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TOWNSHIP OF UNION
Hunterdon County, State of New Jersey
140 Perryville Road
Hampton, New Jersey 08827

January 20, 2013

Subject: Hurricane Sandy Storm Response Meeting – RVCC 1-24-13

Mayor Michele A. McBride
Township of Union
140 Perryville Road
Hampton, NJ 08827

Dear Senator Doherty, Assemblyman DiMaio, and Assemblyman Peterson:

Thank you for providing Union Township with this opportunity to comment on JCP&L's response to Hurricane Sandy. During the two week power outage we experienced, former Mayor Bill Bischoff and I worked daily with JCP&L to restore power to our community and communicate JCP&L's efforts to our residents. 91% of Union Township lost power during Sandy, and the loss of productivity by our community from time out of work and school are immeasurable. Many, especially our elderly, suffered significantly in the cold and dark. As most in our township rely on wells and septic systems, residents had no water for drinking, bathing or toilet flushing. Union Township did its best to aid its residents and to provide information, but as a small township with a handful of full time employees, our resources are constrained. We are grateful to the Hunterdon County Department of Public Safety, and to our volunteer fire and rescue squads, for their excellent service during this very stressful time. During and after Sandy, I watched many residents volunteer to help each other and we came together as a community. Hopefully, we will retain that community spirit for years to come and act upon the lessons we've learned.

After allowing about sixty days for our township to return to normal and celebrate the holidays, on January 14 an ad hoc subcommittee of township residents was convened to evaluate emergency response to Hurricane Sandy and suggest improvements for future storms. In addition to suggestions for JCP&L, we also discussed improvements to Union Township's municipal response, which we will focus upon internally. This letter focuses on problems our township experienced with JCP&L during Sandy, and suggested solutions.

Customer Service Issues-

1. *During the storm response period, Union Township's JCP&L customer service manager changed a total of four times.* It is important to establish a partnership between municipal officials and JCP&L managers, and it was impossible with this level of turnover. We had to go through a re-education process with each new manager, and valuable time was lost.
2. *Most of JCP&L's customer service managers were unfamiliar with Hunterdon County.* Several were from out of state and had difficulty understanding the distinction between municipal borders and post office borders. Most had never been on the ground in Hunterdon County, and were unfamiliar with our main roads, towns, and other geographic intelligence. More valuable time was lost while we educated each manager.
3. *JCP&L's managers relied on inadequate, outdated mapping.* Utility mapping was not well coordinated with township maps. Major roads in the township were not identified by state and county road numbers. There was no GIS location information available to JCP&L. We had to rely upon reporting downed wires by locating and reporting electric pole numbers, and many of these were inadequate, confusing or altogether missing.
4. *Union Township was not furnished with utility structure mapping.* JCP&L's managers would not supply substation locations and utility grid mapping. This made it extremely difficult to communicate with our residents. We understood that power restoration work would proceed from the substations outward, but without mapping it was impossible to explain to residents why work progressed in the order that it did.
5. *JCP&L managers had no knowledge of priority infrastructure.* Our schools, medical facilities, elder care facilities, and emergency response buildings (OEM, fire and rescue) should have been targeted for priority restoration, along with the commercial highway frontage that powered our fuel stations. Twelve days after the storm, our fire and rescue squads were still without power. The traffic lights at I-78 Exit 11 were also without power for 11 days; Exit 12 lights were without power for 7 days.
6. *JCP&L managers could not identify the locations of power restoration crews.* Portable GPS location technology should be made a part of every power truck, and JCP&L managers should have been able to locate and communicate the locations of crews within our municipality in real time. Mayor Bill and I had to rely on residents' reports, in addition to personally logging many, many hours behind the wheel, to find and report on power restoration work as it occurred within the township.

Infrastructure Issues –

1. *JCP&L had significant issues getting materials to our restoration sites.* Poles and transformers should be warehoused in strategic locations to enable faster response. Sections of the township were without power for

days due to the lack of a correct fuse. Union Township would be happy to consider storing poles, as an example, within its borders on municipal property to aid in faster power restoration in the future.

2. *The electrical grid was not interconnected.* If one substation was down for a prolonged time, it should have been possible to power up sections of line from a second substation.
3. *National standards for utility materials and methods were not adhered to.* There were numerous comments made during the restoration period by outside utility contractors that JCP&L structures and methods were outdated and archaic.
4. *Restoration work materials were often substandard.* Broken poles were replaced with smaller, structurally deficient ones. Broken poles were 'tacked' to replacement poles. Lines were left dangling a few feet above the ground. Several weeks after Sandy, a windstorm within our township pushed a number of poles that had not been properly set to dangerous angles and required further work to 'repair the repairs'.
5. *JCP&L relies upon customer input for power restoration.* Technology is available to determine where power is down remotely – it should not be the responsibility of customers to report outages.

Additional Storm Response Issues –

1. *JCP&L should better utilize information and personnel available on the local level.* If properly trained, our Road Crew could determine if wires are powered and, armed with that information, could more quickly open blocked roads. Optionally, utility workers could partner with the Road Crew and make a joint determination.
2. *JCP&L must improve out of state crew logistics and deployment.* We had dozens of utility crews parked at our local Wal-Mart parking lot because they could not get food and lodging further east. We could certainly have used them in our area during the time that they were standing by.
3. *JCP&L managers should be scheduling biannual regional meetings.* Managers should have responsibility for a county or other well defined geographical area. Daily conference calls during outages could commence with the regional group, saving time and manpower. Each manager should be intimately familiar with the territory, including geography, topology and priority restoration sites.
4. *Utility infrastructure must be upgraded.* Antiquated equipment, rotting poles and vulnerable transformers should be upgraded, hardened or placed below ground.
5. *Significant maintenance work remains yet to be completed.* Many stormwater management issues remain, along with tree maintenance problems and low hanging wires. Each municipality should be toured by JCP&L quality assurance personnel to identify and fix problem issues prior to future storms.

Overall Sandy Response - Although the damage created by Sandy was at least double that of Irene and the Halloween Nor'easter, on the municipal level the customer service level was improved. Unlike the 2011 storms, at least we had the ability to speak with a designated, trained JCP&L representative. However, the lack of factual, current information made these phone calls little more than hand-holding sessions. Significant efforts must be expended immediately to improve the quality of the power grid, to improve logistical response to outages, and to bring communications and information technology into the twenty first century. JCP&L must be held accountable for timely implementation of an agreed upon action plan to address our concerns. Union Township will cooperate with JCP&L and/or BPU in every way that we can to make storm response faster and better and look forward to meeting with our regional manager on a regular schedule. We expect and deserve to see real progress, and very quickly. Thank you



Michele A. McBride
Mayor
Township of Union, Hunterdon

On behalf of the Union Township Ad Hoc Sandy Response Subcommittee

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