TO: THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
FROM: C & A HAZARDS CONSULTING INC.

RE: USE OF FUNDING FOR THE IHMC

Per our agreement we are submitting Part II of the Resolution Process Plan for the Intergovernmental Hazard Mitigation Committee (IHMC). In this second portion we have focuses on the Resolution Procedure Design for the IHMC. It is our belief that this procedure will be highly effective at allowing the members of the IHMC to accomplish their goals.

I trust you will contact us if you have any questions regarding the proposed facilitation / conflict resolution process.

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**DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS FOR THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL HAZARD MITIGATION COMMITTEE**

**BACKGROUND**
The Intergovernmental Hazard Mitigation Committee (IHMC) was created to facilitate the creation of Local Mitigation Strategies (LMS) within the state of Florida. These committees will be composed on a county by county basis and are to consist of a representative from the county government and a representative from each of the municipal governments in the county. Charged with the development of the mitigation strategy committees will meet monthly for approximately one year to develop a LMS.

It has been decided that a strategy should incorporate the following elements: governmental coordination, public involvement, guiding principles, mitigation strategies, hazard identification and vulnerability assessment, prioritized list of mitigation initiatives, and evaluation procedures. It is possible that subcommittees may need to be formed to deal with some of these elements such as public involvement, hazard identification, vulnerability assessment, or any other topic. Subcommittees will meet as needed between the full IHMC monthly meetings, the findings of the subcommittees will be reported back to the IHMC at this time.

The first of the nine scheduled meetings will be an organizational meeting. At this time meeting chairs and vice chairs of the committee will be selected, subcommittees will be identified and the IHMC members will be assigned to these subcommittees. In addition, determination of major issues such as group process procedures and rules, and the development of goals and objectives for the IHMC will be determined during this initial organizational meeting.

**CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

The IHMC has determined that they will follow a conflict resolution process to assist them in accomplishing their goals. This process will be administered from the onset of the IHMC meetings with the assistance of a facilitator who if necessary can act as a mediator. The decision to create a conflict resolution process was an important one, with the purpose of creating a proactive approach to resolving differences as they occur thus, preventing the escalation of a conflict within the group. This will ensure that the IHMC stays on track, by following the agenda and accomplishing the said objectives for each scheduled meeting.

**Potential Conflicts**
The IHMC is a diverse group comprised of members with a variety of interest and backgrounds together they must work toward the creation of local mitigation strategies with statewide applicability. In this capacity the group has potential to cover issues that may be controversial in their own right to that group members may just have a difference of opinion about. Such as disagreement about what action should be taken to mitigate for hazards such as repetitive damage structures. Disagreement about what action should be taken in response to a specific hazard can lead to even greater conflicts such as those
between county hazard mitigation objectives and actions taken by other municipalities within the county and vice versa.

Research has shown that Florida ranks at the top in terms of combined population and property risk from flooding (3). Coastal communities are extremely vulnerable from tropical storm and/or hurricane induced flooding due to storm surge. Despite the risk, 57% of Florida’s total population (8 million people) is located within 10 miles of the coast (4). This trend is projected to continue as the six fastest growing coastal counties in the U.S. are found in Florida: Flagler, Hernando, Citrus, Charlotte, Osceola, and Collier Counties (5). The risk for Floridians is apparent but how to deal with such risks is not as clear. The differing opinion of policymakers on such issues can be a major point of contention between neighboring communities.

The recognition of this potential for conflict has led to the suggestion that a facilitator be included as a part of all IHMC meetings. The facilitator will be on and throughout the process to assist at the earliest point a conflict appears to resolve differences as they occur while ensuring the IHMC stays on track, by following the agenda and accomplishing the objectives for each meeting. A facilitator is effective for large groups with diverse interests and common objectives because a facilitator will:

- Establish a cooperative climate and support for ground rules.
- Maintain concensus on the agenda and keep the group focused
- Encourage and balance participation and protect individuals from attacks
- Remain neutral, will not contribute or evaluate ideas
- Clarify, summarize and test for consensus agreement (6)

This lesson can be learned from reviewing case studies of similar group processes such as the Affordable Housing Trust Commission. This group like the IHMC had a very demanding agenda and a very diverse composition of members, they consistently failed to move through the agreed upon agenda without the assistance of a facilitator. As with the Affordable Housing Trust Commission the Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium will be asked to facilitate the meetings. Funding for facilitation will be provided by the Florida Department of Community Affairs and all decisions will be finalized by the IHMC with the assistance of a facilitator as needed.

**Premise of Cooperation**

Realizing that conflict is inherent in political interaction and inevitable in policy making and resource allocation decisions, and recognizing the diversity of perspective represented by its members, the IHMC agrees to resolve all conflicts in policy, procedures and issues based on the following group values:

- The guiding principles, goals and objectives adopted by the IHMC will guide all decisions
- All decisions will be ultimately decided by consensus when possible.
- All IHMC representatives will have equal input into the process.
- Each working member will acknowledge and respect differing points of view.
Decisions on resource allocation will be based on project criteria to be established by the IHMC.

Each IHMC member recognizes the importance of showing community consensus to potential funders/grantors.

**Conflict Resolution Process**
The over-all goal of the conflict resolution process is to emphasize direct communication as a means of controlling outcomes and quality, saving time, money, and reaching mutually beneficial solutions. The resolution process will be a three-level process, utilizing a combination of personal and intergroup communication skills, and a model based on the “Regional Dispute Resolution Process”, established by the Florida Legislature as a part of the 1993 Environmental Land Management legislation to facilitate intergovernmental problem-solving.

**Level I:** Communication/cooperation – Emphasis on personal communication and listening skills, focusing on overall project goals and objectives.

**Level II:** Consensus Building/Facilitation – Formal intergroup process to achieve mutual consensus. The process is based on a settlement meeting at which disagreeing parties explain their interests, explore options and seek a mutually acceptable agreement. Most issues are expected to be resolved at this level, but if a solution is not reached additional settlement meetings can be held. Disputes and conflicts that cannot be resolved at this level can be escalated to mediation.

**Level III:** Mediation – Formal technique using a trained, neutral third party to guide the dispute resolution process. If a solution is not reached following this procedure, the issue will be resolved through democratic rule with a 2/3 majority vote of the IHMC (1, 2).
BIBLIOGRAPHY


4) Florida Department of Community Affairs. 1998.


6) Kinnison, Michael. 1998. Acquisition as Mitigation: Implementing Communities and the Policies and Programs Supporting Buyouts.