

NEIGHBORHOOD WORKING GROUP
MEETING SUMMARY FOR MAY 2, 1995

Participants:

Mrs. George-Ethel Warren - Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood Council
Mr. Marc Cooper - Bywater Neighborhood Association
Ms. Pam Dashiell - Holy Cross Neighborhood Association
Ms. Stacy Rockwood - Holy Cross Neighborhood Association
Mr. Sal Doucette - Holy Cross Community Development Corporation
Mr. John Koefler - Holy Cross Community Development Corporation
Mrs. Laurentine Ernst - Historic Districts Landmarks Commission
Mr. Larry Spencer - District 99 Enhancement Corp
Ms. Nilima Mwendu - Resident
Brother Stephen Walsh - Holy Cross School
Mr. Joe Dicharry - Corps of Engineers
Mr. Les Waguespack - Corps of Engineers
Mr. George Carbo - Port of New Orleans
Ms. Kathy Costanza - Port of New Orleans
Mr. Patrick Gallwey - Port of New Orleans
Mr. Robert Hughes - Port of New Orleans
Ms. Lydia Jemison - Port of New Orleans
Ms. Gloria Johnson - IH-NC Lock Information Office

Summary:

The meeting was held in the Huddle Room of Holy Cross School. Mr. Dicharry started the meeting by discussing the working draft of the Mitigation Plan that is to be included as a part of the Corps' report on the lock replacement project. He explained that the purpose of this neighborhood working group meeting was to update the group on the status of the project in the Corps' review process. He stated that a preliminary draft of the entire report was sent to the regional office, where comments will be made and sent back to the local district for revision. After the report is revised, it will be sent to the regional office as a final draft where it will be reviewed and forwarded to Washington, D.C. for comment. Mr. Dicharry explained that after another revision, the entire report will be sent out for public review and a general public meeting will be held to allow everyone to comment on the project. He said that after the public hearing the District Engineer will make a recommendation on whether construction should occur. He remarked that this entire process will take months to be completed, and repeated that the report is currently only a preliminary draft.

Mr. Dicharry then stated that he would like to go through the mitigation plan with the working group and explain how it is organized. He said that comments from the community groups were included with the report in the form of the summaries of the Neighborhood Working Group meetings, the Proposed Mitigation Plan developed through the neighborhood working group, and the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association's recommendations. Mrs. Warren observed that her written comments were not included in the exhibits of the mitigation plan and asked that they be included. Mr. Dicharry went on to explain that the mitigation is broken into the three categories of normal, direct and general. He defined normal as avoiding the problem, direct as doing what is needed to minimize impacts and general as other things that are felt to be needed with the project such as jobs for the neighborhoods. Mrs. Warren commented that noise impacts occurred from trucks when Tennessee Street was recently repaired, and similar problems need to be avoided. Mr. Dicharry noted that they tried to eliminate much of the noise through less pile driving and bringing in materials by barge. Mrs. Warren added that slowing down the speed of trucks will also stop noise.

Mr. Dicharry stated that at the end of the mitigation plan a dollar figure has been placed on items that are included. He commented that there may be a hard time in gaining approval from Washington for the general mitigation items and local help may be needed. The group then proceeded to discuss the mitigation plan.

Questions regarding how the housing trust fund would be established were asked. Mr. Waguespack replied that there are several ways including the use of established foundations. Mrs. Warren expressed that community involvement is needed in the trust fund operation and that administrative costs have to be limited. She referred to past projects that have been failures because too much of the funding was used for administrative costs.

Ms. Dashiell commented that it was her understanding that one of the goals of the process was to find out how the community felt about the project. She stated that some residents say that the Corps and Port have said they would withdraw the project if the people are opposed to it. Mrs. Warren responded with the question of who is the community? Mrs. Warren said

that there are more people in the neighborhood than those that went to the public meetings in January. She added that some of the people who attended the public meetings do not even live in the area. Mr. Doucette remarked that you cannot always get the true feelings of people at a public meeting. Mr. Dicharry stated that the Corps' sent out 25,000 fliers and did not feel like they got a true response. He added that some people have told him that they did not say anything at the public meetings because they felt intimidated by others from the area.

