

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## Homeowners at the Oaks Break Their Silence!

GALVESTON, Texas – 10 June 2011

Homeowners at the Oaks, Phase 2, who bought their homes after Hurricane Ike, have endured a nearly **2-year nightmare** trying to get the **Galveston Housing Authority**, and its subsidiary, GRACE, to properly **repair the storm damage** done to their homes, and to have them upgrade **substandard construction**. Their pleas for help have fallen on deaf ears as they have been told that if they are just patient for a little while longer; GHA will “take care of them”.

**22 homeowners** have endured month after month of **warped floors, electrical problems, sewer troubles, and A/C and heating problems** that make it difficult to even sleep at night. Family members have become ill due to dust and debris in the heating and cooling ducts, and the temperature problems inside their homes.

Last night, **several courageous homeowners broke their silence** at the City Council meeting when they realized that the promised help and restitution from GHA may never materialize. Some were fearful that if they sought the Council’s help there might be some kind of retaliation, but they told their stories anyway!

After the homeowner’s comments, David Stanowski, President of the GOP, reminded the Council that on **05 December 2008**, GHA Executive Director, Harish Krishnarao, wrote a guest column entitled “Public Housing Can Boost Economy” suggesting 5 rebuilding options including a plan for rebuilding the 569 Public Housing units plus additional mixed-income developments for a **grand total of 2,155 units**. Less than 3 months after Hurricane Ike, he had already revealed his

vision for **the Galveston Housing Authority to become the dominant developer on the Island.**

Then on 15 September 2009, the GCDN quoted Mayor Thomas as saying: “Now the agency (GHA) must become a partner with the city to build houses for **everyone** who lives on the island.”

GHA’s current plan to build **1,527 total units** in mixed-income and scattered site developments plus another **200** as project-based vouchers allows them to continue in their self-appointed role as the primary developer in the City.

Stanowski then asked if allowing the GHA to assume this role is acceptable to this Council.

The GHA wants to **spend \$134 million of taxpayers’ money** to build public housing, but is it wise to allow them to do this after hearing from residents of the Oaks about how they have fulfilled that responsibility?

The GOGP believes that City Council needs to gather much more information about what is going on at the Oaks before moving forward with any of GHA’s new plans.

Stanowski formally requested that Council **put this topic on the agenda for their 23 June workshop.** He asked that they do four things at the workshop:

1. Ask the GHA and City Planning Department to present evidence that the **proper building inspections were done** at Oaks 2.
2. Ask the GHA to present documented evidence showing **how much money they received** from insurance settlements and federal disaster recovery funds for these units, and **how much they spent** repairing them.
3. Ask the GHA to allocate up to \$500 per homeowner to allow them to obtain a home inspection from **an inspector of their choice.**
4. Allow the homeowners from the Oaks to present more information about the quality of the construction of their homes, GHA’s post-storm

repair efforts, and how GHA and GRACE have treated them and dealt with their problems.

Stanowski ended by respectfully requesting the Mayor to direct the City Secretary to add this item to the 23 June workshop agenda BEFORE the meeting's adjournment, so these homeowners could go home knowing that City Council would not ignore their plight.

**The Mayor ignored the request**, and asked GHA Vice-Chairman James Dennis to come up to the mic and respond. Dennis said that now that he was President of GRACE, he was going to solve their problems. However, all of the **GHA Commissioners had received a certified letter** from one of the members of the Oaks homeowners' group dated 10 April 2011, detailing her problems, and nothing had been done. Mayor Jaworski, GHA Executive Director, Harish Karishnarao, and Councilmember Rusty Legg had also received certified letters.

After Dennis' comments, Stanowski made a final request for the Mayor to add this issue to the 23 June workshop agenda, and was **once again rebuffed**.

The Mayor asked the homeowners to meet with GHA Vice-Chairman Dennis after the meeting even though he knew from their testimony that they had **no trust or confidence in the Galveston Housing Authority**, which is why they were there to ask their elected representatives for help.

Councilmembers **Greenberg and Colbert** stepped up and **did put the Oaks on the next workshop agenda**.

**Councilmember Greenberg also generously offered to go to the Oaks**, right after the meeting, so he could see the situation for himself. He was later joined by Councilmember Legg, Councilmember Gonzales and GHA Vice-Chairman Dennis. Councilmember Beeton was on her way out of town, so she sent a representative to the gathering to keep her informed.

The stories that the homeowners told at the Council meeting are far too heart breaking and poignant to reduce to words, but they are **available for viewing by clicking on the following link**.

**Go to Item 17:**

**Their testimony begins at: 3:50**

**<http://galvestontx.swagit.com/player.php?refid=06092011-98>**

**Contact:**

**David Stanowski, President**

**Galveston Open Government Project, Inc.**

**<http://www.galvestonogp.org/>**

**409-356-6553**

**gogp@att.net**

**END**