

PUBLIC SAFETY/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & ENERGY COMMITTEE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

Minutes

A Special Joint Meeting of the Public Safety and Economic Development & Energy Committees of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on Thursday, December 6, 2012 at 6:00 P.M..

Members Present:

Legislator Wayne Horsley - Chairman/Economic Development & Energy
Legislator Kate Browning - Chairperson/Public Safety
Legislator Robert Calarco - Vice-Chair/Public Safety
Legislator Steve Stern - Vice-Chair/Economic Development & Energy
Legislator DuWayne Gregory - Member/Public Safety & Economic Develop.
Legislator Lou D'Amaro - Member/Public Safety
Legislator John Kennedy - Member/Public Safety
Legislator Kara Hahn - Member/Public Safety

Also In Attendance:

Legislator Tom Barraga - District #11
Paul Imbert - Mayor/Village of Amityville
Matthew Cordaro - Chair/SC Legislature's LIPA Oversight Committee
Terry Pearsall - Chief of Staff/P.O. Lindsay's Office
Michael Pitcher - Aide to Presiding Officer Lindsay
Marge Acevedo - Aide to Presiding Officer Lindsay
Tim Laube - Clerk/Suffolk County Legislature
Timothy Rothang - Aide to Legislator Browning
Debbie Harris - Aide to Legislator Stern
Justin Littell - Aide to Legislator D'Amaro
Jason Richberg - Aide to Legislator Gregory
Alyssa Turano - Aide to Legislator Hahn
Tom Vaughn - County Executive Assistant
Linda O'Donohoe - Assistant to the Commissioner of Social Services
Jack O'Connor - Suffolk County Water Authority
Joan Gilroy - Cablevision
Steve Tricarico - LIPA
Karyn Kemp-Smith - LIPA
Vinny Frigeria - National Grid
Bel Pag Danganan - National Grid
Steve Laton - Suffolk County SPCA
Tom Cappetta - Suffolk County SPCA
Paul Llobell - Suffolk County SPCA
Bruce Ettenberg - Commack Community Association
Debra Ettenberg - Commack Community Association
Vito Cottone - Commack Community Association
Maureen Veprek - Resident of Commack, NY
Erika Karp - Times Beacon Record Newspapers
Christine Sampson - Patchogue.com
Danny Andersen - Emergency Management Team for Superstorm Sandy

Arthur Reilly, Jr. - Emergency Preparedness
John Lund - Fire Island Association
Eric Alexander - Vision Long Island
Kevin McDonald - The Nature Conservancy
R. Scott Lewis - ITM Corp
Greg Fischer - Resident of Riverhead Town, NY
Irving Like - Resident of North Babylon, NY
Sheldon Sackstein - Vice-Chair/LIPA Oversight Committee & Former LIPA Trustee
Michael Watt - Long Island Gasoline Retailers Association
Allison Sarmiento - Resident of Mastic Beach, NY
All Other Interested Parties

Minutes Taken By:

Alison Mahoney & Gabrielle Skolom - Court Reporters

(*The meeting was called to order at 6:11 P.M. *)

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

All righty. Welcome, everybody, to our public hearing on Hurricane Sandy. And if we will, would you please all stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Salutation

May we all stand for a moment of silence for those men and women who protect our freedoms, both home and abroad. And may we also add a moment for those citizens of Suffolk County who are suffering because of this storm, and we wish them God's speed.

Moment of Silence Observed

Again, good evening, everybody. I am joined by my colleagues on the County Legislature. My name is Wayne Horsley and my co-chair tonight will be Legislator Kate Browning. And from there, if I just may introduce some of the folks on the dais; representing the Village Association, Mayor Peter Imbert from the Village of Amityville; Legislator Lou D'Amaro, Legislator Steve Stern, Legislator Tom Barraga, Legislator DuWayne Gregory, Legislator Calarco, Legislator Hahn, Legislator Kennedy, and Matt Cordaro who is the Chair of the Legislature's Oversight Committee on LIPA.

All right. I think what we're going to do, our purpose today, and I'll turn this over to Kate, is to take testimony about the Hurricane Sandy, which we still are in the middle of dealing with on a daily basis. And we realize that many of our citizens who are still suffering, many of them still with inadequate heat and inadequate power, certainly their homes in the worst of conditions. We wanted to get together early on and start to draw an assessment and start to find out what went right and what went wrong and how we can handle this better, how we can prepare for this storm better.

And with that, I believe all of our colleagues here up on the dais have gone through difficult times. I know certainly my district, which is -- includes southern Babylon Village and the barrier beaches and Lindenhurst and West Babylon have had a very difficult, terrible experience. But I've got to tell you, and I'm going to leave it at this, that never, never have I been more proud of the folks in my district and I believe all across the south shore and all across Suffolk County who came to the aid of their fellow citizens. If they lived on the very south shore in my district and they were suffering, the folks that were just north of Montauk Highway came to help. And there was just hundreds and hundreds of instances where kindnesses were provided by our fellow citizens. And to me, I could not be more proud to be a long Islander, to be a Suffolk Countyer (sic), to be a south shore resident and realizing, you know, how much we were all in this together. With that, I'm going to turn this over to my co-chair, Legislator Browning.

CO-CHAIR BROWNING:

Is there anything else to say? *(Laughter)*.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Oh, just say the same thing then.

CO-CHAIR BROWNING:

Okay, I'll say the same thing. And I know that probably for many reasons, many people were not able to come. You know, I represented the -- I represent the Mastic Beach community that was very hard hit, and many residents still not in their homes. Some homes are condemned and have a lot of work to be done yet down there. So I know that there are many people who may not have been able to come. So just because they couldn't be here tonight, they can still contact us. We will make sure that they know that they can reach out to their Legislative offices, to their own representatives to give us some input. We welcome all input, you know, on this issue because, again, like Legislator Horsley said, you know, we want to hear the good and the bad. We want to hear what we did well, what was done well, and we want to hear what was not done so well, because with everything, you learn from your experiences.

You know I have always said that, you know, over the years that I've been in office, I have reached out to my community, had meetings, you know, with NOAA, preparedness, sometimes not very well attended, sometimes not too badly attended. But again, you know, it's up to each and every one of us as individuals to take care of ourselves first, but there are many people who need help during evacuation times. And we have many people with special needs who I'm very interested in hearing their testimonies. How did they think the issue was handled during this -- during hurricane season? You know, were they responded to? JEEP applications that we encourage people to fill out; I want to know, did it work for them?

So there are many questions and we will hopefully have some answers. And again, we have learned from this experience that God forbid we have another one next year, we'll be able to improve on that. So I think, with that, if you want to continue, Mr. Horsley?

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Yeah, I just wanted to just quickly mention, in the audience we have representatives from the New York State Governor's Office, Scott Martella; the New York Power Authority, LIPA, Verizon, National Grid, LIGRA, SPCA, the Red Cross, the Suffolk County Water Authority, and I have a statement that has been asked to be read by the Suffolk County IDA, as well as the Administration's representative Tom Vaughn.

Okay. And with that, we'll go to the cards, unless somebody else would just like to make a quick comment. You guys good? Okay. We're here to listen.

The first speaker is Danny Andersen from the Emergency Management Team for the storm.

MR. ANDERSEN:

Ever since the days of Shoreham, I've noticed that LIPA has been the punching bag of government and media and others. I've never -- every time I read a story that related to that, I never felt comfortable with that because I always knew that they're in the business of making electric. And outside of that, the government, specifically Suffolk County Emergency Management, is tasked with developing a sophisticated plan that deals with numerous types of emergencies, including hurricanes; and second to that, to reach out and work out the implementation of that plan as it relates to the services it needs and so on.

Bringing in the State, with all its departments, the County, all the townships with all their

departments, the villages, and the massive amount of potential support, hundreds of trucks, utility trucks, thousands of pieces of equipment, manpower and so on; that didn't happen the way it should happen. So after looking at all of this and considering it, I looked at four specific things that relate to the storm. I've identified four areas of deficiency, and the first one is the fueling stations causing 12-hour fuel lines.

When hurricanes hit, loss of power happens, pumps don't work, fuel doesn't get delivered. It would seem to me that Emergency Management would purchase, let's say, 200 generators, like three kilowatt generators using money from FEMA that it provides routinely, store these things in a centrally located location, to be signed out by station managers when their power is down during a storm so they can continue the flow. Second -- and then they would return those, sign them back in so somebody else could access them.

The second item is a notification by somebody in the government to advise fueling stations to make sure their ground tanks are full throughout the entire storm period, to the extent that they can. Keep those tanks topped off; routinely they do not, under normal business.

The third area, and this is really outrageous, supermarkets were throwing away millions of dollars of food in 40-yard garbage containers because they breached the time/temperature curve under Health Department rules where you have to throw out the food. Again, Emergency Management would look to reach out to the insurance industry and those in the companies that own these supermarkets to bring about a plan to offer the three categories of food -- deli, dairy and freezer -- at a 90% reduction, posted in the front windows of these stores, so the community can come in, empty the shelves in one day flat and still at the register, the store would get 10% and get rebated the other 90% from the insurance company. They got rebated a hundred percent, but the community didn't get the food, the garbage can did; that's outrageous.

And the last item is the tank farms under Northville, Setauket and Holtsville, those huge 400-foot wide tanks are filled in the north -- Port Jefferson Harbor. Barges were going in and out of there, the harbor was open, according to the Coast Guard, and the harbor master said that the barges were going in and out as normal. So the question is why were the stations dry? They were dry because -- and this is to the best of my knowledge -- Northville, I believe, was serving New York City's needs. So maybe you need to make a law that makes Suffolk County first, because the trucks were going there and being turned away.

So that's -- that basically sums up what I wanted to say.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Thank you very much, Mr. Andersen.

MR. ANDERSEN:

Thank you.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Any questions of Mr. Andersen? Again, thank you very much. We appreciate your constructive comments.

The next speaker is Arthur Reilly, Jr., Emergency Preparedness, CCA. Mr. Reilly?

MR. REILLY:

I'll pass. Thank you.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Thank you very much. We're going to try to hold it to three minutes each. But what we'll do is if there's -- there may be questions presented by the panel, if that's possible. Mr. John Lund of Fire Island Association.

MR. LUND:

Good evening. My name is John Lund, I am representing the Fire Island Association this evening. I'm here to thank the County and its many departments that took part in getting Fire Island back up on its feet and running after Sandy.

