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THE HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM

HOBOKEN STORIES:

REMEMBERING STORM SANDY

INTERVIEWEE: MAYOR DAWN ZIMMER

INTERVIEWER: ALAN SKONTRA

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TRACK #2

AS: When did you first hear the words
"Hurricane Sandy?"

DZ: Well, it was some days before the storm
hit. I don't remember the exact timing, but I do recall
that we had the weekend, where we rallied our CERT team and
we had volunteers coming around, knocking on doors, we put
together fliers in both English and Spanish, so there was
the opportunity to really reach out. We were aware of the
storm, and there was time to reach out to the community,
trying to help them get prepared.

AS: What did you expect the storm would be
like, based on what you had heard?

DZ: Well, my approach to every storm is prepare for the worst and hope for the very best, and that was literally the approach we were taking to the community, where we [unclear] these fliers. I was doing press conferences, and trying to make people aware that it could be really bad so take things like -- make sure you go grocery shopping; move your cars; fill all your bathtubs. Actually, that's what we did at my house -- filled up the bathtubs, we filled pots, and tried to get prepared for what happens when you don't have power. Unfortunately, my husband didn't move our car, so we lost our car. But we did do things like before the storm, our municipal garages filled up. We provided transportation over to the Newport Mall, and probably saved about 250 cars just doing that. A lot of people did take us up on it, and moved their cars. We provided transportation down to Shoprite, and were just encouraging people to get out and go shopping, and be prepared before the storm set in.

AS: My next question was, how did the city prepare -- which I believe you've covered a lot -- but anything you'd like to add?

DZ: With every storm [unclear] pre-position [unclear] close down roads, and then trying to get notifications out to the community. Those are the kinds of things. Then we have emergency management meetings, where we kind of activate our emergency management team. So sitting right here in City Hall, bringing everyone together, and talking about what the plan is going to be, and activating the CERT team, as well. So all those things were happening. The "coordination" was also trying to get the community prepared, as well. The city was getting prepared.

AS: And how did you prepare, as mayor?

DZ: Well, I worked to activate our fire chief, the police chief, OEM, getting everyone together and figuring out our action plan. I did make sure to get my family prepared. I brought my bag of -- I planned to stay here, I prepared my clothes, and came back and had a cot set up here in City Hall. Because I live in southwest Hoboken, and I knew I wasn't going to be able to get home. So part of my preparation was, along with preparing a team and the community, also just getting my family prepared,

because we knew I wasn't going to be able to get home. So that was part of all my preparation.

AS: And where were you on Monday, when the power started going out?

DZ: I was here at City Hall.

AS: And what was your reaction when the reports started coming in that the city was starting to go dark?

DZ: Oh, like I said, we were working to [unclear] in any way that we could. We continued to use a lot of social media. We were coordinating, obviously, with the utilities, and coordinating as closely as we could to try and help with the challenging situation I had with our substations -- because they are very exposed. That's why I'm proud that we're working -- we have an energy resiliency plan that we're working on, which I can talk to you more about.

But, yes, it was trying to communicate as much as possible with our residents and, as the flood waters came in, trying to figure out a way to get the

National Guard here as quickly as possible. That's why I worked with the press, ultimately. There was a breakdown in the chain of command, and that's why I worked with the press to try to get the message out that we really needed help.

AS: So when did you first begin to survey the damage? Where did you go, and what were your first impressions?

DZ: Well, I was part of -- when the National Guard came in, I was part of going around with them and looking at the damage and the flooding waters. My biggest concern from the start was the safety of Hoboken residents, making sure that everyone was safe. Until the waters receded, and I knew that everyone trapped in their homes was safe -- I wasn't really that -- I was concerned, but I wasn't thinking about the physical damage; I was thinking about making sure that everyone was safe. That was my entire focus. It wasn't until the water receded, and we were making sure that everyone was safe, and kind of getting through that crisis point of setting up an emergency system of pod-structures at different locations around the city, where volunteers were going. There was

food delivery coordination with the National Guard and the CERT team, making sure that people had their immediate needs met. That was the focus for at least the first week.

