have to preserve the projects and their scope. We know that we want to make sure to deliver more for the residents of Harris County as a result of our projects coming in lower than expected. And it is critical that we also address the true crossroad point that we are at to meet the deadlines for these projects to be completed. And so the plan that we're going to talk through today involves three different steps phasing the projects to address the timeline challenges, moving certain projects into doctor to make sure that we're leveraging all the dollars we can for the benefit and the residents of Harris County, and then actively manage the additional capacity that exists to ensure that we're using as much of these dollars as possible to deliver for the people. And so Scott Elmer is going to walk us through very quickly the details of this plan.

[00:10:46] Scott Elmer

Thank you, county judge and commissioners. Um, as Doctor Peterson said, uh, we're still honoring the promise to the, the constituents in Harris County on that. And this is actually where the strategy becomes simple. We're not changing the promise to the community. We're changing the delivery architecture for the program. This approach that we're going to lay out uses coordinated program management, strategic phasing and cross-agency funding alignment to protect federal dollars and to maximize community benefits. Next slide. For longer duration projects, the plan is to define a phase of work that can be substantially completed within the Cdbg Dr. deadline, with the remaining scope of those projects to be delivered through the Cdbg program. The key point is that the projects remain single projects under a current contract, and with the funding sources assigned to discrete, clearly defined portions of each of those projects. Next slide. The most most tangible example is the transfer of some project seven projects currently managed and operated by HCD subdivision drainage projects, and these can be moved within the Cdbg time frame. Still managed and maintained and operated by Cdbg and the Harris County Engineering Department. By transferring those projects and funding them out of the program. We can maximize our spending and get about 125 million in additional projects eligible for Harris County through the HCD Met program.

[00:12:42] Scott Elmer

Next, please. We also have strategies to manage the remaining funds. We have spoken with GLO from the very beginning of the program about using construction incentives. Those type of incentives have been ruled out. However, we are allowed to use acceleration strategies, for example, paying for additional crews to speed up progress on projects, looking at other acceleration methods. One of the more recent examples that we have already implemented is the use of competitive, sealed proposals in the bidding process, where we can take in time of completion in the award criteria. We're looking at the possibility of upgrading our flood warning system. This would benefit all the residents of Harris County by making a more reliable, more up to date and more accurate flood warning system. Do we have the possibility of including additional subdivision drainage projects? The possibility of moving an additional project from the Harris County Flood Control program to the doctor program, and recently, a possibility of additional planning studies that can be included in this program. So how does this all look when it comes to funding sources? If we go to the next slide.

[00:14:09] Hidalgo

I think we need one of those motions to extend discussion. Motion by Commissioner Garcia. Second by Commissioner Ramsey. All in favor?

[00:14:18] ???

Aye.

[00:14:19] Hidalgo

Any opposed? Motion carries unanimously.

[00:14:22] Scott Elmer

The Cdbg Dr. program at Harris County Flood Control is \$322 million. So what we're looking at is about 105 of the existing projects that would be funded out of the Dr. program. About 23 million are existing under construction projects that would be partially funded out of the program. The full scope of all these projects would be completed. We're just looking at two sources of funding, and we would be completing these contract contracts under the same contractors that are currently working. There would be no stopping work and rebidding the contracts. About \$127 million in Harris County flood control funding. The Harris County sorry, the Housing Community Development seven projects, which will then open up that space for additional projects and the Harris County on the HCD program, about \$40 million in expected change orders and acceleration strategies on construction, and the \$27 million that we're looking at on transferring either additional projects or additional planning studies or the flood warning system upgrades. That concludes my portion, and I'll turn it back to Doctor Peterson.

[00:15:48] Tina Petersen

So we'll go to the next slide please. So this is um this proposal for court to consider is one that that does really focus on, you know, things that will have to change. But there's a lot that won't have to change. We've discussed the funding strategy of this program. We'll be changing the commitment to the community. The commitment to get these projects done will not change. We are not changing scope. We are not changing benefit in the accountability that we have in delivering these projects. Importantly, this program that we're approaching proposing a solution for is also going to deliver higher LMI benefits and provide the opportunity for additional funding to again, benefit our most vulnerable communities. So the the path that we are on will go to the next slide, please. So the action we need today from court is related to really four motions. One is that we do need approval of project lists so that we can work with the GLO to get these amended into the contract. We need to be authorized to negotiate agreements both with H, C, D as well as GLO to implement these changes that we are talking about. And then we are asking just for double, triple assurance approval of a motion to direct us to implement this phasing approach. This approach, I have to stress, was developed in collaboration with the General Land Office.

[00:17:21] Tina Petersen

We have been in deep communication with them really extensively over the last several years of this program, but specifically on this plan. We have it in writing their commitment that this plan will address the Cdbg, GR timelines. And we have their commitment to start working on this. The teams are already working through the operational steps to get this done. So time is of the essence. We appreciate court's consideration of this of these motions. And I believe we'll end with, again, just a reminder of we'll go to the next slide, please. Um, we do have a copy of the doctor list additions. The next slide is the list additions. And then we'll just, I'd like to close with just a, a reiteration on the next slide of exactly what this plan provides for court's consideration. The proposal that we have laid out will meet the doctor deadline. It will preserve the full scope of the work and the benefits. It will protect the federal investment, and it will create more opportunity to deliver more for the residents of Harris County. And again, we are making progress on the existing program. We are delivering the projects, and this plan will continue to help keep our community safe from flooding. So I'm happy to take questions.

[00:18:43] Hidalgo

Thank you. We have Commissioner Garcia, then Brianna, and then Ramsey. And I imagine Commissioner Ellis. You'll have questions, too. Go ahead, Commissioner Garcia.

[00:18:51] Garcia

Thank you. Uh, Doctor Peterson, uh, Scott and your team for the presentation. And congratulations on working to get us, uh, this particular plan that will help to ultimately deliver the projects that were promised to the public. Now, on that point, I've always had issues with how this bond program came to be. It had immense failures. It had immense deficiencies. It was not put together in a very constructive or meaningful way. Yet you have figured out how to unravel that big ball of yarn and make some sense out of it. So I appreciate your work and your leadership. Um, we just had some torrential rains last week. Um, do you know how many inches of water we got.

[00:19:48] Tina Petersen

Off the top of my head? Commissioner, I do not, but it was what what really matters is the intensity as much as the amount of rain. And we had very intense periods of rainfall, more than one inch in a 15 minute period.

[00:20:00] Garcia

That's correct. And, um, any structures reported flooded that you're aware of.

[00:20:07] Tina Petersen

Not that we are aware of.

[00:20:08] Garcia

Good deal. I'm on the downstream side of five counties and I have gotten zero reports of any structural flooding. The work that flood control is doing is absolutely working. Uh, the prime example was after Hurricane Beryl. Uh, it is it's most comparable event in terms of, uh, water was the 2015 Memorial Day, uh, uh, Memorial day flood. And, uh, where in that particular event, we had, I think 3000, more than 3000 structures that were flooded and barrel. I think it's around 12 a handful. Yeah. So again, the work that has been done is absolutely working. Also, I want to thank you and your team, but in particular, I want to thank Doctor Buckingham, uh, for her collaboration with, uh, with the county, but with your department in particular, as you said, this plan is not just an idea that you have, but rather it's a plan that has been communicated with, uh, constructed with, coordinated with, uh, the General Land office. And they are in agreement that this is a path forward. It falls within all of the guidelines, all the rules, and ultimately, it helps us get to the timelines that we've all been absolutely concerned about. The recent conversations about these projects have gone from communication, have gone to whether projects are get under construction, whether projects are going to be delivered.