The command center in Kismet, with its many dedicated volunteers supported by the County personnel, was really appreciated. We were grateful seeing managers, including County Executive Bellone, checking on our recovery status and assisting us with utility issues. The County, working with our many volunteer fire fighters and County Police, instilled a sense of confidence that our homes and belongings were being looked after until we could get back during the repopulation operation. Homes on Fire Island were lost. There's probably over a hundred lost, and we're -- and numerous damaged. Not too sure where all that's going since many of us are scattered around all parts of the United States, and the world for that matter.

Yesterday, at a well-attended meeting regarding the removal of debris from the 17 communities comprising Fire Island, we were delighted to see all levels of government -- Federal, State, County and Town -- that will complete this mission in attendance and willing to address all questions asked. We appreciate the County setting this up -- setting this meeting and bringing the experts for this mission -- for a mission of this size.

The Fire Island Association would like to be included in additional discussions of the recovery, tweaking a few things and improving our communication and coordination to work even more closely on Fire Island and Long Island issues in the future and be better prepared if there is another event similar to this one.

In summary, for those of you who are not aware, Fire Island does not hibernate during the winter. Two of our villages, Ocean Beach and Saltaire, are open all year and holding meetings in the next week or so. Bellport's beach is pretty much a summer only. The Fire Island Association meets every month during the winter and most of our communities have meetings or conduct business via e-mail. Most have websites that can be accessed via the FIA site. There are Legislators here tonight who know we are working all winter with the County on vector control and ferry issues, and then there's parks, highway and special district issues with our towns. I would like to thank you all for providing me the opportunity to speak tonight.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Mr. Lund, thank you very much. And let me just quickly ask you a quick question. You know, we've all heard -- I know the status of Gilgo and Oak Beach and those areas that are in my district personally. What is the status of Fire Island, the communities there today? Has any of the -- anything has opened up, or where are we at with the electricity? Could you just give us a reasonable update?

MR. LUND:

Electric has been restored to most of the communities, but not necessarily all houses within the communities. It's similar to what we've all read in the paper. We're trying to determine that a house is in an appropriate condition to receive electricity. The fire fighters volunteered on Fire Island and went house-to-house turning off gas, securing gas tanks where they could, turning off water and turning off the main switches inside houses. In some instances, they pulled every meter in a whole community, so that there was not the possibility of someone's house starting an event that we all read about at Breezy Point. So, we're --

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Yeah, that sounds very similar to some of the areas along the south shore.

MR. LUND:

Right. There were zoning issues years ago where houses were closer together and, you know, it would make it, you know, a dangerous situation.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Thank you. Legislator Hahn? A question for Mr. Lund.

LEG. HAHN:

I was wondering if you can comment about residents and mandatory evacuations. Because I know that our volunteers, our volunteer fire departments, our FRES individuals, our Police Officers sometimes get put in harm's way when individuals choose not to leave when they're asked to do so or told to do so. And so I know that was an issue on Fire Island. And is your community discussing mandatory evacuations and what that means for the next time around?

MR. LUND:

The mandatory evacuation issued by the County and the County Executive was followed up with Town Supervisors also stating that they wanted mandatory evacuation. There were some people that ended up staying on the Island, most of them were -- most of them were qualified, Fire Commissioners or someone trying to man a water facility or a fire facility. That was understood. There were some people who really had no business being there and should not have been allowed to stay. But I don't think there's an identification process in place to identify those people or report them to whatever County or town authority may have jurisdiction in removing them.

LEG. HAHN:

Thank you.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Thank you very much, Legislator. Legislator Barraga.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Mr. Lund, I represent a good portion of Fire Island, from Kismet all the way through to Ocean Bay park, and I've been over there two or three times since the storm. And I've received about 150 different letters from residents, owners of the properties there, asking for support with reference to taking sand from the Fire Island Inlet and bringing it around and filling in the beaches, because in some cases, from Kismet all the way to Ocean Beach, they lost anywhere from seven to nine feet of beach.

MR. LUND:

Right.

LEG. BARRAGA:

The question I have for you, beyond replenishment of the sand -- because I can see the importance because it's a barrier beach and it's a beach that protects the main land -- has the Fire Island Association -- are you going to take a position on whether or not the homes that have been destroyed that face the ocean right across the board should be rebuilt in the future? Is it time to take a long, hard look at whether or not we should put those homes back exactly where they are, only to have it happen again, over and over again?

Now, I know courts have come down in favor of the owners in the past. But the question is from a public policy perspective, should we adopt a different type of strategy, I mean, and limit homes to be built further back, but not put back exactly where they were just destroyed only to be destroyed again maybe in six to twelve months.

MR. LUND:

There are numerous regulations from the Federal, State, County and Town levels on rebuilding. Almost all of them, as far as I know, have a variance procedure, and variances tend to rely on some particular hardship. The Fire Island Association is trying to create some sort of an edict or a statement regarding that.

I would point out that Breezy Point, Long Beach, Point Lookout, anything along the south shore. You know, one size does not fit all, and I think you all -- everybody up here and everybody in the audience realizes that. So if you're going down that road, I think we -- there has to be exceptions. And I'm not saying that Fire Island has to be one of them, but it's going to be a long, difficult road, I think, to get the answer to that question.

LEG. BARRAGA:

It's just that in the past, the exception seemed to be rule. In the end, they wind up with court approval, putting their homes back exactly where they've been destroyed previously. And from a taxpayer perspective, from the standpoint of flood insurance, maybe, you know, somebody at the association should take a public position, regardless of the variance needs or the court action, in terms of whether or not it's in the best interest to continue to build those homes exactly where they have been just destroyed. That's all right, Mr. Lund. I know you don't have an answer, but I think that it's something that maybe we should start considering based on what I saw the last couple of weeks being over there.

MR. LUND:

Well, as I stated earlier tonight, improving our communication and coordination to work even more closely with Fire Island and Long Island issues. So the Fire Island Association does want that, okay?

And personally, I am pretty sure that there are pretty -- there are going to be a number of houses that will not be rebuilt and we will all be in courts together watching the outcome of that. Okay? That's the way it goes.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Well, maybe some consideration should be given to the fact that in the future, if the courts allow you to build, you don't get flood insurance. You run the risk a hundred percent; that house goes down, you pay for every penny. You're not collecting a dime from the Federal government.

MR. LUND:

And that's going to upset an awful lot of farmers in the midwest.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Mr. Lund, I don't represent the farmers in the midwest.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Mr. Lund, we're sorry, we realize you didn't come down here to be pressed, but how many houses did you lose on Fire Island? Do you have a number?

MR. LUND:

Well, I believe the number is somewhere around 150. Davis Park lost seven houses in the ocean that we know of, and there are two or three houses along the bay that can't be used, water swirling around chimneys, toppled houses, bulkheads blew out. There's another 14 houses at least along the ocean side that are left on the FEMA poles from previous storms; as things were eroded people decided, "Well, I'll spend the money and put the piles in because this is the only place the house can be."

In one part of our community, we were able, in 1992 through '96, to move houses back 80 feet, the lots were deeper. But in a lot of the other communities on Fire Island, there are very, very small lots and you can't move them -- you can't move them anywhere. But the Fire Island Association really was created around the thought that Fire Island should be preserved for future generations, and we invited the National Park Service in and the communities that got behind that, both on Fire Island and the south shore of Long Island, we have preserved 80% of Fire Island in its open and wild or ocean, ocean/bay kind of a state.

And I would point out that there are three villages on Fire Island, there are two town parks on Fire Island, there's a County park on Fire Island, a State park on Fire Island, a Federal park on Fire Island,

So somebody must like going there. We have all invested dollars buying it from private people at one time or another in the history of that Island. So it's the only place I know of where you go from village to Federal and Federal wilderness area, and there's millions of people going there every summer.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Mr. Lund, thank you very much. We appreciate your comments tonight.

MR. LUND:

Thanks.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

I'd like to now call up Eric Alexander from Vision Long Island.

MR. ALEXANDER:

Thank you, Legislator Horsley, Members of the Legislature. I want to praise you guys for having this hearing. It's important to question and understand what we all have gone through and deliberatively make some assessments moving forward. So I think this process is beginning and I'm sure there will be many more.

Our organization has -- is not a direct service organization, but we've been spending a lot of time communicating with folks just basic public information. We've been spending a lot of folks -- having a lot of folks out doing clean-ups in a lot of the impacted areas and organizing some volunteers, so we've certainly been closer to this than we anticipated.

Like everybody, we know the LIPA communications were just awful.

Right after the storm hit, it was word-of-mouth, it was the Verizon telephones, when we got power up it was Facebook, it was the local municipalities putting out information. We put together our e-mail newsletter, we went from 25,000 people to a hundred thousand people that we got out to, and that's just one, you know, one organization.

A lot of local municipality and community groups stepped up to the plate to communicate in the absence of regional, effective regional communication. And I think Suffolk County did a great job getting the word out and all of you were active and the County Executive was as well, and so was Nassau County Exec Mangano. You folks worked as a team.

The actual restoration, we'll leave it to the experts to figure out whether forty-five hundred poles down and bringing that back in two weeks compared to 900 in Irene, whether that was as quick as it could be or not, and those hearings will move forward.

What we did know, we called all of our contacts in various downtowns. The downtowns throughout Suffolk and Nassau became hubs of activity. Power was on in about 30 downtown business districts

within 36-hours of the height of the storm, and folks were charging their devices, they were getting meals, there was all kinds of coming together as a community and I think that speaks to the importance of our downtown business districts.

The human needs were off the charts and still are. There are a lot of unmet needs, folks are cold and scared, sewer-soaked carpets, people living in molds, young people, children, older people with all kinds of intense needs, and they're not, in many cases, getting help. There are groups out there, Island Harvest, they're doing a great job. There are churches, Family Service League's on the ground. There are volunteers waiting for directions, it's kind of chaotic out there. But there are a lot of human needs and there probably just aren't enough resources to deal with all the needs that -- in this unprecedented situation.

From a clean-up perspective and a restoration perspective, where we're moving forward right now, again, the municipalities on Long Island really came together. We had a summit, we had a number of local municipalities step up and send their trucks down to Long Beach and help with the clean-up and we've seen a lot of that working together in ways that we had. And then you see in the community people helping people. You just go on the Facebook pages in the individual communities, Lindenhurst, Freeport, Mastic Beach, you know, across the board, Long Beach, you're seeing that.

The County's done a good job helping small businesses. Nassau County and Suffolk County, you've got your people out there trying to guide them through the FEMA process and also with some various incentives and trying to move the process forward. So -- and the Feds were out as quickly as possible with FEMA, we understand that. So lessons learned -- let me wrap up, I'm probably going over my time here.

