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ANDREW P. RAIA
Assemblyman 12th District

August 14, 2015

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

I am writing to you to follow up my August 26, 2014 letter to the Army Corps of Engineers regarding the Asharoken Storm Reduction Project and the stipulations for receiving the Federal funds needed to complete the project. I have enclosed a copy of my original correspondence for your reference. As I stated previously, many residents of Asharoken Village are concerned about the public access requirement for the project which the Army Corps of Engineers generally requires as a prerequisite for its construction projects.

The Asharoken Storm Reduction Project is a unique restoration project, as Asharoken's narrow beaches and limited road access make for an exceptionally fragile community of about 300 homes. The effects of Hurricane Sandy in this area were exponentially more destructive since Asharoken Avenue, the only road running through Asharoken, is dependent on its protective beach, which was damaged by the storm. Asharoken Avenue is also the only road leading to the area of Eatons Neck, whose population of over 2,000 residents is dependent on the preservation of this road.

It has come to my attention that Breezy Point, a beach community at the outermost tip of Rockaway Peninsula, had plans to undergo a similar construction project from the Army Corps of Engineers to fortify its beaches and residential areas. In order to qualify for the federal money needed to protect the beaches, Breezy Point, much like Asharoken, would have to open its private beaches to the public.

However, Breezy Point, citing difficulties with the project including the need for opening public parking areas and restrooms in a densely settled area, transferred the coordination of the Breezy Point restoration to the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. This program is still federally funded, but is overseen by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), rather than the Army Corps of Engineers. The change in management to FEMA has now removed the requirement of public access for Breezy Point beach.

As I understand it, many of the very concerns cited for this change in project management are mirrored in the community of Asharoken. Narrow beaches, dense population, limited parking, and privacy concerns are all qualities shared by these two communities. For this reason, I see no reason why similar action cannot be taken with respect to the coordination of the Asharoken Storm Reduction Project.

PLEASE REPLY TO: Room 629, Legislative Office Building, Albany, New York 12218 • 518-455-5852, FAX: 518-455-5804
 75 Woodbine Avenue, Northport, New York 11768 • 631-261-4151, FAX: 631-261-2992

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Additionally, the Asharoken Storm Reduction Project is set to protect more than just the beaches of Asharoken residents. The project protects Asharoken Avenue, which is the sole access road for the community of Eaton's Neck, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, and the Eaton's Neck Fire Department. Given the importance of Asharoken Avenue for this entire community, it is unfair for the burden of the restoration project to fall solely on the backs of the Asharoken residents.

For these reasons, I urge you to consider endorsing a change in management of the Asharoken Storm Reduction Project to FEMA, as this change can serve as an amicable solution which better suits our community needs. Your efforts to help facilitate this change would be a positive step on your part to enhance the quality of life and public safety of our Asharoken and Eaton's Neck residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew P. Raia". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent flourish at the end of the name.

Andrew P. Raia
Member of Assembly

Cc: Lieutenant General Thomas P. Bostick
U.S. Senator Charles Schumer
U.S. Senator Kristen Gillibrand
New York State Senator Majority Leader John J. Flanagan
New York State Senator Carl L. Marcellino
Huntington Town Supervisor Frank Petrone
Huntington Town Councilman Eugene Cook
Asharoken Village Mayor Dr. Gregory D. Ietica
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