

Village of Head-of-the-Harbor



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Fellow Residents of Head of the Harbor:

As I write this letter, I am hoping that your electricity has been turned on and all communication services have returned. Please allow me to update you as to what transpired in the Village during and after the effects of Hurricane Sandy and the subsequent Nor'easter.

Village Hall finally has electricity, access to computers, telephone service and the Internet. Therefore, it is now possible for me to provide this mailing and update our website accordingly. Although it seems impossible, LIPA still cannot confirm how many homes in the Village are still without electricity, or when it will be fully restored.

Our three-man Highway Department should be commended for the long hours and great effort they put into cleaning up the Village and addressing the snowstorm that came after the hurricane. Within 24 hours of the hurricane, I authorized our Highway Department to contract with All Island Trees to assist in removing the massive fallen trees and debris obstructing our roads, therefore allowing emergency vehicles to attend to our residents' needs, as well as allowing our residents access to public roads to seek shelter elsewhere as was recommended due to the severity of damage. We are also grateful to the volunteers who arrived from Fairport, NY to assist in debris removal, and thankful to the village employees who made sure they were fed and housed.

The Head of the Harbor Police Department displayed exemplary service to our residents during this crisis. I am pleased to report that there were no fatalities, nor reports of burglaries. The numerous cases of aide/assist were responded to promptly and professionally, and in many instances resulted in letters of commendation.

While awaiting the restoration of phone service to the Village Hall, the Village Clerk graciously transferred all Village telephone calls to a cellular phone to deal with problems and questions from our residents, even outside of office hours. These communications were conveyed either to myself, the Highway Commissioner and/or the Police of Chief.

Village Hall was open to residents for hours extending past normal hours of operation to assist residents, and direct them to emergency shelter. We had several residents come to our Village Hall frustrated and angry as a result of their lack of electricity and no awareness from anyone as to when their electricity would be turned on. Each individual was provided with the most current facts, offered the opportunity to charge their electrical devices, and encouraged to sit and relax in the heated building. Village employees offered coffee, water, and the use of their personal cellular phones so residents could contact family and friends.

As Mayor, I and/or a village representative participated in LIPA conference calls twice a day, every day to address the status of the situation on Long Island. I contacted Town Supervisor Patrick Vecchio and New York State Assemblyman Michael Fitzpatrick to accelerate LIPA's response to the lack of electricity in the Village. Both our Supervisor and New York State Assemblyman have been frustrated by the lack of response from LIPA, and stated there was little they could do.

Whereas a level of anger and frustration is understandable and acceptable, I feel slander and rumor is not. Therefore, I feel the need to address a complaint singling out not only my position as Mayor, but that of the Trustees as well. In my seven years as Mayor, I have never publicized correspondence sent to me by residents who have mailed me letters to my home, my office or to Village Hall. This is the first time I feel the need to publicly respond, as the statements are misleading and totally inaccurate.

As illustrated above, the time and commitment spent by the Board of Trustees and myself during this crisis was immeasurable. The Highway Commissioner, Trustees, Chief of Police, and I have personally driven each village roadway numerous times since Tuesday, October 30, 2012. Residents and volunteers were welcomed and encouraged to use the Village Hall facilities. It is and was a communication and coordination center; it is not designed nor equipped to be a housing shelter. St. James Fire Department and FEMA provided overnight accommodations for volunteers. The FEMA "tents" were heated and included sleeping accommodations, a fully stocked mess hall, and bathroom and showering facilities. At no time did these "tents" collapse and endanger the safety of the volunteers.

I trust that this letter and my direct response to the unhappy resident will clarify the amount of work that was put in by the Trustees, myself, my private office, and the village employees to deal with the problems and frustration that we all experienced in not getting answers. In addition, in some cases we were not aware of the conditions that existed for many of our residents, as we too had no access to telephones, computers, or emails.

Moving forward, if any resident has any suggestions as to how the Village could have handled the aftermath of the hurricane, please feel free to speak with the Board of Trustees. We are all resident volunteers who care about this community and would appreciate all productive involvement. Please keep in mind the feasibility of your suggestions, as our own Town Supervisor and New York State Assemblyman were limited as to what they could do in their official capacities.

I have directed the Village Clerk and Building Inspector to waive all permit fees for any resident that has to repair and/or replace any property damage by the hurricane that requires a permit.

Most unfortunately, the expense associated with hiring the outside contractor and other related expenses was not budgeted for and has placed a further financial burden upon our budget for 2012.

I hope that in the next coming weeks we will be able to clean up the Village even further and attempt to restore it to what it was prior to the hurricane.

Very truly yours,



NATALE J. TARTAMELLA
Mayor

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