(Beeper Sounded)

There you go. Bureaucratic and top-down efforts, to a certain degree, failed. Nimble, bottom-up direct aid helped people. Climate change is real, I think we know that now. Infrastructure needs, we're working with each municipality, with Long Island Lobby Coalition, we need to really pull together in that front. There probably needs to be an emergency management plan for Long Island built up off the strength of the local communities. Again, we're not experts in that, but it's an observation.

We'd like to be cautious in the -- with the LIPA deliberations. Let's get all the facts, understand all the alternatives, let's not rush to judgment.

Lastly, from a values perspective, I think this has humbled all of us. It's humbled our region and we're vulnerable, but we're putting our shoulder to the wheel, community-by-community, municipality-by-municipality, business -- small businesses by small businesses. And maybe we can wipe away the selfishness and really strengthen our values and our connection moving forward. So I'm hopeful despite the devastation. Thank you.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Eric, thank you very much. Just quickly, vision has been the champion of the downtowns, the small businesses and the community stores and the walkability and all of -- how do you -- is there any way that you believe that we could have gotten our downtowns back up and running quicker, or should we have? I mean, should they have been emphasized over other areas? I mean, is there a position by Vision at this point, in your assessment?

MR. ALEXANDER:

I think they were prioritized quite, frankly. Seeing 30 of the 60 significant downtowns on Long

Island back within a day and a half made them downtown hubs now. We are advocates of underground wiring. We'd like to see downtown business hubs as well as hospitals and other key facilities, maybe schools, have underground wires, buried wires, so that those areas can immediately back up -- be back up and running. But I think the downtowns did come together. You saw -- you know, you can talk to a lot of small businesses and many of the downtowns you represent, they were -- you know, you've got chefs working around the clock where they had power, feeding everybody, people coming together and there was a spirit in that that existed through the storm. Could we do it better? I mean, we're going to -- we're going to listen to all the testimony in these hearings moving forward to look at that score. There's going -- there are a lot of infrastructure needs for our downtowns that we're going to lobby for moving forward. So we can give you more details in the coming months, we need to listen a little bit more. But I'll get back to you on that, Legislator.

CO-CHAIR BROWNING:

Eric, I have a question, because you kind of hit on something that I have concerns about. Because I know a lot of homes, no electricity. Generally most people now have phones that, you know, require electricity to stay charged, plus their cell phones.

MR. ALEXANDER:

Right.

CO-CHAIR BROWNING:

And I'm just wondering if you have any thoughts or comments on, you know, charging stations. I mean, we saw all these signs for charging stations and, you know, if I had no electricity, I don't think I have time to go sit for two hours at a charging station to charge my cell phone. So just wondering if you have any comments on the communication issues, because obviously if I had a regular phone that doesn't require charging, should I say the old-fashioned phone that most people don't have anymore.

MR. ALEXANDER:

Right.

CO-CHAIR BROWNING:

Because I know that was something that, you know, I was always told, have that old-fashioned phone because that will always work, and there seems to be this push to go wireless all the time. Do you have any thoughts or comments on that?

MR. ALEXANDER:

Well, what we've always been supportive of is multiple layers of communications. So there's not one method that's going to work, and when one method goes down you need to switch to another. We were trying to get information out through multiple vehicles, and I think that's what -- we had people just calling folks to round up volunteers. So I think what you need -- you need duplication in this instance. So clearly there are a whole lot of issues with cell towers, that's going to come out; certainly Senator Schumer has taken leadership in pushing those facilities to be as effective as they can be, and that's what people are going to be using more often than not, we understand that.

But charging stations were in a lot of places and from our observation they were used. And what we found, too, is there are some companies that are setting up these charging stations and small businesses where there's some new technologies where you can have little lockers for your cell phones and other things. So there are opportunities to kind of work with our small business community to make sure those folks can be hubs and get information. So there's ways to get the word out to people and I don't think the LIPA communications network was prepared to have anything other than whatever model, computer model they had that didn't work. I know they tried the text messaging model that largely didn't work, from what we hear. But we're looking -- you

know, we're going to listen to what failed and we're very interested in seeing some alternatives, too. So we'll pay attention to that, if we got some insight we'll get back to you.

CO-CHAIR BROWNING:

I think looking into the whole idea of everything being wireless is -- it could be a little scary, I think.

MR. ALEXANDER:

Yep.

CO-CHAIR BROWNING:

Even if cell towers are working, but you have no electricity and your phone is dead.

MR. ALEXANDER:

Right.

CO-CHAIR BROWNING:

A lot of good that cell tower is.

MR. ALEXANDER:

But duplication on the backup, independent power is going to be key, having backup generators for these things.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Yep.

MR. ALEXANDER:

Having -- you know, even folks having solar panels that will charge independent power also. So, you know, I think independent power going through this is going to be key and localized power sources also, Greenport, Rockville Center and Freeport that have their own power systems didn't have the same types of problems, and the folks that run those operations know each business and each resident and we're able to get folks back on-line. So I think that we're going to be looking at power differently as well. So again, duplication and backup are key in that score as well.

CO-CHAIR BROWNING:

Thank you, Eric.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

We'd be interested in your report, Eric, when you do put that out. We'll coordinate our information.

MR. ALEXANDER:

Definitely.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

It sounds good.

MR. ALEXANDER:

Thank you.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Legislator Hahn has a quick question.

MR. ALEXANDER:

Sure.

LEG. HAHN:

I also know that sometimes things, the old ways come back --

MR. ALEXANDER:

Right.

LEG. HAHN:

-- when the new technology fails. And things like having a phone book (*laughter*) to look up phone numbers, because phones that did work, you couldn't get -- you know, if your Internet didn't work to look up a phone number and having someone's street address, because I know our Department of Social Services were knocking on people's doors, going door-to-door trying to find out who needed help. And so whereas now the latest and greatest, "Oh, we don't use" -- you know, "We don't need the home address anymore" -- you do. You know, because their cell phone number, their home phone number, their e-mail address wouldn't really necessarily have gotten you in touch with them. And so maintaining -- we found out maintaining those kinds of lists are important and some of the old technology was important. And maybe even something like a clip board on some of those trucks that were going throughout neighborhoods with, you know, the daily flier update might have gone a long way in terms of communication. So, you know, utilizing every avenue and every method we've ever known is very important and that's a very important point.

MR. ALEXANDER:

I mean, our small village -- and we weren't impacted in any way that the south shore villages were -- in Northport, but it was a lot of word of mouth, a lot of people walking and talking to each, more people walking and biking around the neighborhood corners just talking to each other, asking each other what's going on, what do we know, what do you know, you know, that kind of connectivity, quite frankly, was pretty key, and it brought people together in a good way, so.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Okay. Thank you very much, Eric. And we appreciate it and maybe LIPA can get beyond the COBALT system in their technology. So thank you. Appreciate it.

The next public hearing -- public speaker is Paul Llobell, Suffolk County SPCA.

MR. LLOBELL:

Thank you very much, Ladies and Gentlemen. I just want to pass through a couple of comments, mostly positive. We found that as the Suffolk SPCA was out doing our business, that many of our citizens were very reluctant to leave and take direction from the public officials, Police, public safety officials, etcetera, when they had to leave their pets behind. It was clearly evident during the Sandy storm situation. However, we were fortunate enough and proud to be able to work closely with Suffolk Fire Rescue down in the EOC, Suffolk Police, State Police and every other agency that had a post in the County Operations EOC Center. Actually, we're happy we were able to be a part of that rescue effort to help our citizens and we really applaud Commissioner Joe Williams in the EOC, you know, with the unified command structure, he did a great job and they were very professional during this most difficult time.

It's the worst storm I've seen in my lifetime, and I guess I'm dating myself a little bit. You know, we have one gentleman in the audience here, Detective Tom {Capetta}, who spent 12 days in the EOC, actually seven days straight for 24-hours, never left except to get some water, some food and go to the bathroom, and then occasionally he was relieved by Chief {Laten} on certain issues. But we're happy we were able to complete most of our missions. We picked up a large number of animals, didn't need it to be reunited or transported to their owners. We made arrangements to remove other animals and provide them with a safe and habitable shelter.

We made pet food deliveries from Mastic to Amityville to Lindenhurst and other hard-hit areas that were in need. We had veterinarians on staff. We actually treated 70 animals for all types of issues, including -- actually, we administered rabies shots to the ones that didn't have them. At the County's request, we opened a handful of pet-friendly shelters, had them staffed with volunteers. We had our mobile animal hospital, we call the mass unit, was deployed throughout the storm and during the aftermath. We put many, many hours on that, and not a lot of miles because it sits kind of stationary. We delivered clothing to some of the people that needed it, along with pet food.

During the whole situation, we actually investigated the cases. We were getting hundreds of phone calls for abandoned animals, people that left their homes and couldn't take their animals with them. You know, people consider that neglect, people consider that abuse, we didn't treat it that way. We just made the appropriate rescues and we took the animals and got them to safety and hopefully we reunited them with all of their owners. We gave them blankets, leashes, collars, toys, food bowls, essentials like the wee-wee pads and all that stuff; items that the public wouldn't think of taking with them or probably did not have the time to take when they abandoned their homes.

We went from house to house making sure pets were evacuated at the request of most of our -- of the Suffolk County Police Department, Fire Rescue officials, along with the Red Cross and Salvation Army. Complaints were coming to our office in large numbers, everything was investigated, all appropriate actions were taken. We have about 60 volunteers, 30 of them are Peace Officers. We had a couple of thousand actual man hours, between our sworn personnel and our volunteers. We made deliveries actually during the storm to certain homes and certain people that were affected, the ravaged areas. We also distributed food from our office, we made it available so people could come to our office.

We were fortunate, in the Lindenhurst area we had Senator Owen Johnson, Charles Fussillo and Senator-Elect Phil Boyle, and actually their wives; they actually came with us and participated in handing out foods and necessities to the people that needed it the most. We also had -- in the Brookhaven and Mastic area, Legislator Ed Romaine and Kate Browning threw on their boots and she was actually out there chomping through the slop with everybody else and feeding the animals and lugging 20-pound bags of dog food all over the place, and cat food.

This was important I think for the elected officials that could make it and could get there, because it gave them real-time, face-to-face with the families that were affected to get a real sense of what the needs were and what the priorities should be. And, you know, it's kind of moving because some of these little children you see, they really don't understand what happened, and they may never remember this as they grow up, you know, the two and three-year olds, you know?

