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Gulf Coast Interfaith (GCI) continues its work in the key areas of democracy, disaster recovery, housing, healthcare, employment, education, and Latino Outreach in an effort to advance social, economic and health opportunities for the residents of the city of Galveston and Galveston County and the Gulf Coast area. Collaborating with local congregations and community advocacy groups, we are consistently reaching to fulfill our goal to produce tangible, sustainable solutions to the issues facing our neighbors.

GCI

GCI held a steering committee meeting at the home of GCI leaders Mercado and McIntyre on April 13th. The Annual Summary reports for 2010, 2011, and 2012 as well as the 2013 First Quarter newsletter were distributed. Another steering committee meeting was held on May 9th.

DISASTER RECOVERY AND HOUSING

Waivers and Discretionary Action

The Galveston County Collaborating Organizations¹ approved six letters that were sent on May 6th to different entities controlling the recovery of Galveston and Galveston County.

GLO - requested 4 waivers for the Galveston County recovery: 1) expand the outreach in Freddieville from the northeast side of Hwy. 6 to include several blocks on the southwest side of Hwy. 6; 2) set aside 10% of the funds to provide service to underserved communities such as the Latino and Vietnamese community in San Leon; 3) roll over eligible Round 1 families even though they do not now reside in the targeted Round 2 areas; and 4) set aside a temporary relocation fund capped at \$3000 for families seeking shelter and storage assistance during the 45-90 days while their home is actually being built.

URS - requested the contractor handling the City of Galveston in Round 2 to create a temporary relocation fund capped at \$3000 for families seeking shelter and storage assistance during the 45-90 days while their home is actually being built.

¹ The membership of the coalition known as the Galveston County Collaborating Organizations varies depending on the issue. Generally the CO is comprised of: NAACP Galveston Unit 6180, LULAC Galveston Council 151, Galveston County Coalition for Justice, Northside Task Force, Gulf Coast Interfaith, Barbour's Chapel Community Development Corporation, NAACP Mainland Branch Unit 6201, NAACP Dickinson/Bay Area Branch Unit 6280, LULAC Texas City Council 255, and Galveston County Homeless Coalition.

Galveston Planning Commission - requested the Planning Commission to delay the construction of any further metal buildings on the Northside until after the LDR were adopted by the city council and rezone the Northside community to be strictly urban neighborhood rather than a combination that includes light industrial areas.

GLO - requested that the Collaborating Organizations have a seat at the table concerning the recovery of the Northside community.

Galveston City Manager - requested consideration of a moratorium of condemnation and demolition to ensure that LMI families not be excluded from participating in Round 2.

Galveston Grants & Housing Department - requested creation of temporary relocation fund out Galveston's annual CDBG award that would be capped at \$3000 for families seeking shelter and storage assistance during the 45-90 days while their home is actually being built in Round 2.

On May 20th the Collaborating Organizations met with Texas Appleseed and Texas Low Income Housing Information Services at the GCI office to discuss shared concerns about the successful recovery of Galveston. On May 25th the CO sent a letter to Galveston City Manager Kovacs, Galveston Grants and Housing Department Director Patrick and Galveston City Attorney Palumbo requesting information about the COG good faith effort to resolve six items that were discussed in January as well as four additional matters. On June 4th Galveston City Manager Kovacs responded in writing to the 10 outstanding matters and requested a meeting with the Collaborating Organizations.

Taxes

GCI made arrangements for two residents of Galveston to travel to Austin on August 18th to testify before the House Ways & Means committee concerning HB835, sponsored by Galveston's Rep. Craig Eiland, which would limit tax increases to 10% each year after a disaster for homes repaired or rebuild with government disaster funds.

A support letter addressed to Gov. Perry was prepared by GCI leader Steve McIntyre and was signed by all living ex-mayors of Galveston. It was then presented at the City Council meeting on June 13th by GCI leader Joe Compian with a request that Mayor Rosen join the other mayors and then immediately forward it to Governor Perry. The Galveston City Council raised no objection and a support letter was signed the Mayor and forwarded to Governor Perry. The bill was not vetoed by Gov. Perry.