[00:22:00] Garcia

Um, but the, the presentation you just made shows that what we should be most concerned about is whether it's getting done. And there is no, uh, perfection when you're racing to a finish line. Uh, so I appreciate all the work that you've done to You help us get there as quickly as possible and in a meaningful way, in a way that the General Land Office supports. I want to thank Doctor Buckingham because of her letter. Uh, she was pretty clear. We need shovels. We don't need scapegoats. Uh, we need to communicate in unison so that there's minimal confusion out in the public. These recent conversations have had many calls come to me. Um, whether what's happening with the projects and I've had to communicate with them. Nothing is happening in an adverse way. They're moving forward. The flood control district is working. People are at the helm. And so I again, want to thank you for all the work that you're doing now on this, uh, particular plan. Uh, are you confident that the plan will meet the deadline? Uh, that has been set.

[00:23:31] Tina Petersen

Commissioner, based on all the work we have done thus far. Yes. We we will have to make sure that we get our phasing right, but we absolutely believe that this is the path forward.

[00:23:44] Garcia

And so these challenges that you faced, I want to be real clear. And as I started with, they were outside, largely outside of the control of the flood district, as I mentioned, uh, from the very beginning. Uh, no. These, these were all these plans. And by the way, I, I spoke to someone who led the campaign on this bond, and I asked him the question because I remember early on when I got here, I wanted to make, uh, more sense of the funding and the investments I moved to continue.

[00:24:25] Hidalgo

Motion by Commissioner Garcia to continue a discussion seconded by Commissioner Brown. All in favor? Any opposed? Motion carries unanimously.

[00:24:32] Garcia

I wanted to move to open up the bond program, at least in my precinct. There's \$150 million that's currently going to be used just for right of way acquisition. Not not a project. And I think there's maybe 50 some odd houses that may or structures that may benefit from that 150. I wanted to move that 150 over to places that would support more structures and keep more families out of harm's way. I lost that vote because there was a thought that there was a there were covenants made on these very specific projects, according to the campaign manager on this bond program, that was not true. So we had an opportunity to make better sense of this. Um, we have since found that there are a lot there's at least I'll say for me some projects that were not feasible, uh, as they were originally planned because there was no consideration of work that had been already done, uh, prior to and as a result, uh, a community led project, uh, exploration green demonstrated their retention capacity, uh, made the bond program or project in my precinct unfeasible. So all of these things were not of your doing, uh, and are, were largely outside of the flood controls, uh, purview. So for the residents who have been asking, uh, what does all this, uh, this plan mean? And ultimately, just to confirm, it's going to mean that it creates the opportunity for approximately 125 million in additional mitigation work. That is real flood protection work for real neighborhoods. Is that is that fairly accurate?

[00:26:38] Tina Petersen

That is accurate. Yes.

[00:26:39] Garcia

And and what would your message be to communities who have felt frustrated on these projects? And let me add to that. There's also been conversations about, uh, not following the prioritization framework. Um, it has any of that been accurate to any extent?

[00:27:04] Tina Petersen

So, Commissioner, what I would say is, I think an answer to the constituents that you were just talking about, I would say that we have been focused on solving problems. They've been long standing problems in the past. Some of these issues have been kicked down the road, but we did. As part of the bond program. Reprioritisation say that certain projects are no longer feasible based on the engineering work that's been done. We also reprioritized the bond program based on the prioritization framework.

[00:27:33] Garcia

So we followed it. We followed the prioritization framework. So look, at the end of the day, my role here is, uh, to be bullish on getting these projects done. Um, and have you, as folks have heard me say, I don't care how we get there, as long as we get there and we get there within the rules, uh, and the guidelines that were provided, you're demonstrating that innovation and that leadership. And so I applaud you for the work that you and your team have done. And then lastly, I want to just say to the public, uh, that all of this conversation has created an incredible, incredible amount of anxiety at the wrong time. We're in the hurricane season, and so folks are concerned, and at the end of the day, we should be getting out of your way so you can get the job done. And, and I hope that we will understand the logic in that as we continue to move forward. But again, I want to thank you. Uh, again, I want to say I want to thank, um, the, the general, the commissioner of the General Land Office, Doctor Buckingham, uh, for her support of Harris County.

[00:28:55] Garcia

And ultimately the goal here is let's get the money spent. So none of it has to go back. And the plan that you have laid forward gives us a pathway to accomplishing that. That's what she wants. That's the conversation I've had with her. That's what we want. And ultimately, that's what the residents of my precinct and I believe in Harris County. Want to see done. They want to see these projects done. They want to see them completed. And. And we have to make sure to allow you the space to create that plan and that path, that pathway forward. So again, thank you for your work. Thank you for your leadership. And I hope that we will be focused on results versus backroom deals or any politics. Ultimately, it is the residents that are at risk and money, real money, that can help those residents. And I want to make sure that we're not doing, uh, any, uh, anything that works against that. So thank you very much, Doctor Pearson.

[00:30:00] Hidalgo

Commissioner Briones, followed by Commissioner Ramsey and Ellis.

[00:30:05] Briones

Doctor Peterson, thank you and your team for coming forward with this bold solution. And thank you for your tireless efforts over these years. And thank you to Mr. Ulmer, to Mr. Williams, Emily and all your team. I appreciate you so very much. And to echo Commissioner Garcia's words, I'm so grateful for Commissioner Doctor Buckingham. To me, she gives me hope for the future of Texas, and she has been a fair, collaborative partner, her Heather LaGrone and all their teams. So I have deep gratitude. The reason this matters. And just to help. Level set for everyone listening. So in 1937, Harris County Flood Control District was created Harris County. We all know we have a problem with flooding Harris County. We have 23 watersheds. Harris County, we have 2500 miles of channel that we're responsible of taking care of Harris County. We have billions of dollars in capital projects, new projects, and thanks to the Harris County community, we have approximately 100 million now invested in an unprecedented way to maintain the 2500 miles of channel. Is that all correct? That is correct. Okay. So today, what you are asking the court to approve is a bold solution to make sure that we meet the deadline, deliver the projects for the community, and make sure we don't send money back to the federal government. Is that correct? That is correct. So I call this the swap solution plan. For sake of ease. I will refer to it as such. So this plan is a solution saying if we don't get any extensions and we will not get an extension, this is a workable, aggressive plan that will be executed with urgency so that we hit the deadline, which, by the way, everyone, our deadline for the projects is February 28th, 2027. Is that what we're trying to achieve by swapping submit and doctor projects in accordance with all rules, all regulations, so that we deliver for the people of Harris County what we said we would.

[00:32:23] Tina Petersen

Commissioner, that is correct. We are focused on the doctor program and making sure that we can spend those dollars within that program by that timeline.