AS: Okay. What were the initial challenges that the city faced?

DZ: The challenges were the communications, and really trying to make sure that everyone was safe. The biggest challenge was trying to figure out a way to get to the residents. We were using -- we had to locate a new "payloader." Thankfully [unclear], get that "payloader" purchased. I'm so grateful that we had that "payloader," and we had the old one, and that's what we were using. That's what we were using. So I am extremely hopeful that we can get the council's support, trying to get a high-water vehicle, because the challenge is that it does take time to get the National Guard here. The governor controls the National Guard, and, ultimately, they're looking at the needs of the entire state. I think we need to have some type of, at least one high-water vehicle, where we can absolutely get to residents and rescue those people who have those emergency situations. That's what we were doing. We had people who had really high fevers. We had seniors

who were in emergency situations, and that's how we were rescuing them. In retrospect, it was kind of crazy. It was startling to see. I went out and was part of some of those rescues, and we were using them. We were putting our seniors into the "payloader," into the front bucket. That's how we were rescuing them. When CNN came in, we were going to try to do a rescue of a grandmother, just as we were coming out to do the interview -- came up to me crying, and said, "I really need to get to my grandchildren. I don't know if they have enough food." She was really upset, so I said, "[Unclear] rescue, and there wasn't enough space. We could not get down the street to her grandchildren. Sorry. It was hard for me to say to her, "We can't get there." So that's why I went on the "front loader." That's why I felt it was important. I just turned to the CNN reporter and said, "Let's just get in and let's show the world what's happening to Hoboken." And that's what we did.

AS: So of all the challenges, you said that public safety was the most urgent. Would you say that's correct?

DZ: Yes. Again, now, it's my biggest concern. Using the "payloader" to go and rescue people, and

not knowing really "where or what." As their telephones died, they didn't have a way to communicate with us. So that was my biggest concern: there were people trapped in their homes in emergency situations, and we had no way of knowing whether or not they were okay. Also, another major concern, as we went around knocking on doors, and in Church Towers, [unclear] really nice [unclear] country music singer [unclear] heard about what was happening in Hoboken, and drove in with a truck full of food. So I went around with some volunteers, knocking on doors, just to let people know that this is over at [unclear] park, and [unclear] literally cried in my arms, and said, "They left us in the dark. There's not even [unclear] we can find, there's no light to get down the stairs. We were scared to go downstairs, because we can't see anything." As I went around, I could see that the seniors who were there, their homes are filled -- they're lighting their entire home with candles. To me it's a miracle that we made it through without -- we did have fires, but somehow we were able to get to them and control them, and no one was killed in a fire. Because we had all these buildings, citywide, where people had their homes and apartments filled with candles. But there was no connection -- there was no emergency backup generator, so there was no fire suppression system,

so there's no way to know when that fire starts. So it's just a huge, huge risk.

So these are all things, based on my own personal experience -- the experience of driving through the darkness with the National Guard, believing that we have to have some kind of lighting system where we can see who really needs our help. We have to have a micro-grid system where our seniors and our most vulnerable residents have a place to be safe through the storm -- at least the hallway lights are lit, at least the fire suppression system is hooked up to some kind of backup generator, to keep them safe through the storm.

AS: As the days went on, what new challenges did you discover?

DZ: Well, it kind of went in stages. Obviously, there would be the immediate response of getting in there and getting the National Guard in, and working to rescue people who needed to be rescued out of the flood waters. A lot of people hunkered down, they had made their choice, and we wanted them to know that if they wanted to evacuate there was an option to evacuate. It took five days for the flood waters to recede, so it was a constant

process of going around and making sure that everyone who needed to evacuate was able to evacuate and get them out safely. The first one was looking for the emergency situation, and then it was trying to help those who felt like they wanted to get out and be evacuated. Another challenge we saw was the seniors who were running out of medication. So in the CERT team, we set up a system of literally volunteers taking those prescriptions -- we got CVS to fill the prescriptions, and then the CERT team member volunteers would run them back to the seniors. So we saved, I don't even know how many -- hundreds and hundreds of prescriptions that we filled, and that's another way that we as a community came together to save lives.

