



For Immediate Release

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GOVERNOR’S OFFICE OF STORM RECOVERY ANNOUNCES \$3 MILLION TO RETROFIT VOLUNTEER FIREHOUSES

The NY Rising Community Reconstruction Program will increase resiliency of local emergency response facilities in Gerritsen Beach, Brooklyn, and Hamilton Beach, Queens.

New York, NY (February 27, 2015) – The Governor’s Office of Storm Recovery (GOSR) today announced two projects totaling approximately \$3 million to retrofit and increase resiliency of volunteer fire department facilities in Gerritsen Beach, Brooklyn and West Hamilton Beach, Queens. The projects were developed as part of the NY Rising Community Reconstruction (NYRCR) Program– a grassroots planning and implementation effort managed by GOSR.

“The Community Reconstruction Program was designed to empower local stakeholders, help them prioritize the needs of their areas and propose projects to enhance quality of life,” said Executive Director of GOSR, Jamie Rubin. “Firehouses provide essential services during normal times, and vital services during emergency situations. With instances of extreme weather becoming all the more common, we are committed to not simply rebuilding what was damaged, but rather, coming back better and stronger than before.”

The Gerritsen Beach Fire Department is the last remaining volunteer fire department in Brooklyn and provides emergency services and critical assistance during extreme weather events. The two-phase project is estimated at \$2.4 million. The first phase would increase the capacity of Vollies Memorial Hall to serve as a relief and recovery center by retrofitting the first floor with interventions such as flood barriers, hurricane-rated roll-up doors and the elevation or enclosure of mechanical systems. In addition, construction of a second floor would be explored to contain equipment and material needed for 24-hour emergency response operations including communications equipment, shower room and kitchen. A retrofit of the firehouse would also be explored, which would protect mechanical, communications, and firefighting equipment, as well as ensure continuity in services during extreme weather events.

The West Hamilton Beach Volunteer Fire Department currently serves the geographically-isolated community of Hamilton Beach, which is home to nearly 1,400 residents. Besides aiding this community, the West Hamilton Beach Volunteer Fire Department also serves the greater Howard Beach area, which is home to approximately 26,000 residents. The project– estimated at \$500,000– would flood proof the firehouse’s existing building, which took on several feet of water during Superstorm Sandy. In addition, the project would strengthen flood-proofing measures at the station’s entry and garage bay doors. The

undertaking would also install a back-up generator on the facility, and would introduce check valves to prevent storm drains from backing up during heavy rains.

“When Sandy hit our community, the volunteers from the West Hamilton Beach Fire Department were flooded – both literally and figuratively,” said Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. “The headquarters was under seven feet of water, but they knew their neighbors needed help, and so they paddled through floodwaters in a borrowed fishing boat. This amazing act of heroism will never be forgotten, but also shows the need for these funds and facility upgrades. Their building is their lifeline, and that of the community, as it houses emergency vehicles, technology, everything. It is vital everything in-house operates smoothly so they can protect us on the outside. I thank Governor Cuomo and the Office of Storm Recovery for giving my constituents the tools they need to stay safe and operate at their highest capability.”

"I commend Governor Andrew Cuomo and the NY Rising Community Reconstruction Program for dedicating significant financial resources to make sure that the Gerritsen Beach Volunteer Fire Department is prepared to withstand any future storms," said Senator Marty Golden. "For more than 90 years, this volunteer emergency service organization has stood as a foundation of the Gerritsen Beach neighborhood. This investment is critical to the future of our community."

“The Gerritsen Beach Community thanks Governor Cuomo for the opportunity to identify and invest in projects that will protect and enhance our neighborhood,” said Committee Co-Chair and Fire Chief, Doreen Garson. “With these resiliency improvements, the Gerritsen Beach Fire Department will be more efficiently enabled to serve the community.”

“The West Hamilton Beach Volunteer Fire Department is a vital part of the Howard Beach Community.” said Howard Beach Planning Committee Co-Chair, Frances Scarantino “I am delighted that the project is moving forward!”

Established in June 2013, GOSR coordinates Statewide recovery efforts for Superstorm Sandy, Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee. Through its NYRCR Program– in addition to its NY Rising Housing Recovery, Small Business, and Infrastructure programs– GOSR invests more than \$4 billion made available through the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development’s (HUD) Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Program to better prepare New York for future extreme weather events.

Over an eight-month period following Superstorm Sandy, a total of 50 communities (representing more than 100 localities) participated in Round 1 of the \$650 million NYRCR. The bottom-up process strives to empower storm-impacted communities to rebuild, while becoming stronger and more resilient.

Altogether, more than 500 participants serve on NYRCR Committees throughout the State, having proposed approximately 600 projects with an aggregate cost of more than \$800 million. Each participating community was allocated between \$3 million and \$25 million to implement eligible projects that incorporate and capitalize on local needs, strengths, and challenges. In summer 2014, New York State launched “Round 2” of the program, extending the opportunity to 16 new communities.

Visit www.stormrecovery.ny.gov for more information on GOSR programs.

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