

# Las Vegas Urban Area Working Group

CLARK COUNTY FIRE ADMINISTRATION  
575 E. FLAMINGO RD, 2ND FLOOR, MACC  
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA 89119

## DRAFT MINUTES Tuesday, August 20, 2024 10:00 AM

### **UAWG Members Present:**

Billy Samuels, Thomas Touchstone, Jennifer Wyatt, Carolyn Levering, Diana Clarkson, Bradley Iverson, Greg Chesser, Jim Owens.

### **UAWG Alternate Present:**

Gary Stevenson, Jeremy Hynds, David Milweski, Greg Chesser, Sander Smiles.

### **UAWG Members Absent:**

Travis Anderson, Jayson Andrus, Warren Hull, Misty Robinson, Bryan Ostaszewski.

#### **I. Call to Order**

- Billy Samuels, UAWG Chair call to order at 10:02AM Tuesday, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

#### **II. Roll Call**

- Quorum present.

#### **III. Public Comments**

- The chair asked for comments, there were none.

#### **IV. Comments From the Chair**

- Chair Billy Samuels clarified the confusion with the calendar invites vs emails and introduced Katya Collins that will take over the administrative tasks for the UAWG meetings.

#### **V. MSA Submittal**

- The Chair asked Diana Clarkson what to change to increase funding and to Carolyn Levering about any ideas to get a better ranking.
- Diana Clarkson, with LVMPD Emergency Management, expressed that there's an opportunity to potentially expand the partnership by sharing data, additionally, they are working on the special event data as well as the CIKR data call. Working on resubmitting it. They would like to connect with the CCFD through Chair Chief Billy Samuels; to get some supplemental information for those submissions. That will contribute the most to elevate the ranking on a safe risk profile score.
- Chair addressed Carolyn about GBP. Carolyn expressed how they have already made their concerns known through their delegation about the formula changes. Main issue is that the data lingers by a year or two, not much can be done to up the risk appearance through GBP, because the numbers are what they are, the best thing that can be done is to show how GDP has affected the community, the inflation rates, the employment rates, the real estate costs, all have an impact on the most vulnerable community members, increases in homeless data, things like that, to show vulnerability, these components are not part of the formula. Unfortunately, these questions are not asked, the delegation needs to keep bringing up these issues to make sure that future generations of the formula include these factors in.
- The chair commented about the lack of multiple revenues in our urban city, how this should be a part of the report, and if that was even an option.
- Carolyn Levering expressed that economic diversity is not a factor in the formula.

Tourism based economies like ours have always suffered from these formulas because they don't consider the tourism numbers, people who are not educated about our hazards coming and going frequently. New Orleans, San Diego, Orlando, are some of the urban areas, like ours that suffer from that lack of acknowledgement of how important tourism is to our economies. We are working to just enhance that information sharing. The more information we have, I think the better suited we are to show the risk in our valley.