AS: Were there any difficulties communicating?

DZ: That was a major challenge -- communications. That's why what we did was we set up a system of -- in my press conferences, we decided we were going to turn it into a daily communication briefing. So every day at 2:00 I was briefing whoever wanted to be there. You could come and hear what was going on. We set up community "boards" around the city, like ten different

"boards" where we would have volunteers [unclear] information and providing updates. Then we had public notices that were pretty much twice a day, once or twice a day, in English and in Spanish, and we had volunteers going around putting them up on [unclear]. So that was another way of trying to communicate with people. Obviously, we're keeping the regular ways of communicating -- through the social media, and email, and talking to the press. So I was on top of that. That was our kind of back-to-the-basics, as far as communications. Kind of a hand-delivered letter is what we were doing. "Office Depot" was amazing. We actually worked to provide them with a backup generator, so that their printers could operate, so they were printing all of our fliers for us.

AS: What did the city need that it did not have?

DZ: High-water vehicles; stronger communications. Fuel was running low, and that was a major challenge, as well. It wasn't so much that fuel was running low, but we couldn't get it out of the ground, out of the gas stations. Those were some of the challenges that we were facing. We probably needed more flashlights, and part

of the outreach was trying to get what flashlights we had, and encouraging people with each storm to have a parking plan. You should go shopping, you should have your water [unclear] flashlights. Trying continue to expand that outreach, for people to be aware of those basics.

AS: And how did you feel about appearing on national television, and what message were you trying to tell people?

DZ: Well, at first I was trying to tell people that we needed help. I was trying to get the message to Governor Christie, and there was an unfortunate breakdown. I knew that once he heard the word that we really needed help that he would be here, and the National Guard was sent in immediately. But it was difficult to get that message through. We focused on trying to get help for Hoboken. That's why I went on national television; because I wanted to help our city.

AS: You also spoke with President Obama. Is that correct?

DZ: I did. I participated in two conference calls, with other elected officials. He was talking about the need to get everyone evacuated. I respectfully pointed out that in Hoboken the challenge was that we were not able to get them evacuated. They were willing to go, and we really needed backup generators. I really respected that he totally listened, and within hours there were backup generators on their way to Hoboken. I do feel like because of the National Guard, because of the attention we received, we were able to mount this entire review of our electrical grid. We had the Department of Energy doing a review within the National Labs, in part because we were cut in that mold of an urban area, a small community, but I'm thinking in part because we got the national attention. We had become higher profile [unclear] our energy resiliency going forward is, I think, one of the biggest challenges. Obviously, addressing the flooding is a major challenge and we're working hard on that, too, but energy resiliency is going to be extremely important. And given where the substations are, it's a challenge we face every single hurricane season.

AS: I just want to get, for the record -- I just want to ask -- identify, to the best of your ability,

the damage the city incurred, in terms of losses to the actual city, losses to the residents, dollar amounts -- things of that CERT.

DZ: Well, we estimated the losses to the residents to be over \$100 million in damage, when you calculate our estimates on the number of homes that were eventually destroyed. That doesn't even count the total amount of so many businesses, restaurants where, with the power being out, they lost all their inventory. It's probably a low number. Then the city estimates that we had about \$10 million in damage. Then we had fire stations damaged. Our senior center, our midtown garage, hospitals had major damage. Some of our parks on the waterfront were damaged, as well. Our municipal garage was severely damaged. Eighty-percent of our city was underwater for five days, so there was major damage to our city.

AS: What did Hoboken learn about itself?

