



P.O. Drawer 5548 • Thibodaux, LA 70302 • Telephone 985.446.8427  
Thibodaux 800.834.8832 • Fax 985.446.8459 • Mathews 985.537.7603

Charlotte A. Randolph, *Parish President*

## PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 10:20 A.M.

Thursday, August 13, 2009

For more information contact:

Name: Brennan Matherne

Phone: (985) 537-7603

### **Lafourche Parish Government Purchases Old Mathews Wal-Mart Building**

Lafourche Parish Government has purchased the old Wal-Mart building located at 4876 Highway 1 in Mathews. The building will be named the *Mathews Government Complex* and will serve as the new permanent location for several parish departments currently operating there after the Sondra Barrios Building was severely damaged during Hurricane Gustav.

On Monday, September 1, 2008, winds in excess of 115 miles per hour from Hurricane Gustav severely damaged a large section of the Barrios Building roof. The accompanying rain which continued over the next 48 hours also caused severe interior water damage. Less than a week later, due to the increasingly worsening conditions at the building, the Parish was forced to find a new location for the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The old Wal-Mart Building was deemed the best location because it could house not only the EOC, but the entire Raceland office staff.

Lafourche Parish Government leased the building free of charge for the first six months. During this time, the Parish was presented with the opportunity to purchase the building. On May 26, 2009, the Parish Council voted to purchase the old Wal-Mart building, citing a need to “plan for the future” because of the larger size of the building, which is over 50,000 square feet. The total square footage of the Barrios Building is less than 23,000 square feet. The estimated cost of purchasing and renovating the Mathews building was also slightly less than the estimated cost of repairing the Barrios Building.

Council Chairman Jerry Jones said, “It’s a wonderful deal. We’re going to have a lot more space and a nice new Council Chamber. It’s going to be a nice place these Parish offices can call *home*.”

Parish Council Vice Chairman Daniel Lorraine agrees. “This building has a great location, more space and more parking for our parish residents,” Lorraine said. “When you look at the South Lafourche Library and government offices in Galliano, you see how nice you can make one of these old Wal-Mart Buildings. I think we’ll end up with something similar in Mathews.”

(more)

The Lafourche Parish Council Chamber, as well as all departments and offices formerly located at the Barrios Building will now be permanently located in Mathews. Public Works and Community Services make up a large portion of the staff housed there. The Department of Public Works includes offices for Permits, Planning and Compliance, while the Department of Community Services includes offices for Community Action, Head Start and several other programs. The Mathews building also houses the Offices of Solid Waste and Recreation and the Lafourche Council on Aging.

The Office of Emergency Preparedness will construct a new EOC within the Mathews Government Complex to replace the temporary setup currently in place there. At the Barrios Building, the Public Works offices and meeting areas were used as the EOC in the event of an emergency. The Mathews building has enough space to construct a permanent EOC which will allow both the Office of Emergency Preparedness and the Department of Public Works to operate more efficiently during any emergency or storm event.

The Parish also plans to make several other improvements to the building including construction of a new Council Chamber, the addition of interior walls, and replacement of the existing roof. The administration is hoping to fund most of these projects from settlements on the Barrios Building claims through insurance and FEMA. The Parish is also considering selling the Barrios Building and applying for Community Development Block Grant Funding, both of which would also help fund these improvements.

The phone number for the Mathews Government Complex will remain the same: (985) 537-7603.

- ### -