- The chair asked about infrastructure risk, like Hoover Dam and the threat if something were to happen there and incorporate that in the report.
- Diana Clarkson replied, absolutely. The parameters for the MSA risk profile are substantial, it might not be easy to meet those parameters for certain infrastructure facilities and the actual rating in which how they qualify, and then group these things into clusters versus nodes, unique process. Diana offered to work with Chief Samuels and go through that process and see if there is room to improve. Chair Chief Samuels agreed to it, get a small group together and discuss how they can assist.
- The Chair expressed how we are not a top 10, but we are top 15 or at least we should be in that range. Cities like Miami, New York, Chicago and LA, are tough to beat, but should be higher than where we are at. The Chair requested opinion on fighting this battle if it is even possible or not worth it, but he thinks there is some margin to work with. Diana Clarkson and Carolyn Levering agreed that it might be possible to solidly get a higher place in the ranking than where it is, it likely won't affect the funding. Carolyn Levering expressed how the 80% risk allocation money goes to those top 10, if we are typically assigned that \$5 million range, jumping a level might not be possible, but it's certainly worth to explore it. Ask our delegation work on the distribution of funds instead of increasing our rank, changing the top 10 receive 70% instead of 80%, that way the top 25 can get a little more funding. Carolyn Levering expressed how that could be a better scenario to sell across the Congress, especially if it's coming from Nevada, FEMA just decided, if you're not eligible for a million dollars or more, we are not even bothering with you anymore, a lot of urban areas got cut out completely at that point. It is a heavy lift to change that allocation, and particularly as we're watching these grants get cut 10% year over year, this continues to be a challenge, but it's certainly worth having that conversation so that at least our delegation should be in the know of what our challenges are.
- The Chair asked Carolyn to share with the group the ranking of MSAs, to join efforts with the other groups that got similar allocations to write a joint letter, instead of just coming from Nevada.
- Carolynn Levering replied, the list she has available is organized in alphabetical order, and not necessarily in funding order. For the purposes of comparison, Phoenix area was awarded 4.7 million, and Orlando was 3.4 million, both fall in same rank as Nevada. Other jurisdictions based on tourism dollars, Hawaii, Honolulu area, 1.3 million which is shockingly low for the kinds of challenges a literal Island has. Nevada, for Las Vegas area, 4.7 just like Arizona did. The other communities that are kind of lumped in that same group with us, includes Twin Cities, Detroit, Phoenix, and Anaheim, and the next level up for 6.9 million includes cities like Atlanta, which has the busiest airport in the world. Which makes it tough to compete with, and they are the only one in the 6 million, category. There are quite a few that are getting less than us, just over a million dollars, or around 3 million, only a handful that are in that same range with us, and Atlanta is the next closest with just shy of 7 million.
- The Chair stated he wouldn't like to involve California in any of their discussions, to avoid the transfer over of some of their UASIS, a partnership with Phoenix could help support Nevada since it's in the same jurisdiction.
- Carolyn argued since Anaheim is getting 4.7 million, Long Beach and Los Angeles area is getting almost 60 million, it's hard to believe that Anaheim doesn't somehow benefit from the \$60 million coming to LA and Long Beach. We have no region next to us like that, that is that well supported. We are kind of that island scenario, but where they ranked Honolulu is distressing and doesn't provide us a lot of hope from the tourism-based economy discussion.
- The Chair remarked that Long Beach might not be spending that 60 million and maybe

that would be an entry point to discuss that those UAWG's, are not even spending their money, let's divide that more amongst the lower ranks. Carolyn Levering stated that this question has been asked before, for probably a decade, knowing how hard it is for our own state to spend all our money, even especially in the early days when it was many more millions than it is now. This is where the politics take shape. No one is ever going to take money away from New York. New York City got 156 million last year alone, and they have been in that range between 160 and 180 million every year, since 9/11. Most likely it can't possibly be spending that kind of money specially with the limitations on the eligible activities. Their politicians will fight and scratch and claw for every penny of that, whether they need it or not. We can buy their old stuff after every two years, when they must buy new stuff, we'll buy theirs.

- The Chair thanked the group for getting the conversation started and the effort that SNCTC does with this write up. Remarked how nothing needs to be solved immediately, asked Diana Levering that if help was needed to let the group know. Addressed the group about any ideas on the MSA's submittals, none was heard.

