

Ministers' Conference leads citywide Hurricane Matthew relief effort

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

It has been over a week since Hurricane Matthew swept through the east coast of North Carolina, but a number of cities in eastern North Carolina are still suffering from major flood damage, downed power lines and destroyed homes.

According to reports, the storm damaged about \$1.5 billion in property, including more than 100,000 homes. To help with relief efforts, the Ministers' Conference of Winston-Salem and Vicinity (MCWSV) has kicked off a citywide initiative to collect essential items for those in need.



Rev. Carlisle

The conference will be collecting non-perishable food, clothing, diapers, baby formula, toiletries and water that will be delivered to displaced residents in Wayne County and the city of Goldsboro next week.

While Lumberton and Nash counties were the hardest hit by Matthew, MCWSV's third vice president and program committee chair, the Rev. Alvin

Carlisle, said that after speaking with city and county officials, they discovered that the Wayne County area is in dire need as well.

As native of Goldsboro, Carlisle said he has seen the affects of flooding firsthand. During an interview earlier this week he mentioned during Hurricane Fran in 1996 his grandmother lost their family home, so when he saw the hundreds forced to live in subpar conditions, he felt the need to lend a helping hand.

"It's heartbreaking to see large sections of the city shut down and people living without the basic necessities," he continued. "I've seen the damage flooding can do in the Wayne County area and we felt compelled to jump into action."

McCrory refuses session to help Princeville and flooded counties

BY CASH MICHAELS
FOR THE CHRONICLE

As massive pumps displace 4 million gallons of flood water per day from the Edgecombe County town of Princeville, and hundreds of evacuated families from there and other impacted communities continue to worry about where they are going to live next, state lawmakers are strongly urging Gov. Pat McCrory to convene a special session of the N.C. General Assembly as soon as possible to appropriate the critical recovery funds thirty-one central and eastern North Carolina counties need in the aftermath of Hurricane

"Now that President Obama has declared a state of disaster for almost a dozen eastern counties, I urge you to call the General Assembly for a Special Session for the purpose of putting additional appropriations in place to expedite and begin the long road of recovery, disaster clean-up, rebuilding, and relief efforts."

What has not been said is that federal assistance will cover up to 75 percent of what the state spends in recovery efforts, according to the state Emergency Management website. So there's little reason not to use rainy day funds.

But again, in the aftermath of Matthew, Democrats say \$12 million to \$18 million isn't nearly enough.

During last week's gubernatorial debate with Democratic challenger Attorney General Roy Cooper, McCrory proudly touted that over \$1.6 billion was budgeted away in the state's "Rainy Day Fund." But it takes legislative action by the N.C. General Assembly to touch any of that fund because it's deliberately unallocated to any agency or program, thus the call for McCrory to immediately convene a special session as soon as possible to determine how much more beyond the emergency fund is needed now.

If a reference point is needed for state lawmakers Gov. McCrory to determine what the possible total cost



Gov. McCrory

could be, they need look no further than Hurricane Floyd in 1999, which caused massive flooding and destruction in Edgecombe and other counties, costing North Carolina \$836 million in disaster relief funding, even with federal assistance.

A special session was called to appropriate that funding, albeit three months after Floyd hit. Democrats say given the high level of suffering, loss of homes, businesses and farms, in addition to lives (at least 25 at press time) in the aftermath of Matthew, faster action is required now.

The population of the small town of Princeville, considered the oldest incorporated town founded by African-Americans in the nation, is more than weary of the flood waters Matthew has brought. Many of them experienced the same dire dilemma in 1999 when Hurricane Floyd dumped heavy rains on an already swollen Tar



N.C. Emergency Management photo

This is an aerial shot of flooded Princeville after Hurricane Matthew.

River that separates Princeville from neighboring Tarboro. The subsequent flooding forced the town's 2,000 residents to flee for their lives for emergency shelters in schools and nearby hotels, or out of the area with relatives, with little more than the clothes on their backs.

History has repeated itself again 17 years later with Matthew. Sen. Smith-Ingram says FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) is imploring impacted victims to file with the agency as soon as possible, noting that they have 60 days from the disaster declaration (roughly Dec. 9). They should call 1-800-621-3362.

But many of the survivors are poor and elderly, and don't have bank accounts that FEMA can automatically deposit needed funds in. They normally go to check cashing places with whatever public assistance they get.

Tarboro High School has served as an emergency shelter for many. Those who have been able to afford to, have stayed in area hotels and motels, afraid that when their money runs out, they and their children will be kicked to the streets.

Princeville Elementary School was found under six feet of water. Classes have been relocated to different facility.

Based on news reports and interviews with officials involved in the disaster relief in the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew, that price tag will be considerably more than Floyd.

