



# Mayor's Monthly Newsletter

Written by Mayor Justin Ray

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## May 2016 – Drying Out and Moving Forward

Hello Neighbors, Residents and Friends:

This past April 18th our community was ravaged by devastating flood waters. This was our second 500 year rain event in 15 years. This storm overwhelmed western Harris County with Jersey Village and other neighborhoods suffering heart breaking flood damage. A few days after the storm I spent days walking the affected streets and attempted to provide encouragement to weary and dejected neighbors. I saw lifelong possessions being thrown in to trash piles and witnessed a fair share of tears. There were hugs, words of encouragement and prayers as we talked about moving forward as a community.

As many of you know, the Harris County Flood Control District (HCFC) has undertaken large scale White Oak Bayou (WOB) improvements to reduce flooding. Improvements in our area include detention ponds and the Jersey Village bypass channel. Additionally, the City of Jersey Village has engaged in extensive street improvements to further alleviate localized street flooding. Early analysis shows that these improvements likely reduced the flood impact in Jersey Village. In 1998 Tropical Storm Francis dropped 10” of rain in a 2 day period over Jersey Village resulting in 340 homes flooding. This April’s rain event dropped 12.36” of rain in an 8 hour window with 185 homes flooding. Those numbers indicate we are heading in the right direction, but I understand that is little consolation to those neighbors staring at concrete floors and exposed wall studs.

The City’s strategy for flood control has been to reduce street flooding through drainage improvements and promoting Jersey Village interests to HCFC in the ongoing WOB project. In order for continued flood mitigation to take place, multiple entities from the federal government to the local level must play a role. I have been in contact with Congressman John Culberson’s office, County Judge Ed Emmett’s office, State Senator Paul Bettencourt and State Representative Gary Elkins. City Manager Mike Castro and I had a productive meeting with County Commissioner Jack Cagle as well. I am pleased to say all of our elected officials are engaged and share a sincere interest to work together to come up with solutions.

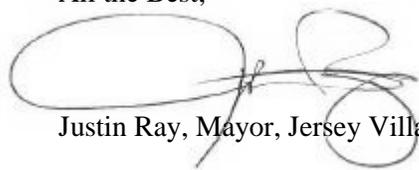
The City of Jersey Village will continue its existing strategy, but we can do more. Over the next several months and throughout this year, we will be conducting workshops to address flooding in Jersey Village. We must develop a broad strategy to tackle this to the best of the City’s ability. All options are on the table and we must investigate every strategy to bring relief to flood affected homeowners. I can’t predict what this enhanced plan will look like but I can assure our community that the city government will be aggressively tackling this issue.

These horribly destructive flood events are understandably emotional issues that are ripe for misunderstanding and confusion. I recommend anyone with questions about the history of Jersey Village flood control efforts and future plans to reach out directly to myself and members of City Council. I encourage residents to attend any flood control workshops or City Council Meetings to engage directly with the policy makers. Accurate information in the hands our neighbors will go a long way toward us all working together to address problems.

The list of people who deserve recognition and thanks is a mile long. The day of the storm saw our entire City Staff managing the Emergency Operation Center. Our Fire and Police Departments were managing an orderly evacuation plan and sheltering displaced residents. I can't thank the City Staff, Police and Fire Departments enough for the superb management of this tragedy. The list of volunteers to thank is also extensive. Volunteer Firefighters performed dozens of high-water rescues the morning of the flood. I witnessed Jersey Village students organizing volunteer teams to assist homeowners clear out their homes. The numerous stories of neighbors pitching in to help other neighbors is a true testament of the community spirit and character of Jersey Village. I sincerely thank everybody who volunteered their time and resources helping our neighbors.

During my visits to flood affected homes, I was in awe of the resiliency and hardiness of our neighbors. Even as many of them were pulling out drywall they reaffirmed their desire to stay in Jersey Village and rebuild. Seeing the resolve of these neighbors even during the midst of despair made me proud to be the mayor of this beautiful community. Those visits brought to mind the British World War II poster that rallied Brits to "Keep Calm and Carry On". Through the power of prayer and community spirit, that's exactly what we are going to do.

All the Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Justin Ray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Justin Ray, Mayor, Jersey Village, Texas