

**TESTIMONY OF LAUREL HOLLOW MAYOR DANIEL DEVITA
SUBMITTED FOR HEARING ON TROPICAL STORM ISAIAS
August 20, 2020**

My name is Daniel DeVita. I am the Mayor of the Incorporated Village of Laurel Hollow. I would like to thank Senator James Gaughran for his invitation to speak here today.

Laurel Hollow is a community of 630 families with a population of 2000 people.

LH is also the home of the Cold Spring Harbor Lab and the CSH Fish Hatchery and Aquarium.

What I will tell you about the Storm and PSEG's response or lack thereof is not unique to our Village but was experienced by all North Shore communities.

On August 4th, the storm swept through our area swiftly and harshly. It was over within hours. While the damage was severe, it was by no means nearly as devastating as the destruction wrought by Superstorm Sandy in 2012.

Prior to Isaias striking, PSEG alerted municipal officials to the various means of contacting PSEG with outage information, including phone numbers for the public to report outages and downed wires, a municipal officials hotline number, registration to report outages and receive text alerts from PSEG, liason information for municipal officials, and website information for the outage map, which in the past has proven useful to gauge restoration times during periods of isolated or small numbers of outages. Of course, I distributed all of the pertinent public information to our residents before the storm.

To summarize, nothing worked. It soon became apparent that the text alerts reporting restoration times and dates were always wrong. People were being given information over the phones that was wrong, including that the homeowner had been restored when in fact they had not. Smart meters were sending information to PSEG that homeowner's power had been restored when it had not. Our residents were texting, emailing and calling me with a level of frustration and helplessness that I had never heard from such educated, hard-working, and good people.

As the days wore on without power or any sign of repair trucks, matters became worse. Half of our Village is located north of Route 25A. In three quarters of that area, the homes are serviced by well water, not "city" water systems. Those well

pumps are operated by electric-powered pumps. So when the power goes out, there is no water. As a result, we had many residents sitting in the sweltering heat, no air conditioning, no water, and in many instances, like in our Village Hall, no phones or internet, because Optimum/Altice goes out when the power goes out and is not restored until after the power comes back on.

Like many of my fellow mayors, day and night I fielded phone calls, texts, and emails from residents who were not only in the dark, literally, but were in the dark information-wise. Because of the levels of anxiety and frustration produced by the inaccurate and misleading information provided by all of PSEG's methods of communication, I told residents to stop looking at the outage map and the PSEG text alerts, especially after PSEG officials themselves told us on municipal official conference calls that the information shown was unreliable.

But there were cries for help that were unanswered by PSEG. What could I tell the family of a 100 year-old blind and bedridden person who had to have neighbors bring in buckets of water just to flush the toilets? What could I tell concerned neighbors of a 100-year old person just released from the hospital who was still ill and who lay sweltering in the oppressive heat. And there were others. I tried my best to help. PSEG officials told me to put in an email a request for the escalation of power restoration for those people and similarly dire situations. I did. But nothing happened. Nothing was done.

Meanwhile our Village Hall—our designated Emergency Storm Center and Shelter-- remained crippled. While we have a generator, it was broken for almost 5 days before it could be repaired. Even once repaired, because we rely on Optimum for phones and internet, they were down until power could be restored, which did not happen until **10** days after the storm hit.

The other main point I wanted to raise was the complete mismanagement of assets, namely the out-of-state crews brought to Long Island to hasten power restoration. While I received many reports and photos from residents of utility trucks sitting around in parking lots or parks for hours on end or even days without moving, I witnessed this firsthand.

In one instance, 5 out-of-state trucks were sitting in the parking lot of our grade school, The West Side School. I approached one truck and the driver told me they were waiting for work assignments. They sat there most of the day without moving. In another instance, there were 4 out-of-state utility trucks parked in our beach parking lot. They too were waiting for work assignments. They were there

most of the day. Ironically, only 150 feet away was our crippled Village Hall, a critical facility for which I repeatedly had requested immediate restoration. Not much further away were hundreds of residents without power. PSEG reportedly brought in 6000 out-of-state crews. To say they were underutilized and mismanaged is a gross understatement.

Finally, I just want to express the overriding feeling of helplessness experienced by our community, including me. I asked myself, is this Laurel Hollow, the Village in which I have lived and to which I have volunteered my services out of love for my community for the better part of 30 years? Is this Long Island, my beloved, beautiful, diverse geographic jewel bounded by magnificent waters? Is this the great State of New York, always the leader in improving the lives and livelihoods of its citizens? Honestly, it felt like a third world country, its populace abandoned by the mistakes and mismanagement of a utility monopoly whose sole function is to ensure adequate power, especially at times other than on a sunny day.

I am in support of Senator Gaughran's bill that would give the Public Service Commission authority to investigate and mandate change at PSEG Long Island. It may not be a cure-all but it just may be the first step in righting a sinking ship.

Thank you.