

**CITY OF ALAMOGORDO, NEW MEXICO
CITY COMMISSION EMERGENCY MEETING MINUTES
9:00 A.M., COMMISSION CHAMBERS
JUNE 23, 2006**

**MAYOR DON CARROLL
MAYOR PRO-TEM RON GRIGGS
COMMISSIONER INEZ MONCADA
COMMISSIONER ED COLE
COMMISSIONER MARION LEDFORD**

**COMMISSIONER CHRIS LUJAN
COMMISSIONER STEVE BROCKETT
CITY MANAGER PAT McCOURT
CITY ATTORNEY WILLIAM BROGAN
CITY CLERK RENEE CANTIN**

CALL MEETING TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Carroll called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., and Commissioner Marion Ledford was absent.

Mayor Carroll thanked all of the emergency responders, City employees and volunteers throughout the community who stepped up and provided whatever aid and assistance they were able to.

1. Update on the emergency situation by Chief Trujillo.

Mr. Trujillo reported that the day before between 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. there was approximately four inches of rain that fell in Alamogordo and in the mountains east of the community resulting in massive flooding in the City from Tenth Street south and west. Several roads had to be closed, and City staff focused heavily on preventing injuries and conducting rescues. Some of the roads that were closed were First Street, Tenth Street at Scenic Drive, Washington, Scenic and Abbott, Canyon Road, Hamilton Road, and Highway 54. There were also several other smaller streets that had to be closed temporarily to clear them.

The Abbott ditch area east of Scenic Drive widened extensively resulting in several homes being flooded. There was a loss of electrical power, and there were some ruptured gas lines. Several evacuations were made in the area of Abbott and Tenth Street east of Scenic Drive. A temporary shelter was established at the Alamogordo Senior Center, and transportation was provided to and from the affected areas. One structure fire was reported in the 400 block of Sunbeam, and several minor rescues and a couple of significant ones were conducted. One woman was trapped inside a flooded vehicle, and officers were able to get her to safety. In addition, one vehicle went into the ditch at Arapaho Trail. The driver was trapped inside the vehicle, and officers went into the water and conducted a rescue. Overall, a significant amount of damage occurred both throughout the City infrastructure and private property in the community, but there were very few minor injuries reported and no deaths.

Mr. Trujillo pointed out that they had a tremendous amount of support from various individuals and agencies. Just about every City division responded and provided manpower for assistance. Several volunteer fire departments provided support along with the New Mexico State Police and Department of Transportation assisting with the traffic and rescues. There was also a lot of support from contractors that came in with heavy equipment to help clear roads so that rescues could be performed and evacuations, while also getting the streets cleared for the morning traffic. Mr. Trujillo highlighted organizations and individuals that provided assistance.

Mr. Trujillo said that he would be requesting that the City approve a disaster declaration to the Governor that would open additional funding and resources to the community. Also, a large segment of the community is going to be without power at least through the weekend. It is expected to be the area south of Tenth Street and East of Scenic Drive.

Mr. Trujillo reported that additional rain and flash flooding is expected over the next five days. Some of the events may be repeated, and the City is preparing for such.

City Manager Pat McCourt reported that what they are doing immediately is to make sure that public safety is secure. As Chief Trujillo mentioned, they need to get the roads clear so that emergency vehicles and personnel can get to all sectors of the City. A somewhat hidden concern is that they make sure that the water and sewer systems have not been compromised in any way, and the crews are out checking and verifying that the water and sewer systems are still safe and secure.

Mr. McCourt also echoed Mr. Trujillo's comments especially with regard to the private construction companies and how they have helped the City during this time of need by bringing in equipment.

Commissioner Cole asked if there is any idea when electricity will be restored. Mr. Trujillo said the preliminary information is that the electricity will be out in the area east of Scenic and south of Tenth Street through the weekend. A representative from NM Power Company stated that they do have a plan to restore power to the majority of the customers along the ditch. It's going to require a lot of new construction, but the plan is to get power by the end of the day. Commissioner Cole asked if he knew whether it would work for people to put dry ice in their deep freezers in order to minimize the loss of frozen goods. He said they really need to see what is going to happen with the ditch as their main artery runs through it, and that is what is feeding the houses along Abbott. He suggested that folks along Abbott be advised to wait and see. As far as the blocks between Tenth and Abbott, they should be restored by the end of the day.

