

Local advocates aren't the problem on isle

By HEBER TAYLOR | Posted: Friday, August 2, 2013 12:01 am

Rumors have been floating around Galveston that local groups that have advocated to rebuild public housing have used their influence to tie good-hearted city officials in knots.

Actually, the fact that the Texas General Land Office promised to release some of the federal disaster recovery money that it had put on hold argues against that view. The promised release of the money is evidence that the advocates have been using their influence to help the city, not hurt it.

The advocates wrote a letter to the General Land Office arguing for the limited release of some funds earmarked for infrastructure. The letter was signed by representatives of the NAACP, the Galveston County Coalition for Justice, the League of United Latin American Citizens, the Galveston Northside Taskforce and Gulf Coast Interfaith.

The local advocates aren't the problem.

Again and again, some city officials have argued that the city has done nothing — absolutely nothing — to block the development of public housing.

But, of course, a majority of council members campaigned on promises that the mixed-income developments that included public housing would never be built on their watch.

And, of course, the council hired an attorney to study a legal strategy to block plans to rebuild public housing units on scattered sites.

And, of course, some council members have variously called Commissioner Jerry Patterson, who heads the land office, a liar and compared him to Stalin.

If you were Patterson, or an official in his agency, what would you make of the talk that council members have done nothing to block the reconstruction of public housing and deserved to be treated as grown-ups negotiating in good faith?

The advocates have been the grown-ups in this case.

Tired that nothing was getting done for people who really need help in recovering from Hurricane Ike, they were willing, as a sign of good faith, to ask for the state to release some money so the city could get on with some its infrastructure projects.

State officials considered the level of trust the city deserved and said: Nah, they deserve about half that.

The local advocates are the least of the city's problems.