DZ: I think Hoboken really kind of reaffirmed what a special community we are. I was amazed and then I wasn't amazed. We had over 5,000 volunteers coming in and helping each other, just going around and

knocking on doors. The way we came together as a community was beautiful. So I think there was a reaffirmation of the spirit of Hoboken, and a community spirit that makes our town very, very special.

AS: And what did you learn about yourself?

DZ: [Unclear] that I can get through anything. You've just got to roll up your sleeves, stay calm, stay focused, and just work through it. [Unclear] one of the bigger tasks I've been through -- though I actually think that [unclear] was more stressful than the storm. That's when I thought the entire city was gone. But this was something where we just had to stay at it. It was exhausting. I only got a couple hours of sleep a night, but I was committed to keeping this community safe. Again, that's what we did by having, from our first responders, our CERT team, the Hoboken Volunteer Ambulance Corps, everyone at the county, state, and federal government. It was all of us pulling together. It was definitely a very strong team approach. I was part of it, leading it, pushing it, advocating for it, and making it happen. I'm very, very proud, again, of how we came through it as a community.

AS: Is there anything that you wish you had done differently? Or is there anything that you wish you had had greater foresight about, to be prepared in any different way?

DZ: I wish my husband had moved our car.

[Laughs] Yes. I mean, well, I do wish -- I'm joking around about that, but I think it's really important that we move toward energy resiliency. I think it's really important that these properties, especially where there are seniors, and the housing authority -- I know from experience that you're not really going to be able to give them a place to evacuate. We want to give them the option to evacuate, but I recognize that they're not going to. Often they're not going to, and we need to have facilities to keep them safe. So that's why I am very committed to this micro-grid system and figuring out a way where in our senior buildings every hallway is lit, every fire [unclear] is wired into our micro-grid system or backup generator and works. I think what we need to be doing is also figuring out a way to keep the lights on in the community; keep, maybe, a gas stove going in community rooms. What happened was -- I remember when we gathered together every day in a community room, in that community place, where everyone was kind of coming

together -- if there's a way where this micro-grid system could power the elevator. Maybe it goes down once in the morning and once in the evening. That's kind of your process. We can have solar-powered radios on every single floor, so people can have a way of knowing that that's a way they can know what's going on. I think that was the biggest challenge for people -- not really knowing. I think that was very hard for people. They're in the dark, and you don't really know what's happening, when the water is receding, and what is going on. I guess that's one thing I could say we could probably encourage people to have radios, and think about that as a good option for communications. Like I said, there are technologies out there where it could be solar-powered, and those things could be battery-operated. They can last for a long time, and that's an excellent way for people to know what's going on.

AS: Who were some of the unsung heroes?

DZ: Gosh, there were so many heroes -- people from the CERT team, who, like I said, came up with the idea of filling the prescriptions. Police officers who just -- it's really hard for me -- there are so many people

who did an amazing job. Unsung heroes are those people we don't really know about who reached out and helped their neighbor. I heard so many great stories about those people who did have electricity putting out the place where everyone could come in, and making coffee and delivering it to everyone. People who did have power bringing everyone into their homes. The [unclear] did an amazing job, just cooking and cooking and cooking. It was a fantastic place for people to go. The churches that opened up when we had our shelter go down. They opened up their homes and their places of worship for us to have shelter. There are so many. I feel like everyone who participated in made it through, helped a neighbor and helped a friend, was part of the unsung heroes. We're all heroes for making it through Hurricane Sandy.

AS: And as the days went on, did anything surprise you? Whether it was a bad surprise or even a pleasant surprise? Something that caught you off guard.

DZ: I think Leo Pellegrini and I were a little surprised by the amount of debris. It felt a little bit like a war zone, when you went out and the debris was everywhere. He did an amazing job in bringing in the

contractors and coordinating everything, but as soon as we cleaned up it was back out there again. So I was surprised by the amount of debris. That was a challenge, but I think we handled it very, very well.

AS: When did you feel like the worst had passed?