[00:32:33] Briones

Okay. Thank you. And again, Commissioner Buckingham to me is one of the best partners. We have talked to her before, her letter, after her letter. And I'm so grateful for her leadership. And I agree 100% that we need shovels, not scapegoats. And we need to get this done as a team to protect Texans. So my question to you and you already covered it, but just for sake of being crystal clear and I've gotten in my communications also the clarity. But for everybody's sake, could you please go into more detail about the recent collaboration with the G. L o in terms of this swap solution plan that we're discussing today?

[00:33:14] Tina Petersen

Yes, Commissioner. The there has been collaboration with the General Land Office since the very beginning. We have worked with them closely, coming on board with these dollars. They were a tremendous partner in terms of having their staff embedded to make sure that we worked together to drive this program forward. Over the last several months, we have been in close communication with the General Land Office, laying out goals, accountability in terms of what we would deliver, and targeting this time to be coming back to the table with a a solution, a strategy for how we were going to complete this work. And what we have been able to achieve is, I would say, something that is greater than the sum of its parts. You know, the flood control district had a very specific way of thinking about things, as did the G, L, O. And when we put the entirety of a solution on the table based on the parts, we were able to come up with, something that neither of us probably would have come to the table with, but we were able to identify a path forward. And it's really, really fulfilling to me. I think it's an example of how we can work together. We can deliver this. I also just have to say.

[00:34:34] Briones

Can we motion to suspend the ten minute rule period? Motion for this item.

[00:34:39] Hidalgo

Is second by Commissioner Ramsey. All in favor? Aye. Any opposed? Motion carries unanimously.

[00:34:44] Tina Petersen

I was also just going to say the collaboration with others within the county. I know you didn't ask that specifically, but I think that has also been key to making sure that we are thinking through the holistic solution, which I think that is what we were able to achieve in partnership with the Glo as a holistic solution. Okay, so.

[00:35:01] Briones

What I'm hearing, and please correct me if I'm wrong based on what you've said today, what I have read in emails and based on my own conversations, The Glow has co collaborated, co-created this swap solution, and has every confidence that if we continue meeting all the requirements, this will be a workable plan forward. Is that correct?

[00:35:24] Tina Petersen

That is.

[00:35:24] Briones

Correct. Okay, so the other thing I wanted to talk on is something you already just led me to. As I say every quarter, patience is not a virtue I possess, especially when we know that we're in hurricane season and we know that our families have been waiting for these projects. So my question is, I know the court has taken an approved several actions to help accelerate and speed up the work. For example, the delegation of authority, for example, allowing alternative procurement methods such as sealable sealed bid proposals, which you referenced. Now all projects will be in construction and as a lawyer, but as a non-engineer, I know that there will be change orders. So in terms of delegation of authority up to a certain amount for change orders, we must continue cutting all red tape because every day matters and we're in full court press. So my question to you is, would you please recap what we have already done to essentially get out of our own way, reduce bureaucracy, and what other ideas and how can this court support you? Because we want to support we don't want to interfere. What else can we do? Doctor Petersen, to maximize our chances of success.

[00:36:39] Tina Petersen

Thank you for that question, Commissioner. I would say we have done a lot within the Flood Control district and in partnership with the GLO to advance this program. You know, we have stood up a focused team to deliver the program, bringing all of our different, um, resources, like our environmental team, our finance team. We've really embedded them all together so that they can make decisions quickly and not get caught up in decision paralysis. We have also, as you noted, made sure that we have a broad delegation of authority, but that the delegation of authority also fits within what county attorney thinks is appropriate in terms of being able to move forward. That was the same thing in terms of the purchasing. We worked very closely with county attorney to make sure that that was properly bounded, so that the decisions and the information that is coming to court are what should be coming to court, and other things don't have to. So your point about change orders, I do believe that there is something that we are working on with the county attorney in terms of making sure that we properly constrain because, again, you know, I the clarity that we have from County Attorney is we just need to be clear about what the delegation is. I will also say there are other conversations we're having with other county departments in terms of doing a similar thing that we have done with our team to, again embed additional resources. Certainly, purchasing is one area where we have a lot of activity, um, early in our procurement steps during the project execution, because of purchase orders, because of change orders, because of lots of data and information that we're exchanging back and forth between our teams. And then obviously project closeout. And so we are in conversation to bring to court a plan to embed additional purchasing support. And that is something I think will potentially make a really big difference for us. And again, we have had a great partner in purchasing Agent Williams, and this will just extend and improve our ability to work together.

[00:38:46] Briones

Thank you. So what I'm hearing is again, both and right. We will both continue to meet every rule and regulation. And we're trying to be as creative, aggressive and innovative to accelerate delivery. Is that what I'm hearing?

[00:38:59] Tina Petersen

That's absolutely right. And that's why the engagement of county attorney in these steps is so critical because we need a strong legal basis. We need that documented because we know that there are rules, there are requirements that we have to meet with these dollars as well. And that is not negotiable.

[00:39:16] Briones

And as a as a lawyer, I'm smiling at Miss Abernathy, who's been shaking her head because I know how deeply you all have been collaborating. And I think engineers and lawyers, together we work magic. But at the end of the day, honestly, Doctor Peterson, it goes back to me being a mom and, you know, I was super pregnant when Harvey hit. My whole neighborhood was flooded. I thought, you know, I was so grateful my home didn't flood, but the entire neighborhood was flooded. And I worried that I was going to have to have my youngest daughter in a bathtub. And by the grace of God, she stayed inside me. And she was born in a hospital. But this weighs on me every day. And now to have the opportunity to represent Western Harris County, which as you all know, we have attics and barker dams. You remember what happened after Harvey? I every day it weighs on me. There is no room for error. Failure is not an option. Full court press. And I have every faith and confidence that you and your team are stepping on the gas. And I see another one of my dear friends, Regina. Thank you as well. So in conclusion. We will get these projects done for the people of Harris County. Is that correct?

[00:40:38] Tina Petersen

That is that is the plan that we are presenting Commissioners Court with a plan to accomplish that? Yes.

[00:40:43] Briones

And so today you're asking for us to approve what I'm calling the swap solution so that we can hit those deadlines and deliver the protection and progress that we have told the people of Harris County. Is that correct?

[00:40:57] Tina Petersen

That is that is what we are proposing in this plan.

[00:40:59] Briones

Okay. And again, just big picture. I don't want to speak for my colleagues. We want to support in a way that doesn't create more red tape and delays. We want to be your partners in this action oriented, full court press. And so I appreciate you tremendously, Doctor Peterson. God bless you. God bless you too. I was telling my team member, God bless you because she keeps sneezing. But God, we have to get this done. And as hurricane season is here, we must absolutely. So thank you, Doctor Peterson. Thank Commissioner Buckingham and her team because Texans are counting on us and we must deliver. So with that, I have motions to read. I will absolutely be supporting the solutions, and I appreciate the solutions oriented commitment to serving and protecting the people of Harris County.

[00:41:54] Hidalgo

Commissioner Ramsey and then Commissioner Ellis.

