



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Cecilia Tkaczyk

## Community Resiliency Forum Held in Montgomery County

CECILIA TKACZYK March 4, 2014

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### *First Event to Address Public Safety Threats Since 2013 Flooding*

(JOHNSTOWN, NY) February 28, 2014 -- In the wake of last year's flooding in Fort Plain, and with serious storms becoming more commonplace, State legislators and local leaders today held a Community Resiliency Forum designed to improve emergency preparedness, response and recovery. The event was organized and hosted by State Senator Cecilia Tkaczyk, Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara and the American Red Cross, Northeastern New York Region.

The discussion focused on improvements to local preparedness, response, resiliency and recovery efforts in the wake of Hurricane Lee, Superstorm Sandy, and the flooding of Summer 2013 that devastated Fort Plain in western Montgomery County. Each of these areas address the ability of a community to respond to and recover from disasters. Disaster preparedness is a large component of the resiliency discussion -- the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has estimated that every dollar invested in preparedness saves more than four dollars in post-disaster response costs.

Participants included:

- Gary Striar Red Cross Regional CEO;
- Professor Dustin Swanger, President of Fulton Montgomery Community College, who acted as moderator;
- Professor James Halpern, Institute of Disaster & Mental Health at SUNY New Paltz, who delivered keynote remarks;
- Sister Betsy Van Deusen of Catholic Charities;
- Glen Aichinger, National Grid's Director of Emergency Management;
- Montgomery County Executive Matt Ossenfort;
- Michael Raphael, American Red Cross of Northeastern New York; and
- The Montgomery County Emergency Management Office

Senator Tkaczyk said, "Last summer, I witnessed the amazing resilience of the people of Fort Plain, as they recovered from the floods that devastated the village. While the response to the crisis was laudable, we have to continually work to improve our preparation, response and recovery efforts."

Assemblyman Santabarbara said, “We must make sure that we continue to make progress in our recovery efforts and we need to protect our families and businesses from future disasters. Community input on such serious matters is vital and will allow us to be best prepared moving forward.”

Red Cross Regional Chief Executive Officer Gary Striar said, “The Red Cross is pleased to be working with state and local government officials and local residents on ways to build a better prepared and more resilient Montgomery County. By working together, we will assure that when disasters strike, the people of Montgomery County are ready for whatever comes their way.”

Montgomery County Executive Matt Ossenfort said, “This forum, and the relationships and partnerships we are forming today will help our community grow stronger and better prepare for future emergencies.”

The Forum is intended to be the first in a series of discussions and continuing collaboration between organizations on making Montgomery County communities more resilient and better prepared.