

**Mayor's Testimony
June 19, 2008**

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**City of Waveland
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The citizens of Waveland, having been ground zero for Hurricane Katrina's ferocious landfall continue to struggle. With 100% of our infrastructure destroyed all City buildings reduced to the slab, including the three story Historic City Hall and 95% of residential homes destroyed along with 100% of the businesses.

Waveland residents are very proud and hardworking. They haven't placed blame or pointed fingers. They have simply worked hard everyday at rebuilding, hoping to end the day having progressed at the task.

Many still have received no insurance or enough money to rebuild. Approximately 1,200 Citizens in Waveland remain in a FEMA trailer, MEMA cottage or other form of alternative housing.

Senior Citizens lose hope and die in their FEMA trailers, seeing no hope for the future.

Coleman Avenue, the old "Business Downtown" had forty-eight (48) businesses. This old downtown was the heart and soul of our Community. To date only one (1) business has been able to rebuild. The problem is the cost of building has increased by, as much as \$75.00 a square foot and insurance premiums are now ten (10) times greater than they were pre-Hurricane Katrina.

These independent businesses and "Mom and Pop" stores were the backbone of our City. Its tragic that zero funds were allocated for them to rebuild.

I have been promised at all levels of Government that everything was being expedited to begin rebuilding in Waveland. Yet we stand here almost three (3) years post Katrina's landfall still trying to build the first structure.

Waveland went one (1) year without any income, therefore we are at the mercy of FEMA and Grant Funds in order to begin rebuilding.

We haven't received any additional FEMA Funds in the past forty-five (45) days for a myriad of reasons. One example of the hold ups occurring is the City's Municipal waterfront pier and park has had a Project Worksheet written for two years. The City's Project Worksheets or P.W.s have been devoured and combed through checking for accuracy. In March of 2008 after FEMA taking 2 ½ months approving the Engineers plans and specifications the City received a visit from FEMA to tell us that two weeks into the bid process they have problems with the project. We are still trying to work through their last minute issues.

We have had monies allocated to purchase critical equipment. Again, P.W.'s were written and gone over numerous times. There are e-mails supporting the step by step action FEMA needed us to take. Months after the bid was awarded FEMA removed as much as 50% of allocated funds from our bank account saying they made a mistake.

We have been trying to keep the City afloat financially and it hasn't been easy, however when FEMA makes us come up with 50% of monies that we didn't plan to use nor do we have its just devastating.

We have chosen architects and Engineers more than a year ago. However we haven't been able to officially hire them under contract because we are still waiting for our Community Development Block Grant Funding (C.D.B.G.) C.D.B.G. does not allow the City to enter into a contract if you expect them to pay for it, until the City receives the C.D.B.G. Funds.

There are other glitches, for example we are still trying to satisfy the Mitigation Grant process for FEMA. Which each building will need to utilize some FEMA Mitigation Funds.

Please don't misunderstand, since Hurricane Katrina made landfall, there have been great FEMA personnel that truly help us in our recovery effort.

The citizens of Waveland have been through hell the past three years. Nothing will raise their spirits like seeing their Government buildings going up.

The first responders, all of whom are heroes, will have their spirits lifted when we move them out of the trailers they have been operating from into a new Police or Fire Complex.

We have come a long way, yet we have a long way to go.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity and thank you for not forgetting us.