

Schumer urges FEMA to stormproof Island Park

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By JIMIN KIM

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New York Senator Chuck Schumer called on FEMA to approve a \$40 million project to make Island Park more resilient to storms following Superstorm Sandy.

"Very few communities in America suffered the devastation and natural disaster that Island Park suffered," said Schumer, standing by the Island Park Harbor at a June 16th press conference. "Ninety-five percent of the homes had flooding, two schools were damaged, a hundred businesses, commercial properties, an administrative building and a public library."

Anthony D'Esposito, chief of the Island Park Fire Department, is all too familiar with the catastrophe that was Sandy.

"Our streets along the canals had eight to ten feet of water," said D'Esposito. "As someone who's lived here my entire life, I hope that in my time this community and our neighbors never see anything like that again."

The Village of Island Park is still recovering after almost two years since the disaster.

"Still today, people have not returned to their homes and Village Hall continues to operate out of a trailer," said former Senator Alfonse D'Amato, who was present at the conference.

FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) recently received a \$157 million boost in funding. Schumer aims to allocate \$40 million from the HMGP for Sandy relief and storm disaster prevention.



Jimin Kim / Herald

FORMER SENATOR ALFONSE D'AMATO, left, NY Senator Chuck Schumer, center, and Island Park Mayor Michael McGinty, right.

"I am urging FEMA today to make Island Park's \$40 million protection and recovery project the highest priority and to provide funds for this project and make it a reality," Schumer said. "The application is in and there's no time to waste."

The first phase of the project will focus on a comprehensive engineering study to examine defects in existing roads, pipes, bulkheads and seawalls to form an effective storm protection strategy. The study will also

examine drainage inlets and evaluate the installation of swirl separators, which prevent debris from clogging sewers.

Once the research is complete, structures to prevent future flooding will not only be rebuilt, but also improved to include modern-day pipes, roads, bulkheads and tide gates. Island Park's drainage infrastructure dates back to 1940 and upgrading the pipe sizes to properly channel storm flow will be a top priority. Roads will also be raised to avoid chron-

ic flooding.

"There's always federal bureaucracy and there's a lot of competition for this," said Schumer regarding the \$40 million grant. "I'm putting my weight behind the Island Park project. There's more applications for the money than there is money obviously, but we did get a new trunk of money, they do listen to me, I helped write the [Sandy Relief Bill], so I have a little say in what happens."

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