DZ: I think I felt a little sense of relief when the flood waters had receded, and we were able to really get in and make sure that everyone was okay. There was still concern the next morning. We made it through the storm, but there was concern about power lines being down. That was another kind of moment of worry about people possibly being electrocuted. When the flood water receded, I felt a little bit of relief. But it just moved into a different phase.

AS: My last question -- I'll ask it, and then if there's anything that you wanted to add that I didn't ask about, please feel free to include it. Do you feel that Hoboken has recovered in any sense, and if so, was there a moment when you felt that "Hoboken is back?"

DZ: Well, I do feel like Hoboken has recovered. I believe there are still businesses -- sadly, there are businesses that went out of business and won't be coming back. There are still some businesses that are struggling to get back on their feet, and residents who still haven't been able to get back in their homes. But I think for the most part people are back in. But to me the recovery process continues, and we've been working really hard to put together a competent plan to protect the city, and advocating, literally on every level, to get support for comprehensively protecting communities and protecting places like Hoboken. That seems to be a shift in policy and approach. We've applied for funding, and we're advocating as strongly as we can. In fact, we're taking out our own loans to get the first pump -- the next pump down there, because that needs to happen as soon as possible.

The recovery process absolutely continues because we literally -- I'm concerned now, as these flood maps come out -- I'm concerned about protecting Hoboken both from the next flood but also from the financial flood that's going to happen when all our flood-insurance rates go up. Quite frankly, personally knowing that, that the flood insurance program doesn't work -- it doesn't work for the urban areas, and I feel like we're paying into a

system -- we pay into it, but we don't get any coverage. It feels a little bit like "servitude." In order to get your "mortgage," you have to be part of a national flood-insurance program and now, as a result of Sandy, there are a lot more people who are going to be in that situation. So they, too, are going to be paying into a system that is not going to pay them. That's why I'm advocating so strongly for a comprehensive solution to protect our city. Because I think it's very unfair. I think it's really going to hurt us economically, so I want to figure out a way to protect the entire city. What I'm going for is what's called a "shaded X-zone." I've met with national flood-insurance people who have told me that "if you can demonstrate that you're truly protecting the entire city, Hoboken could be designated as a "shaded X-zone," and we could possibly get out of paying into national flood-insurance programs.

So that's what I'm trying for, because making changes to the national -- I feel like I will succeed in protecting the city, and figuring out a way, either through grants a public/private partnership, to protect the city [unclear] the national flood-insurance program.

AS: I have a couple of more questions I wanted to ask, if there's time --

DZ: Sure.

AS: -- just about you as a resident. How did the hurricane and the days after affect your life in terms of disrupting your routine, and not being able to be home.

DZ: I went home after the waters receded, enough for me to get home. I don't remember how many days I was here. It took me a long time to clean out my car. Things were still happening so quickly that. I had my cot, I had my sleeping bag, my clothes were all over the places. You're still kind of in that crisis mode, working through things. When I did go home, we certainly didn't have -- actually I remember it was kind of funny -- Chief Blohm gave me a ride home, and I tried to ring the buzzer, but there was no power. So, of course, my husband couldn't hear me. His phone had died, so he couldn't answer my calls. So I went around back to try to yell to him, but he couldn't hear me. So Chief Blohm set off this alarm, set off this siren [laughs. So I apologized to my neighbors. It was 2:00

in the morning. But that's how I was able to get into my home.

AS: What did your family do while you were here?

DZ: My family was at home. My mother-in-law was in her apartment and I would stop in and check on her. When the flood waters receded, my husband was going over and checking on her too. My children were at home.

AS: How did they pass the time?