Mr. Dicharry repeated the Corps' review process for the benefit of those who arrived late. Ms. Dashiell asked Mr. Dicharry to confirm that this was not the end of the community involvement process. He replied that the neighborhood working group will continue to meet to discuss the project.

Mr. Spencer commented that if 25,000 fliers were sent out for the public meetings in January, then a cross section of the community should have appeared. He continued by saying that he has not yet been to a meeting where the people were in favor of the widening of the lock. Mr. Dicharry responded that the purpose of the January meetings was not to get comments on the project, but the stated purpose was to comment on the proposed mitigation plan. Mr. Spencer said that the community put together a wish list for the mitigation plan and he felt like it was now being said that they are supporting the project because they cooperated. Mr. Dicharry assured him that cooperating on the mitigation plan was not being taken as support of the project. Ms. Dashiell stated that being on the neighborhood working group in no way meant that she endorses the project. Mr. Doucette commented that everyone had stated in the beginning that working on the mitigation plan does not mean consent for the project. Mr. Spencer again expressed his belief that the Corps was trying to call cooperation on the mitigation plan endorsement of the project. Mr. Dicharry responded that the Corps has always said that the mitigation plan is for if the project occurs and that letters from the neighborhoods state that cooperation is not support. Mr. Gallwey reminded the group that the public meetings in January were not called so that people could vote on the project, but to explain the project and the mitigation plan created by the working group. Mr. Gallwey remarked that other residents of the area still do not know as much about the project as the working group does.

Mrs. Ernst asked that the letters stating that the neighborhood organizations are not supporting the project by working on the mitigation plan be included with the mitigation plan. Mr. Koefel commented that the Corps has engineers working full-time on the project while the residents have trouble making it to meetings.

Ms. Rockwood stated that the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association has been working with a group from UNO who have helped them better understand their neighborhood and they have discovered that the neighborhood has been holding its own through the years. She said that their ideas on what should be done as mitigation for the Holy Cross area have now changed because of the new knowledge of the neighborhood. Mr. Dicharry said that is why the mitigation plan is a living document and items can be added or taken out as needed. Ms. Rockwood noted that the lock project and working on the mitigation plan has helped pull the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association together. Mr. Gallwey said that the working group has been trying to put its finger on projects, betterments and improvements that will help make the community flourish and not just hold its own. He said that the major impact of the project on the neighborhoods is not from the lock construction but from replacing the bridges which are currently deteriorating.

Mr. Doucette asked how long the new lock would last. Mr. Dicharry replied it was being designed for a 50 year life-span.

Mr. Cooper noted that on page 17 of the mitigation plan it is stated that net improvements will not occur. He expressed that an improvement in the transportation across the bridges should be concentrated upon. Mr. Cooper observed that the idea of extending the streetcar across the St. Claude Bridge did not make it into the mitigation plan, and requested it be included as an example of mitigation that reduces pollution and helps the area aesthetically. Mr. Dicharry stated that it would have to be related to the lock project. Mr. Cooper responded that since building a new bridge would add more traffic to the area, extending the streetcar line would incorporate mass transit into the project.

Mr. Spencer asked what would happen if it was decided in Washington that the mitigation plan being proposed is not relative to the project. He commented that there are no assurances that items will not be scratched out of the plan. Ms. Mwendo stated that people view the mitigation plan as an opportunity to improve their neighborhood and offered the suggestion that a telephone survey could be used to find out if people want the project. She said that the community needs development and growth, and if the federal government wants to put the project through, it needs to offer extra mitigation measures. Mr. Spencer stated that he wanted to see shippers give guarantees for the mitigation plan by putting \$50 million in an escrow account. Mr. Gallwey noted that the maritime community is already contributing to the project through their share of the cost of the project coming from the waterway users trust fund. There was general discussion about guarantees for the mitigation plan and public input into the decision of whether the project should be constructed.