Mayor Carroll asked if there was a representative that could speak on the gas outages. Tim Curry with PNM Gas Services said that the south side of the 3000 block of Abbott is where natural gas lines were washed out along with the meters. They were able to kill that section, which is affecting 18 customers right now. The rest of the facility is in pretty good shape. There are some exposures elsewhere that they are temporarily securing until the City decides how they are going to address the wash out. They have the same issue that the power company has on the south side of Abbott, and until there is a plan to reconstruct that drainage, they won't be able to provide service there. There is just no place to install utilities at this point. He can't envision that service will be restored to those homes any time in the immediate future. Fortunately, all that will be out is their hot water at this point. John Price, who is on the very east end, will potentially be back in his home in the next couple of days, and they have a plan to restore service to him early next week. Until the drainage issues are resolved, they won't be able to restore service to the 3000 block of Abbott.

Mr. McCourt pointed out that one of the primary reasons the meeting is taking place is to adopt Resolution 2006-48 requesting that the Governor issue a disaster declaration for the City of Alamogordo.

2. Consider Resolution No. 2006-48 requesting that the Governor issue a disaster declaration for the City of Alamogordo.

Recommendation: Approve the resolution.

Commissioner Brockett made a motion to approve the resolution. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cole. A roll call vote was taken, and all voted "aye." The motion passed unanimously, 6-0-0.

UNSCHEDULED COMMUNICATION

A representative from Palo Verde said that they've had this problem for about two years since the construction of the ditch. The fence went out last night and came into his property. He asked what is being done for tonight. This problem has been around since they built the apartments, and if the rain comes tonight, they are going to lose some things.

Mayor Carroll said that the primary focus of the crews today is to clear the major thoroughfares and do what they can to clean the flow paths and the ditches so that if in fact there is more rain, the damage can be minimized.

A representative spoke from the White Sands Community. She has a building and is allowing the Red Cross to use her building for the evacuees. She described how the ditch overflowed, and they had to carry people on their backs through waist-deep water to get them out of their homes. They can't get the residents back in their homes, and they can't even drive through the streets.

Mayor Carroll thanked her for offering her facilities for some of the people that have been impacted. He assured her that they are working as best they can to clear up as much as they can as quickly as they can.

Another citizen spoke regarding the mobile home park and stated that the water was so high that they could have ridden a canoe down the road. Each time they get a rain it gets worse, and they would like somebody to look at the situation. Mayor Carroll assured him that someone would be out to look at it.

Mr. Trujillo wanted to mention that the best way to handle this is to coordinate through the Department of Public Safety. Lieutenant Livingston is handling all of the calls, and they are compiling a list of resources. Their Department is able to funnel information to the appropriate division or agency, and the number is 439-4300. There will be people ready to answer the phone and direct resources.

Danny Hale addressed the Commission and expressed his appreciation for the fact that the City is asking the Governor for funding. He pointed out, however, that they have known about this problem for over a year and a half. Why has it come to it flooding? He asked what they are supposed to do tonight, through the weekend and in the immediate future. People's houses are getting washed away. Their houses are full of water, and the Commission was well aware of this problem a year and a half ago. He appreciates the efforts right now, but the efforts should have started over a year and a half ago. It is poor City design, and a lot of the people are elderly, low-income people who cannot take care of their old businesses. They have begged for help for a year and a half. It has been on record, and they need solid answers. They need to know what to do tonight. There was almost loss of life last night.

Mayor Carroll expressed that they are taking all of the steps that they can to mitigate what may happen if there is more rain in the short-term. The drainage problems and potential flooding problems have been in the community for years, and this Commission and past Commissions have been working to address them. The Army Corps of Engineer's flood control project is the major way that the problem can be mitigated in the future. Unfortunately, that project is a fairly slow-moving one. What has been put in thus far appears to have helped a great deal, and had more of it been completed, it may have solved some of the problems.

Mr. Hale asked where the Corps is now and if they are taking responsibility. Mayor Carroll said that the Corps is building the project. One citizen said there never was flooding until the Corps put in that ditch. Another citizen asked what the Corps' responsibility is in all of this, and if they can work together with the City to come to some solution. Mayor Carroll assured him that they certainly will work toward that. This was an unusually large amount of rain in a short period of time, and most of the drainage system functioned as it should have. It was simply overwhelmed by the amount of water.

