

Supervisor Romaine Holds Press Conference to Announce Recommendations to Help Improve Highway Department's Snow Removal Operation and Weather Emergency Plan

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Supervisor Ed Romaine speaks at a press conference where he announced recommendations to help improve the Highway Department's response to weather emergencies. Pictured left to right are Patchogue Village Mayor Paul Pontieri, Deputy Supervisor/Councilman Dan Panico, Mastic Beach Mayor Bill Biondi, Supervisor Romaine and State Assemblyman Ed Hennessey.

Farmingville, NY - On February 20, Supervisor Ed Romaine held a press conference at the Town's Mastic Recreation Center. At the event, he announced his recommendations which are aimed to refine the Town's emergency response plan and improve the Highway Department's snow removal operation in the wake of winter storm Nemo.

Supervisor Romaine delivered the following comments at the press conference:

"First, I would like to thank everyone for joining us today. I want to particularly express my thanks to the local civic associations, business and community leaders and especially many of our residents for voicing their concerns and hearing our recommendations for handling future snow and weather-related emergency situations in the Town of Brookhaven.

There were several areas of service that I particularly want to address today regarding the handling of the largest storm of its kind in recent memory in the Town of Brookhaven.

This storm on Wednesday, February 6th was predicted to bring between 6" and 12" of snow. When the storm hit earlier than anticipated, we first received snow, then freezing rain, and then snow, for a total in some places of more than 33".

At this point, I also want to note that my criticism was directed towards the leadership of the highway department; it was not directed at the men and women who worked throughout the storm to clear more than 2600 miles of roadway with equipment that was not always up to the challenge. These men and women have dealt successfully with numerous snow storms in the past.

As many of you know, the Highway Department does not report to the Town Board or to the Supervisor. It is an

independent arm of town government headed by its own elected Superintendent of Highways.

If the last six months have taught us anything, from the impact of Hurricane Sandy in late October - to the recent winter storm this month, it is that no weather related calamity can be dismissed and anything, truly anything is possible and the Town of Brookhaven must constantly refine its plan that goes beyond past calculations and can effectively deal with the problems these storms create.

We are currently in the midst of a fact-finding mission; during the last week, I have met with the Department of Highways, local Fire Chiefs and other first-responders to assess what did not work during the blizzard and find solutions so that the problems do not happen again.

My recommendations to the Town Board and the next Highway Superintendent include the following:

- Recommend that New York State pass legislation that allows for raising the cap for the expenditure of heavy highway equipment;
- Lessening insurance requirements for private snow plowing contractors; to ensure the availability of equipment. Islip, for example, does not have these requirements • Raising the rates for heavy equipment so that they equal that of surrounding towns; to ensure availability of equipment
- Issuing an RFP for a study that would examine our highway equipment and its mechanical history, as well as issue a report that determines what type of equipment is needed for a Highway Department with 2600 miles of road. This report would outline the existing inventory of equipment and the condition of this equipment, what additional equipment is needed, should equipment need to be replaced, and finally, establish a five-year capital program to accomplish this goal.
- Requirement that all private snow plowing contractors have a transponder or GPS related smart phone so the town Highway Department can track their progress.

I fully intend to meet with our Albany delegation to discuss not only lifting the cap but to discuss other legislation pertaining to the storm.

Finally, I would like to mention that the town has an updated mapping system that can locate not only a town street but an actual address, to better pinpoint and evaluate where residents are experiencing problems with respect to an emergency weather situation.

I look forward to working with the new Highway Superintendent to ensure that the Highway Department is on board with using this technology.

Thank you."

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