



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

# **Economic Development & Flood Recovery Money To Help Rejuvenate Schoharie County**

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COBLESKILL - 12/12/11- State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I-Oneonta) and Assemblyman Pete Lopez (R/C/I-Schoharie) joined with local officials and area businesses at SUNY Cobleskill today to focus on newly-awarded state funds aimed at rebuilding flood ravaged communities and strengthening job creation in Schoharie County.

In today's briefing, Senator Seward and Assemblyman Lopez drew attention to over \$5 million dollars for growing the county's economy and to \$50 million approved for flood recovery in Schoharie County and in other declared disaster areas across New York State.

**“By steering funds to our most promising economic development projects and shoring up communities that sustained the back to back blows of Irene and Lee, the state is sending a strong message of commitment to Schoharie County,”** said Senator Seward. **“This is yet another step to help enhance our local economy, assist our family farms, and rebuild our communities.”**

“Even before Irene and Lee, many of our communities were struggling to make ends meet. People were losing their homes and jobs, school enrollments were shrinking, farms were just hanging on, and many had made up their minds to leave New York State” said Assemblyman Lopez, “These funds bring meaningful relief and hope for the people of Schoharie County”.

Several local economic initiatives advanced by Seward, Lopez and Schoharie County Officials will be benefiting thanks to regional council awards and community

redevelopment funds resulting from the closing of the Summit Shock incarceration facility. Both legislators worked closely with Chairman of the Board, Harold Vroman, County Planning Director, Alicia Terry, as well as with other local officials and businesses to advocate strongly for projects designed to build on and strengthen Schoharie County's economy. "The economic times are bad, but that started before the floods of 2011 and we, the supervisors and budget officers, have been working on this for the last 3 to 4 years with the unions and department heads to cut costs and still provide services to all county residents.", said Harold Vroman, Chairman of the Schoharie County Board of Supervisors. "Part of doing this is by having a vision and staying with that vision for the future. We have to do everything we can for the flood victims, but at the same time we have to stay the course with economic development which will create jobs and revenues for the county. Through state's efforts, we have been awarded monies to sustain this vision." "The state has recognized the need for Schoharie County to recover from both natural distracters and a slow economy," said Schoharie County Planning and Economic Development Director, Alicia Terry, whose office has been working tirelessly to respond to the needs of the community on many fronts. "This is good news from one end of Schoharie County to the other."

Both Seward and Lopez also made calls for a special legislative session to focus on flood related issues. A number of measures spearheaded by both were incorporated in a new flood relief package approved last week by the legislature and signed into law by Governor Cuomo.

The Hurricane Irene-Tropical Storm Lee Flood Recovery Grant Program package is intended to fill critical gaps in state and federal assistance, reflecting insights gained by Seward and Lopez as they worked with the governor's office over many months to respond to the needs of distressed communities in Schoharie County and across the state. Elements of the plan include:

- Grants of up to \$20,000 from \$21 million set aside on a statewide basis to help small businesses, farms, multiple-dwellings and non-profit organizations to recover costs for flood damages.
- Grants of up to \$500,000 to assist counties included in federal disaster declarations with stream stabilization (\$9 million set aside statewide)
- \$20 million set aside for communities to help them meet other costs not covered by federal disaster assistance (including the local share of flood clean up and recovery projects).
- Permitting local government to let taxpayers impacted by the storms to pay their property taxes in installments, and authorizing schools and local

governments to immediately revalue flood affected properties and offer refunds of taxes to property owners.

“The devastation we felt can only be overcome with outside funds, and this aid package provides it,” said Middleburgh Mayor Bill McCabe, “Money can’t heal all wounds but it can help. We thank the state for all its efforts.”

With the commitment of the Cuomo administration, both the economic development and flood relief funds are on a fast track, and will be drawn down from the state as the county heads into the new year. Monies will help stabilize area communities, as well as promote much-needed job growth in the region.

**“Meeting with Schoharie County elected leaders, business owners and families a sentiment of resilience shines through. These recent announcements are exactly what are needed to fuel the recovery which is well underway,”** added Senator Seward.

“This aid gives us a fighting chance,” concluded Assemblyman Lopez. “Working together, we will bring this County back.”