## **VI. Maintain, sustain and new project definitions**

- The Chair stated how this year, everything was a new project for our UAWG, which means next year we cannot have everything as new again. Addressed the group if anyone had any suggestions, named Carolyn, as she has the most historical knowledge when it comes to these definitions. What are her thoughts on if we want to make it simple, where it is new or maintained, or what do her opinion is.
- Carolyn Levering expressed that however you want to define it, people are always going to find a way to game the system. Having three levels has always been a challenge. Over the years we have had challenges with existing projects taking on more and more scope within their project to expand things that maybe don't really belong there. In the last year we have done a better job than the last couple of years of forcing those expansions into new project territory. We should have a way to evaluate returning projects to determine whether it's truly a returning sustaining project, or if there is expansion involved with that, and whether that expansion should be looked at more closely as new versus expanded. It is tough to quantify that in a meaningful, measurable way, to give us more visibility on what our actions really are when we vote on some of these projects.
- The Chair asked, let's land on this board. Are we going to call them maintain or sustain or separate. Are they different?
- Carolyn Levering commented, maintenance makes it sound like it's on autopilot. We wish that all the projects be sustainable and can continue with or without urban area money, however, this is not a reality for many of the activities that depend on this funding. Carolyn expressed how she likes sustained better and so if it's a new project, it should be identified as such, and otherwise we're sustaining a capability, not expanding it, not scaling it back, but sustaining a capability.
- The Chair continued, if we land on definitions new and sustained, we all kind of talked about, there's that unwritten rule that you shouldn't be going over 10% over what that initial value was when the year prior. Is that a fair thing to stay with, and if it goes over 10% then you're going to have to fight in that new category for that project, just to say, hey, this project, I need to increase it by 75% and it's in the sustained category, it's probably going to get pushed through, because we always push those through first. Are we good if we looked at it, if there is greater than a 10% increase, it automatically gets moved to new?
- Carolyn Levering intervened, 10% is just a subjective number. We have seen in recent years; inflation rates exceed 10% for goods and services. Certainly, any of our projects that are paying personnel are kind of automatically tagged with those increases that are negotiated in any given jurisdictions contract process. We don't even remember where that number came from. I guess it was just to draw a line in some way, shape or form. It is important that when we go through these budgets and then meetings and talk about it in detail, if your project is going up like 10% or more, where is it? Using as an example, the southern without a CERT program, it might need to buy a new fire pan for \$15,000 one year, but won't need it for the next three years, so that \$15,000 might

show a significant percentage increase in that one given year, but it's still sustaining an existing program. Some investment in certain high-priced pieces of equipment needs to be done at times. Maybe one year it needs to go up 12% but the next year it can go down 10% so I don't know really the answer to the question, other than I don't think it's necessarily a bad thing that we put a number on it and look at it from that perspective, whether or not you can call it a new project if I need a fire pan, it's not really new. It's something that we use in the course programming every class, but it could potentially drive up the overall cost on one given year over another and we have other projects that are similarly laid out like that.

- Bradley Anderson commented, some of what came up in this discussion was process, having vocabulary changes, but having process to support things. Suggested that we use a template. Create a template for these projects where people must answer some of these types of questions, like, what is the percentage increase and why is that.
- The Chair mentioned, the state has that template. When the submittal of projects through grants, that template shows the percent increase. Probably 10% was used, because that's easy math, and someone can look over and they can just move the decimal over. The template exists, and it shows, when we get our Excel sheets, how much that project is increased or decreased, if it was a previous project.
- Bradley reiterated, that we could create a template that forces people to answer questions that we're not asking right now. The Chair added, that last year, the existing template gave us the ability to evaluate the projects in a way that is more sophisticated. The template that was used last year, it was created by Pam, and it was created more for RC staff to use when they were submitting their projects. But it can be modified if there is something else that we want to see in there. The Chair requested David, to get that template from Pam and share it with the group. Once we review this template, we can come through a discussion and ask the State to add it as well. The Chair stated that the 10% feels arbitrary in a project. Changing the template for people to know they will have to justify the request to increase it. The Chair addressed Carolyn on her opinion on this subject.
- Carolyn Levering expressed that something that has been overlooked over the years, but it is important to require sustained projects to report on what their current activities are, if this project hasn't spent their money and is coming back for more just to make sure to be sustained into the future. Carolyn has experienced sometimes in their own shop how two or three years' worth of grants kind of piling up on top of each other, which is also an administrative nightmare, because you're doing quarterly reports, programmatic and financial on everything while it's open and so I think it's a valid question for us to ask, if someone's coming to the table looking for a big chunk of money. How did the last money you got was spent? We, as a body should be examining a little bit more closely to ensure what has been accomplished with the funding so far, so that we can determine for ourselves how we want to rank whether those projects continue in their current form.
- The Chair expressed his agreement with Carolyn's point. The Chair requested to talk about time frames, if a project is sustainable for four years, might not be a high priority work. The Chair suggested that every three years a project should go back to be new and avoid projects keep going and going, the project has been on sustained for so long that everyone thinks is going to stay. The chair addressed the group on their opinion about it and reiterated that this is not an actionable item in the agenda, just a discussion. Carolyn added that, since some of the projects like Fusion and SIR MMRS have been around for so long and have been identified as in continued need of support, although at varying levels, year over year, might not make a difference to slap a label of new vs sustained since the long history with these projects. Adding a new label does not really make a difference on how you're going to rank it at the end of the day.
- The Chair expressed that when the projects are presented, sustained and new are in a different category and the level as how they get voted first and funded first. If we look at the sustained first, there won't be much allocation for the new projects. Since this year everything was new, and didn't carve anything for anybody. The Chair agrees with the process to continue on that way, not having to jump through a million hoops to

