



Mayors Council on Rahway River Flood Control ups estimate of Hurricane Irene damage to \$60 million—Mitigation action needed

Published: Monday, March 26, 2012, 11:24 AM Updated: Monday, March 26, 2012, 11:29 AM



Cranford Chronicle

By

New estimates of the damages brought by Hurricane Irene now are in excess of \$60 million well above earlier estimates as residents and businesses have finalized damage claims. While the financial impacts are significant, other impacts from family burdens to property value losses remain serious concerns. Some residents are just now returning to their homes.

During Irene the damages were far reaching including almost \$4 million damage to the Brookside Avenue school and the Cranford High School in Cranford; significant damages in Rahway (\$5 million) to 262 homes and to the church on West Grande; public infrastructure including roads and numerous homes impacted in Millburn and Springfield; 392 homes in Union Township were impacted; lost business sales in the downtowns of Cranford, Rahway, Millburn and Union from flooding and power outages; hundreds of homes had first floor damage and the first floor of the Cranford Municipal Building was destroyed; and the flooded PSEG substation in Cranford caused over 6,000 customers in Westfield, Cranford and Garwood to be without power for several days.

Hundreds of repetitive loss properties in Cranford and Rahway again were impacted by Irene. A Union County Hazard Mitigation study in 2008 pointed out as a priority the significant impacts of past storms and that numerous properties were still in the path of future losses.

The Mayors Council will be meeting April 3 at 5 p.m. at the Union Municipal Building in Union Township, to discuss flood mitigation measures. Mayor Florio who has been a leader in this effort will be hosting the meeting, The Mayors Council on Rahway River Watershed Flood Control was formed to develop solutions to mitigate flooding. The Council is being broadened to include the Rahway River East branch communities of Maplewood, South Orange and West Orange.

Mayors David Robinson (Cranford); Mayor James Florio (Union); Mayor Sandra Haimoff (Millburn); Mayor Rick Proctor (Rahway); Mayor Andrew Shehady Ziad (Springfield) Mayor Kathie Fiamingo (Kenilworth); Mayor Skibitsky (Westfield); Mayor David Wright (Winfield); Mayor Quattrocchi (Garwood) will be participating.

The agenda for the meeting includes: review of the update on the US Army Corps of Engineers study of the watershed with potential opportunities for flood water storage at Orange reservoir; South Mountain

Reservation; Nomehegan and Echo Lake Park and Lenape Park. The US Army Corps is in partnership with the NJ DEP to study the flood control alternatives. Senator Lautenberg, Senator Menendez and Congressman Lance have recently announced a \$225,000 federal grant to continue the evaluation. Once the cost-benefits study is done the Mayors Council intends to petition state and federal leaders to fund the mitigation plans.

In addition, the Mayors Council will consider a resolution to urge all communities to adopt a plan to reduce impervious surfaces at school and municipal facilities by 10%; petition Union County to use open space funds for purchase of flood control properties; and designate April 21 as River Maintenance Day region wide.

© 2012 NJ.com. All rights reserved.