



FEMA

October 21, 2009

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
on
Relocation of Americus and Sumter County Hospital Authority's
Sumter Regional Hospital/Phoebe Sumter Medical Center
Sumter County, Georgia
FEMA-1686-DR-GA

Background

As a result of the March 1, 2007 tornado, the Americus and Sumter County Hospital Authority (Authority) applied to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for assistance with a project to relocate the former Sumter Regional Hospital (SRH) destroyed in Americus, Sumter County, Georgia. The Sumter Regional Hospital facilities were recently renamed the Phoebe Sumter Medical Center (PSMC). FEMA assisted the Authority by providing a temporary hospital facility after the March 1, 2007 tornado. FEMA is helping the Authority replace the permanent hospital facility. FEMA's Public Assistance Program is considering providing funding as an Improved Project under Presidential Disaster Declaration FEMA-1686-DR-GA.

After careful consideration, the Authority decided not to rebuild the permanent hospital on the former SRH site. Due to limited land available at the former site in a developed area, the hospital is unable to expand to accommodate future growth. Instead, they determined that it is in the public's best interest to relocate and build the permanent hospital on a 45-acre parcel of former farmland at a new location northwest of the intersection of U.S. Highways 19 and 280, on the west side of Americus. This would include constructing medical office buildings, housing women's and family services, oncology and surgical clinics, and wellness and outpatient rehabilitation to stabilize the healthcare delivery system in this community and surrounding areas. A new four-story 76-bed hospital building would be constructed and the existing temporary hospital services would be transferred to the new building.

Findings

The purpose of this proposed project's Environmental Assessment (EA) is to analyze the potential environmental impacts of the proposed relocation project, and to determine whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). In the EA process, FEMA evaluated the following alternatives: No Action Alternative, Former Hospital Site Alternative, and the Proposed New Hospital Site Alternative.

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Relocating the hospital would have negligible effects on the human (physical, biological, social, and built) environment. Anticipated environmental impacts would, to the extent practicable and as required by federal, state, and local laws and regulations, be avoided, minimized, and offset (mitigated).

Relocating the hospital would have beneficial effects: existing and recruited healthcare professionals, supporting staff, and businesses would return to support new hospital and community growth. It would also improve housing and business development of lands on the west side of Americus. Also expected is an increase in the level of facilities and services to the community as housing and businesses develop lands on the west side of Americus anchored by the proposed project.

In accordance with criteria in 44 CFR Part 10.8 (d)(3)(x), FEMA has determined that the proposed project alternative would not have significant individual or cumulative adverse effects when combined with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future (next 20 years) actions. There would be no significant adverse impacts on geological and hydrological features; floodplains (project site surface elevations are well above the 500-year flood elevation; important for this "critical" facility); wetlands and jurisdictional waters of the U.S.; water quality; air quality; vegetation; wildlife; state and federally listed threatened and endangered species and their habitats; cultural resources; socioeconomics (including minority and low income populations); safety and security; and traffic and transportation would occur. No work would occur within identified units of the Coastal Barriers Resource Act. No unacceptable discharge of hazardous materials or toxic wastes are planned or anticipated.

The Draft EA for this proposed project was made publicly available to all interested parties through publication on FEMA's website (<http://www.fema.gov/plan/ehp/envdocuments/ea-region4.shtml>) and by distribution to the Lake Blackshear Public Regional Library, and the Americus Municipal Building. Notification of availability of the Draft EA was also published in the Americus Times-Recorder newspaper on September 11th and 15th, 2009.

The following summarizes what is outlined in the proposed project's Draft and Final EAs, and are the conditions that the Applicant/Sub-grantee and their contractors and other agents must meet as part of implementing this proposed action alternative, and to remain eligible for FEMA funding for this project:

1. Appropriate soil erosion and sediment control and other construction Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be used to minimize any adverse impacts from parking lot runoff, soil erosion and/or wetland or stream sedimentation during and several months after construction.
2. Dust and airborne dirt generated by construction shall be controlled through general dust control BMPs or a specific dust control plan could be developed if warranted. Any burning of materials, vegetation or debris would be done according to relevant local laws and ordinances, including, but not limited to, the current ordinances or regulations of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR).
3. If project activities include the stockpiling of soils onsite, the Applicant will be required at the direction of the engineer to cover these soils to help prevent fugitive dust and erosion. Fencing and straw/hay bales should be installed to reduce loss. After construction activities, exposed, compacted soils would be graded, seeded or sodded, and restored.

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4. If an accidental fuel, oil, or chemical spill occurs during construction, the contractor will be responsible for minimizing the amount spilled and for any cleanup required. The Applicant, the contractor, and their agents will comply with Federal and State regulations regarding the reporting and cleanup of accidental spills.
5. To minimize risks to safety and human health, all construction activities will be done using qualified personnel trained in the proper use of the appropriate equipment, proper maintenance, and all appropriate safety precautions. Additionally, all activities will be conducted in a safe manner in accordance with the standards specified in Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) regulations.
6. To ensure that during the construction process any items of archaeological, historical, or architectural interest are protected the Applicant and their contractors shall monitor excavation activities. In the event any items of interest are discovered, the Applicant and their contractors should make all reasonable efforts to protect the items and to avoid further harm to the items until the significance of the discovery can be determined. The Applicant and their contractors shall immediately notify FEMA and the Georgia State Historic Preservation Officer (GA SHPO).

Specifically, if any archeological artifacts or human remains are found (discovered) during project work, then for each discovery: (1) all project work within 100 feet of the discovery must immediately stop and project work may not resume at that discovery location until after FEMA gives resume work with caution notice for that location; (2) the Applicant or their agent shall notify FEMA of the discovery within two working days; (3) project work elsewhere on the project site may start or continue; (4) FEMA will determine within another two working days if further action is needed; (5) if FEMA determines further action is not needed, then same day, FEMA will give resume work with caution notice for that discovery location; or (6) if FEMA determines further action is needed, then same day, FEMA will notify interested Tribes and GA SHPO of the discovery; and then (7) FEMA, the Tribes, GA SHPO, GEMA, and the Applicant shall consult and take further action if needed, to meet National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 requirements as quickly as possible; and (8) when FEMA determines in these consultations that Section 106 requirements have been fully met, then within two working days, FEMA will give resume work with caution notice for that discovery location.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the attached proposed project's Final EA, in coordination with the appropriate agencies, and in adherence to the project conditions set forth in this EA, and in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing NEPA (44 CFR Parts 1500 – 1508), and FEMA regulations on environmental consideration for NEPA compliance (44 CFR Part 10), FEMA has determined that the proposed action will have no significant adverse impacts on the biological or human environments. As a result of this FONSI, FEMA will not prepare an EIS and the proposed project as described in the attached EA may proceed. Furthermore, FEMA has determined that the proposed project would comply with Presidential Executive Orders 11988 (Floodplain Management), 11990 (Wetlands Protection) and 12898 (Environmental Justice).

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Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William R. Straw", is written over a horizontal line.

William R. Straw, Ph.D.

Regional Environmental Officer

FEMA Region IV

Date: 10/21/09