If I had to say if we had any problems, our -- one of our tough problems is seeing we're all volunteers, most of our volunteers, probably half of them, were either active Police Officers or fire fighters and the rest of our volunteers we had communication issues. When they don't have power, they depend on Internet or they depend on cell phones, you know, I was literally getting text pages back 24-hours later with my Verizon phone, and then when I got it once I would get it three or four times, the same message. I don't know if that was them jump starting the system to get it back up and going or what. But that was one of our biggest issues, is trying to get our volunteers out to where they had to be and communicate with them. So, you know, we're looking at --

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Mr. Llobell, would you please start to wrap it up?

MR. LLOBELL:

Yeah. We're looking into other avenues like Ever Bridge or something like that to maybe take care

of that. But all in all, I think we did fairly well. And for those of you that support us, I appreciate the support; for those of you that don't, I hope you'll join -- jump on the bandwagon. And thank you very much.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Mr. Llobell, thank you very much for your service. We appreciate everything you guys do.

MR. LLOBELL:

Yep, no problem. My pleasure. Thanks.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

All right. Mr. Vito Cottone, documented policy for who is responsible for wires, blown-down wires. I think that's what this says.

MR. COTTONE:

Well, that was one of the topics anyway.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Okay. I didn't mean to -- I was just reading your card here.

MR. COTTONE:

Okay. The name is Vito Cottone from Commack. I'm part of the Commack Community Association. It's -- a funny thing about it, I'm looking around the audience here, it appears that in Suffolk County now, one out of every five person is a senior, and maybe they could be used in assisting situations like this.

We all know that we have had a few hurricanes on Long Island recently and they seem to be getting worse. The question is what is Suffolk County, or even the local communities doing to assure we don't have a repetition of what we've had before? Some of the problems are you have a tree come down right on top of wires. The town comes around to clear these streets and they see a downed wire and they say, "Well, we don't know if that's alive or not, so we're going not going to touch that." What is the policy in a situation like that? Because LIPA comes around and is trying to fix the wires and there's a tree on it. The question is how do they get the wires out? Has there been a policy since Hurricane Gloria or Hurricane Irene what to do in a situation like this? That's one of the questions we're going to have to get answered. It's a rhetorical --

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Right, it's a rhetorical. Okay.

MR. COTTONE:

I have to thank, if anyone I have to thank, is the State of Michigan for sending in their wire men, because we finally got electricity the ninth day. And I see that the LIPA trucks coming in there and they start at 9 and they leave at 3, I guess they were not asked about overtime. But these utility men coming in from out of state were working, it appears to be 24-hours, because we did get electricity about nine o'clock on the ninth day. Thanks, once again, to the State of Michigan.

I think what Suffolk County has to do, and maybe start at the Legislative level, Mr. Stern is very happy to work with other communities and other people on getting the answers to some of these questions we have about the priorities of the personnel who are trying to get the energy back on, electricity. I was watching some of the men actually fixing the wires for electricity to some of the local homes, yet when I went to Jericho Turnpike there was no lights. Fortunately the Police were there guiding traffic. There's got to be a system in place where everyone knows where these substations are and the lines and what they feed into. Obviously the roads take priority over everything else, because I know there were a few accidents that happened because there wasn't any

lights. And you can't have a cop on every other corner.

(Beeper sounded)

The senior organizations. Now, we have a number of seniors in Suffolk County; like I said before, one out of every five is a senior. I think they can actually be brought in to be the eyes and ears of whatever system they have in place now. It's got to be on a town level because the communication system -- I have a landline, that died. I have a cell phone, the cell phone towers died.

Fortunately, I had a battery operated radio, it's the only thing I was able to communicate with everyone else, and I was told, "Hey, to recharge your cell phone, go to Suffolk County Dennison Building and they can recharge it there." Fortunately, we have a library in Commack, they also were able to recharge. So there should be a list of places you can recharge your cell phone, because apparently land lines are not going to work if you don't have any power. The question had come up about frozen food.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Okay. Mr. Cottone, you still have to wrap it up.

MR. COTTONE:

We had a situation where last year we spoke to someone from LIPA and we said, "Look, should we take our frozen food out and put it in freezers?" He said, "No, you should have power on in the next three or four hours," and we did. You call up LIPA now, the last circumstance we had, and they couldn't tell you anything. Obviously we had such a serious problem, it was so chaotic that no one knew what was happening; that's got to change. You have to be able to get down to the people.

Now, the other thing is -- the last one.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Okay, last one, good. Thank you.

MR. COTTONE:

Last one. Last one is two days after I got power on -- now, this is now the twelfth day after Sandy -- they were trimming trees. They were trimming one inch -- the limbs were about one inch in diameter and you saw whole trees bringing down wires. So there's got to be a system in place where, I don't know, maybe in the next hurricane we won't have any trees to worry about. Because I think that putting the wires underground, it will never happen, too expensive. Maybe consider raising them above the tree. Well, those are some questions we have to have answered.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

And we appreciate those comments. Those are helpful and we appreciate that. Any questions? We're good? Okay, thank you very much. We appreciate your coming down tonight. Debra Ettenberg is next up, Crisis Network.

MS. ETTENBERG:

Hi. Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am also a member of the Commack Community Association. You know, Commack is the tail end of Smithtown and the tail end of Huntington. I was alone in a house and two 70-foot trees crashed on our house, took down the wires. Down the end of Pinecone, on which I live, there were trees that crossed the road, on {Rondi} they crossed the road and on {Gannet}. You could not get an emergency vehicle when our neighbor needed it, a Leukemia patient who was recovering, thankfully. The ambulance had to go around on to the lawns in order to retrieve her and get her to the hospital. Nobody knew where to turn. Nobody knew who was responsible for our area. Was the fire department knowledgeable about what was happening in our small area? There was no police in the area, they were too busy, rightfully so, where there were

houses submerged or on fire. But maybe we could coordinate, in this crisis plan, with local groups, agencies to be responsible for certain communication.

Often times you were told to go to the Internet. We didn't have Internet. We didn't have any electricity. We couldn't get around. So, therefore, it became like telephone, "Did you hear what this person said or this agency said?" It was not reliable. Therefore, I'm asking you, when you have a crisis plan, think about the individual homes, the individual people in the homes, and let them know what the plan is so they can, therefore, relate to those agencies, respond and tell them of the need. I appreciate your time and your effort in this situation. Thank you.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Thank you, Ms. Ettenberg. Just a quick question. When this -- the crisis plan that you speak of, and if it is some sort of document, if it is some sort of plan, how do you think that we should be getting it to you? Do you think it's something that should be put in the mail, is it something that should be over the Internet, or how do we do that? What do you --

MS. ETTENBERG:

That's interesting, because I think if you have the fire department, the schools, libraries perhaps captain of certain areas, I don't know who would we involve that would be -- but in order -- you would use -- obviously the Internet would be prior to any crisis.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Right.

MS. ETTENBERG:

And you would have your PTA people. You'd have any natural organization, your rotary clubs, whatever groups you have out there. This is a community. And you've heard people speak before, the communities responded by helping one another. If somebody had a generator, they would hook up with their neighbor. You would see these extension cords across the roads; I don't know if any of you had that happen. So you'd be riding over the extension cords because -- and I'm sure it was totally illegal, but they were helping one another because there might have been an older person in one of the homes, you know, someone who was ill. So that's what I'm looking for. I'm looking to go down to the various houses so we can work as a community, which you're trying to do now, right? You're trying to work as a community.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

That's why we're here.

MS. ETTENBERG:

That's right. I thank you.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Legislator Browning has a quick question.

CO-CHAIR BROWNING:

Not so much of a question, but I think, you know, representing the waterfront communities, I did a lot of meetings and presentations in my district for hurricane preparedness, assuming you're a water front community and you're going to have the water coming in and that's where you're going to see most of the damage. And it was after the fact that I realized, you know, the middle of the Island got hit pretty bad, too, with the loss of power. So, you know, maybe having some hurricane preparedness. I don't know if that's something that's ever happened in your district, but maybe having hurricane preparedness meetings within your district, because obviously look what it did.

MS. ETTENBERG:

We were out for 12 days, not one road was passable. I think day eight we finally got some passing roads. I think preparedness is something -- we had lights, we didn't have generators, nobody anticipated that. But I think somebody to the area, to get out and to help and to look at the situation. I went up to a LIPA truck, it was somebody from out of town, and he had a paper map. And I said, "Give it to me, I'll show you where you need to go." This isn't -- we don't have a smart power system.

CO-CHAIR BROWNING:

Technology needs to change.

MS. ETTENBERG:

Yeah.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Yeah.

CO-CHAIR BROWNING:

We need better technology.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

We've heard about this.

CO-CHAIR BROWNING:

Heard that often.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

This system.

MS. ETTENBERG:

So I was trying to help LIPA to help us. Thank you very much.

CO-CHAIR BROWNING:

Thank you.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Thank you, Ms. Ettenberg.

Okay, next speaker is Kevin McDonald.

MR. McDONALD:

Good evening. I want to thank you for having this hearing. I'm going to speak in two capacities. The first comment is in my capacity as a policy advisor at The Nature Conservancy, and then as a citizen who just happened to live through this like everybody else but had a much easier time. I only lost power for six days and that was my biggest complaint.

Okay. So in -- whatever your emergency response team is, when they're at the Command Center and you know you're going to have a hurricane and you know you're going to have a lot of water and that's what the predictions are -- one of the issues that became apparent to us, we have a \$5 million restoration project going on in the Great South Bay for twenty-four, twenty-six thousand acres of bay bottoms and lots of clams are at risk. And in some cases, the contents of everybody's garage, basement, the fuel tanks that ruptured and were stumbling in people's garages and basements and behind their houses; all that stuff ended up in our local waters. And when a few days passed and I could get the folks on the phone, the question I asked the State and, in some cases, County folks at the staff level was, *"Do you have any boats going out and taking additional*

testing for constituents that are outside of the realm of what you normally test for?" Normally they test for nitrogen and oxygen and other things, and the short answer was no. So all the notices that EPA is putting out across the city and other places about oil contaminated sofas and couches and beds and fences and all the other stuff that people threw out in front of their house loaded with all this stuff, paint cans and stuff like that, is all mixed in the region's water supply, in some cases where it went into the groundwater after the ground was saturated for days. If you pumped -- I have a friend who had a basement, pumped it out and he said, "Man, the water kept coming back in because the ground was still saturated." So this was just a big ugly mess, right.