DZ: I think they were playing out in "back" and getting to know the neighbors even more. I do think that's a great thing. People now have Sandy friends, like there were connections made all over the city between neighbors. When I called for the evacuation, that's exactly what -- I wasn't trying to get everybody to be friends, but I was trying to say reach out to your neighbors downstairs, go to your neighbors upstairs, and ask to stay with them. Because I knew, from Hurricane Irene, when I called for that evacuation, I felt like I was sending people into harm's way. People left here and went, like, for example,

up to the Catskills, and then couldn't get back. That's the thing. Everyone scurries -- everyone gets on the road at the same time, and you've got people coming in from New York City, and it's difficult to get out. That's another reason that I feel like shifting the policy approach to shelter-in-place; that we can -- I'm not saying that that's what we do for every -- we always need to be prepared if we really need to get everyone out, that we're prepared to evacuate if that's what we need to do -- but I think for these kinds of storms, if we build stronger -- if we have a micro-grid system, if we have communications, and teamwork and everything in place, that there is a way to shelter safely in place, and that's what I'm advocating for. And that is a different approach. That is a different approach than I've really seen anywhere, but for me it is a recognition that you're just not going to get everyone to evacuate, and I don't want to leave the most vulnerable people left with no resources and no help.

AS: Okay. And my absolute, final question for both of these parts -- how did your family support you or comfort you? Or what did you take from them to encourage you in your other role as the mayor of the city?

DZ: My husband was very supportive, my parents were supportive. I think my dad was a little -- he was the captain of a tugboat, so I was talking to him about different options, trying to figure out our fuel situation. So I think he was a little surprised at that. I was pretty much looking at every single option, but "Mayor Turner" came through for us. But they were very supportive of what I was doing. My husband took care of the boys, so I didn't need to worry about my family so much. Again, I wish he'd moved the car -- but that's okay. [Laughs]

AS: I think that's a light note to end it on.

BF: So did you get a new car?

DZ: Yes, we did get a new car.

BF: I'll just throw in a couple of things. Early on you talked about a breakdown in communications. What were you referring to there, when we first started the interview?

DZ: There was kind of a chain of command as far as if you were making a request to have the National Guard come in. We were trying to go through that chain of command, and to this day I don't understand exactly what happened, but nothing was getting through -- that we needed the National Guard.

BF: And when do you call the National Guard? When do you start that request? Was it right after?

DZ: Oh, yes. We started it right away, trying to ask for the National Guard. But I, as mayor, can't call in the National Guard. It has to be that I'm getting the message to the governor, and the governor is directing the National Guard to come into Hoboken. So it's not like I'm on the phone and I can just call up the colonel of the National Guard and ask him to come in. You almost shift into a military command form -- which I respect and I understand -- but somehow the communication wasn't happening, and they weren't coming in. It was almost two days before the National Guard came in. The word was out as far as what was happening in Hoboken, CNN asked to do an interview, and Rachel Maddow asked to do an interview, and I just made the decision that I just had to

do what I needed to do for my community and ask for help -- and make it very clear that we needed help, and call directly on the governor to send the National Guard in.

BF: And do you get like recommendations from the fire department and the police department, like, "We can't handle this, so we need to go to the National Guard?" Or do you just kind of see it that way?

DZ: I saw it that way. Like I said, everyone gathers in this room and we'd have morning, mid-morning, and late-afternoon and evening meetings here, as emergency situations [unclear]. We'd get everyone together and have this meeting. Everyone discussed it, but I knew when I was starting that process very well that I would try to get the National Guard to come in.

BF: So who would be at the table for that meeting?

DZ: We had Chief Falco, Chief Blohm, and other police officers, and people from the fire department, OEM. My business administrator was here; Juan was here; the communications people; the ambulance corps; sometimes the

utilities were joining us. The [Unclear] Authority was joining us; people from the hospitals; people from the schools. [Unclear] all these people [unclear].

BF: Can you talk about, let's say, the year before? We had Hurricane Irene, in which the residents were warned about the potential but nothing -- not that much damage was incurred. Do you feel that people's guard was down because of the previous year?

