



CITY OF JAMAICA BEACH

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January 6, 2019

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Galveston District
ATTN: Col. Lars N. Zetterstrom, District Engineer, Commanding Officer
P.O. Box 1229
Galveston, TX 77553-1229

RE: City of Jamaica Beach, TX - Response to Coastal Study Tentatively Selected Plan

Dear Colonel Zetterstrom,

On October 26th 2018, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) released their report titled "Coastal Texas Protection and Restoration Feasibility Study." This report was the result of a joint effort between the USACE and the Texas General Land Office (GLO) that began in November 2015 and examined the feasibility of alternatives that enhance, restore, and sustain the environment, economy, and culture along the Texas Coast. The report recommends a number of ecosystem restoration (ER) projects along the coast and a system of coastal storm risk management (CSRM) features to protect the upper Texas coast. With the report's release, the USACE began a 75-day comment period specifically designed to solicit public comment on the Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP). This correspondence has been drafted to answer the solicitation of comments regarding the TSP and its direct impact on the City of Jamaica Beach, Texas.

As a brief introduction, the City of Jamaica Beach, Texas is a *fully developed* community with a relaxed atmosphere located on the west-end of Galveston Island with 3,327 LF of frontage on the Gulf of Mexico which also backs up to West Bay. Jamaica Beach was incorporated in 1975. According to the U.S. Census Bureau as of July 2010, Jamaica Beach has a population of approximately 983 and covers .77 square miles. A number of our residents live in close proximity to the beach while others residing north of FM 3005 can view the Gulf of Mexico from their homes. Our community has a thriving commercial footprint albeit small, located immediately north of FM 3005. Our commercial base not only provides for the livelihood of the business owners and their employees, but also provides for the convenience of offering goods and services locally. As I'm sure you understand, the prospect of constructing a levee/floodwall ranging from 17 to 21 feet in height, running adjacent to and north of FM 3005 on the west end of Galveston Island, is causing great angst for our residential and commercial property owners.

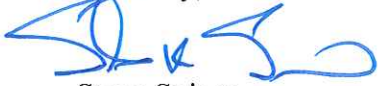
With the prevalence of smart phones, social media and the formation of “virtual relationships,” it has become more challenging for community leaders to maintain a “sense of community.” This challenge will only be compounded if a physical barrier separates portions of our community. While we are a resilient group of residents in Jamaica Beach, the placement of the barrier running adjacent to and north of FM 3005 will have dire consequences on our community resulting in 131 parcels valued at \$36,906,748 being subjected to increased surge, increased insurance rates, and the potential lowering of the aforementioned property values. More importantly, is the potential of loss of life due to a delayed response of EMS personnel/equipment. The present plan of placing the levee/ floodwall immediately behind FM 3005 will leave this critical access road open to increased scouring and damage from a storm surge, resulting in the potential for a total lack of access to or from Jamaica Beach and the west-end of Galveston Island following a storm. This fact alone should cause *all* public officials, whether elected or appointed, to seek the other alternatives.

The city’s General Fund Municipal Budget will also be negatively impacted by the potential lowering and direct loss of property values as a result of the TSP. The present plan of placing the levee/ floodwall immediately behind FM 3005 will directly intersect nineteen (19) parcels which include city hall, two churches, several homes, and our entire commercial base valued at \$3.3 Million. As indicated above in the introduction of Jamaica Beach, our community is essentially fully developed. As a fully developed community, the taking of property through eminent domain to construct the levee/floodwall will mean the permanent loss of the city’s commercial base as there are no other suitable parcels to build on within the corporate limits of Jamaica Beach. Additionally, the city would have to acquire other *taxable* property to site a new public facility (city hall) resulting in additional loss of property values. Compounding the loss in property values will be the direct loss of approximately \$98,605 in annual sales tax which comprises almost 8% of our annual municipal revenue stream. Please understand this is not theory, there is a direct correlation between the irreplaceable loss of our commercial base and the related sales tax derived from said base. This loss could precipitate a significant increase in property taxes and/or significant reductions in city services.

We applaud the extensive work by the USACE on the Texas Coastal Study and a Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP) that identifies a coastal barrier system as the best option for protecting the upper Texas coastline from devastation caused by hurricane storm surge. However, as city officials we respectfully request the USACE to move the proposed levee/floodwall from behind FM 3005 to the coast and construct the protection needed as a natural appearing fortified dune system. A fortified dune system is proven and visually attractive allowing for recreational opportunities and provides a natural environment for dune ecosystems. Strategically placed along the coast, it allows all improved properties to be located behind the protective barrier not in front of it, exposed to additional risks because of the barrier’s presence. Additionally, due to its location on the public beach no property owners will be displaced. This is the locally preferred option that fits better into the economic, environmental, social and recreational fabric of our community.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our concerns with the TSP and respectfully request that you give consideration to the locally preferred option of a fortified dune system.

Sincerely,



Steve Spicer
Mayor, Jamaica Beach, TX



Sean L. Hutchison, CPM
City Administrator, Jamaica Beach, TX