[00:42:00] Ramsey

What we're about to enter into is the most difficult phase of this series of projects. What we've done sounds very complicated to folks, and a 45 years of engineering. I am a professional engineer. I have worked on many flood mitigation flood projects in the region, working with 50 cities, 20 counties, and every state agency you can't name. So I know a bit about getting the job done. Precinct three is really the gateway to water coming into Harris County. Probably 75% plus of the water that comes into Harris County is processed in precinct three first before it goes in other other areas. I really don't have any questions, but I do have remarks, uh, based on the plan, I will tell you that the framework of this plan was put together four months ago, and to have it come this late is a discouragement to me is a concern to me. So the framework was put together four months ago. It took this long to get here. And we can have those conversations with the G, L, O and I again, the partnership of Commissioner Buckingham is been extraordinary. I think, uh, as she issued, I think, in a very timely manner, a, uh, a letter to Judge Hidalgo expressing her positions, her concerns, I think, related to what we were doing and what we're about to do. But simply stated in the communication from Commissioner Buckingham this week here, or Commissioner Buckingham's concerns related to Harris County Flood Control district and completing projects.

[00:43:59] Ramsey

And I quote. Despite the extensive support provided by G. L o Harris County missed deadlines Reprioritized projects repeatedly. That's a communication issue. Submitted incomplete, inaccurate documentation that failed to adhere to federal grant regulations. Failed to respond to GLO requests regarding federal grant processes. If you remember, I came to court on April 16th asking for certain data related to these projects, which was provided again on April the 30th. I didn't make up that data. That's what the GLO was asking for and they could not get. So it took a court action to get data that the GLO was asking for. The other issue that Commissioner Buckingham and her office pointed out experienced significant employee turnover. I guess in terms of who was working with the GLO loss of experienced staff capacity. And the last item that's referenced is failed to achieve timely engineering design, environmental clearance, procurement, vendor contracting and construction start. It is absolutely critical that we maintain our relationship with our significant funding partner, the GLO. This is what they're saying about their concerns. But in the context we're going into the most complicated phase of the project, we're building it. We better be on our toes. We better be able to not do the six things that Commissioner Buckingham mentioned in her letter on Monday. This plan again should have started. This concept. This this discussion we're having should have started months ago.

[00:46:06] Ramsey

And I'm going to go to be a summary of, of, of just engineering details. Harris County Flood Control is planning on shifting. Here's the details. 87 million from their doctor program to the Met program, 25 million from the Met program to the doctor program. I know this sounds complicated, and it's probably not as complicated as it sounds, but. But these are details related to what we are going to have to do. A net add to the Met program of 52 million. Again, if projects come in under budget, which historically in the last few months, that's what's been happening. Uh, we're going to have to figure out how to spend that money. Identify more projects. And let me give a shout out to Tao. Are you here, Tao? Raise your hand. Thank you. Because if it wasn't for the seven projects that you kept on schedule, if it wasn't for those seven projects, we wouldn't have a solution here because we're transferring those projects from CSD over to even make this possible. So. So for thank you for keeping on schedule and making that part happen. Of the 325 million Harris County Flood Control District plan to spend on projects, only 105 will be spent. So that's less than a third. So we're we're working on those details of the 325 Harris County Flood Control District is holding 67 million. 40 million of those are change orders.

[00:47:42] Ramsey

I don't know, I do the math. Typical change order that that's allowed is roughly 25%. That's going to be roughly 27 million, 40 million is more than 27 million. So we're going to have to work through that change order issue. Again, these are all issues we can work on. 27 million for potential. So we're going to need to come up with more projects that again, we're going to turn over to Tal. And she's going to be tasked with doing a pretty difficult thing of taking projects and being sure that we can meet her deadline, which is a year after these. So my point in reading through that, we have got to have leadership that will deliver. We got to have leadership that the Glo can trust. We have to have leadership that can deliver on these items. I support this plan. I helped come up with a plan, so I support this plan. I wish it had come earlier. I'm glad it's here now and I'm glad I get a chance on voting on it. So I'm going to agree with Commissioner Briones, and I notice she's got a couple of motions. Uh, I know motion one, I'm definitely going to be a party to. So I support the motion. I support the plan. We've got to move forward. I continue to have concerns about our ability to execute the plan that's on the table today.

[00:49:13] Hidalgo

Thank you Commissioner. Now we have Commissioner Ellis and then Commissioners Garcia and Brandis would like to circle back around.

[00:49:20] Rodney Ellis

Thank you judge. I'm going to support both motions. The second one in particular I think is also important because the county engineer in particular all the departments, but the county engineer in particular has been involved because this will impact some of those drainage projects we did. It can be done, but it is not an easy thing to do. Uh, Doctor Peterson, I've said to you many times when you appear before us is always a challenge to spend federal money, because there's generally a lot of strings that are attached to it that comes through the process on things you have to do. And I think I made reference a couple of times when I was on city council, and people have to come in and explain why they lost federal money, and it was always a big challenge. I'm for it. Uh, I commend all of the parties that were involved in it. I appreciate the patience of the GLO, but I do want to make a couple of brief comments. I don't have any questions. I was I happened to be the only person who was sitting at the desk when we put the county's Harvey Bond package on the agenda, and it was a big deal. Unlike any of the other 254 counties in Texas, Harris County stepped up the board, the judge and the commissioners in a big way to The put \$2.5 billion on the ballot, and it was a leap of faith only because when I was still in the Texas Senate a decade ago, 2016, I won.

[00:50:58] Rodney Ellis

But I hadn't gotten sworn in. I had to wait a good while to take the oath. Doctor Petersen, your predecessor, Russ Poppy, and his team came in to talk to me about cost benefit ratio, cost benefit analysis, and said that they thought that because I'd been in the legislature, I ought to be the one to go take that message to Washington. And I was thinking, well, I think maybe you should have you should have talked to me some time ago to try to change that language. They even had with me. They had me meet with the head of the Corps of Engineers. Everybody was agreeing on Commissioners Court. Both parties, no matter what area you represented, they're taking care of the wealthier neighborhoods first. Just didn't make sense. So one of my staffers really crafted a good bit of the language work with a lot of folks. But a staffer in particular judge that you ended up taking when you got there, I think took the lead on drafting that that language that we came up with. So our framework was a part of the process when the Harvey package was put on the ballot.

[00:52:09] Rodney Ellis

And in my judgment, it was not followed until we really dug into it and even asked the auditor to go in and look at it. So if there were changes, it was because what we were being told was not happening. First big change I remember making to the projects was for a project that happened to be outside the county. By the way, in my. My dear friend, God bless him. Uh, Mayor Turner was pushing for that project and we did it. That one certainly was not on the radar, but we did it. I may have argued against it, but, you know, kept the faith. We kept moving forward. We kept going. Every time we hit a bump in the road, we've had a presentation and we've had one of those kumbaya moments, and everybody says, this is the best thing since sliced bread. I believe in this plan. I do think he could have been done a long time ago. I think there's some gaps in it right now that not even worth bringing up, but it's going to be a challenge to get it done. Uh, it is such a brilliant idea. I wonder why we didn't come up with it as much as a year ago. And I mentioned that you and I talked to you, Doctor Peterson, the other day. The other thing that I added on the ballot, because I just happened to be there, added to the mix of discussion, was the county doing a disparity study, and my colleagues at the time agreed to it because they knew they had to go to those voters countywide, including the ones in my precinct and precinct two at the time, who historically cast most votes for bond issues, where they would come up on a countywide basis.

