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Flood Recovery Task Force, Inc. Meeting Minutes, 1971
April 4th

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FLOOD RECOVERY TASK FORCE, INC.

WILKES COLLEGE

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WILKES-BARRE, PENNSYLVANIA 18701

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President's Office

MINUTES

MEETING of the Executive Committee, March 28th, Hotel Sterling, noon.

Present: Bierly, Boltz, Hardwick, Hourigan, Kiley, Lashford, Morgan, Rose, Rosenn, Rubinstein, Sordoni, B. Schechter, Shaw.

Shaw reported on the progress that Direction Associates has made on the Housing work-program it is developing for the Task Force. He also discussed the results of the Public Opinion Survey conducted for the Task Force by Wilbur Smith and Associates, and reported the progress this same consulting firm has made on the Area Appearance and Image work-program it is formulating for the Task Force.

In regard to the Housing project Shaw reported that results were discouraging at first. The first report Direction Associates submitted, on financing sources for housing developers who are planning construction in Wyoming Valley, required extensive reworking by the Consultant and by Task Force staff. The second, on population characteristics, was unsatisfactory in content, format, and style, and, consequently, was withdrawn by the Consultant and recently resubmitted. A draft of a third report, on governmental regulation of housing construction in Wyoming Valley, was received at the same time as was the redraft of the second report. Though the staff has not yet made a careful critique of the new drafts, they can see that the re-written one is greatly improved and likely to be of real value to housing developers.

On the Public Opinion Survey conducted by Wilbur Smith and Associates, Shaw remarked that though it did not reveal a suspected demand for consolidation of local governments, it did show widespread eagerness to see local governments combine to provide better services. He also noted that the survey produced a great deal of information that is bound to prove useful to local officials and other community leaders in a number of ways.

Turning to the Area Appearance and Image project, Shaw expressed the opinion that, when finished, this piece of work will prove to be the Task Force's most important contribution to the Valley's economic recovery. He noted that charts and maps already submitted in connection with this project point to numerous feasible ways to speedily improve the Valley's appearance and change its image for the better both in the eyes of its own residents and in those of persons living outside the region. Finally, Shaw noted that one of the Consultant's contract obligations is to set up a prototype improvement program

for one of the Valley's flood-affected municipalities, and that Plymouth is likely to be the community chosen for this purpose.

Discussion of when Task Force operations should be terminated, and on what basis, ensued. It was agreed that, in accordance with the Task Force's understanding with the Economic Development Administration at the time of its funding, the organization should wind up its work by early summer and transfer all unfinished projects to appropriate ongoing community organizations. It was also agreed that it would be best to keep the Task Force alive as a corporation in case a need for it to act as such should arise. It was moved and seconded that the Task Force terminate its operations on June 23rd, the second anniversary of the Tropical Storm Agnes flood, but continue to exist as a corporation. The motion passed.

Next, the question of who should be responsible for maintenance of Wyoming Valley levees came under discussion. It was agreed that the present situation in which the County maintains some levees, and individual municipalities maintain others, is unsatisfactory. Hourigan suggested approaching the County Engineer with the idea that the County should have the ultimate responsibility for maintenance of all County levees. Rosenn suggested that the Task Force pass a resolution calling for the County to be responsible for making sure that the separate municipalities maintain their own levees. Further discussion of the issue produced agreement that the County Commissioners should be approached on the matter before a resolution is passed. It was moved and seconded that the Task Force recommend to the County Commissioners that the County assume the responsibility for maintenance of the levees. The motion passed.

Next, disposition of unspent Task Force funds was discussed. Rosenn pointed to a need for a group dedicated to making sure that municipalities carry out their economic responsibilities. He said that since there have been instances of such citizens groups meeting with success, the EDA might approve use of remaining Task Force funds to start a responsible citizens action group in the Wyoming Valley. Shaw expressed the opinion that EDA might look favorably on use of some Task Force funds to make the Susquehanna River Basin a vital, useful organization. The Committee asked the staff to outline possible uses of these monies for the Committee's consideration at its next meeting.

It was agreed that every effort should be made to get full attendance at the next meeting of the Committee, and that arrangements should be made for a photograph of the Committee to be taken at that time.

