

September 2, 2011

As I write this message, it is Thursday afternoon September 1st. Full power restoration appears to have been accomplished throughout the Village as LIPA crews installed new feeder lines energizing the last homes without power in the West End. There were outages extending from several hours to several days in every area of the Village. By Sunday evening nearly 20% of the Village was without power. At the outset of Irene, our singular focus was the safety of our residents. While most of us were asleep Sunday morning, our Police and Public Works crews were dispatched and operating in 40-50 mph wind driven rain, assessing damage and addressing the needs to keep us safe. As night became day, roads needed to be secured and others cleared of debris for emergency vehicles. Trees resting upon homes, blocking roads or affecting electric service needed to be removed. Fifteen trees were felled during the storm. Additional trees will be removed in the coming days. We anticipate total tree losses due to Tropical Storm Irene to number between 35-40. Most importantly, however, there were no injuries to our neighbors, police officers, public works crews or volunteers. One minor injury was sustained to a member of our fire department. All in all we fared well with this storm.

It was fortuitous that the magnitude of Irene fell before it hit Long Island. But, that our Village has rebounded so completely is the residue of planning and preparations. Our Emergency Operations planning commenced several days prior, when reports of Irene were still projections. We met each day with all department heads discussing scenarios and responses. These meetings proved invaluable as scenarios became reality and preparation steadied nerves. DPW Superintendent Steve Siwinski and Supervisor Richie Albertson listened to and participated in NOAA webconferences, preparing the village and readying our crews. Police Commissioner McAllister briefed his department. The response of our sergeants, officers and dispatchers was professional and compassionate. SCHSD Superintendent Dr. Ralph Ferrie offered any assistance he could. We thanked him and took him up on his offer and Recreation Superintendent Kurt Meyfohrt readied an emergency shelter at FP Memorial in the event any home became inhabitable due to damage in the middle of the storm. He solicited volunteers; members of the Rec Staff and Rec Committee, to staff the shelter. Our FFPD Chiefs Vinnie Modica and Brian Naughton were instrumental in acquiring much needed supplies for the shelter and Headquarters and who, along with our greatest volunteers, the members of our Fire Department, were on standby at Headquarters and our outlying fire houses throughout Irene. Our Emergency Operations were coordinated by VFP Administrator Pat Farrell, Clerk Susan Walsh, Co-Chair of Emergency Management and former Mayor Kevin Greene who was a rock throughout the night monitoring operations, coordinating communications along with Trustee Dom Longobardi, ex-Chief Joe O'Grady and PC McAllister. Our website, local news and local weather was manned, coordinated and monitored by our 4VS's Jim Green and Veronica Venturi. About 2 am as Irene began to express her fury, our DPW crews were now called upon in earnest and they were outstanding.

There was no flooding in the Village. DPW began planning weeks ago by vigilantly maintaining our storm sewers and drains, our tree department trimming and keeping our great tree resources healthy, our mechanics keeping the trucks, pay loaders, mechanical tools and all rolling equipment in optimal operating condition.

The value of a full service village was not only illustrated during Irene, but by how we look today. That is something about which we may be justifiably proud! What makes Floral Park great was exemplified and embodied by the spirit of our employees and our volunteers that night and since. The actions of many, but especially our everyday heroes, our DPW crews, continue to this day. They have logged hundreds of hours clearing and cleaning the village, while still attending to refuse, recycling and maintenance. Along with Steve Siwinski and Rich Albertson the exceptional efforts of Supervisors Mike Naylor and Russ Mazzola and their crews should be applauded.

But I especially wish to thank my fellow Floral Parkers for your response to the storm. We, as residents, took the predictions and forecasts seriously and responsibly prepared. I heard again and again how neighbors checked in with neighbors, shared electricity and offered assistance to those without power. It was great seeing how we support each other. As the Village worked to expedite electric restoration or tree removal, your patience and understanding was gratifying. Seeing neighbors helping neighbors or sharing storm stories as we together cleared our streets of debris reinforces why Floral Park is a great place to live!