Brother Walsh commented that Holy Cross School is not a neighborhood school, as stated on page 14, but serves the metro region. He said that continued accessibility to the school is vital. He stated that the language throughout the mitigation plan is too vague and needs to be more concrete. He emphasized that the Corps and Port have to write the report and that the neighborhood groups should not have to write it for them. Ms. Mwendo said that it seems to her that no promises can be made about mitigation and the project is going to happen anyway. Mr. Dicharry stated that the Corps was trying to build consensus on a mitigation plan that would address the concerns of the area. He asked that the members of the working group review the working draft of the mitigation plan again and plan on discussing it further at another meeting to be set for June.

P. O. Box 3207
New Orleans, Louisiana 70177

June 21, 1995

Neighborhood Working Group
Port of New Orleans
Corps of Engineers

Greetings:

The following is a proposal to be added to the existing "Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet New Lock and Connecting Channels Mitigation Plan."

Besides direct and indirect mitigation to individuals and property (addressed in a number of publications, including the Draft Evaluation Report, Mitigation Plan, Working Draft, April 1995), consideration should be given to the general disruption of community life -- its present operation, maintenance and development -- that will be caused by the Inner Harbor Navigational Canal Lock Project (herein called Project).

The present location of the Canal and Lock have caused problems which have hindered growth and development (see attachment). Yet we have learned to cope with these problems without compensation. If implemented, the Project will further complicate these existing problems and add new ones (see attachment).

Some structure must be established that will, at least, maintain the present quality of life and, at best, improve it during and after this Project. I think that it is only fair that an industry which will profit so greatly from improvement to the Canal should compensate the community that will be so negatively affected as a result. Additionally, corporations are becoming more aware of their social responsibility to individuals and communities.

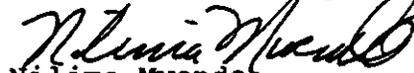
NOTE: This proposal is not to assume agreement or disagreement to the IHNCL Project. If the Division Engineer approves the project and it is implemented, I propose the following:

1. A toll will be collected from each vessel and water craft that uses the Lock and Canal (this is not a new practice; it existed when the Port owned the Locks). The tolls would be collected from the time the Project begins to the permanent close of the Canal and Lock.

2. A percentage of the money collected (no less than 50%) be given to the four neighborhoods that surround the Canal. Each neighborhood would receive a set percentage based on the degree of negative impact. The remaining 50% or less can be allocated to fund the establishment of this structure and to help pay for the Project, if deemed necessary.
3. The monies received by each neighborhood would be allocated to the following community issues in that neighborhood: health, education, housing, crime prevention, recreation and economic development.
4. A committee will be established in each of the four neighborhoods to suggest the best use of funds. A significant percentage of neighborhood residents must then approve the suggestions made by the committee.
5. Committee members will be primarily area residents. Specialists and/or professionals working in the above-stated community issues will sit on each committee as advisors.
6. A committee can also be established to make suggestions to the neighborhood committees from a city-wide perspective. Members will consist of a resident representative from each of the four neighborhood committees and a Councilperson representative.

I plan to submit this proposal, for revisions, if any, and approval, to the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association, Ms. Warren as representative of the Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood Council, the Lower Ninth Ward Coalition, and to any other organization and/or organizational representative in the impacted areas who wish to have it.

