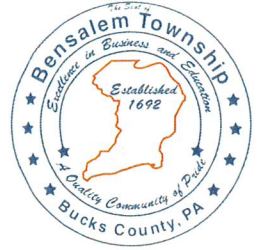


Township of Bensalem



Joseph DiGirolamo
Mayor

July 30, 2021

Governor Tom Wolf
Office of the Governor
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf,

I began to compose this letter to you yesterday morning after having learned that you will not be issuing a Declaration of Disaster Emergency for my community, Bensalem Township, nor for neighboring communities in Bucks County, following the 100 Year Storm that fell on our communities on July 12, 2021.

That afternoon, nearly 10 inches of rain fell on Bensalem, flooding homes, highways and various waters of the Commonwealth within our community. In a six hour span that afternoon, our first responders answered over 200 calls to 911, many for citizens who had to be rescued from their homes and automobiles that were submerged in the quickly rising flood waters.

In my many years as Mayor of Bensalem, I have always made the safety of our community my top priority, as reflected by the fact that nearly half of our community's annual budget is appropriated to public safety. I am both proud and thankful that during this unprecedented natural disaster that befell our community, the experience, planning, equipment, and training of our Emergency Personnel prevented any loss of life or injuries to our citizens or our First Responders.

As the day drew on yesterday, I had put this letter aside, as the National Weather Service began issuing Warnings of severe weather that was again bearing down on my community and other parts of Bucks County. For the second time in fewer than 3 weeks, I directed that Township Personnel and Emergency Responders begin preparations for the high winds, heavy rains, and possible tornado that was being predicted for our community. As the afternoon progressed, these Warnings became Emergency Broadcasts with directives for our residents to seek shelter, as a tornado and accompanying heavy winds had touched down in Bensalem.

As yesterday's storm passed, it left a trail of devastation in its wake. Thankfully, our community has once again been spared any loss of life or major injuries to citizens and First Responders impacted by yesterday's storm. Sadly, it was once again necessary to establish a Red Cross center in my community last evening to assist residents left without shelter or food.

Throughout the night, our First Responders and other Emergency Personnel inspected damaged and destroyed structures to assure that all of our citizens were safe and accounted for. This morning, the survey and assessment of damages, and the cleanup of our community, are once again under way.

The July 12th Storm has resulted in millions of dollars of property damage and devastation in Bensalem. Portions of our neighboring communities of Bristol Borough, Bristol Township and Northeast Philadelphia suffered significant damage and devastation, as well. Homes that were miles from FEMA Flood Districts were ravaged by flood waters. Property owners throughout our Township who had never experienced prior water damage had their structures and their contents destroyed by water damage that day.

To date, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Red Cross has provided assistance, primarily in the form of food and temporary shelter, in over 100 active cases in Bensalem Township representing more than 240 of our residents impacted by the July 12th Storm. It is too early to even speculate on the amount of property damage caused by yesterday's tornado and storm, but I assure you it is significant.

What befell Bensalem and our neighbors on July 12 was a natural disaster. Plain and simple. There are no other words to describe it. You personally visited damaged homes in Bensalem and Bristol, and you saw the damaged homes and businesses, and in some cases the flood waters that had yet to recede, as you drove through Bensalem, Bristol and Croydon on Friday, July 16.

What befell Bensalem and other parts of Bucks County yesterday was also a natural disaster. There can be no question. I invite you to once again visit our community in the coming days to see the devastation caused by yesterday's tornado, as well as to see the remnants of the July 12th Storm that are still affecting the residents of our community.

Earlier this week it was announced that you will not be issuing a Declaration of Disaster Emergency for Bensalem or Bucks County in response to the 100 Year Storm. To date, I am told that based upon PEMA's Preliminary Damage Assessments completed to date, there are \$3.9 million of uninsured losses in Bucks County from this Storm, and the numbers continue to mount while our community waits for assistance.

The citizens of Bensalem have just suffered their second natural disaster in the span of a few short weeks. More property damage has occurred. More of our residents have been left homeless or without shelter. Our community needs your help.

During my time as Mayor of Bensalem, Tom Ridge, Mark Schweiker, Ed Rendell, Tom Corbett and now you have served as Governor of our Commonwealth. In that time, I have witnessed your predecessors eschew bureaucracy in times of emergency so as to deliver aid and assistance to the citizens of Pennsylvania in their hour of need. I am asking you now to do the same.

The promise of low interest loans through the Small Business Administration for the victims of the 100 Year Storm is encouraging and appreciated. Help of all kinds and in all amounts is needed for our community to recover. But individual assistance is also needed in our community, especially for renters and for homeowners for whom flood insurance was never required nor, candidly, ever thought of as a need based upon the location of their homes.

With the devastation brought on by yesterday's tornado and storm, even more individual assistance will be needed by the residents of our community.

The Pennsylvania Fiscal Code¹ empowers you to transfer unused funds in the Pennsylvania General Fund to any Commonwealth Agencies as you may direct for disaster relief. All it requires

¹¹ The Pennsylvania Fiscal code at 72. P.S. 1508, entitled "Use and appropriation of unused Commonwealth funds", allows for the Governor to transfer any unused funds appropriated for ordinary State Government expenses to such Commonwealth Agencies as the Governor may direct (including PEMA) for disaster relief whenever the Governor has declared a disaster emergency.

is that you, as Governor, issue a Declaration of Disaster Emergency. No PEMA or FEMA thresholds need be met as a prerequisite to your issuance of such a Declaration under the Fiscal Code, just your own decision that a disaster emergency exists in our community.

Inspectors, assessors, managers and other personnel from PEMA have toured our region in the days and weeks since July 12th. Boots on the ground, they have walked through damaged property after damaged property. Our Township and County Emergency Management Personnel have been there with them, and have provided to them the names of every property owner and the location of every property impacted by this Storm.

More importantly, you saw it with your own eyes. You heard directly from me, from our County Commissioners, and from the residents of our community while they were digging through the remnants of their homes and possessions, that we need the help of our Commonwealth. Now.

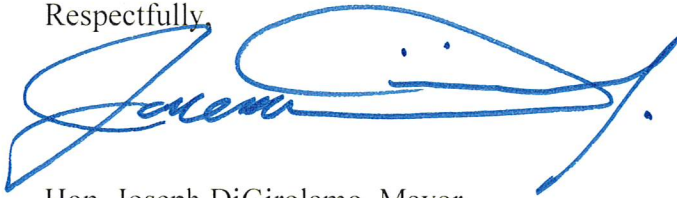
It is within your power to appropriate and direct, right now, the millions of dollars of assistance that our communities need to rebuild their properties, their businesses, and their lives following July 12th. It all begins with your Declaration of a Disaster Emergency and your direction that the disaster relief, in whatever form you dictate, be directed to our residents.

I renew the request previously made to you by our State Senator, by our State Representative, by her fellow State Representatives, by our County Commissioners, and by me. Please issue a Declaration of Disaster Emergency for my community and for our county, now. Please exercise your powers to direct disaster relief to the residents and property owners of our community whose lives and livelihoods have been impacted by the 100 Year Storm of July 12th.

At the same time, I am asking that you issue a Declaration of Disaster Emergency for my community following yesterday's tornado and storm. Please do not make the residents, businesses, and property owners impacted by yesterday's devastation wait for assistance that may never come. Please issue a Declaration of Disaster Emergency, now, or as soon as possible, and provide individual assistance, SBA loans, and any and all other relief it is within you power to appropriate and approve as Governor of Pennsylvania.

Thank you for consideration.

Respectfully,



Hon. Joseph DiGirolamo, Mayor