[00:53:56] Rodney Ellis

And they agreed. They try to come up with a process where you're more inclusive in how you do county contracting. And those were good things. But, you know, that's behind us now. Uh, I appreciate the leadership of the DLO. We need them. You know, there's a reason why federal government doesn't want to go and do direct allocations to every city and county in the country. Usually go through a state because you want to if you have to have a clawback, you want to deal with 50 states and not hundreds or thousands of counties and cities around the country. Sometimes we've been lucky and there have been direct allocations, but that is generally not the norm. But we are where we are. I do think that we got to move decisively, I decisively. I do think there have been issues with providing accurate data, even to this body, in the past. Uh, and I'll close on this comment.

[00:54:49] Rodney Ellis

It was really over this issue with flood control that I coined the phrase that I have a healthy distrust of the bureaucracy. Normally I don't, I don't sit at the dais and use it as an opportunity to beat department heads over the head. If that's something I want to say, I'll say it in private. I don't do it at the table. It's just not my nature. Uh, but I do think there have been issues with transparency and I hope going forward, that does not happen again. Uh, if I don't have the three votes on the commissioners court to go in a particular direction, or I got to live with that. And I stress this all department heads, if somebody didn't have the three of us, Rodney doesn't have the three. Just say, hey, you've got some good points, Rodney, but you don't have three votes. And if. If you are in doubt about it, well, just say put it on the agenda. I put it on agenda. You put it on. Make sure it's clear. But I'm a straight shooter. I don't play games with people. Uh, and I think going forward, we'd all be better served if we took that same approach. Thank you. And I'm prepared to vote on the motions, judge, whenever you are. We finished the speakers.

[00:55:58] Hidalgo

Thank you. Let me let me make my comments here, colleagues, before I circle back around. Um, so first is a question for Commissioner Ramsey. So you mentioned the change order. So one of the things we were talking about is that the project scopes will not change. So I want to understand what you were referring to just as a as a non-engineer.

[00:56:17] Speaker 12

Well, part of the part of the.

[00:56:18] Ramsey

Plan here, which is I, I agree with plan that, uh, when a project comes in under bid, that leaves some room for change orders. And this plan involved 40 million of change orders. So you need to define within scope of that project. Other things you can do and deliver, and certainly be in compliance with everything with the G, L, O and others. So that's the reference. But again, you got to have someone that is able to process that, uh, execute that, make that happen with the contract. This is going to be a complicated, uh, plan to execute and implement. That's just one part of it.

[00:57:04] Hidalgo

Okay. And forgive me if I'm being dense, you guys, I'm trying to understand this. So the, the excess funds, if the, um, if the costs come under the estimates that would go to making the project even better, or would it go to some projects lower on the prioritization list, or would it go to some of the projects that are paused?

[00:57:28] Ramsey

I think in general, what I understand we're trying to find as many areas to invest as possible within the guidelines and requirements of the glow within our own guidelines and requirements. So you got to check about 5 or 6, but its investments, its \$40 million worth of investments on flood mitigation in Harris County. That's the good news.

[00:57:49] Hidalgo

Yeah. So it sounds like we're not sure right now. Like we'll pick exactly where it goes.

[00:57:55] Tina Petersen

We have 40 million dedicated to, um, acceleration strategies, as well as making sure that we have enough money to complete the scope because Commissioner Ramsey, as you know, construction is complicated when we are accelerating and getting to construction quickly. There are potential risks. And so change orders help us make sure that we have the dollars to be able to manage any potential issues that come up in construction.

[00:58:27] Hidalgo

Okay. Okay, I will. It sounds like I might I might circle back. Um, Because I would think that this means that if things came under budget. Anyway, I'll circle back. Um, other question is, um, when I spoke to Commissioner Buckingham, she said, you know, moving the funds is possible and legal, but it's still a huge lift. And so I want to understand from you, um, from purchasing whoever is the relevant folks. Why is it a huge lift and can we speed up that lift? What do we do to make it less huge? Judge that's a great question.

[00:59:07] Tina Petersen

The the challenge with these dollars is there are a number of rules, regulations, processes, audits that will be required in terms of spending these dollars. It is a very complex program. The GLO has very, very tight controls over how they operate. And so we have to follow the processes they've laid out that are in alignment with HUD. Right. So we have steps we have to take. They have steps they have to take. We have to make sure that all the documentation is in place so that if and when an audit occurs, we are solid. The the complexity in the opportunity that we really have is, you know, adding projects certainly is something that that can be done. I think the, the shift in our understanding and what the tools that glow made available was really being able to phase projects. That was really a key. And so that will take some effort to make sure that we have discretely defined the phase of work that will be completed because frankly, we we need to be accountable for what we deliver. And so we have to be able to put on the table, this is what we delivered for these dollars. And so that will take some engineering work. Then we have to make sure that our contracting mechanisms are able to accommodate the additional funding sources. But the good news is we only have one construction contract, and so that will reduce the paperwork tremendously for us. We only have to have one contract that defines two different funding sources for two different programs.

[01:00:49] Hidalgo

Okay. I'm not sure. I am trying to get to a very specific question. I guess the question is, when we switch these sources of funding and maybe folks on this side can help me or purchasing, we switch these sources of funding. What, you know, bureaucratic processes do we have to go through specifically?

[01:01:14] Tina Petersen

So, Daniel, I could start and I'll let you fill in. So.

[01:01:18] Hidalgo

Um, maybe an order director just exactly what happens.

[01:01:22] Tina Petersen

Yes. So basically there are dollars entered into our ERP system and their journal entries and different pieces of different processes that have to be done in the backside to facilitate those changes.

[01:01:39] Hidalgo

Yeah, I mean, that's my question. Okay. So you get the dollars from the other from Taos pot of money into ERP system. Is that what you're saying?

[01:01:48] Tina Petersen

Let me yeah.

[01:01:49] Ramos

I can take a swing at this. So every project has a project code in our accounting system, along with the fund number that that corresponds to whatever source of funding, whether it's doctor, a bond funding, mobility, whatever it is. Essentially, we create a new project code with the with the new funding, with the new funding code. So there's a two step process. One is moving any existing expenses, eligible expenses to that new account number. The second part of it is moving all purchase or existing purchase orders or future purchase orders into that new project code.

[01:02:26] Hidalgo

Okay. So on that, who does the I guess that's three steps is creating a project code, moving eligible expenses and moving purchase orders. So who's responsible for those three steps?

[01:02:38] Ramos

It's a coordination between the department, the county auditor and, and our my office.

[01:02:44] Hidalgo

Okay. And so I guess this is a question for, for you guys. Um, you know what, how quickly can you do this? And if it's not fast, why, what's the obstacle? And if the auditor wouldn't mind hopping on the line while I, while I ask the other folks. Yeah.

[01:03:05] Ramos

Um, it's generally not as long as we can get the account code set up timely. It is not a huge, huge lift.

[01:03:12] Hidalgo

Days.

[01:03:12] Ramos

Weeks, a week.

[01:03:15] Hidalgo

Okay. Um, okay, so that's for, um, for step one. Is that the funding code? Right.

[01:03:22] Ramos

That's purely our internal administration, right. I would assume that there's many layers of approvals on the on the the funds.