So there's two issues here. There's the environmental issue as to what was the impact on the region's water, surface waters? What's the impact in some cases where people have independent drinking water wells near their property? And then there's a question of legitimate public health issues about people have the stuff all over the soil on their front lawns and their back lawns and where their kids might play later, and people need information about whether that's an issue, whether that's a concern or whether it's no concern, but they need something.

So my macro recommendation to you going forward is in instances like that, it really would be helpful to have an environmental team as part of your emergency response team. Because if they were asked, they would have had told you septic systems will be under water, fuel tanks will break because they're not really -- they're not -- I know a little bit about plumbing because I'm reasonably handy. Nobody puts a fuel tank in their basement or their backyard with twisted pipes for the purposes of believing that it's going to have to withstand a lot of wave energy. So when that happened, they all -- they got loose. If they were half -- if they were low-lying -- if they were sort of empty, they floated and then they broke off, and if they weren't and there was enough wave energy they got pounded around.

So enough of that. The macro recommendation is water quality is an issue in the after effect of what happened. We should be doing a little bit more to make sure that we're testing that. And if so, understanding what you may be needing to recommend as part of your recovery strategy is a water quality restoration and mitigation fund from FEMA to help devise a scheme or a response strategy different than, "No one ever told us this was an issue." So that's one recommendation.

The Nature Conservancy has developed --

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Okay. Start to wrap it up, Kevin.

MR. McDONALD:

I'll be real fast.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

And what we'll do is when we have a question, so you can answer it within the question.

MR. McDONALD:

Sure. We have a sea level rise prediction model that was developed with Columbia University. We'd be happy to work with you folks going forward on what some of those things are.

And here's the last thing on communication from a personal standpoint. If any of you have a kid in college or a friend in college, all of them now have, after the Virginia Tech shooting, automatic e-mails that go to parents and students that says, *"There's an incident on campus. This is what we know. This is what you should do."* So it wouldn't be that hard, if residents were so inclined, at either their town level, their village level or at some other level where you guys could access and just send an e-mail that said, *"This is what you need to know today as a result of the storm that just happened."*

And the final point is when you have power outages and land lines become no good, the cell system is incapable of handling all the other people that just whipped out their cell phones. So what they do at sporting events and 50,000, a hundred thousand people show up at Yankee or at Giants Stadium is they have extra cell satellite dishes come on the site to provide the extra capacity. So to the gentleman who made the suggestion about get 200 extra generators, the County should own or have contracts for mobile satellite communication towers so that other people who then jump on to that system as their sole means of communication actually can have one that works. So I'm done. I thank you.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Kevin, thank you very much. We appreciate that. Legislator Gregory has a quick question, though.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you, Kevin, for coming here today. You brought up some very good issues and points. I had concerns about the environmental impacts as well. And as the Mayor sitting here to my left will attest, that there are situations where people's properties were contaminated and there's debris and it's sitting on their lawns --

MR. McDONALD:

Yep.

LEG. GREGORY:

-- and it's very difficult. What are we doing? I heard that the State was going to come out with a program late last week; I don't recall anything coming out. Because we've been -- my office has been reached out to and some people are being told that it's part of the insurance, other people are saying that their insurance won't cover it, so.

MR. McDONALD:

This is part of the problem. I don't think -- and I don't mean this to be critical of anybody or any emergency response, you know, teams that have done plans on this. This may have just been one of those things that people just didn't really fully appreciate the problem adequately but now we know it. So it seems to me that you need to know the magnitude of the problem, is this a garbage problem only? Is it a surface water problem, and is it a groundwater problem? And you need to do some preliminary spot testing just to register whether anything -- whether there is a concern or not. And, you know, I had some dealings with insurance companies on some of these things. If anybody is complaining about the communication they got from everybody else, the insurance companies weren't a whole lot better.

But, you know, going -- you know, for another longer discussion, if anybody wants to have a conversation about what could be done, your health unit that goes out and does -- marine monitoring unit that does do this, has -- they have a boat, they have a sampling, you have a lab, you might want to consider deploying extra hours to the crew to do the work that some of -- which is what we're talking about now. And we can talk off-line. I appreciate it. Thank you.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Thank you very much, Legislator. Legislator Kennedy, you have a quick question.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Yeah. Kevin?

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Kevin?

LEG. KENNEDY:

Kevin, come on back.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Legislator Kennedy has a quick question.

LEG. KENNEDY:

That was so good, you got me intrigued here, too. Just as a follow-up, even towards what Legislator Gregory spoke about and what your program does. We really are, I guess -- we, meaning the County of Suffolk, suffered a loss, we suffered multiple losses, but the seeding programs for both the oysters, the eel grass and for the clams we invest multiple millions of dollars in each year.

MR. McDONALD:

Yep.

LEG. KENNEDY:

And that had to be unsettled from the whole variety of things. Not only contaminants that you talk about, but we took a massive infusion of just straight ocean water which had to alter the salinity which is -- isn't that a key component of how those beds operate?

MR. McDONALD:

Well, you know, we've been having this discussion internally and the overall consensus is that the -- this is a very narrow response to your question.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay.

MR. McDONALD:

The additional over washes and water that was exchanging into most of the bays and harbors was an offset against some of the debris in people's houses, garages, places of employment that went in the water. So given the choice between a little more salinity and all the other stuff that used to be in people's garages that was in local waters and harbors and bays, I think we'd take the salinity. But this is something that you need to monitor going forward to find out what really happened and what the consequences of what happened or what will happen. And right now, I don't believe there's any agency -- and part of this is, you know, the dramatic reduction in staff that has occurred at the State, County and Town level over the last four years or so. So, you know, the government you need the most in moments like this isn't quite available because we don't have the staff we used to have that could have been available to do these things. That's just plain reality.

But the short answer to your question and what I would recommend is there needs to be a thoughtful, comprehensive monitoring and assessment of your creeks, harbors and bays to find out are there problems that we didn't know about that we should have told FEMA about that we would have been part of a recovery strategy?

LEG. KENNEDY:

All right. See, that's the piece that I'm looking at right now. It's a twofold; we've got to get it back in a napkin that's kind of quick because of the time frame in order to even go ahead --

MR. McDONALD:

Correct.

LEG. KENNEDY:

-- and develop a FEMA claim and then the longer. So maybe that's Cornell and our Health Department. All right, thank you.

MR. McDONALD:

We'll talk. Thank you.

LEG. HAHN:

And we did have Cornell come to our last Environment Committee, or two Environment Committees ago, and report on the status of some of our marine programs, the status of our farmlands, because some farms were flooded and there's salt, additional salinity on the farmland and our agricultural lands. So we did have Cornell in and Cornell is very much on top of that already. And if you weren't there that day, you certainly, we can get you that information. And we should -- we need to continue monitoring and do more monitoring and monitoring for different things that we don't normally test for.

MR. McDONALD:

Because they're not supposed to be there, right.

LEG. HAHN:

Because they're not supposed to be there, correct.

MR. McDONALD:

Okay. Thank you.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Kevin, thank you very much. And I've got to tell you, and I think Mayor Embert would agree with me on this, the problem with the break away oil tanks is just awful.

MR. McDONALD:

Yes.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

I mean, that is something that clearly has to be addressed at any storm remediation plan. Okay. R. Scott Lewis wants to talk about the election of the LIPA Board. Hello, Mr. Lewis.

MR. LEWIS:

How are you?

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

I understand we're down to eight on the board; is that correct?

MR. LEWIS:

That's right. We lost four in the storm.

*(*Laughter*)*

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Kind of like the oil tanks.

MR. LEWIS:

Yes. And I'm really pleased to meet all you folks, and the reason is because you have created a law on the books called Election Law 1-102. So I'm going to give you some background -- and again, this is all geared towards Sandy -- the point and the benefit, because this is a meeting --

MS. MAHONEY:

Can you talk into the microphone, please?

MR. LEWIS:

It's my understanding this is a socioeconomic development and safety meeting and all of the above applies.

All right, I'm going to give you a quick football metaphor, okay? You've got companies like mine who go out there and work really hard for other companies, like {Brawn Seafood}, Fun Zone, helping them lower their electric bills. And then we run into LIPA and National Grid, another big company that does -- you know, in a competitive environment you're going to have some fouls, and you guys have created the laws and, in fact, yours truly helped with having some people arrested because the fouls were so bad. For example, the unlawful rebates -- or rebate checks being written to crooks instead of real companies like mine. So the term grand larceny and some other and identity theft come into mind, and those folks paid the price, thanks to your loss. The point is, like on a football field, you need a referee.

Now, last Spring I ran around with the -- and jumped on a law, this Election Law 102, with the help of my friend Greg Fischer pointing out to me the fact that that law means that we could run for LIPA Trustee, which is a wonderful thing. So I ran around, got 600 signatures, we put the valid petitions into the Board of Elections, to both Nassau, Suffolk and Albany. Consequently, the Board of Elections didn't do their job, they didn't put us on the ballot like the laws you wrote prescribe. So what happened? We sued the Board of Elections. And consequently, Nassau, Suffolk and Albany refused to obey the law; instead they tried to throw the case and do Governor Cuomo a favor. Because what our grassroots effort does is override his appointment. So the point is you can consent, your attorneys can consent right now to the election of LIPA Trustees. And consequently, you'll have the governance that you had the foresight of knowing that this disaster was going to be created, this big monopoly called National Grid and LIPA is running this Island into the ground. So the benefit is -- or the point is is that there's no vision, there's no justice, and consent to the elections as the law prescribes, and the benefit will be people competing to clean up the shores, to clean up the electricity, to clean up the place.

It's a wonderful thing, competition. We all just took the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag to protect it. Our judges aren't doing that; I want to bring that to your attention. So please, consent to the election of LIPA Trustees. Thank you.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Thank you very much, Mr. Lewis. The next speaker is Mr. Greg Fischer, also on the election of the LIPA Board.

MR. FISCHER:

Hi. Greg Fischer, Riverhead Town. I was before you on Tuesday talking about the possibility of either County Executive Bellone or County Executive Mangano or Governor Cuomo consenting to elections of LIPA Trustees, to consent to the relief sought in this so that we would have instant oversight, transparency and hopefully improvement. The LIPA experiment of 25 years of appointments has failed miserably; it's the source of our paying double for the electric rates and for multiple billions of dollar missing, to the point where the Comptroller can't even do a valid audit anymore. The recent audit was a political opinion, not really an audit. It did review the salaries and made that a big deal. The salaries come to, what, 30 million, 35 million? In a budget of four billion, it doesn't seem to be much. They didn't audit the fuel which we know is missing, lots of it, hundreds of millions of dollars of it.

