

In response to Hurricane Florence, the Town of River Bend has entered into a contract with Phillips & Jordan (P&J) to collect both the vegetative debris and the construction debris (C&D) related to the hurricane. The contract with P&J was a pre-event contract. That means its terms were negotiated prior to the event. Craven County actually developed a Request for Proposal and solicited bids for the service. The contract was awarded to P&J on July 1, 2015. The Town of River Bend was a named party in that contract, which allowed us to be well equipped and prepared to respond to Florence. A pre-event contract, that meets all of FEMA's bidding requirements, is recognized as a FEMA reimbursable expense. Our pre-event contract meets the requirements. Any approved debris removal contractor is required by FEMA to be monitored. FEMA will also pay for monitors. We have hired Tetra Tech as our monitor. We also had a pre-event contract in place with them.

P&J began debris removal service in River Bend on September 24. That was 10 days after the storm arrived. This delay was intentional in order to allow residents to return to town and begin moving debris to the roadside for collection. P&J is working 7 days a week, 12 hours per day. Yesterday, October 1, they operated 12 trucks and collected 68 loads of vegetative debris, totaling 2,201 cubic yards (CY). To date, P&J has collected 11,696 CY of the estimated 50,000 CY of vegetative debris. They have collected 362 loads in only 8 days of operation in River Bend. They have completed about 24% of vegetative debris removal. For comparison, a 2,100 square ft. home is about 775 CY.

C&D is not measured by CY. It is measured by the ton. To date, P&J has collected 312 tons of C&D debris in 58 loads. For comparison, an average mid-sized car weighs about 2 tons. I have no estimate on the amount of C&D debris in town. P&J is also removing hazard trees/limbs. To date, they have removed 289 limbs and 20 leaning trees in town. They only remove hazard trees/limbs from the public right-of-way or trees/limbs that are in danger of falling on the public right-of-way. They do not remove trees/limbs from private property.

There is still much work to be done. The recovery will be slow and difficult. Every street in town will be picked up. We will do multiple passes if necessary. When a final collection date has been determined, it will be advertised. After the first collection has taken place on your street, I recommend that you rake up/tidy up the pile in preparation for the next pass. The process is not perfect and there will be problems along the way. I realize that not every twig, leaf and limb is collected by P&J. They will not be. In a project of this magnitude, that is an unreasonable expectation. I am also aware that limbs and other debris are being blown from trucks and end up on our streets. I expect that. Our focus is on the big picture. That is to return as many people as possible, to as much normalcy as possible, as soon as possible. We will come back to the small issues at a later date.

Many people have asked me how they can help. One simple way is for you to become a volunteer debris remover in your community. If you see a limb or a piece of trash in the road, rather than calling Town Hall to report it, you can just go pick it up and place it in a pile or in the trash. That simple act, done by hundreds of you, will be a tremendous help to **US** all. If you have access to a blower and want to blow leaves, etc. from your street, please feel free to do so. If your street does not need extra attention, be thankful and search out a street that does and give it some attention. Show your community spirit!

I can assure you that we are responding as quickly as possible and in compliance with FEMA regulations. Operating within FEMA guidelines is very important. If we fail to do so, FEMA will not reimburse us for the costs and then 100% of the costs will be borne by River Bend taxpayers alone. That is definitely a scenario we are trying to avoid. Thank you for your patience and contribution to recovery.

