

Board of County Commissioners

Leon County, Florida

Policy No. 96-17

Title: CDBG Hazard Mitigation Program Citizen Participation Policy

Date Adopted: November 12, 1996

Effective Date: November 13, 1996

Reference: N/A

Policy Superseded: N/A

In order to promote citizen awareness and understanding of the County's Community Development Block Grant Flood Mitigation Program, and to comply with federal and state requirements for citizen input during the implementation of the Program, the County hereby adopts this Citizen Participation Policy for this specific grant project. This grant has been awarded to Leon County under an emergency appropriation which waived the requirement for a citizen advisory task force and a formal application process. The grant is currently being implemented, thus this policy is intended to address requirements for public participation only from this stage through completion of the grant.

I. Citizens Advisory Task Force

A citizens advisory task force is not required for this project, and will not be appointed. There has been citizen input into the Lake Munson restoration project for the past several years, and the property acquisition, relocation and elevation/retrofit program is underway under adopted policies for this grant.

II. Public Hearings

A public hearing will be conducted on the CDBG project each time the grant is significantly amended in scope (purpose, activities, accomplishments, location or beneficiaries) or in budget by 50% or more in any one line item or by more than 15% overall. Amendments which only change the schedule of accomplishments or grant close out date do not require a public hearing. At least five days advance notice of public hearings will be published in the Tallahassee Democrat and, at the County's discretion, by other methods in compliance with the County's policy on public notice. Additional public hearings may also be conducted at the County's option, with public notice similar to the notices required for the mandatory public hearings.

The hearings will be conducted at the Leon County Courthouse, which is accessible to disabled persons and centrally located within the County, in order to make the meetings accessible to potential or actual beneficiaries. There is not a significant non-English speaking population in

Leon County, thus the hearings will be conducted in English, and all information will be provided in English (except for sign language if required to meet the needs of a disabled person who gives reasonable advance notice to the County of such needs).

III. Public Information

Any person may request access to information and records pertaining to the CDBG project, and will be provided reasonable and timely access in compliance with state and federal public records requirements. Copies of project records will be provided, upon request, at the standard fee established by the County for copies of public documents. Because this is an ongoing grant, there is no need to provide technical assistance to groups representative of low and moderate income persons who would wish to develop a proposal for project funding.

IV. Citizen Complaints

Local citizens or others with a legitimate interest in the CDBG grant may issue complaints regarding the grant to the Public Works Director (which, throughout this policy document, shall include the Director or his designee). Citizens will be provided the name, address, telephone number, and times for submitting complaints and grievances. The Public Works Director will be responsible for determining that the complaint is issued by a county resident, property owner, or other person, company or organization having a legitimate interest in the CDBG grant. If such determination is made, the Public Works Director will then be responsible for responding to the complaint within 15 working days, with a proposed resolution of the complaint, if reasonably possible. If a resolution of the complaint can not be made within 15 working days, the response will indicate the actions taken by the County, and future outcomes or actions to be taken. The County may dismiss complaints with a written response refuting the complaint if the County has evidence that the complaint is not valid.

If the County's initial response (and follow up, when required) does not resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant (who has standing), further action will be taken in an effort to resolve the issue. Depending upon the nature of the complaint, the issue will be readdressed by the Public Works Director or referred to the County Administrator, County Commission, or County Attorney. The County Commission shall have final authority to dismiss complaints if the complainant is

requesting action which the County determines to be illegal, in conflict with applicable regulations or rules or grant conditions, inappropriate due to the stage in the project or cost of the requested action or other relative factor, or otherwise not in the best interest of the County or its residents, or if the complaint is without merit.

If a complaint is anonymous, it will not require investigation or receive a response. . All complaints must be reduced to writing and signed by the complainant. The County will not be obligated to consider complaints which the complainant refuses to reduce to writing and sign when submitting the complaint to the County. The Public Works Director will offer to assist the complainant in writing the complaint, if the complainant is unable to do so.

The County is also not obligated to investigate complaints regarding the CDBG grant made by persons, organizations or entities if the complainant does not have a legitimate interest in the CDBG program, such as through local citizenship or personal representation of a local citizen,

performing or bidding/proposing goods or services of a CDBG funded contract, ownership of property, or ownership of or employment by a business in the jurisdiction. Complaints from persons without a legitimate interest in the project may be responded to by notifying the complainant that he/she does not have standing to complain, or the Public Works Director may choose to issue a more thorough response if he believes such action would be in the best interest of the County.

V. Additional Options

Nothing in this policy shall prohibit the County from allowing additional public participation in the CDBG project, nor shall this policy require the County to take any actions which the County determines to be illegal, unreasonable or otherwise in conflict with its legal, financial or moral obligations.

Nothing in this policy shall limit the legal rights of any party to request additional participation opportunities or to seek further remedy of grievance(s) through other methods available to them.