[01:03:31] Hidalgo

Okay. So, um, auditor post, thank you for joining us. Um, so we're talking about, you know, as we, we look to move funding sources for these flood control projects to try to meet the deadlines. I'm trying to understand if this is going to cause a delay to. And so because of my conversation with with, uh, Commissioner Buckingham, it sounds like this is complicated. So the steps that we just came up with, with Daniel's first you create a new project code with the new funding code, then you move eligible expenses to a new account number, and then you move all purchase orders. Does your office have a role in any of this? And if so, which one and how long does it take to achieve that?

[01:04:17] Rodney Ellis

Uh, yes, we have a role in what you just laid out. So you're going to create new accounts. Um, those can be created by the auditor's office. Once we have all the requests signed and approved, it doesn't take us long. Once the documents get to us. But we would be responsible to take the requested, um, action to create the new accounts and actually make that happen in our current ERP system. Then you're talking about moving expenses again. If the forms, the paperwork gets to us with the approvals, you know, there's an approval by the departments whose budgets are affected. The actual mechanics of doing those transfers is pretty quick. It's like a day. So we do play a role. But and it doesn't take us long to do our part, but it does. It does require everything to be documented and requested in a proper way. Okay. And that's our goal.

[01:05:35] Hidalgo

That's helpful. So then the folks that document and request in the proper way is that flood control. Is that, um, purchasing engineering, who's, who does that?

[01:05:46] Rodney Ellis

That would be primarily flood control. Okay. Now if, if there's some part of this that, you know, is in another department, like, you know, housing and community development, I've heard, you know, mention the swapping. I don't understand it completely. Um, it may require them to sign off on it too, but we'll work with the departments and when they get us the proper request, with the proper approvals, the auditor can move very quickly to make these things happen.

[01:06:22] Hidalgo

I mean, sounds like legal would have a job there too, right? So do you guys just between the three of you guys, how long do you think that that would take to have the the proper request with the proper approvals so that you can send it over to the auditor?

[01:06:39] Tina Petersen

So, judge, I would tell you that, you know, we we have already started working on this. We actually had a call, I know auditor post, you weren't on the call, but your staff were on the call with my my finance team with finance team director.

[01:06:53] Hidalgo

I'm sorry to keep you, but I'm asking several questions and I know my colleagues want to go and we're tight on time. So could you give me an answer? A day, a week, two weeks, two months? How long?

[01:07:05] Tina Petersen

We are working on it right now. Um, we will have to work with the General Land Office to make sure that the pieces of what we're putting in place make sense. But what I can tell you is we are actively, as of today and yesterday, putting a comprehensive list together that we have reviewed with the General Land Office to send over to them to maintain alignment.

[01:07:26] Hidalgo

So there's not a number there. I believe there's some somebody here from the G, L o and perhaps you're not here to speak, but is there any chance would you be able to answer that question? That's okay. Thanks. Hi. Um, so so first of all, thank you so much for your support. Um, so we're going over, you know, obviously the main issue here has been delays, right? Um, and so right now there's this idea of switching the funding codes so that we can meet the deadline. Um, so we're on the same page on that. So what I'm, you know, based on my conversation with Commissioner Buckingham, it seems that this funding code switch is, is not as easy as, you know, switching a number on a computer. It's, it's still a huge lift. It's a conversation I had with her. So I'm concerned that we will find new delays in that huge lift. So I'm asking the different part. You know, I'm asking the leaders here, uh, what exactly are the bureaucratic steps we have to go through to do that switch? And so where I am now, if I think I'm understanding correctly, is, you know, the budget office can do their piece quickly, the auditor's office can do their piece quickly. We're talking about a week, a week, a day to a week, but the bulk of the work needs to be done within flood control. County attorney and our housing office. So as flood control. Well, how long will this take? And she said, it depends on the GLO. So that's why I want to know if you have an estimate of how long it takes to put together a proper request, with the proper approvals to then send to the auditor and the budget office. Does that make sense?

[01:09:08] Assistant 3

Judge, I'm sorry if we could have anyone speaking come up to the microphone.

[01:09:11] Hidalgo

Okay. Um, I'm so sorry. Just because we have to be on the record. Would you mind joining us at the microphone? Thank you. And and just stating your your name for the record, please.

[01:09:38] GLO Rep

Hi. My name is Regina Recinos with the General Land Office. Unfortunately, I'm in the government relations department, not the grant administration. And so those are the experts in the ins and outs of, um, this very complex, very complex program.

[01:09:54] Hidalgo

Okay. Okay. Um, I'll have my team check with you to see if maybe, you know, they have an estimate at all by the end of today. Of course, that I can sort of wrap my head around. The reason I'm trying to, you know, really understand is to set expectations for the community because, Uh, you know, there's, I think the, the way this is presented is okay, it's a swap. It's easy, it'll be good. But I don't want to have any more surprises for the community. So I'll ask myself, I know you guys have already visited. We'll go through you. And to the extent that you guys can help us, you know, kind of put a number on it. And of course, the next step from from what I'm doing, um, Daniel and, um, administrator, uh, Carter is. How can we speed up those steps? I mean, obviously we can't speed up anything. The glow, that's their purview. But how can we speed up the flood control community and county attorney piece? Because that seems to be where the bulk of the weight would be.

[01:11:04] ???

I can't speak for the county attorney, but I will tell you, they're putting all their staff time. Budget will be laser focused on their role, adding hours if needed. They've been working day and night just to get to this point. So that's my commitment for flood and budget and myself.

[01:11:19] Hidalgo

Okay. Um, okay. Thank you. Is there any are there any other steps after that? Um, director Peterson so after we've moved all the purchase orders, then what?

[01:11:31] Tina Petersen

I think really there's keys in terms of making sure that we have proper contracting in place that that actually has to happen in some cases before we have the funding code switches. And the good news is, again, we're already working on it. We're already coordinating with the G, L, O, and this change, the strategy and the process and the approach that's been laid out does not require is not going to be dependent like execution of the projects is, is going to happen. That is happening now. Projects are under construction. And I just want to be clear that projects are under construction and we're moving as fast as possible to get these administrative pieces in place.

[01:12:17] Hidalgo

So after the proper contracting, is there anything else?

[01:12:21] Tina Petersen

Nothing is coming to mind at the moment other than execution.

[01:12:24] Hidalgo

And then when you talk about um, this projects are not dependent. So is what you're saying that this huge lift of switching the codes, you're saying that that has no bearing on how long the project takes to deliver the.

[01:12:43] Tina Petersen

I'm thinking through your question to make sure I'm going to answer it fully. Judge the the the intent here. Yes.

[01:12:53] Ramos

I can jump to I can jump in here. I think what she's saying is we're continuing to accumulate bills based on the construction. It is not a one time. We don't just move the expenses. One time expenses linger into the old account codes. We can always go back to the order and move those expenses to the new account codes so that the bills will continue to get paid, regardless of whether we're behind on this, on this administrative change.

[01:13:20] Hidalgo

So just to be more specific, there's, you know, there's 11 projects here, six that are really at risk of missing the deadline. So if we pick one of them. In that project, you know, if everything stayed the same, that project was going to be finished in one year. Let's make that up. Now that we're switching the codes, will it be done still in one year or will it be in a year? In six months?