DZ: I do think when it comes to being there -- I do think in some ways we expected it to be -- I still thought it was pretty severe. But I think if people didn't have their car damaged, they certainly weren't expecting it to happen this time. It does seem like there were a lot of cars left on the street, or put into garages. They weren't expecting flood waters to fill up their garages. So, yes. Since it wasn't so severe for Hurricane Irene, people weren't quite as prepared. I don't know. But we certainly were out there trying to promote it, doing press conferences, and trying to communicate with them. Again, that's why I tried, with the reverse 911 calls -- if we think there is going to be significant flooding, trying to do the reverse 911, and let people make a parking plan.

Know what your parking plan is going to be, and move your car.

BF: The prediction is that storms -- maybe not of the magnitude we just had -- will become more frequent. But do you feel that if there are no storms, all this will be for naught? All this planning? Do you think people will go back to their old ways, in a sense?

DZ: If we were not to have any major storms for a couple of years, then yes, probably people would just go back to their old ways. But the reality is that we seem to be having increasingly more intense storms. We've had three major flood events since Hurricane Sandy, so whether you believe in climate change or you don't believe in climate change (I personally do), we're dealing with whatever it is -- the results -- and we've got to deal with it. So from my standpoint, we need to focus on layers of protection. The first layer, obviously, is people doing their own, personal preparedness, making sure that they do what they need to do to be prepared for when that storm hits -- the absolute basic things. But there are also things -- you know, there is grant money out there now and we're trying to do a major push, where people could

[unclear] up the mechanicals in their homes. There are things that people can do to reduce the amount of physical damage. They can move their cars. If they get that word -- yes, it's a pain to move your car. But, on the other hand, it's really a pain to have your car totaled.

So those are kind of some initial layers of protection. But then it's also, like I said, trying to have pumps along the waterfront; buy more land on the western side of the city; have large detention bases. The reality is, the more we can do to capture the rainwater and prevent the rainwater from going into the sewer system -- Hurricane Sandy -- if we had had more pumps, it would have helped to take away the flooding a little bit faster, but we really can't prevent that from happening. But we are trying to -- I mean, the waters came in from the south and the north, and if we were to figure out a protective barrier, we might be able to prevent the waters from coming in. We're looking at redesigning Hoboken Cove a little bit, to try to prevent those flood waters. And we're looking at how can we incorporate some different designs, "harden" the existing buildings, and potentially build on future buildings, and have a series of protections along the south and the north, to actually protect from possible future storm surges. The biggest challenge we face is heavy rainfall, high tide that

results in a lot of flooding. This is the first time that the Hudson River breached the city of Hoboken, so, hopefully, that won't happen for a very long time, but it could. At this point, now, it has happened, and it could happen sooner than expected. So that's why we're looking at these layers of protection where the individual home and a comprehensive approach to protecting Hoboken -- I am also an advocate for a regional approach, and I've seen some concepts for a regional approach where you essentially provide a protective barrier for the entire area. That might be a cheaper alternative than some of the [unclear]. If the city does everything they're proposing, that's going to be one heck of a lot of money -- \$5 to \$6 billion for some of the other regional solutions might actually be quite cost-effective.

BF: Then it's a question of for-how-long, I guess, things go, though.

DZ: That's the challenge. I certainly hope that a regional approach will ultimately be implemented, but that could take twenty years and you can't wait twenty years. That's why we're moving ahead. We've already put in our application for the next pump, and pushing hard on

getting the grant money for another pump. These are things that we know can help. You can speak to business owners and home owners who have the experience of having their home flood or their business flood five or six times a year, pre-pump. Post-pump, there was just Hurricane Sandy.

BF: Is there anything that really gave you strength during that week? I'm not sure if I'm repeating a question. A person -- that person that you helped rescue -- I'm sure adrenalin kicks in and gives you a real purpose with an individual. But I was just wondering if with the team, a particular person go into action that you might not expect, or a book you were reading, or just anything that would have given you inspiration.