justify a couple of our ongoing things with any great extravagance, but at the same time, feel very comfortable in voting for the entire slate at any given setting, because the sustained projects typically do score rather high because they're sustained for a reason, people value them and see the results that are coming from them. The Chair addressed the group if they agreed with him, as far as voting to continue the same process. To keep everything being new that makes everything a lot easier, addressed Carolyn if that was her point, to keep everything new every year.

- Carolyn added that carving things out for sustained projects, pigeonholes us. We should have the freedom and flexibility to rank the projects as they stand, without this veil of protection for some projects that maybe need to tighten their belt.
- Jeremy Hynds intervened, stated he does not have a lot of experience with reoccurring projects, but he believes to make the people shouldn't get funding this year thinking on the next year's capabilities and capacities. If we think the project is important, but that agency is still trying to increase their capabilities. We don't want to take that away from them. I know, Carolyn's project CERT is reoccurring, I know the fugitive center is reoccurring, and that's why this we got to remember, this is why those projects, or the funding is theirs, because of the fusion centers and those certain programs, everything else is just a nice to have. We should make sure your programs are still good, and you guys can rely on that for a couple years at a time.
- Diana Clarkson commented she completely agrees. It needs to have a level of some sustainment, especially for those programs like you mentioned, the fusion center, in which we are counting on personnel and our computers and hardware things that are just keeping the program afloat. I like the idea of three years potentially. I also don't mind the presenting on the sustain effort. So maybe rather than new, doing what Carolyn has suggested, which is speaking to the line items within you sustain the funding that you have spent on and how you have shifted it. Taking as example us, last year, we really did our due diligence and made sure we asked for exactly the number we needed, based on the number of funds we already still had and the current cost of the program for that next year. We went line by line by line and made sure we adjusted those numbers so that way they were matching the actual need of those funds, rather than justice standards of state effort. Will love to present more on that subject. This forces everybody to have a level of accountability as well.
- The Chair addressed Carolyn about the meetings for the second quarter since they will be that long with the fund coming out. Suggested, that the first quarter for next year is everyone reporting out on their funding and their activities and spending on their current activity that they have from the UASI with fiscal years. This will eliminate that time frame when it comes to the voting day.
- Carolyn agreed with it, also stated it could be challenging because then we would need to look at 2023 funding for 2025. Suggested that anything that is still holding 23-22 or possibly even 21' money, this will be a great opportunity to explain where those projects are, and especially if they are planning to come to the table for 25' money.
- The Chair agreed with Carolyn and added that this way we could track where and how they are spending their funding. This will be added to the agenda on the first quarter next year. Carolyn also added that agrees with Diana's idea of a three year sustain projects. The Chair confirmed this is a discussion only, but we could make an action item if that was the consensus on the group, same agenda item will be in the next meeting.

## **VII. Public Comments**

*No Action may be taken upon a matter raised under this item of the agenda until the matter itself has been specifically included on an agenda as an item upon which action may be taken. Comments may be limited to 2 minutes.*

- Jeremy Hynds noted there was not an agenda item for the approval of the minutes from June 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. Next meeting will have two approvals of minutes.

Next UAWG meeting: Wednesday, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at 11:00 AM., hybrid or in-person meeting, via Microsoft Teams or in-person at the Clark County MACC.

## VIII. Adjournment

Motion, by Jeremy Hynds: To adjourn meeting

Seconded, by Brad Iverson

No discussion, motion: carried

Meeting adjourned.

DRAFT