Another citizen addressed the Commission and described watching the water come up to her porch, which is almost four feet off the ground. She couldn't leave, and she couldn't stay in. If there is another storm like this, her trailer will be floating. The waves were five to six feet tall. That is not normal. They were bad last time, but this time they were worse. Something has to be done immediately.

An individual addressed the Commission and said that what the Corps has done is take away the drainage that is above the pond, and the water has to go on Canyon Road. The water has no place

to go but in the neighborhood. It was caused by the Corps of Engineers. The City has some responsibility to go and see what is happening and get the drainage back in place.

Michelle from the White Sands Community said that if there is more rain tonight, there are about 30 homes under water. There are individuals on oxygen, and she wanted to know where they should go if there is more rain tonight and how to get them out. She feels they will lose about 100 homes.

Mayor Carroll asked Mr. Trujillo what preparations have been made as far as flooding in the short-term, how to get to people and where people might be able to go. Michelle asked if they could activate the Mutual Aid Agreement where other counties help with things like sand bags.

Mayor Carroll said they did in fact have support from other agencies besides Alamogordo's resources, and they will be available to whatever level they are needed. He expressed appreciation for the help that the citizens gave to minimize the damage and ensure the safety of everyone.

Mr. Trujillo said that these concerns are being expressed all over the community. They did activate the mutual aid agreements immediately when the incident occurred because the City's resources were quickly overwhelmed. They did, however, focus heavily on the rescue areas and getting streets open so that they could get emergency help to all locations. Crews have been working through the night to clear debris for access to additional areas, and there is still an incident command system set up at his department where they will be funneling resources. They will be meeting with the Red Cross and the Salvation Army to coordinate where individuals can be placed for long-term care. Last night the Alamogordo Senior Center was used for short-term care, and there ended up being about seven people who needed longer-term shelter. Sand bags were brought out, and there were several volunteers filling them up and taking them to the locations that they felt to be most critical at that time. Today they are preparing for another rain, and they are going to try to mitigate the damage and direct the flood waters to different locations. The ditches, however, are blocked and several streets are blocked. If there is that much rain, it will be going down the same areas. They are doing their best to make contact with the public to let them know where the danger areas are, and they will be doing news releases throughout the day.

Mr. Givens asked how contacting the Governor is going to work. He said he doesn't have flood insurance and has never needed flood insurance. The area never flooded until about three years ago. He has two vehicles in his garage, but he can't get out. There is a rock wall in front, and all of the gravel is gone. He can put up with it, but he doesn't like it one bit. He wanted to know how the process is going to work. Mayor Carroll explained that it will be dependent on the state and federal rules and regulations as to what assistance may be available to individuals without flood insurance and those sorts of things. He doesn't know what the criteria are for providing the assistance at this point, but he simply knows they will make every effort to get all the assistance possible at both the state and federal level.

Mr. Givens asked how he could get help today. Mr. McCourt said what they are doing immediately is there is a number set up to assist and gather information. He doesn't know at this point what will be available from the federal and state level or if they will even be eligible to get that assistance. They will, however, get as much assistance as possible as quickly as possible. Right now every large piece of equipment in this part of the county is at work in the City cleaning up and clearing the debris and trying to get it in some order for the reasons that have been stated. They are extremely concerned about the safety and are trying to get at least a semblance of a drainage system back in shape. They have to make sure that emergency equipment can get around and that the water and sewer systems haven't been compromised. They are moving as quickly as they can.

Mr. Givens asked if there is anything that can be done with regard to the dirt that was put where the school is now that diverted all the water back into the apartments. He wanted to know if they could cut through the dirt to let it go back where it used to go. Mr. McCourt reiterated that there is no bright spot in this situation, but they are doing what they can.

