



Stockton Hosts Public Hearing on State Plan to Spend \$1.46 Billion on Sandy Recovery

Feb. 11 Event at the Performing Arts Center Draws 150

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Galloway Township, NJ- Members of Gov. Christie's Administration took to the road today for the first of three public hearings on the state's plan to spend \$1.46 billion in additional federal funds to help New Jersey residents and businesses recover from 2012's Superstorm Sandy.

About 150 people were welcomed by President Herman Saatkamp of The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey at a hearing in the Performing Arts Center from 4-7 p.m.

"I'm very proud that Stockton has played a significant role" in the region's ongoing recovery, President Saatkamp said. "Together in a collaborative effort, we can grow stronger," President Saatkamp said.

Executive Director Marc Ferzan, of the Governor's Office of Rebuilding and Recovery, moderated the panel discussion and public hearing on the state's proposed amendment to the New Jersey Disaster Recovery Action Plan.

On the panel were: Commissioner Richard Constable, Department of Community Affairs; Commissioner Bob Martin, Department of Environmental Protection; Senior Advisor Michael Winka, Board of Public Utilities; Michele Brown, Economic Development Authority; Commissioner Jennifer Velez, Department of Human Services; Commissioner Allison Blake,

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Department of Children and Families; Capt. Jeff Mottley, Office of Emergency Management; and Deputy Executive Director Terrence Brody, Governor's Office of Rebuilding and Recovery.

Each outlined how their agencies plan to utilize the second round of federal funds allocated to New Jersey for Sandy recovery, giving priority to the nine counties most impacted: Atlantic, Cape May, Ocean, Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Middlesex, Monmouth and Union.

The \$1.46 plan proposes to spend \$735 million on housing assistance programs, with \$450 million of that going to low-to-moderate-income families. Another \$535 million would go to infrastructure programs such as providing reliable power to critical public facilities including hospitals, shelters and wastewater treatment plants; and to provide flood protection for high-risk areas.

Other parts of the proposal include \$90 million in funding for local governments impacted by Sandy to maintain essential services; \$10 million to demolish unsafe flood-damaged structures; and \$5 million to help affected municipal zoning and code-enforcement offices respond to the influx of applications to rebuild. The plan also includes \$5 million for marketing tourism at the shore.

Victims of Sandy from Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland and Ocean counties poured out stories of still needing help 15 months after the storm. One Atlantic City woman who is still homeless broke into tears and could not speak when her turn came.

"We appreciate your frustration and thank you for your comments," said Ferzan, in response to a homeowner.

Brigantine homeowner Jane Peltonen criticized the Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, Elevation and Mitigation (RREM) program as "a black eye" on the state and said her case is still in review.

Since President Obama and Gov. Chris Christie visited Brigantine, she said, "only one house has been lifted" by the program.

Representatives of various groups spoke, including the Atlantic County Long-Term Recovery Group, Clean Ocean Action, the New Jersey Flood Plain Managers, the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey and the Fair Share Housing Center.

Many called for more transparency in government, such as posting regulations for rebuilding

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receiving aid. Commissioners Constable and Martin also offered to meet personally with three individuals after the hearing.

At Stockton, Spanish-language translators, sign language interpreters and other services were provided by the state to make the event accessible to more members of the public.

Two more Sandy Recovery hearings will be held this week at the New Jersey Institute of Technology in Essex County on Feb. 12 and at Brookdale Community College in Monmouth County on Feb. 13.

A 30-day period for public comment on the state's proposed amendment to the New Jersey Disaster Recovery Action Plan will run through March 5, 2014. The plan was developed in consultation with residents, elected officials, long-term recovery groups and other stakeholders in New Jersey, and will also incorporate feedback received during the public comment period, the Christie Administration said in a statement.

The proposed plan may be obtained in English and Spanish at <http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/sandyrecovery/action/> on the DCA's website. Written comments to the proposed plan can be submitted by email to sandy.publiccomment@dca.state.nj.us or can be provided by mail to the attention of Gabrielle Gallagher, NJ Department of Community Affairs, 101 South Broad Street, Post Office Box 800, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0800. All comments must be submitted by 5 p.m. on March 5, 2014.