[01:13:45] Ramos

I can tell you that the account code switch would not does not have any bearing on the on the project delivery timeline. Okay. Because at that point, it's just administrative, it's moving, it's moving the expense to the appropriate place.

[01:13:57] Hidalgo

So basically you would have to do that before the deadline though, right? So before February.

[01:14:02] Ramos

We would need to have the account, all the accounts tied out by then.

[01:14:06] Hidalgo

Okay. So I guess okay, so I guess that's the question. Is, can we make sure we get that done by February 27th? Okay. Okay. All right. Well, um, thanks, colleagues for for giving me a chance to ask these questions. And, uh, that's all I got. All right. Thank you. Um, commissioners, um, Ellis Garcia and Briones Ellis just spoke. So Garcia and Briones.

[01:14:36] Garcia

Thank you. Uh, director, thank you again for your response and answers to the questions that are being provided. Um, I want to begin with, uh, with one question is, um, the remark of this should have been done a long time ago. Uh, why now? Uh, what's, what's your response to that?

[01:15:01] Tina Petersen

You know, we've been working on a plan, Commissioner. We have been working in lockstep with the intent to get these projects under construction. There is information that we gained in terms of getting lower bids that we would not have had until this moment. And the other opportunity that really came to bear is the fact that we can reduce administrative paperwork by using this approach. And so we have projects that are split between both programs, and that requires dual applications. That requires dual construction contracts. And what we are doing here is saving bureaucracy, cutting red tape, finding ways to move faster. And that option was not on the table for us previously. And so this solution, this comprehensive solution also right. It's a comprehensive solution.

[01:15:51] Garcia

Good deal. Thank you for that response. Also, um, you know, just a bit of reflection. When I was the director of the mayor's anti-gang office, I was applying for Cdbg money and other grants. And the Consistent question I would get from the mayor's office was, are you sure you want to go after this? Because it's got so many damn, uh, strings attached and reporting requirements. Do you have the staff to do this? And so a lot of times we didn't get to have fun with the program because there's just so much we had to administratively do. And that's something that you're communicating to us right now that aside from getting to construction, there's a lot of there's a lot of trees, maybe digital trees these days, but there's still a lot of trees you're having to kill to provide the administrative support to these, uh, these resources.

[01:16:46] Tina Petersen

Commissioner, if I could clarify, I did just get some communication from our funding partners, and I do want to clarify on that point. Some of the administrative things that we do need to make sure are legal agreements and subrecipient agreements between Harris County and flood control. I know I, I did articulate the subrecipient agreements, but just to be super, super clear. So for everyone involved and to be clear for the General Land Office.

[01:17:12] Garcia

Good deal. Thank you. And, um, and yes, it's a huge lift and I appreciate you willing to, um, even make the effort to do a huge lift. You know, uh, this is a rhetorical question, but the response would be, so what? It's a huge lift. So we do nothing and doing nothing is absolutely unacceptable. So I appreciate the effort to take on a monumental task. And that's what we expect you to do. So thank you. And then, uh, there's been some points about missing deadlines, uh, about, uh, the incomplete and inaccurate documentation, uh, the failed response to, uh, GLO requests regarding federal grant processes. Um, and, in the fail to achieve timely engineering, design, environmental clearance, procurement, vendor contracting and construction starts. What's your response to those points?

[01:18:14] Tina Petersen

One of the things I would say, Commissioner, is some of these issues, like the missed deadlines, uh, those have been solved for with this with this approach. You know, we have reprioritized the project list once, but with this approach that will not be necessary again. The, the staffing certainly, you know, the we have a dedicated team for our Cdbg program. That's one of the keys we believe, to how we have moved so quickly. And that team has been very consistent, including multiple levels of staff. Certainly we we want to make sure that we have a robust team. And we also need to make sure that we have the right talent in the right places. And the good news is that this team's turnover reflects the low turnover that is at the flood control district overall. And then the other thing that I would highlight is just the complexity of this program. We have individual project communications happening at a project level. We have conversations happening at the program level for projects. We have regulatory conversations happening. We have compliance, we have purchasing, we have auditor. And so we are not aware of any specific issues that we can pinpoint. But we take feedback like this seriously. And we will of course double down, just like we have on communication issues to make sure that there are no gaps. But we do have a dedicated compliance team who is focused on these issues, and I have confidence in them.

[01:19:49] Garcia

Good deal. And and then lastly, I just want to reiterate that. There aside from all of the points that I've been very, very repetitive about. This was a poorly constructed bond program from the very beginning. Studies were just grabbed off the shelf and then there was a you know, the way I hear it, a napkin sketch of how much is this going to be? Or what's the most we can get? That's the way 2.5 billion came to be in those studies. No environmental impact, uh, or very little. Uh, and probably we should say very little understanding of environmental impact, if any, was understood at the very beginning.

[01:20:49] Tina Petersen

Well, and I would say, Commissioner, there's a difference in the environmental for local regulations versus federal. That's right. We had a project, um, a T.C. jester that was ready to go into construction. But because of the federal regulations, it took another year, year and a half.

[01:21:04] Garcia

That's right. That's right. The federal the federal strings attached to these points are very, very different than from what we could do at a local level. Yes. Then right of way acquisition. We didn't know just how much right of way acquisition we were going to acquire. And let me just say, every time you do right of way acquisition, uh, you don't always get a willing seller. And so it does require, uh, the county attorney's office to get engaged. And that takes time. Generally, from what I hear, is that if you anticipate right of way acquisition, that's the first thing we do at the very beginning of projects, if possible, if we know it.

[01:21:49] Tina Petersen

Well, except in the federal process, you cannot do that until all the environmental clearance is done. Only then can you do the property acquisition.

[01:21:56] Garcia

There you go. So you got two major time consuming steps to take before any other meaningful work can be done. And then, um, cost estimates. We didn't know real cost estimates to any of these projects. Many of them have originally came way over budget than what they were originally projected to be. And then tariffs, inflation. Uh, and then thankfully, renegotiation has been able to have some impact on those. But again, things we did not know fully, uh, when we engaged on this. And then, um, not last, but we started with a two year hiccup because of the previous administration at the General land office. Harris County, Houston was cut out of getting any funding For two years, if not more. Under the previous administration, and not until Doctor Buckingham came in and we had a conversation and, uh, we got her everything we needed to give her the confidence that we could get, uh, these projects done. And you're demonstrating that we're getting them done. Uh, all of that are things that don't happen easily. So again, doctor, uh, Peterson, thank you so much for your work. And, uh, and I also look forward to, uh, voting on these motions by Commissioner Briones. Um, but I would just say that again, I'll just go back to the Lions and Doctor Buckingham's letter. We need shovels. We don't need scapegoats. We, uh, this is not politics. This is about people. And, uh, if we're going to, make these decisions. Let's make them for what we really care about. And that is protecting people. So let's get out of your way so you can get the job done. Thank you.

[01:24:06] Hidalgo

Thank you, Commissioner Briones.

