



## **Deer Park Community Advisory Council**

### **Summary of May 23, 2011 Meeting**

#### **DPCAC Discusses Hurricane Surge Suppression**

The status of the “Ike Dike” and other hurricane surge suppression initiatives was shared with the Deer Park Community Advisory Council (DPCAC) in late May by Dan Seale of the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership (BAHEP) and Scott Jones of the Galveston Bay Foundation (GBF).

Two hurricane protection initiatives were introduced after Hurricane Ike. Dr. Bill Merrell of Texas A&M-Galveston proposed the concept of an “Ike Dike” as a barrier to keep surge in the Gulf of Mexico. Rice University’s then new Severe Storm Prediction, Education, and Evacuation from Disasters (SSPEED) Center proposed looking at both structural and nonstructural alternatives to prepare for and defend against storm surge and flooding. (Dikes and gates are examples of structural barriers to surge. Wetlands are a nonstructural option; they naturally slow the flow of surge.)

Seale explained that the “Ike Dike” would extend the existing Galveston Seawall to High Island and to the Freeport levee and use huge movable gates to shut off the Houston Ship Channel from the Gulf of Mexico. Surge lasts 18-24 hours, then flushes out to sea. The gates would close before the storm and reopen after surge subsides so that ship traffic may continue. BAHEP has promoted the Ike Dike as a way to protect both people and business investments. Because of the volume of refinery and chemical products made locally, production interruptions here may affect commerce and daily lives across the country.

Until the “Ike Dike” is more than a concept, Jones said GBF cannot comment on specifics. The group wants any projects to avoid harming the bay system. They believe studies should address economic and environmental impacts and aesthetics. Jones spoke of the importance of accounting for sea rise in any design as well as the effects structural changes could have on the shoreline and beaches. He said that thorough study helps prevent unintended consequences.

The 6-county Gulf Coast Protection and Recovery District was formed in 2010 to consider storm surge protection options. The funding expected from the governor’s office was not forthcoming, and reorganization was slow after the November elections left the group without a chair. The

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district's next steps have not been announced. The SSPEED Center recently obtained funding to study a variety of options. Their plans may be found at <http://sspeed.rice.edu/sspeed/>

In small group discussion, both DPCAC community and plant members favored doing something to suppress surge. They were pleased to see that GBF and BAHEP have a good working relationship on this important issue.