

Comite River Diversion Canal Project Task Force

**Minutes of Meeting
2018-2019 Interim
March 13, 2019**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Representative Valarie Hodges, chairwoman of the Comite River Diversion Canal Project Task Force, called the meeting to order at 1:44 p.m. in Room 3, in the state capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

II. ROLL CALL

LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representative Valarie Hodges, chairwoman
Representative Rogers J. Pope
Senator Bodi White, vice chairman

LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Representative Barbara Carpenter
Senator Regina Barrow
Senator Dale Erdey

NON-LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mark Harrell
Christopher Knotts
Brandon Rogillio
J. R. Saucier
Brenda Zeringue

NON-LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Jason Lanclos
Jerry Passman
Paul Sawyer
Tom Stephens
Jerry Thibeau

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

House:

Ashleigh Clare-Kearney, attorney
Glenn Fleming, attorney
Angelique R. Mozee, committee secretary
Danny Leming, sergeant at arms

Senate:

Fate Mitchell, sergeant at arms

III. OPENING REMARKS

Representative Hodges gave an overview of House Concurrent Resolution No. 51 in 2014, that created the Comite River Diversion Canal Project. She discussed the impediments to complete the canal and the bipartisan efforts to move the project forward and commended the task force, the Department of Transportation and Development, Congressman Garret Graves's Office, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for their commitment to the project. She also gave updates of monies appropriated for the project.

IV. REQUEST FOR UPDATES

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Department of Transportation and Development

Mr. Bobby Duplantier, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE), 7400 Leake Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70118, (504) 862-1037, spoke for information only and narrated a portion of a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Comite River Diversion Project Status Update", Exhibit A, which is included in the committee records. He discussed the organizational chart for the USACE, Documents and Construction Authorization, an overview of the Comite River Diversion, Projects and Partnership, Project Features Constructed and Examples, 90 Days Focus Areas, and the MVN Estimated Construction Schedule.

Ms. Christina Brignac, Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD), 1201 Capitol Access Road, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 379-1394, spoke for information only and narrated a portion of a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Comite River Diversion Project Status Update", Exhibit A, which is included in the committee records. She discussed the organizational chart for DOTD, the DOTD Project Task 2018-2021, US Highway 61 Utilities, Other Highway Utilities, Bridge Design and Construction projects, and the Simultaneous Construction Tasks along the Comite Channel.

Mr. Nick Sims, USACE, 150 Terrence Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA, no zip code provided, (225) 613-3753, spoke for information only.

Senator White and Mr. Duplantier discussed how the citizens of the Amite River Basin and East Baton Rouge Parish can finally see contracts rewarded for the Comite River Diversion Canal Project, after years of paying millage for the project, along with state funds, and the completion date for the project in February 2021.

Representative Pope and Mr. Duplantier discussed the safety factors in awarding contracts and who will mediate conflicts on the construction site.

Mr. Duplantier and Representative Hodges discussed the designation of dirt dug from the canal and how it can be used for other projects. They also discussed the USACE project chart of expenditures.

Representative Hodges and Ms. Christina Brignac discussed plans of notification to the public in reference to detours of the bridge construction phase.

Amite River Board of Commissioners

Mr. Dietmar Rietschier, Amite River Basin Commission, 3535 South Sherwood Forest Boulevard, Suite 135, Baton Rouge, LA 70815, (225) 296-4900, spoke for information only. Mr. Rietschier talked about Lily Bayou, and he thanked Congressman Garret Graves for fully funding the Comite River Project.

Representative Hodges, Senator White, and Mr. Rietschier discussed the termination of hunting leases.

Mr. Rogillio, Mr. Rietschier, and Mr. Fred Raiford, City Parish, 2222 St. Louis, no city provided, (225) 389-3159, spoke for information only. They discussed East Baton Rouge Parish maintaining all servitude for the Comite River Project.

Mr. Larry S. Bankston, 8708 Jefferson Highway, Baton Rouge, LA 70809, (225) 766-3800, spoke for information only.

Mr. Paul Varnado, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE), 7400 Leake Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70118, (504) 862-1808, spoke for information only. He discussed the engineered spoil banks and their functions to the project.

Representative Hodges, Mr. Raiford, and Mr. Knotts discussed the maintenance corridor for East Baton Rouge Parish and updates for repairing the weir and dredging for the Amite River Diversion Canal.

Mr. Harrell advised the task force that Livingston Parish has accepted the challenge to rebuild the weir to its original state. He hopes to have a letter of approval for Phase I by April 15, 2019.

Mr. Saucier and Mr. Sims discussed the USACE's study on the Eastside of the Mississippi that deals with the entire watershed. Mr. Sims stated he will provide Mr. Saucier the contact information to discuss the study further.

Ms. Cindy O'Neal, Department of Transportation and Development, 1201 Capitol Access Road, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, (225) 379-3005, spoke for information only and provided a handout, Exhibit B, which is included in the committee records. She gave an overview of the National Flood Insurance Program, discussed the flood insurance premium comparisons, and discussed the Federal Emergency Management Agency/ Community Rating System Insurance Savings Report in Louisiana.

Senator White and Representative Hodges and Ms. O'Neal discussed elevation of dwellings to determine the increase or decrease of flood insurance premium cost.

Representative Hodges thanked Mr. Chris Knotts for his leadership in moving the Comite River Project forward. They discussed restarting the process of completing the Darlington Reservoir project.

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

VI. CLOSING REMARKS

There was no closing remarks.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman Valarie Hodges
Comite River Diversion Canal Project Task Force

Date approved: _____