Mr. Givens said that the monsoon season is coming. This is a normal rain that came out of the Canyon. If stuff hadn't been plugged, this wouldn't have happened. Mr. McCourt pointed out that this was an unusually large storm of about four inches in two hours. It was very localized. In fact, in this particular case on the north side of the town there was very little rain. He heard the question asked earlier whether another one should be expected. He said the immediate answer is it shouldn't be expected, but of course it can happen. They are doing everything they can to try to get the systems back in place. This was not a normal storm, but being abnormal doesn't mean it's not going to happen every day for a period of time. The last time storms like this were recorded in Alamogordo was in the 1950s when there was major flooding that occurred not only in the southern part of the City but the northern also. He couldn't of course guarantee that there will be success, but he asked citizens to contact them. Risk management will gather information so that if they are capable of getting the federal and state aid they will have the information and can assist individuals in getting the relief that is possible. The number for Risk Management is 439-4206, and the number for emergency assistance is 439-4300.

Doug Denman addressed the Commission. He lives at the convergence of Bellamah and Abbott, and the road is gone. In the last flood that they had about three months ago, the Abbott ditch filled with boulders. It was a good ten-foot ditch, but after the rain, it was probably four or five feet. It was never cleared out. The boulders sat in the ditch, and nothing was done about it. He wanted to know why. Some of his neighbors were notified in the last three or four months that they were no longer required to have flood insurance, and his neighbor across the street who just bought her home was told that she didn't have to have flood insurance. He knows for a fact that according to the FEMA flood maps she lives in a flood zone, and all of the houses across the street are in a flood zone.

Mr. McCourt said they could certainly discuss what is going to be done in the future, but that doesn't help the people who have been flooded right now and it doesn't address the situation tonight if another storm occurs. The flood maps haven't changed as far as he is aware so he's not sure who is indicating something contrary to the flood maps. The City looks directly at the flood maps and lets people know if the maps indicate they are in a flood zone. As far as the Abbott ditch, Mr. McCourt commented that he didn't know what would have happened if it hadn't been put in. What he does know is what happened further up the ditch where the ditch broadened out and took out alleys, backyards, and gas meters without having the concrete lining. Mr. McCourt couldn't comment on why the ditch hadn't been cleaned out.

Edward Hines addressed the Commission. He has been in the community for 21 years and used to live in the projects right next to the elementary school. He has never seen the ditch cleaned out from where they concreted it all the way down to the bridge. There was a storm similar to this around 1991 where there was about five inches of rain in two hours, and in his opinion, there was never flooding like this before all of the construction was done off of Scenic.

A citizen addressed the Commission, and her family home is at 3100 Abbott. It is almost gone, and her concern is tonight and this weekend. The ditch is now up against the back of the house. There needs to be immediate attention given to that area. She hasn't seen sand bagging, and all they're doing is clearing the streets. There is no ditch, and it will not hold tonight, tomorrow or through the weekend. The people on Abbott stand to lose their houses. Her dad's house has two standing walls out, and a gas line broke behind their house. If it rains, the debris from those houses will hit everyone below. She's wondering if there is any way to get in there to sandbag to keep more debris from going straight down to where the individuals are talking about.

Mayor Carroll said that they have the crews out there working as fast as they can to do in the shortest period of time what they believe will provide the most protection for the most area. There is simply too much to do to be able to do it all at once. They are having to make judgment decisions as to where the best place is to put their efforts in the short-term. They will do all that they can as fast as they can to protect as much property as they possibly can.

Yvette Edgar asked if the commissioners had gotten into a vehicle and driven to these areas. Mayor Carroll said he was out last night looking at some of the areas. He hasn't been everywhere, and none of them have been everywhere. He understands from what he did see the damage and devastation that happened. He is sure it's bad in areas that he hasn't seen, but whether he goes out and looks at it or not is not going to expedite the solution to the problem. With the resources the City has, they are attempting to address the situation as rapidly as they can in as many areas as they can. They cannot do everything all at once.

Another individual commented that they had a severe rain about three or four weeks ago, and her father put in four calls to Pat McCourt. Nobody would return them. He has watched the ditch and said it would not hold. He kept calling back and telling people it would not hold, and nothing happened. The only clearing she saw was down by Washington Park by the bleachers. Her father did everything he could to get out there by himself and start cleaning it up because it wasn't holding, and it filled up again. She said continuing to clear the road is useless. They need to address the ditch first.