So, besides waiting around for the County Executives or the Governor to consent, this body, of course, has influence over the County Attorney and what it litigates and what it does not litigate. So this body could -- the Legislature of Suffolk County can instruct the Suffolk County Attorney to agree to the relief sought of elected Trustees. Whether or not that's Mr. Lewis and myself or not, that's to be negotiated or that's to be put into the stipulation. There have been many stipulations in this County before as to election law, and this -- believe it or not, this Legislature can instantly create the transparency necessary for LIPA, period. Waiting for Albany to come up with the solution is folly. They've had a long time to do that and it continues -- the situation continues to erode. This body can tell them not to be sending out attorneys to oppose this litigation. Why are they opposing the oversight and transparency of LIPA? I don't know if anybody can answer that.

We didn't have one objector to the petitions Mr. Lewis mentioned in the entire State of New York. Anybody could have stood up to object to those petitions; there was no objection to the petitions by citizens. This was the government -- Suffolk County, Nassau County and Albany -- opposing an election, an election that was originally promised to the people back in 1986 when they formed LIPA. 1995, repealed illegally, as I talked about on Tuesday, the government did that. The government, for no legitimate purpose, without strict scrutiny, took away voters rights. And now they take them away again by actually sending out droves of attorneys. This County spent a lot of money to send out droves of attorneys to oppose this in the Trial Courts, in the Appellate Courts, in the Federal Courts. Why did this County send out droves of attorneys to oppose the transparency of LIPA? We have to wait for a storm to find out the infrastructure of LIPA is ancient and fragile? We have to find -- wait for a storm to find out that it would have cost us far less to put key lines under ground than to replace them.

So please, use your power. Please use it for what the people want. There are no objectors to elected LIPA Trustees. And I've gone to many towns boards and provided them with a sample resolution -- and I provided that to this body also, it's been given out to all the Legislators. I'm going to give more copies now for the record and for you to take. Simply to have this County consent to the election of LIPA Trustees changes the whole game in terms of our cost and infrastructure for power. Thank you.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Thank you very much, Mr. Fischer. We appreciate your comments.

The next speaker is Irving Like who is going to speak to us on Fire Island Inlet, Montauk Point Project and Sandy and LIPA.

MR. LIKE:

Good evening.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Hey, Irving. It's good to see you.

MR. LIKE:

Good evening, everybody. I want to tie together the LIPA issue and the Sandy issues. I've appeared before the County many times, but today I'm speaking purely as an individual. I want to make two points. First, that the Fire Island Barrier Island is a 32-mile natural and engineered sand levy which saved the mainland of Suffolk County from the devastation Sandy caused to New Jersey; there's no doubt about that. You can read in the media numerous statements by coastal engineers saying that the mere existence of that sand levy was of indispensable value to the mainland. That's my first comment.

Secondly, Fire Island has been rated as one of the coastal, multi-billion dollar jewels of the County of Suffolk County. That was a conclusion that was reached after a comprehensive study by the Suffolk Budget Review Office. It was a report called *The Economic Value of the Atlantic Beaches*. If that report were updated, there's no doubt in my mind that it would more than substantiate the economic importance of the Fire Island Barrier Island and The National Seashore.

Another point. Fire Island has been recognized as having such national or -- and international importance that it would qualify as a national historic site on the National Register. Also, it would qualify as a World Heritage site which would put it into the ranks of some of the world's great places that people want to go to, want to visit, want to enjoy. And New York City being the gateway, the cultural capital, the financial capital, the seat of the United Nations, Fire Island being in the gateway as you approach, the fact that it has a Federal Wilderness area, the only one in New York State, the fact that the Statue of Liberty, which is a short boat ride away, is the only World Heritage site in the State of New York.

The point I'm making is that the importance of Fire Island, both to the economy and to the protection of the mainland and its importance naturally and internationally, leads me to one conclusion, and I would like to use a metaphor. Fire Island is Suffolk County's golden shield, which in biblical terms meant that it had the protection of God. Now, I'm not suggesting that there's some divine manifestation which created Fire Island, but the point I'm making is you can refer to it as the golden shield of Suffolk County. The conclusion I draw from that is that the County should petition the Federal and State Governments to promptly fund the replenishment of the dunes and the beaches of Fire Island and the repair of the coastline of the mainland.

And if I may, Legislator Barraga, respond to the questions that you put to the representative of the Fire Island Association as to whether or not it makes any sense, as a matter of public policy, to allow an oceanfront home that's destroyed, to be rebuilt in the same location. We have a coastal erosion hazard area law whose regulations provide that if a house is more than, I believe, 50% destroyed, the owner will not be given a permit to rebuild. It's not even likely he would get a variance, particularly because to rebuild would interfere with the abilities of the Corps of Engineers and the interior department to do the very Fire Island -- Fire Island Inlet/Montauk Point project which is almost there, and I'll get to that in a moment.

What would happen in the case of an owner whose house is destroyed is he would have to make a claim of condemnation and he would then have to prove the value of his demolished lot, which is not likely to fetch much of an award in a court of law. So a combination, Mr. Barraga, of the coastal erosion hazard area law and the practicalities of eminent domain I think would be the bull work that protects the taxpayers in that situation.

Now, with regard to your point about FEMA, whether it makes any sense for FEMA to be reimbursing oceanfront owners whose properties are destroyed. The last study that I was familiar with was done a number of years ago --

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Irving, you're going to have to start wrapping it up.

MR. LIKE:

-- established that the premiums paid exceeded the payouts. Now, that should be brought up-to-date from a policy matter to see what is the cost benefit analysis of continuing that.

The second point I would make -- if you would give me a few more minutes, Mr. Horsley -- is that LIPA deserves to be replaced by a ratepayer-elected board, selected from 21 ratepayer districts as it was when it was created by Governor Mario Cuomo. Since LIPA became an appointed board, it, together with KeySpan and National Grid, the former long-term energy manager and power supplier

have evaded effective oversight and the PFC, the FCC, the Comptroller and the Courts. Many of their abuses have escaped public scrutiny because of their lack of transparency and accountability to the ratepayers.

Rhetorical questions. Do you think that ratepayers who have the right to select and fire LIPA directors would have allowed LIPA to evade the Shoreham settlement agreement by giving away \$50 million in unauthorized rebates to Nassau County and \$18.3 million of arbitrage investment earnings?

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Okay. Irving, what we're going to do is Legislator Barraga wants to ask you a question. So why don't we do that, then maybe this way you can get your time extended.

MR. LIKE:

Okay. I'm almost finished.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

I appreciate a good brief.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Mr. Like, you were heavily historically involved with Shoreham and you make reference to the legislation that basically created LIPA. If my memory serves me right, and I was in the State Legislature, the sponsor of that Legislature was Paul Harenberg, and in his bill, he originally wanted elected members to LIPA. And it was the Governor of the State of New York, Mario Cuomo, who, for some reason, did not want to pursue that element of the bill. The rest of it pretty much went through.

MR. LIKE:

You're absolutely correct.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Okay.

MR. LIKE:

He should have held a referendum when he had the time to do so and submitted the matter to a vote of the electorate.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Yeah. Now, I don't know the rationale that the Governor was thinking when he made that decision, maybe he felt that the whole thing would be politicized, much like any other election that with Democrats backing one and Republicans backing the other, I don't know what the rationale was. It was a disappointment to Mr. Harenberg and myself, but the reality is the bill, you know, went forward.

You mentioned the coastal erosion flood area where these homes are now and somehow the taxpayers would be protected. Even though these homes are in that area, historically when different laws have been challenged in the courts, the courts have come down on the side of the homeowners allowing them to rebuild. So I'm not so sure, because you're in the coastal erosion flood area, that, you know, somehow the taxpayer is going to be protected. Once you get into courts, like I said, the history is on the side of the owner of the home.

MR. LIKE:

There isn't much in the way of judicial history in regards to the interpretation of the Coastal Erosion Hazard Area Act. There was one decision by the Supreme Court, Suffolk County, which indicated

that if he were denied what he was asking for, to rebuild, that he would have a right to a condemnation award, which would then place the issue before the courts, what is his lot worth in its damned condition? We don't know the answer to that.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Okay. Very quickly, back in '91 and '92 when I went -- remember, Dune Road was devastated, homes were knocked down on Fire Island; they're all rebuilt.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Okay. Irving, I think we're going to have to end it there. We've got a number of other speakers who would like to address us.

MR. LIKE:

Okay. Thank you very much.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Thank you. We always appreciate your comments.

All right. The next speaker is Sheldon Sackstein, a member of our LIPA Oversight Board. Shelly, are you still here? Oh, there you are.

I didn't even know where you were. Hidden behind the podium.

MR. SACKSTEIN:

Good evening. Thank you for coming together to look at what has happened. And I think Irving has made a very good case in relation to the fact that he's trying to tie it together. And I think what we're dealing with is a structural issue, and I'm here not just as a Vice-Chair of the LIPA Oversight Committee, but also just as well as a former LIPA Trustee and as a member of the Suffolk County Commission to Study LILCO's response.

I've got a little bit of history here and I'm delighted to share that with you. And recognize that the structure we're operating under right now is a structure created by then Governor Pataki, a three-legged structure. Three-legged stools have a way of tipping over. Put together LIPA, which is basically a financing tool, National Grid and formerly KeySpan and the labor force, and it has been, at best, an unwieldy and costly structure and is currently proving somewhat unwieldy in the transition of the recently new management services agreement.

Frankly, I believe that now is the time for LIPA to change that structure. Hire a management staff with energy world experience; revisit the new Management Services Agreement with PSE&G; shorten the term of the new National Grid and enter directly into a contract with the people who actually do the work of providing the services. LIPA should look at the structure of new and clear, more efficient power. Plants will be owned by LIPA and, therefore, the people who pay for it, the ratepayers, operated by independent power produces under leases awarded by LIPA. This structure produces direct management by LIPA, eliminates the profit of the MSA middleman, gives ownership and control of the power plants to the rate payers, and for the first time brings energy rate competition to Long Island.

One can only speculate as to whether or not this structure could have changed the response to Hurricane Sandy. However, I would like to take this moment to draw a few historic comparisons and share current observations. I'm going to read something to you folks.

*(*A portion of Mr. Sackstein's testimony was not able
To be transcribed due to equipment malfunction*)*

That's your current manual. So what you really need to look at -- we can look at what happened. We can say, "Maybe it was LIPA," but it is wasn't LIPA, it was the whole structure. And so we need to look at the structure. And what we need to do, I think, at this particular point, as I said before, is look at the structure and get to work on it now. You can't wait because it's going to happen again. You can't turn off nature, you need to be prepared.

