



Michael J. Gonnelli
Mayor

Municipal Government Center
Secaucus, N.J. 07094

Tel: 201-330-2005
Fax: 201-330-8352
Cell: 201-376-3576
Town Web: www.secaucusnj.org

February 25, 2016

President Barack H. Obama
Executive Office of the President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Having visited New Jersey after Super Storm Sandy, you are aware of the devastation suffered by our residents. I am writing to express my disappointment at the lack of realistic protective flood measures to be funded and implemented through HUD's Rebuild by Design program. The Meadowlands, one of the areas most severely impacted by Super Storm Sandy, was recently denied funding for flood remediation in HUD's Rebuild By Design project. This letter is to request that you direct the use of unallocated funds from the initial round of that initiative to projects that could be swiftly implemented in local areas of greatest vulnerability.

By way of background, several New Jersey regions eagerly participated in the National Disaster Resilience Competition program and were encouraged by receiving funding to design flood protection projects. In the second stage of the program, Rebuild By Design New Jersey was awarded only \$15 million for construction projects, mostly for remediation programs on the western shore of the Hackensack River. No funds were allocated to the core Meadowlands region, including my Town of Secaucus, where hundreds of homes and businesses were affected by the storm.

It is my understanding that much of the \$150 million awarded in the first round for flood protection projects remains unallocated. HUD, which is overseeing the program, is focused on awarding the funds to projects that are so large in scope that it is doubtful that they will ever be completed; both because of their expense and the myriad of hurdles associated with their construction. Conversely, critical and worthy local projects that can be implemented quickly to address repetitive flooding from tidal surges and frequent storms have been disregarded.

I would like to bring to your attention two studies that highlight the impact these prospective projects represent. Prior to Sandy, a study by the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission in 2005 identified 58 projects, including 28 in Secaucus, that would have protected the region from damage during most weather conditions at a total cost of \$35 million. While these projects may not have prevented all damage from Sandy, they would have significantly reduced it, and would have also aided local residents during less severe storm events. Then after Sandy, NJIT delivered its 2014 Flood Mitigation Engineering Resource Center project, an 84-page document that reinforced some of these suggestions and added projects for neighboring municipalities. A recurring theme in both of these reports is that there are many projects that can be designed and constructed relatively quickly and inexpensively to address critical local flooding issues.

Mr. President, my request is that you urge HUD to consider a mechanism for the use of unspent Rebuild By Design funds in our region to construct projects that could be swiftly implemented in local areas of greatest vulnerability. While the larger projects of Rebuild By Design are interesting engineering exercises, my fear is that they will remain just that...engineering exercises which, because of a lack of funding and other logistical impediments, will never get completed. Municipalities like ours that are at great risk for routine flooding and storm surges are in desperate need of these funds now for projects that can be completed expeditiously and have a direct impact on residents every time a storm approaches.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Please let me know how I might further support this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Michael J. Gonnelli', with a large, stylized initial 'M' and a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael J. Gonnelli

C: Senator Robert Menendez
Senator Cory Booker
Congressman William J. Pascrell, Jr.
Governor Chris Christie
Lieutenant Governor Kim Guadagno
State Senator Nick Sacco
Assembly Speaker Vincent Prieto

Assemblywoman Angelica Jimenez
State Senator Paul Sarlo
Assemblywoman Marlene Caride
Assemblyman Gary Schaer
Hudson County Executive Tom DeGise
Freeholder Al Cifelli
Freeholder Anthony Vainieri