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GCI hosted a number of closed-door meetings on April 15th and 16th at the GCI office in an attempt to resolve the impasse created by the Galveston City Council and Galveston Housing Authority board. Galveston council members, city staff, GLO representatives and community leaders were in and out of the GCI office over two days as different participants attempted to move forward. The Collaborating Organizations presented powerful testimony on April 17th and the Galveston City Council voted 5-2 to reverse itself and eliminate the contingency language attached to the resolution approving the GHA plan on February 28th. Later in the council meeting Mayor Rosen requested GHA to hold a special meeting as soon as possible to reconsider its refusal to sign the contract proposed by GLO. GHA scheduled a special meeting on April 23rd and voted 4-1 to agree to sign the GLO contract.

City of Galveston Ike Round 2 Needs Assessment

At the City of Galveston R2 Needs Assessment meeting conducted by URS on March 27th GCI leaders McIntyre and Compian raised a concern about poor families facing condemnation and demolition by the City of Galveston simply selling out and moving out of desperation just as the R2 process targeting LMI families was about to start in a few months. It was suggested by McIntyre that a moratorium was needed to stop the city from any further residential condemnation/demolition efforts until the completion of the R2 Outreach. The consensus seemed to be that GCI should make an effort to pursue a moratorium from Galveston.

Galveston County Ike Round 2 Needs Assessment

At the City of Galveston R2 Needs Assessment meeting on March 27th GCI leaders McIntyre and Compian complained about the Galveston County “demand” letters that were being sent to R1 homeowners warning them about the need to purchase insurance during the second year or face losing their homes. The Galveston County “demand” letters were misleading and terrifying elderly poor families. GLO staff person Joe Anguiano promised to review the language in the Galveston County letter. At the April 9th Galveston Needs Assessment committee meeting he reported that the letter had been softened and changed to address the problems.

Future Disaster Housing Recovery

GCI along with H-GAC, Houston Endowment, Texas Low Income Housing and Information Service, Texas Organizing Project, Texas Southern University, Center for Sustainable Development, and others hosted a forum at H-GAC on May 13th to discuss a large scale Rapid Housing Recovery Housing Program for survivors of federally declared natural disasters. The program is funded through the terms of the Conciliation Agreement that was the result of a discrimination complaint filed by Texas Appleseed and TLIHIS with HUD against the State of Texas after Hurricane Ike and Hurricane Dolly in 2008.

HEALTH CARE

The Galveston County Commissioners Court held a health care workshop on March 19th where Indigent Health Care, charity care, UTMB, 1115 waiver, Medicaid and related health matters were discussed and considered. During the course of the work shop Dr. Mark Guidry, director of the Galveston County Health District, mentioned that a concern had been raised by Gulf Coast Interfaith about the 6 month residency requirement that is used when GCHD administers and processes the Indigent Health Care application for Galveston County. Dr. Guidry questioned GCI leader Steve McIntyre who was in attendance and in the audience. McIntyre repeated his position that durational residence requirements were declared unconstitutional 3-4 decades ago by the Supreme Court and that Galveston should stop illegally denying health care. After the meeting Dr. Guidry reaffirmed his desire to work with GCI to resolve the problem.

GCI leader Joe Compian testified at the Galveston County Commissioners Court on June 25th concerning an agenda item to reduce the eligibility level for County Indigent Health Care to 21%. Compian also suggested considering innovative new ideas for the provision of health care that might be available in Obamacare. The Commissioners voted to lower the level to 35% and directed Connie

Nichols, Director of Community Services, to meet with GCI to review innovative ways to provide services.

Joe Compian wrote a guest column on June 27th in the Galveston County Daily News that questioned the plans of the Galveston County Commissioners Court to reduce the qualifications from 100% of poverty to 35%.

EDUCATION

No current activity.

EMPLOYMENT

The Galveston living wage support group that was founded around a kitchen table by GCI leaders Laura Murrell and Steve McIntyre with Father Maynard Tetreault met at St. Patrick's Catholic Church in April, Live Oak Baptist Church in May, and again at St. Patrick's Catholic Church in June. It is now a growing and diverse group of 27 individuals that continues to meet monthly.

LATINO OUTREACH

No current activity.



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