Mr. McCourt said that one individual came in and met with him, and he did talk with them about the flooding situation. He wanted to point out that though there are ditches in the community, the streets are a major part of the drainage system. It is designed that way. There is not a lot of subterranean drainage, and when you clean a drainage system you have to start at the bottom and come upward within it to get it clear so that the water has someplace to go. Cleaning the top of the drainage system will only further complicate the problem because it hits further down in the ditch that is clogged. It spreads it out and creates further devastation. It has to be worked on from the bottom to the top, and that's what the City is doing. They are out seeking to protect the public safety, and they are expending efforts to do that. It is important to clean the ditches, but they have to work on things in order of priority.

Frank Hugel with the American Red Cross said that in the coming days they will provide clean up kits to people who have flooded homes. They will provide financial assistance to people with immediate emergency disaster cost needs, and if it rains tonight, they will provide additional shelter space. He said that yesterday the Senior Citizen Center was opened as an evacuation site, but at about 11:00 they were told they had to leave. That created some problems. If that were to happen again, he asked that the evacuation center be kept open over night. The number for the Red Cross is 888-922-2631, and it is staffed 24/7.

Mr. Trujillo said this is the first time he heard anybody mention that the senior center was closed. The Red Cross local representative was in the command post at City Hall. The last conversation he had personally was that they were looking at putting the individuals up short-term in a motel room, and they no longer needed the senior center. They will coordinate with the Red Cross, and if the Senior Center is needed, it will be made available. The Senior Center and Civic Center were ready to go.

The resident of 3100 Abbott addressed the Commission. He said he has lost everything, and he has big boulders in the back yard. If more water comes down, those will be in his living room. He asked for help to get those boulders out of the way. Mayor Carroll said they would do what they can.

Jim French representing the Building Contractors' Association of Otero County gave out the phone number to their office. It is 437-2066, and if they contact Amber at that office, they will do their best to coordinate with the local building contractors or landscapers to make a list to have volunteers go and clean out driveways. There are limited resources, and the individuals are working on a voluntary basis. He asked that people be patient, and they will make an effort to coordinate help for individuals.

Terry Branshaw lives at 1602 Abbott, and he echoed that the ditch right behind Abbott is full. He asked about the availability of sand bags, and they will be ready to be picked up at 2600 North Florida after one o'clock. Mr. Branshaw said that he lives at almost the bottom of Abbott, and two of

his cars ended up over on Bellamah, which he thinks may have something to do with the ditch never having been cleaned out.

Mr. Trujillo said that there are a lot of volunteers, and there are incident command systems set up in their department. A resource list is being compiled, and there are people prepared to answer phone calls and direct callers to these resources. Commissioner Brockett asked Mr. Trujillo if it rains again tonight how they would relate to the public where they can go. Mr. Trujillo said they would be putting out press releases throughout the day addressing locations that individuals can go to for both short and long-term shelter. Today the focus is also to help mitigate any immediate flooding. The press releases will go through all media channels.

Commissioner Moncada pointed out if individuals have no phone and no electricity, there is no way for them to get the press release. She wanted to know if there is a place they can simply pick up and go to. Mr. Trujillo said if they need a place to stay, that is being coordinated through the Red Cross, and facilities will be available. If food is what is needed, that can also be handled through the Red Cross. The Salvation Army has also been providing those kinds of assistance. The resource list will help to address individual needs. If there are particular areas that are in immediate danger, those are the areas the City will be targeting by going door to door, contacting them to let them know the City does not feel that they are going to be able to protect that area and recommending that they leave. At this point, the City is not ordering anyone out of their home. It is just a recommendation.

Mayor Pro-Tem Griggs said there is a large function at the Civic Center tonight, and it might be a good idea to discuss with them what will be done if the Civic Center is needed.

An individual living at 1602 Abbott said that her concern is if it does happen again tonight how they will get out. They have the arroyo right behind them and Abbott, which if and when it hits is gone. She wanted to know how they are going to get out. Ms. Keller said they are providing transportation as close to areas as they can to take citizens to the senior centers and safe places.

Mayor Carroll thanked everyone for the comments. He assured them that the City is doing all that it can to protect both life and property and take the steps necessary to cope with additional rain. He adjourned the meeting at 10:12 a.m.

/s/Donald E. Carroll

Mayor Donald E. Carroll

ATTEST:

/s/Renee Cantin

City Clerk Renee Cantin

(SEAL)

(Prepared by Ubiquis Reporting)

Approved at the July 11, 2006 Regular Commission Meeting)