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Important Information for Van Buren and Carter County Citizens Regarding May 2017 Flood

JUNE 11TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR VAN BUREN AND CARTER COUNTY CITIZENS REGARDING THE FLOOD OF MAY 2017.

On Thursday, June 7th, a meeting was held in Jefferson City between State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and Carter County officials: Presiding Commissioner Donald Black, Sheriff Rick Stephens and County Clerk Leona Stephens. Also in attendance and joining in on the discussion were Rep. Steve Cookson, Mr. Bennie Cook representing Congressman Jason Smith's office and me.

The focus of the meeting was to get clarity on the recovery and rebuilding of the Carter County Justice Center, The Sheriff's office and the courthouse. It has been clear that the Justice Center and the Sheriff's office need to be replaced and relocated. Many citizens have indicated their desire to keep the courthouse at its original location.

Carter County officials have been under the impression, through written and verbal communications with FEMA, that the process to approve the rebuilding of the Justice Center and Sheriff's office and to start the repair of the courthouse would be forthcoming soon.

It became apparent at this meeting, there is still a lot of work to be done by our county officials in providing even more information and studies to FEMA (in all fairness to the FEMA staff, federal law has to be followed). This meeting became very contentious when discussing the courthouse restoration, but the Carter County officials did a wonderful job in negotiating.

At NO fault of the Carter County officials, this is, and has been, a very complex undertaking with government red tape. Complying with and following FEMA instructions has been very difficult and sometimes the communications were not clear, which has resulted in misinformation received from FEMA.

Bottom Line: The work of Commissioner Donald Black, Sheriff Rick Stephens, Clerk Leona Stephens and many other Carter County citizens and officials has been amazing through this whole tragedy.

This work is NOT over. To keep the courthouse at its present location will take everybody pulling together.

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