What I would like to say now, Action Long Island, whose board I chair on a volunteer basis, extended the invitation to meet with County Executive Mangano and Bellone, a meeting with Bellone and Mangano -- I don't know, January 25th, the members of the Suffolk County Legislature, the Nassau County Legislature, the Albany delegation and Governor Cuomo to further review and develop more new, effective structures for LIPA. Now's the time for a well-founded outcry from the public about the horrific impacts caused by the perfect storm Sandy. And it should be followed up by the perfect storm of public communication and support from elected officials, dedicating ourselves collectively to improve and recreate a more affordable, reliable energy structure for the future. Thank you for listening.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Thank you very much, Shelly. We appreciate you coming down here tonight.

MR. SACKSTEIN:

Thank you for the opportunity.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Next speaker, Maureen Veprek.

*(*The following testimony was taken & transcribed by
Gabrielle Skolom - Court Reporter*)*

MS. VEPERK:

First I'd like to thank you for having this meeting. It certainly lets people air their views on what happened and if there are any solutions. Before I forget, I'd like to just also thank Joye Brown, who I believe is in the audience over there, for alerting everybody in the paper yesterday. It helps, certainly, if you know it's happening.

My own experiences in Commack, I have lived there for 50 years, and after about a week of no electric and no phone, I happened to be in Smithtown prior to the elections and went into town hall and asked if there were any councilmen there. Spoke to the secretary or administrative assistant, whoever she was, and I said, "What's the plan for Smithtown? I'm in Commack. I'd like to know kind of what's happening in the future," and, "Will we see electric or phone in the near future?" She said, "Well, I'll have him get back to you," so I gave her my cell phone, which does record messages. We're not always able to call out. I had to go to the CVS in this time period in order to receive any messages, but I did that every night.

I also, the same day, went to my local fire department, which is on Jericho Turnpike, and I happened to speak to a man there named Marty, and I said, "What's the plan? You know, we're still waiting. We haven't seen any trucks or anybody," and he said, "I don't know of any plan," so I assumed we would just wait until we saw the trucks. They eventually came in. Ours came from Indiana, and they fixed the wire in back of my property, but unfortunately it had surged the telephone, so there was another week of waiting for the telephone. So after three weeks, my house was back up, and it made me start thinking -- I belong to a community association in Commack. We're here tonight. We are at the edge of two towns, Huntington and Smithtown. I felt myself,

personally, that we're very underserved because we don't have a central person to go to. We have two different places to go to if we have complaints.

But, in any case, our group started thinking about what we could do as our community, since we're underserved by the two people who control our taxes, you know, as far as ideas. And so we're in the process of formulating that, and so that's why we came tonight because we felt we would get ideas from you. But in my own particular opinion, having coordination and communication seems to be the overriding thought here tonight, and we all rely on these cell phones and internet, and we have to get more basic than that. I think Kara Hahn, who said, you know, we have to go back to a simplistic kind of way in these crises, that we don't know when the electric will go on, we don't know when the phones will come back.

We were very happy to find out, and we sent word, I sent word around my area that the local library in Huntington had actually opened it up. There were hundreds of people there. They were getting their cell phones backed up and bringing their mobile devices to get regenerated.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Ms. Veprek, if you'd please wrap it up, but what I might do is Legislator Kennedy would like to ask you to a question so this way you can extend your time to talk about it once he asks the question, okay. Legislator Kennedy, would you like to?

LEG. KENNEDY:

Yes. Thank you, and thank you for coming out. As a matter of fact, Commack Community Association is always right at the tip of most issues. And, obviously, you hit the nail -- well, I don't want to say you hit the nail on the head with Commack, because Commack, being in two different towns I don't know necessarily made so much of a difference with restoration here. I would talk to you more about Commack being fed by multiple substations, like the Pilgrim substation on New Highway and the Indian Head Road substation that fed down.

And what one speaker alluded to with the paper maps that were in substations that had circuits that ran along roads and trying to understand the actual process of doing restoration for down poles. I know I spoke with folks up on Ruth Boulevard that had multiple --

MS. VEPREK:

That's where I live.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Yeah, that was me. That was me. And each and every one of us in our own way tried very hard with the inside telephone numbers that we had as elected officials to get the information from LIPA. And I don't even fault the people that were out on the restoration out of the substations. There's a whole 'nother conversation that we need to have with the level of communication from the upper level, because as we were struggling, ma'am, to get the same answer you were trying to get, the plan, local people were doing what they could to try to host the restoration.

Commack housed 150 out-of-state linemen in that firehouse for almost two weeks because there was no place for them to stay. A lot of these people were living in their trucks. We had 30 of them in Nesconset, and Smithtown had 45 from French Canada up in New Brunswick.

So, look, your point is well taken, that there are multiple lessons that have to be addressed after this, but in the midst of it day by day, I think each and every one of us who was doing the level best that we could to try to advocate and to get the simple answers you folks were looking for: Do I abandon the house? Do I dump the freezer? Do I stay another six hours? That was the most frustrating part, and each and every one of us tried to do what we could, but nobody was taking a walk around Commack or any place else.

MS. VEPREK:

Yeah. I realize Commack wasn't the worst place on Long Island.

LEG. KENNEDY:

I'm not suggesting that it wasn't, ma'am. Legislator Browning said it: We in the middle of the Island took tremendous tree damage. The south shore, where Legislator Barraga talked about, houses gone into the ocean, just gone.

MS. VEPREK:

Yeah.

LEG. KENNEDY:

So it's spanned across the board.

MS. VEPREK:

Yeah. I think most people in Commack were fairly patient on that issue. No one was really doing a lot of screaming and yelling. The thing that -- at the firehouse that we found out later that they were housing them, there were people who would have taken them in their houses. There were people who would have fed them. Now, I understand now after searching out information that the high school evidently fed them and the fire department fed them down at night, and that was wonderful, but I think they could've even had, I want to say, more luxurious -- I mean, we were thankful to have them. I happened to work the next day at the Board of Elections, and I said to them, "Feed them, and they will stay," and, you know, it's --

(Laughter)

LEG. KENNEDY:

An army travels on its stomach, ma'am.

MS. VEPREK:

It always travels on its stomach. And they are from out of town and they don't know what we're all about, but I think when they got out of here -- I saw the letter that came in the Commack Patch about the man who wrote later and said he never knew Long Island people were as nice as the people in Commack. There are volunteers in Commack that will take up this sword in order to keep us moving along not the way we're used to.

One of the most critical things you all have to think about is that water supply. If that's not protected -- we were fortunate in our household because we had a gas stove, but if that water was not working, you would have people who would not be able to get to the store. You have over 53 percent of our citizens in Commack who are retired, and they are not all as mobile as they would like to be. Now if you don't have some organization within your own local area -- and it doesn't always happen from the top; it sometimes happens one house to another. And I thought, Even if it was a red and a green flag that sat in front of the house to say, "I have a downed wire," I mean that helps the fellas who, you know, are coming in from out of town who have no clue where they are.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Ms. Vubeck, we have one questions from Legislator Browning, and, by the way, we feel your outrage when we hear you were out of power for three weeks.

MS. VEPREK:

That's okay. We're survivors. Our age group are survivors.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Our age group, yes.

MS. VEPREK:

My age group.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

I'm with ya. Legislator Browning.

CO-CHAIR BROWNING:

Just a real quick question. When you mentioned 53 percent being retired, seniors, many of them possibly with a certain kind of health needs and not having electricity for a period of time, are you familiar within your organization about the JEEP program, the JEEP applications that can be filled out and sent to our FRES department.

MS. VEPREK:

The ones that come through the police department? Is that the senior --

CO-CHAIR BROWNING:

It's the Joint Emergency Evacuation Plan, it's called, and it's a form that if there's anyone in your community who has any kind of special medical needs that they can fill out this application and submit it, so that way our fire rescue emergency services in the County, they log that for any kind of emergencies, evacuations, or they can track because I know I have pushed the issue. In my district, I have a couple gentleman who are in wheelchairs, and, pretty much, they need electricity. So that way they can call them and will say, Okay, you have to evacuate, this is where we'll get you, and they call them. So if you fill out those forms, you will get called.

MS. VEPREK:

Part of the problem in Commack, there was no evacuation site. I mean, what do we have? We have the schools and we have the firehouse. We had the workers in the firehouse. So, okay, where are you evacuating them to? Most of what happened on my block and in the surrounding area that I live is that it was a one-on-one between us and our neighbors. We knew who was old. We knew who may not need as much help. But it was really neighbor-to-neighbor, and that's probably the best way to go in a lot of ways, anyway. But we have people that would be willing to get down there and help the fire department; maybe, say take some training from the fire department ahead of time, wear those little things that have red on it so that if you're at an intersection of some sort, that -- we had a tree.

I'll give you this. This was the classic of Huntington and Commack. We had two trees across Townline Road. Nobody seemed to be able to figure out who was responsible because the root was on one side, on the Smithtown side, and had the basic part of the tree, the head of the tree was on the Huntington side. So I had the 14,000 cars that go up and down Townline Road going on Terry Lane until they figured it out, maybe, five or six days later. Okay. You've never really lived with that traffic until it's in front of your house, and so that's where Commack is in the big picture, but I think the solution has to be with some very basic guidelines. Even having a billboard that would be at the Friendly intersection at Commack and Harned Road would give people clues. They could at least say, "Oh, go to Meat Farms, they have ice," you know, things like that. Thank you.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Okay. Thank you very much for your suggestions, and they will be noted and marked in our report. Thank you.

Bruce Ettenberg.

MR. ETTENBERG:

Good evening. I'm Bruce Ettenberg. I'm the president of the Commack Community Association, and I would like to thank you for this hearing, and I hope the result of this hearing will be some

planning for the future in terms of emergency management, and I certainly hope that that planning and implementation will include the community associations and civic associations in each of your districts. We live in the communities. We know where all the problems are, and we have people who have come forward already and said they want to volunteer their time to help their communities and we work free. So it seems to me to be a perfect solution to the communications and the planning of emergency management for Suffolk County. It certainly should be a part of it. And I urge you, since I'm sure all you are familiar with your community associations, to get in touch with them and include them in on any planning. Thank you.

CO-CHAIR BROWNING:

Just one quick -- not so much of a question, but I think -- I don't know who your legislator is, but I'd recommend you contact your legislature for information on the Suffolk County CERT Program. That is a volunteer program. There are many seniors and community residents who volunteer in the program, and when emergencies like that come up, they help in their own community so.