For a better, brighter future,



Nilima Mwendo
Holy Cross Neighborhood Association
Lower Ninth Ward Coalition

Existing Problems and Future Problems Due to the Project

Some of the Existing Problems

1. Inconvenience (loss of time and money) due to bridge lifts throughout the day and night
2. Isolation from the larger New Orleans area
3. Population loss, particularly of young adults who grew up in the Lower Ninth Ward
4. Difficulty in reaching medical services, especially in emergency situations

Complication of Existing Problems and Introduction of New Ones

1. Major inconveniences, resulting in loss of time and money
2. Further isolation (particularly of the Lower 9th Ward residents)
3. Decreases in immediate health care accessibility
4. Further decreases in property values
5. Further population loss (those who choose to move out due to the Project)
6. Increases in abandoned houses
7. Decreases in the possibility of occupancy in existing abandoned houses
8. Many yet unforeseen problems

Compounded, these problems then lead to an increase in crime, drug houses, unemployment, etc.

**NEIGHBORHOOD WORKING GROUP
MEETING SUMMARY FOR JULY 19, 1995**

Participants:

Mr. Lloyd Brown - Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood Council
Mrs. George-Ethel Warren - Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood Council
Mr. Marc Cooper - Bywater Neighborhood Association
Mrs. Laurentine Ernst - Historic Districts Landmarks Commission
Ms. V. Lynn Flowers - Historic Districts Landmarks Commission
Mr. Mike Agnew - New Orleans City Planning Commission
Mr. Willie Calhoun - Resident
Mr. Charles McCray - Resident
Mr. Rudy Muse - Resident
Ms. Nilima Mwendo - Resident (Holy Cross Association/Lower Ninth Ward Coalition)
Ms. Marietta Williams - Resident
Mr. Joe Dicharry - Corps of Engineers
Mr. Les Waguespack - Corps of Engineers
Mr. George Carbo - Port of New Orleans
Ms. Kathy Costanza - Port of New Orleans
Mr. Patrick Gallwey - Port of New Orleans
Ms. Lydia Jemison - Port of New Orleans
Ms. Gloria Johnson - IH-NC Lock Information Office

Summary:

The meeting was held at the site of the current lock. Prior to beginning the meeting, the participants had the opportunity to understand how the lock works by seeing a small ship travel through the lock. Mr. Dicharry started the meeting by stating that the meeting had no formal agenda and was open to general discussion about the lock replacement project. He stated that he wanted to make sure that the draft mitigation plan captured the issues the community had raised. He explained that the draft report for the project is being compiled, and will soon be sent to the Corps of Engineer's headquarters for comment. The report will then be revised and sent out to the general public. Mr. Dicharry explained that after the public has a chance to review the report, a general public hearing on the project will be held. He said this meeting will probably occur toward the end of the year and will help the District Engineer make a recommendation to Washington, D.C. regarding the project. He said that if the project is recommended by the District Engineer and then approved by Congress, the Corps will again start to meet with the community to work out details on the mitigation plan. Mrs. Warren said that she was interested in obtaining a copy of the entire report when it is released and not just

the main report and mitigation plan.

Mr. Muse asked the time frame for when the question of should the lock be built would go to Congress after all reports are done. Mr. Dicharry responded that if the public hearing is held at the end of this year and if a recommendation to build the project is made shortly after, all the reports could then be put together with the recommendation and it would probably reach Congress in late 1996.

Ms. Williams asked if notice of the public meeting would be wide-spread. Mr. Dicharry replied that it would be, and that the meeting would have to be held in a meeting room big enough to handle a large group. The group discussed where rooms large enough to possibly accommodate the public hearing are located. Ms. Williams asked if this working group meeting was the last time comments could be made on the mitigation plan. Mr. Dicharry assured her that although the meeting notification letter said this would be the last working group meeting before the draft report is sent to headquarters, the Corps will be glad to continue receiving comments on the project even while the draft report is being reviewed.

Mr. Gallwey told the group that the comments from previous meetings regarding Holy Cross School and the streetcar are being included in the draft mitigation plan. He stated that discussions with RTA have begun regarding the extension of the streetcar. He added that the report tries to include the strong feelings of neighborhood residents about the project.

Mr. Muse said he realized that the Corps is at a point in the study that is technical, and asked when a review of the legal process driving the project would be done. Mr. Dicharry responded that the legal process is reviewed throughout the review of the reports. Mr. Muse stated that the reason for his question is that there may be legal challenges if the project is approved. He said that there is a question of the legal basis for selecting the current site.