"In the days and weeks ahead, it is critical that our state leaders thoroughly document the needs in these communities and pursue innovative approaches to meeting those needs. There will be gaps in available federal assistance and it will be incumbent on North Carolina to come up with the ways to provide relief to those that may be initially left out of the recovery," said Bill Rowe of the NC Justice Center, a Raleigh-based progressive think tank.



Smith

Matthew.

But the governor and Republican legislative leaders refuse, saying there is enough in the state emergency fund to tide the impacted flooded areas over until state lawmakers reconvene in January, pointing to the projection that swollen rivers will recede by Oct. 24.

Apparently Republican leaders in the N.C. General Assembly convinced the governor that the small disaster relief fund, which is reportedly under \$20 million, would be quite enough for now. Legislative sources say it is just \$12 million (the Governor's Office placed that figure closer to \$18 million in its Oct. 11 press release).

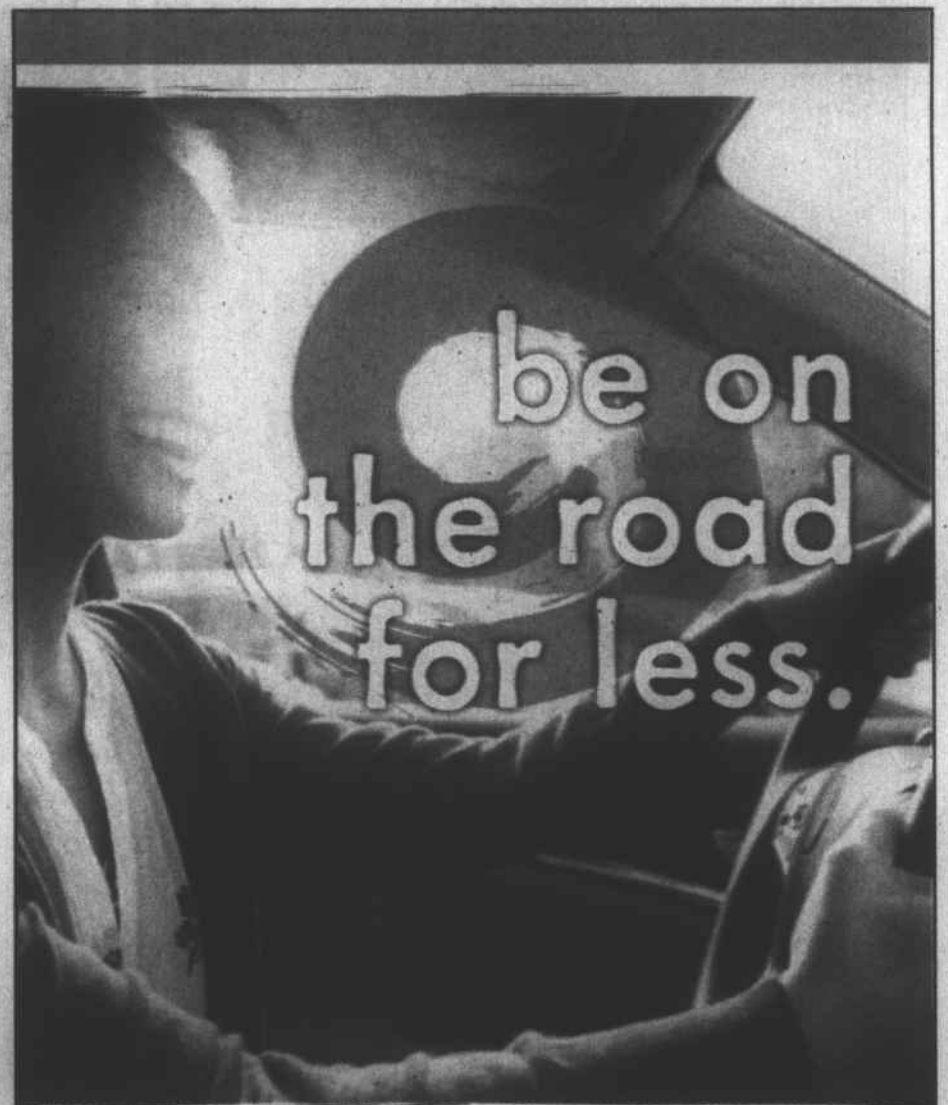
"[It would be] imprudent to try to determine long-term needs until floodwaters recede and immediate threats to safety are controlled," a joint statement from House Speaker Tim Moore and Senate leader Phil Berger said.

Democrats wholeheartedly disagree.

Last week, as flood waters and power outages continued to ravage homes, businesses and farms, state Senate Minority Leader Dan Blue (D-Wake) and other Senate Democrats called on McCrory and Republican leaders to move quickly to address the emergency.

"[W]e as state leaders, need to act now to provide immediate relief and assistance to communities directly impacted by the storm," Blue wrote in an Oct. 12 letter to McCrory.

State Sen. Erica Smith-Ingram (D-District 3), who represents many of the areas affected, including Edgecombe County, also wrote McCrory urging quick action.



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