DZ: I would say that there were two experiences that definitely kept me going. There was a resident who reached out to be from [Unclear] Towers. He came home early, and he was kind of panic stricken. I went over myself, and I was part of convincing his mom -- we arranged to get her evacuated and to a shelter because she was on oxygen. The power had gone out, and we just weren't sure how long the generator was going to last. It was a dangerous situation. So I was part of convincing her to

evacuate. Her son later came to me and said, "You saved my mother's life." She was short of breath, and getting into a very dangerous situation by the time we got her to the hospital.

So things like that definitely gave me strength. I felt really good when we were all out there. For that one incident, there were, across the board -- that was happening across the city, where lives were being saved, but that kind of my -- between that and this other senior -- to literally just hold her and comfort her. I think of her when I think of this energy resiliency plan that we're doing, and all of our seniors. They don't have the resources, necessarily, to evacuate, or the family to evacuate, and we need to help them. That's kind of driving me forward, and I'm trying to make sure that our city is even safer for future storms.

BF: Any real fearful moments that you want to reveal? I mean, it was a scary week.

DZ: Yes. I was really nervous about -- I didn't want anyone to get electrocuted. So when the flood waters were happening, and the power lines were down, and communication was really difficult -- I know with Hurricane

Irene that exact situation happened, where -- it didn't happen in Hoboken, but it happened in other communities, where the power line was down, someone went in to rescue someone in their car, and they were electrocuted. So that was a real, major concern. It started to get a little bit nice and everyone was like, "It's fine," kind of thing. That was a major concern, as we figured out how to work with "PSE&G" to take care of those wires, and make sure that everyone was going to be safe.

BF: Could you talk a little bit about the hospital evacuation?

DZ: Yes. I felt bad for the new CEO. I think he'd only been on the job for three weeks. I called him and said -- he was debating whether or not to evacuate, and I said, because we had done it for Hurricane Irene -- I was on the board, and I was the one who really advocated and got the board to -- every board supported it, but we had made a decision, with Hurricane Irene, to evacuate and evacuate early. So what I said to the CEO was that if you're going to do it, do it now. Don't wait, because if you're waiting, and we're trying to evacuate you in the middle of the storm, it's going to be really dangerous for

you and your patients, and also dangerous for the rest of Hoboken, because I can't have all my resources focused on the hospital, when I'm going to be needing to rescue many other residents throughout the city. So please, if you're going to make this choice, make it now. This is my advice," and he said, "I appreciate that." He did tell me that that was one of the more difficult calls. He had to call up the owners and say, "I'm new on the job, but I need to evacuate the hospital." But that's what he did, and obviously it needed to happen. For him, he said he'd never seen anything like that. It was like a river running through the hospital.

BF: And do you know how many fire companies, or towns participated in that evacuation? I was just riding my bike around that night, and I remember just seeing --

DZ: It was incredible.

BF: -- it was amazing. There might have been fifty fire trucks. It was like two blocks of fire trucks.

DZ: It was incredible teamwork. I don't know the exact number, but it was a lot of different communities coming together to help with that evacuation, line up all

the ambulances, and take them over to Bayonne or Christ Hospital, and made sure they were safe. I will say, that was another amazing thing. We used social media to communicate with people. As the trucks came in, with the MREs -- meals ready to eat -- we put out a tweet like, "Come to the high school and help unload the trucks," and 200 people showed up at 9:00 at night. You had this line of people passing food, piling it up and -- it was amazing.

BF: That's a pretty good way to end, I think.

DZ: Okay.

BF: Any other last thoughts you want to tell, to share, that we might have missed?

DZ: I think we've covered a lot of ground. Staying in focus, for me -- it's not a crisis, but it's something I'm very focused on, trying to make sure that I continue to advocate, continue to plan, continue to do the outreach, continue this process. I'm trying to get Hoboken to shift a little bit. It is about the emergency response, but our focus has to be on resiliency, and being resilient

as a community, and figuring out ways that we're just going to automatically implement the system and know what we have to do. So we're kind of shifting and expanding that outreach, going forward.

BF: Thank you. That was great. We will get a transcription of this forty-nine minutes and thirty-four seconds.

END OF INTERVIEW