

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD
OF ROWAN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL CALL MEETING - HURRICANE HUGO DISASTER
SEPTEMBER 25, 1989 - 10:00 A.M.
RED ROOM - COMMUNITY BUILDING

The Rowan County Board of Commissioners met for a Special Call meeting on September 25, 1989 at 10:00 a.m. in the Red Room of the Community Building.

PRESENT: J. Newton Cohen, Chairman
Wilborn S. Swaim, Vice-Chairman
Henry H. Palmer, Member
George C. Knox, Member
Jamima P. DeMarcus, Member

The County Manager, County Attorney, Finance Director and Clerk to the Board were also present, as well as various administrative staff. The purpose of the meeting was the current disaster recovery situation of Rowan County from Hurricane Hugo.

Chairman Cohen called the meeting to order, and gave the invocation. He then personally commended the combined efforts of the "911" Emergency Medical Services Personnel, Sheriff's Office and the Southern Bell technicians from Charlotte, all whose assistance aided in resuming normality.

Mr. Morris Bagwell of Duke Power Company presented the Commission with an update of the County's situation, with regards to restoration of power to residential/business customers. On Friday, approximately 35,000 customers were out of power. Today, the total has been reduced to 6,000. He continues that Duke Power will concentrate on customers in the southeastern area, such as Rockwell and China Grove, as they seem to be the hardest-hit areas at present. Mr. Bagwell expressed his appreciation to all agencies/customers for their cooperation and patience during the recuperation process over the last 3-4 days. He continued that it may be as much as three (3) days longer until complete power to the immediate area will be restored.

Commissioner DeMarcus expressed her concerns regarding the spoilage of food from freezers and refrigerators, disposal of limbs and trees, and reports of "unidentified persons" making door-to-door assessments of damages. She stated that the Commission needs to take a stand to offer support and compassion to citizens.

Commissioners Palmer stated that, with approximately 6,000 citizens still without power, the primary concern should be for the lack of ice and water.

Regarding the disposal of food spoilage, Commissioner Knox suggested that the landfill would be the best possible solution to the problem. Mr. Don Conner, Environmental Services Manager, mentioned that any food spoilage brought directly to the landfill need not be bagged, but food brought to the "green boxes" should be properly bagged, to prevent any health hazards. Commissioner Knox suggested that in lieu of bagging food spoilage for the "green boxes", that all food be brought directly to the landfill, instead.

Chairman Cohen suggested that designated sites for disposal of debris be named to aid citizens in their cleanup efforts, as soon as possible. He suggested that Dan Nicholas Park and Sloan Park be temporary disposal sites for trees and brush. Commissioner Knox also suggested that both landfills and the Julian Road dumpster site be used for depositing debris. No yard waste or other kinds of debris will be accepted except at the landfill.

It was the concensus of the Board, that the primary concern was the lack of an adequate water supply. Commissioner Demarcus noted that the National Guard transported two (2) tankers of water into China Grove to aid citizens. Wayne Ashworth, Emergency Medical Services Manager, stated that the nearest tankers, for hauling water into Rowan County, were six (6) hours away at Johnson Air Force Base. He felt that the main problem of water supply in our immediate area was due to the lack of power to operate well pumps. Mr. Ashworth also noted that no dry ice was available in the area.

Chairman Cohen suggested that designated locations be named where citizens needing water could go for assistance. The Emergency Medical Services Facility will aid anyone needing assistance to find water, according to Mr. Ashworth.

Commissioner DeMarcus questioned whether Rowan County has qualified to receive any financial help. The Governor has requested for Rowan County, one of 20-30 counties in the State, to receive "disaster aid" according to Chairman Cohen.

Also, seven (7) schools are currently without power, according to Commissioner DeMarcus.

RED CROSS REPORT - MS. JUDY BANISH:

Ms. Judy Banish of the Red Cross reported to Commissioners that the agency is mandated to make a primary assessment of the area's damage within 72 hours of the occurrence. She reminded

members that the Red Cross is willing and ready to assist the needy victims with shelter and food. Their personnel will be conducting a "windshield" assessment, which means that Red Cross personnel will be assessing damages from their cars, only. No one will be conducting door-to-door assessments. After a final assessment is made county-wide, Ms. Banish will report her findings to County Manager Tim Russell.

SOCIAL SERVICES - EDWIN KOONTZ:

Mr. Edwin Koontz, Director of Social Services, reported to the Board that, if the area were declared in a "state of disaster" by the President, Federal agencies will step-in and provide assistance. At this time, the County is not expected to be declared a disaster area for issuance of foodstamps; however, Rowan County does qualify for expedited services. This means that, within 24 hours, an application would have to be approved within the foodstamp guidelines. Mr. Koontz presented literature to Board members regarding Aid to Families with Dependent Children - Emergency Assistance, as attached to these minutes.

He continued that, at the direction of the Board, his department will be prepared to extend their hours to assist those in need. Chairman Cohen suggested that Mr. Koontz take such measures. Also, staff members will be prepared to go out into the County, as a satellite, for foodstamp assistance. Local funds available total \$8,000 for Emergency Assistance Programs, according to Mr. Koontz.

SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - Sheriff Bob Martin:

Sheriff Martin commends his staff for their actions during the disaster, and says that only two (2) department vehicles sustained damages. He reports several break-ins, specifically in the Faith-Stokes Ferry Road areas during periods of power outages. Any questions regarding the clean-up period, should be directed to his office for assistance, with regards to door-to-door damage assessments.

Sheriff Martin voiced his primary concerns for citizens as being water, ice and plastic (for damage cover-ups). He also reported that no "price gouging" had occurred in the area.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES - WAYNE ASHWORTH:

Mr. Wayne Ashworth, Emergency Services Manager, commended the Sheriff's Department for their efforts and assistance during the

disaster, by bringing generators to the 911 Station, as their generator failed. He reported that State officials would be coming in the near future to assess the damage to the area. Also, only two (2) minor medical emergencies occurred during the storm. Only one (1) emergency vehicle sustained damage. Overall, our damage was substantially less than the surrounding counties, according to Mr. Ashworth.

Regarding the lack of water and ice in the area, Mr. Ashworth recommends that anyone needing assistance should call the Emergency Medical Services Department. Chairman Cohen questioned whether citizens should be cautious in using well water after wells were inoperable for long periods of time. Mr. Ashworth maintains that no harm will come from continued use of the wells, and boiling the water is not necessary.

FIRE MARSHALL - RANDALL FAGGART:

Mr. Faggart expressed his appreciation to the Rowan County Rescue Squad for their efforts. He also commended all Volunteer Fire Departments in the area for their assistance.

Guidelines for area cleanup were discussed with input from Mr. Don Conner, Environmental Services Manager. Mr. Conner noted that additional personnel will be necessary to accommodate the "cleanup sites" (Julian Road, both landfills, Dan Nicholas Park, and Sloan Park).

Chairman Cohen suggested that debris to be chipped for mulching, and debris to be chopped for heating wood, etc. be separated upon disposal. Mr. Conner agreed, and added that each site needs to be accessible to the public all day next Saturday and Sunday.

At this time, Chairman Cohen personally thanked all Department Heads and officials for their efforts and assistance in recovery from the disaster.

County Manager Tim Russell noted that the only known County buildings which sustained damages were the Community Building and shelters at Dan Nicholas Park.

There being no further business, Commissioner Knox made a motion to adjourn at 11:36 a.m. Commissioner Palmer seconded, with unanimous approval.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise Barrow
Clerk to the Board