Mrs. Warren said that a vote was taken by the residents of Violet and she felt the same should happen for the current site. She explained that she had seen the book where people

signed whether they were for or against the project. Mr. Dicharry said that the Corps did not hold an election on the Violet site, and that Mrs. Warren was probably referring to something done by local people.

Mr. Cooper asked if Congress is prohibited from appropriating money for the project so that action could be taken as soon as a project is approved. Mr. Dicharry responded that Congress could probably appropriate money, but the Office of Management and the Budget (OMB) will not allocate it (allow it to be spent) until the Corps reporting process is complete. Ms. Flowers asked if the Corps was concerned that the project will get stuck in a Congressional committee. Mr. Dicharry said that there is always the chance that a project could be held up, but the Corps will not ask for funds until its reports are done. Mrs. Warren said that congressmen need to be invited to come to the table with the community. Mr. Gallwey commented that the project would be in the Administration's budget and would have to follow federal rules and guidelines before it could occur.

Mr. Cooper asked that the phrase "bridge and approaches" be used in the reports when referring to the construction of a streetcar line on the St. Claude bridge. He also commented that the best case scenario for the neighborhoods — having the streetcar extended through the neighborhoods — may not occur. He said that if the transportation problems associated with a new St. Claude Bridge are not solved, the neighborhoods would be better off with the no-build option. Mr. Cooper said that due to the lack of commitment for the extended streetcar line, he was not sure the mitigation plan has the solution. Mr. Dicharry said that the restoration of the old "Desire" streetcar line from Canal Street to the St. Bernard Parish line goes beyond the mitigation plan and will require the cooperation of agencies such as the Regional Transit Authority (RTA), and the City to become a reality. Mr. Gallwey stated that coordinating efforts with the RTA on extension of the streetcar had begun. A meeting with the RTA was conducted last week with the Corps and the Port concerning the inclusion of rail on the St. Claude Avenue Bridge. Mr. Cooper stated that he is not saying that the Corps should build the entire system, but wants a reasonable expectation that RTA will participate in the project and that the community will not be stuck with rails on the bridge that connect to nothing.

Mr. Brown said that the group has been concentrating on the riverfront, and wanted to know what was to be done with the current Florida Avenue bridge since the state was planning on building a new bridge there. Mr. Gallwey stated that the Port is trying to replace the railroad bridge that is currently located at Florida Avenue and that the project is separate from the high-rise bridge and the lock. He said the new low-level railroad bridge will have two roadway lanes on it, and will be located next to the state's high-rise bridge. Mr. Brown commented that he felt it does not make sense to build a bridge with only two lanes on it. Mr. Gallwey explained that the current bridge is to be replaced with federal money that will only pay for replacement of what is currently there. Ms. Williams asked if it would be possible to have information about the state high-rise bridge at the public meeting toward the end of the year. Mr. Dicharry said the state department of transportation has said there would be meetings regarding the bridge as that project progresses. There was general discussion among the group concerning the Florida Avenue bridges.

Mrs. Ernst asked if pedestrians will still be allowed to cross the new St. Claude bridge. Mr. Gallwey said a low-level bridge was being built which would allow people to walk across it.

Mr. Agnew commented that it is not completely clear in the community cohesion section of the draft mitigation plan when the seed money would be put into the neighborhood. Mr. Dicharry explained that the mitigation will be enacted in three phases: pre-construction, during construction and post-construction. He added that items such as the job training program would be included in the pre-construction phase. Mr. Agnew said that it seems like the seed money for projects would be wanted in the early steps of the project and that the report needs to be more specific.

Mr. Dicharry stated that the working group should not feel like this meeting is the last time to comment on the project. He said the Corps will be glad to meet with smaller groups concerning the project if requested, and will continue to receive comments while the draft report is being reviewed by headquarters.