



THE GALVESTON DAILY NEWS

GLO thanks isle for passing housing plan

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GALVESTON — The Texas General Land Office sent a letter thanking the city council for passing a plan to rebuild public housing in Galveston that affirmatively furthers fair housing.

The letter, dated Oct. 2, is from Deputy Land Commissioner Gary Hagood.

But language in the letter indicated the state wants to see evidence of construction at public housing sites before it releases Community Development Block Grant funds for Round 2 projects, City Manager Michael Kovacs said.

“The city has demonstrated a commitment to ensure the CDBG program requirements will be met,” Hagood said in the letter. “There is still much work to be done, but we look forward to rebuilding the city of Galveston with you.”

The land office confirmed that Round 1 disaster recovery funds that had been on hold were released as a result of a 5-2 vote by the city council Sept. 28 approving a public housing plan, Hagood said.

But the land office won't release funds for Round 2 projects until it receives a comprehensive development plan for the \$107 million in CDBG funding allocated for Round 2. State officials are still reviewing the “finer points” of the plan, according to the letter.

The city has submitted the Round 2 project list to officials at the land office, Kovacs said.

“They want to see the public housing get started,” he said. “They want to be able to trust us.”

Rebuilding the Cedar Terrace and Magnolia Homes areas are at the top of the public housing list, he said. According to the plan, the Galveston Housing Authority’s developer will begin construction of mixed-income developments at Cedar Terrace in April 2013 and should be finished by July 2014. The developer should begin construction at Magnolia Homes in June 2013 and be finished by October 2014.

But many nondisaster related Round 2.1 and 2.2 projects are already line items in a project list the city’s construction division presented to the city council in June, Kovacs said. Those projects include roadway reconstruction, two 59th Street water pump stations and drainage improvements.

“We have critical, time-sensitive projects tied to Round 2 grants that need the green light,” Kovacs said.

There was only one Round 1 project on hold, Kovacs said. It was an upgrade on a historic preservation project.

Kovacs said the land office agreed to talk to the city about building priorities.

The finer points of the housing plan relate to the placement of scattered sites for public housing, Kovacs said.

The plan called for 388 single-family and multifamily units on scattered sites, of which up to 50 units can be built off the island but within Galveston County.

In the letter, Hagood said the next step was to put an agreement in place for a \$500,000 planning grant to fund a study that focuses on revitalization efforts in neighborhoods north of Broadway and to provide data to the land office on other areas of the city that are appropriate for scattered site units.

That study is necessary to coordinate the use of Round 2 infrastructure, housing and CDBG funds for the replacement of the public housing units on scattered sites.