[01:24:08] Briones

Commissioner Garcia. I agree wholeheartedly. We could be sitting here making excuses that the previous General Land Commissioner burned ears on the clock, giving Harris County zero money. And we're blessed that we have Commissioner Buckingham, who is fair, collaborative and cares deeply about Texans. We could be talking and relitigating years of challenges and problems. But at the end of the day, and yes, this is highly complicated, incredibly complex. This is hard. But what I appreciate about you, Doctor Peterson, is you're not sitting here making excuses and relitigating this very complicated, troubled past. What you're here today is saying we are taking decisive action. We have a solution. It will be hard, but we owe it to the people of Harris County to get it done, and I respect that tremendously. And I thank you. And I thank the GLO for how collaborative they've been in co-creating this solution. And so thank you. I have two motions that I would like to read. These have been circulated. Motion number one. I move the Commissioner's court approved the additions to the Cdbg Dr. and Cdbg Mitt project lists, authorize the Harris County Flood Control District and Harris County Housing and Community Development to negotiate any agreements necessary to advance eligible projects to authorize the two departments to coordinate with the Texas General Land Office on required contract amendments, program updates and related approvals, and direct the Flood Control District to implement the associated phasing and funding realignment strategy. That is motion number one.

[01:26:00] Hidalgo

Um, do you guys want to vote on them separately? I figured we'd just vote on both of them. Yeah.

[01:26:06] Briones

Okay. Thank you. Colleagues. Motion number two. Move to direct the flood control district to work with the County Attorney's office and other relevant departments to compile a list of vetted recommendations on what Commissioners Court can do to help expedite projects under the Cdbg and Cdbg Mitt programs, and return to Commissioners Court with recommendations for consideration and possible approval.

[01:26:37] Garcia

Second.

[01:26:38] Hidalgo

All right. So we have two motions by Commissioner. Second, by Commissioner Garcia. All in favor? Aye. Any opposed? Motion carries unanimously. Thank you. Um. Yeah. Thank you. And I'll say on the, uh, on the point about the glow, um, I got, I gotta give credit where credit is due, but, uh, Commissioner Ellis and I went to DC and sat with Secretary Marcia Fudge and got a \$750 million investment, um, for Harris County. So that's, uh, saying that, that the funds didn't arrive until later is the alternative facts. And then obviously, obviously, we worked with Commissioner Bush to hold back the 300 million because the community projects weren't moving fast enough. So then that came back later as flood control as promised. So I think obviously we work a lot better with Commissioner Buckingham. We wouldn't have had to do that if the Glo hadn't held back our billion dollars. But it's one of my proudest achievements to bring \$750 million here, and really 350 more that we had held back for flood control, which did end up arriving thanks to Commissioner Buckingham. So yes, Commissioner Ellis.

[01:27:56] Rodney Ellis

Yes. I just don't want us to forget those citizens that went out and filed a complaint. Uh, you know, they, they they did a tremendous job for all of us, 100%. All right. Thank you all. It was a shared effort and unanimous, uh, uh, bipartisan outrage, by the way, helped as well from Commissioners Court.

[01:28:18] Hidalgo

That's right. So folks, can we go to executive session? Uh, yes. Commissioner Garcia.

[01:28:25] Garcia

I just want to make one final point. With all the complexities of what it has taken to manage this particular program, uh, all the things that are outside of Flood Control's purview, all of the unknowns that we know now, but didn't know then at the very beginning of this. Um, the structure of how this bond was put together, the, um. The idea of how many changes this particular court has made to it, not forgetting that aside from Glow, you have received both additional state and congressional earmarks, which brings a whole other level of complexity in addition to the complexity of the existing Cdbg dollars, all those things have do not have Doctor Peterson's name on them. They have nothing to do with the performance of your administration and the flood control district, but have everything to do with the bureaucracy of what is typical between federal, state and local governments. It is the frustration. An example of the frustration. Why people say, why can't you just get it done? It's not that easy. So I just want to make sure, uh, to make the point you have delivered, you have put together a plan, hard, heavy lift, whatever. Makes no sense. We asked for a plan. You've been working on this plan for months, and, uh, if things were, uh, copacetic, as they say, months ago, this plan would have been approved. It wasn't because there's compromises in what was originally being asked of you that couldn't be done. So I just want to say this is not about performance. This is about governmental bureaucracy that absolutely needs better reform at all levels. Thank you.

[01:31:00] Hidalgo

I actually do have one more thing which is on Commissioner Buckingham's letter. One of the main points here is um. Uh, is our opinion, this first paragraph that regardless of who's leading HCFC, if Commissioners Court continues business as usual, compelling CFC to repeatedly address the court for every minor change, there's likely a zero chance of success. And that's in the first paragraph and then the second to last paragraph. My advice is simple get out of the way. So I don't know. I know this is based on conversations, obviously, that that the Glo had with flood control and flood control must be under the impression that we're requesting that they come to meetings for every address, the court, for every minor change. I'm not aware of that. So I would like to know what that's about so that we can indeed get out of the way.

[01:32:00] Tina Petersen

Judge Hidalgo, that is not any information that the Flood Control District would have shared. We report to Commissioners Court and our job is to bring information and when our. When we need court action, we work with County attorney to make sure the court action is needed and we bring it at the appropriate time.

[01:32:20] Hidalgo

Right. But are we delaying your ability to take action?

[01:32:25] Tina Petersen

We follow the process. We follow.

[01:32:27] Hidalgo

Is the answer yes or no?

[01:32:28] Tina Petersen

There is. There are.

[01:32:31] Hidalgo

See, this is the issue I have. Director, will you please just answer my question?

[01:32:36] Tina Petersen

There are no delays. And once it gets to court, there are no delays at all.

[01:32:39] Hidalgo

Okay. Yeah, once it gets to court, are you waiting for it to get to court? Like, why can't you just say we?

[01:32:46] Tina Petersen

There are no.

[01:32:46] Hidalgo

Delays.

[01:32:47] Tina Petersen

There are no.

[01:32:47] Hidalgo

Delays because I'm not aware of them. And anything that that needs to come in a in a timely manner, time sensitive manner is approved at business court. I'm not aware of business court items on contracts, on changes that have been flagged for regular court. So I know they're very professional office. I don't know, they wouldn't have put this in here if they hadn't gotten it from somewhere. I'm not saying it was you, but I just want to set the record straight that we're not asking every little thing. Certainly I'm not. I'm never asking. I wanted to go have executive session. I'm the last one. We need to have discussion. And everything that happens that is administrative, bureaucratic contracts, purchasing, whatever it is that gets addressed at a at a consistent, at a consistent path, in a copacetic manner, at a business cards. So I'm not really sure of examples from this letter. Um, all right folks, so if y'all are okay, can we go to executive session? Didn't we vote already? Thank you, director and team. Uh, did we vote already? Okay.

[01:33:55] Assistant 3

Yes, ma'am.

[01:33:56] Hidalgo

All right. So can we go to executive session now? All right. So let me list the numbers here. All right. So we're going executive session item one two. No no no not that. Session item 125, 418,419 and 483. To consult with attorneys as well as on personnel matters. It is 10:52 p.m.

[01:34:19] Assistant 3

We're not you're not going on. 125 are you? That one already passed.

[01:34:29] Hidalgo

Okay. Okay, so 418, 419 and 483.

[01:34:31] Assistant 3

Thank you, thank you.

END OF TRANSCRIPT



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