MR. ETTENBERG:

Well, I do want to compliment my legislator, Legislator Kennedy. He was the only one I could contact who could actually tell me when power was being restored to the areas of our neighborhood, so his office knew when LIPA couldn't.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

That's impressive. I'll hand you one, Mr. Kennedy, on that one.

MR. ETTENBERG:

I was impressed, and he knew within a few hours of when it was going to be restored.

LEG. KENNEDY:

I have an old eight ball.

CO-CHAIR BROWNING:

John, he needs the CERT information.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Thank you, Mr. Ettenberg.

Michael Watt wants to speak about LIGRA.

MR. WATT:

Good evening, and thank you for this opportunity to address the Legislature about this. I've submitted my comments, the written testimony. They're rather lengthy, so I'll skip to the good parts. I assure you, though, each and every word is brilliantly written and worth reading on your own when you have a chance.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

No doubt.

MR. WATT:

Thank you. But skipping through, we all know about the storm. There has been legislation proposed to require backup generators for service stations in Suffolk County that has been shut off for the time being. We are very grateful to the legislators involved who understand that it's a much more complicated issue, and we are working to come up with a comprehensive plan that would resolve a lot of problems that presented themselves during the storm.

But I would like to take this opportunity to just rattle off a couple of points and measures, provisions and measures that I think are worthy of consideration. We are all very aware what happened in the aftermath of the storm. Dozens, if not hundreds, of gas stations either had power but didn't have gas or didn't have power but had gas. The simplest solution to the problem is to make service stations, gas stations a priority for restoration. And most service stations are along major thoroughfares in Suffolk County, so you're not looking for any special treatment.

As one of the previous speakers mentioned, a priority should be to have the traffic lights up and running. Most service stations are located right next to intersections. We had one service station at an intersection, out of power four days. The 7/11 across the street had power a day later, and you had the LIPA crew there. Why not just make sure the service stations were adequately lit up? So the simplest solutions to make sure LIPA, or whoever is in charge of the next storm, has as a priority putting the gas stations back on the grid.

Any programs for backup generation should be on a voluntary basis.

Not all service stations warrant backup generators. Some don't do enough volume to pay back the investment you have to make. We're talking about anywhere from 30 to \$50,000. New builds -- new gas stations being built or significant renovations of old gas stations should be required to be wired for either generators to be put in place or to have the generators in place, and the reason why you shouldn't automatically require a generator to be in place is a lot of the service stations that they had backup generators, the generators would've been underwater because the service stations are in low-lying areas. So not all service stations lend themselves to having backup generators.

We also ask that the requirements be implemented in a uniform basis across the region. A lot of our service station owners have stations in two or three different municipalities and to have to understand the rules and regulations of all the municipalities can be very inefficient and very expensive. We would also love to use this opportunity to explore having the federal government fund generators that can feed backup batteries and have these service stations put on solar power, which would be kind of neat if you think about it.

You can talk about transfer switches, and again, not necessarily requiring that the generators be on the premises because it doesn't lend itself to that, but have a system in place where generators are at the ready, and then have the County with a database of emergency contact numbers for all the service station owners so that when a situation like this comes into place, we can identify and track down the station owners. Because one of the things that came up during the aftermath of the storm was I couldn't get in touch with my members because they're not at their place of business. I don't have their home numbers or cell phone numbers. So you can trust me: One of most important things to have is an emergency contact number for every station owner.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Michael, that makes a whole lot of sense. We're going to start wrapping up, so maybe you could add some of your comments in through the question. Legislator Gregory.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you, Mike, for being here today. Given my -- you know, my little self-evaluation of this whole process and everyone has their kind of take-away points and things. One of the things that kind of stuck out for me really early on was once the whole situation with the long gas lines was that we haven't -- you know, we do all this planning but we really didn't take a good look at what our critical infrastructure needs are. I mean, I think we did to a certain extent, but we clearly left our retail service stations out of the mix. So I think it would be appropriate that there's a representative or representation on these planning committees from the service stations and any other critical areas, you know, that are needed during such a storm.

Unlike New York City, we are a commuter community. We need our vehicles to get from A to B, and if we can't get fuel to do that, it makes a horrible situation worse. And I think it would be very important to get feedback and information from your industry on how to best implement a plan to ensure that there is little disruption as possible.

MR. WATT:

We would welcome that opportunity. And just one final suggestion, actually two-part. Like I said before, not every service station has to be up and running. You really want to target the ones that are in the most viable places, the most central locations, and you also want to dedicate a couple service stations strictly for the use of first responder and hospital workers and clearly identify those stations so you don't have that problem of emergency personnel and badges not being able to get gas.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Okay. Thank you very much, Michael, and I got to tell you that LIGRA and the gas station industry has got our attention because we fully recognize that the economy runs, and it runs on gas, and it shut us down, our economy, for several days, and we're -- we've got to do something about it together.

MR. WATT:

It was a very scary couple days, I have to tell you. And the other part of the equation is you have to work on the distribution channels, make sure we don't have a repeat of what happened because it wasn't fun.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Good point. Thanks for coming down. We appreciate your comments.

Okay we've got one more card. Allison Sarmiento from the Mastic Beach community.

MS. SARMIENTO:

Hi. How ya doing? I just want to comment on the prior-to crisis. Obviously -- I mean not obviously, I shouldn't say that. Communities, you know, the civic leaders, the school, the fire department, the ambulance company, they have maps of these areas. They can get down there and do intake immediately, assessing situations. Establish the DRC. Now someone mentioned we have to go backwards. Technology is amazing. We have to use technology. Facebook, internet, global network; I mean, it's viral, so the second somebody posts something on Facebook -- sorry. I don't know how to use this thing. As soon as someone posts something on Facebook, it's in China. So if prior to the crisis, we say, okay, we get devastated. The DRC is already set up, so at first sight of the storm, the community has to get in touch with the officials or visa versa. Get in place the DRC, Disaster Relief Center is going to be located -- boom, it's there. Get the resources to a location where the community knows the site. "Hi, we're here to send you over to the DRC. We're going to take intake from you. We're going to track you. We're going get you a hot meal. We're going to give you a blanket," so there's no chaos. There's chaos when there's confusion.

So the powers are down. You know, you know what, powers are going to go down again. And until there's -- whatever -- new systems in place, plan on power going down. Okay. Storms coming in a week. Instead of get your flashlights and get your water supply, how about if, in fact, you're impacted, here are the locations to go to. If you are, in fact, impacted. So when they -- oh, no power, oh, okay, I heard last week that if I was impacted I would go down to the library, or I would go down to the nutrition center that happened to be the main resource assistance center overnight on accident because of Facebook. Somebody posted on Facebook, "Oh, go to the nutrition center for donations." Then somebody posted, "Oh, they're receiving donations at the nutrition center," and that was never established through any officials. It just became like this -- we call it "the nut," because here they come looking for help. We want to give it to them, but nobody knows who they

are, so you have to write down their address and find out are they victims of the hurricane, or are they just taking advantage of the supply. So we had that going on.

So I have been deeply involved in from day one. I was out trekking in the streets, advising people, "You got to get assistance. You got to get out." People don't want to leave their pets. You know this already. I don't have to go over it. But that's all I want to add, that let's not say we have to go back to knocking on doors, which would have to probably merge together. But Facebook, learn how to use it. I mean President Obama should say, "This is the most valuable information, it's intel that's been confirmed. So here it is, people, if you're impacted, this is in place. Donations go here. Distribution goes there so it's already in place before the crisis hits. And then when the power's out, people know where to go. They are not waiting for Channel 12 news to tell them because they can't turn on the TV. So you don't have North Carolina friends Facebooking people in New York saying, "Oh, I just heard that you guys have this and that," and we're like, "Well, we can't get to that information because we don't have power," so that's pretty much my comment.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Ms. Sarmiento, thank you very much, and I've got to tell you that almost every community along the south shore had "the nut" as well. And if it wasn't for our communities working together, I don't know how we would have gotten through this, so I applaud you for creating your nut. Legislator Browning.

CO-CHAIR BROWNING:

Hi, Allison. I'm trying to remember. I know there was certain areas that were evacuated, and I actually have a friend that lives on Trafalger that was pretty flooded out, which is not far from you. How did you do in the storm.

MS. SARMIENTO:

We had just some structural damage that we need an engineer. We can't get anybody now to come over. It's a high demand job, you know. So we're waiting to see if the foundation is, in fact, you know -- I don't know, the level of damage that is. I'm higher up on new construction. Further down my block -- I'm on a dead end on Heathcote -- they had floods, you know, and ruined all their stuff up to the first floor. But Smith Point, you know, over by the canals, yeah, there was some damage, but, you know, Mastic Beach from, you know, south of Dogwood, south of Cedar was trashed and still is.

CO-CHAIR BROWNING:

So you weren't actually evacuated.

MS. SARMIENTO:

No, and I'm in the flood zone, and they told us to evacuate, and I didn't. As soon as I saw the power line go on fire, I said, "All right. I'm getting out of here," and we had no power for about a week. But, you know, no damages, the flood, or anything like that, thank God.

CO-CHAIR BROWNING:

Just, you know, the answer to that, because I know that some people that lived down in that area were not asked to evacuate that I felt should have been asked to evacuate, and that is something that I've already asked FRES to look into and address and, as you know, William Floyd High School sometimes is an evacuate center. Evacuation centers change based on whatever the emergency is and whatever the condition is. And because it's in the flood zone, it was not used as an evacuation shelter at this time. That's why they went to Eastport Manor. So it's kind of hard sometimes ahead of time, like very much ahead, to say, "This is where you're going to go." It is a little fluid, and it sometimes does have to change, so that makes it difficult. They do have a reverse 911 system, but, obviously, the best-laid plans don't always work. So that's why we're here tonight is to hopefully learn from some of the mistakes and hopefully make things better next time. But thank you,

Allison, for coming out.

MS. SARMIENTO:

Sure.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Okay. That concludes the cards that I have tonight. Does anybody want to be heard? We're good. Well, I appreciate it, and what we're going to do is we're going to take these comments. We're going to give it to the respective agencies that deal with the issues that were brought up tonight, and hopefully sometime during the next couple months, we're going to have a full report laid out to the Legislature in different components so that we can make this next storm, when it comes, better. And I appreciate the Legislature and our guests for sitting in with us and working with us throughout the evening. Thank you, everybody, and have a merry holiday season.

*(*The meeting was adjourned at 8:13 P.M. *)*

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