

## **A concept that deserves your support - The Galveston County Daily News : Guest Columns**

### **A concept that deserves your support**



**Mayor Tim Paulissen**

**By TIM PAULISSEN | Posted: Sunday, July 6, 2014 12:30 am**

Everyone who grew up around the Gulf Coast region has a story or two to tell about hurricanes and tropical storms.

My first experience with hurricanes was back in 1961 in Morgan's Point where I grew up. Hurricane Carla hit with surges of 1,520 feet. I was too young to fully understand the impact, but it made a huge impression on my life.

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In 1983 Hurricane Alicia blew in with a similar surge.

Then in 2005 when Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, we were all glued to our televisions watching rescue missions, listening to the heartbreaking stories of families separated and loved ones missing.

For months we were asking ourselves, how could we have prevented this? What can our government do to protect our families and properties in the event of a similar disaster? Since that time our area has endured Hurricane Rita, which thankfully didn't significantly impact League City; but the situation was much different when Hurricane Ike made its mark on the Gulf Coast region. Ike made landfall in September 2008. It sent a 10- to 15-foot storm surge into Galveston and parts of Galveston Bay, and up to a 20-foot surge over the Bolivar Peninsula and Chambers County. It caused massive flooding all over the region. Families and businesses across the Houston area, including League City, suffered

damages and went without power, some for weeks. Ike caused \$29.5 billion in damage, making it the second-costliest U.S. hurricane on record, second only to Katrina at the time.

During 2008, I was a League City Council member and I watched as our city did everything we could to respond. We kept our residents informed, worked with agencies like Galveston County, American Red Cross and FEMA to provide essential resources. Our staff and partnering agencies did an amazing job addressing the response. But, the same questions we asked ourselves after Katrina resurfaced. What are communities around Galveston Bay doing to protect residents from wind and storm surge damage? Luckily, Professor Bill Merrell of Texas A&M University at Galveston was asking himself and his peers those same questions. They decided that the key is prevention — not just recovery. He and his team conceived the “Ike Dike” concept, which is a proposal to create a “coastal spine” with a combination of barriers and gates extending along Galveston Island and the Bolivar Peninsula. These floodgates at Bolivar Roads, the entrance to the Houston, Texas City and Galveston ship channels, and at the San Luis Pass would provide the necessary barriers to protect our vulnerable communities against Gulf surges into Galveston Bay.

As mayor of League City, I worked with our council to support the “Ike Dike” concept with a resolution of support in 2013. It was a great first effort to bring recognition to the project and to encourage our federal government to invest in the protection of our coastal communities. It has a big price tag, up to \$10 billion, but that’s not even half of the price of damage from Ike alone, not to mention the staggering cost of recovery.

Here in League City we are continuing to shine a spotlight on this project and we encourage our state and federal representatives to act now, before another disaster strikes.

Let’s contact our officials and pledge our support for this life and property saving project.