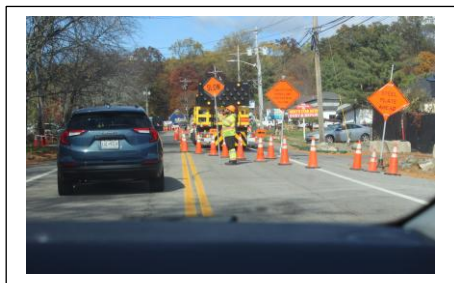




# LAWLER LANDS \$1,000,000 FOR SMALL BUSINESSES AFFECTED BY CHPE PROJECT

BY: Keith S. Shikowitz, Editor in Chief/Investigative Reporter

The CHPE project was a disaster and a pain for the businesses along the 9W corridor from Stony Point all the way to Congers from the beginning. Businesses lost collectively over \$10 million. One restaurant along the corridor lost \$10,000 in one cancelled party.



Mike Tracey from Congers Auto Spa said that CHPE's affect was "Well, for, for the last year, I would say, the car count coming into the wash and the express salute has gone down dramatically. Our business is 80% return customers, 20% impulse which are new customers that drive by. We've effectively lost that 20% because we just don't have people using the corridor to drive down. The other 80%, my customers call me and tell me I can't get through because it takes me too long."

These are just two examples of losses along the corridor. In his constant looking out for the constituents of the 17<sup>th</sup> Congressional District Congressman Mike Lawler worked to get \$1 Million to compensate these businesses for some of their losses. He held a press conference to announce this. This was not a political event. This was a non partisan event. Howard Phillips, Town Supervisor of Haverstraw was present with all the other officials.

"Good afternoon everyone and thank you for being here. I want to thank all of our local officials, our partners in the North Rockland Chamber of Commerce, our small business owners, and the folks at, CHPE (the Champlain Hudson Power Express) as well as the Community Foundation of Orange, Sullivan, and Rockland.



Officials at Lawler Press Conference

"Today we are here to announce that after a lot of communication, a lot of back and forth, a lot of advocacy, by the small businesses, by the chamber. that the Champlain Hudson Power Express has agreed to put \$1 million into a good neighbor fund that will be housed at the Community Foundation of Orange, Sullivan, and Rockland for the express purpose of supporting the businesses that have been impacted by the construction. Over the past year, this is something that I am extremely proud, to have helped broker, to support our small businesses here in, North Rockland, and Rockland County, and it came as a result of the sustained advocacy of our small businesses and community leaders, here."

"This was a great partnership. It took a little bit of time, a little longer than we all would have liked, but I think it shows what can happen, when everybody works together to try and solve a problem, and as we've seen, over the last, year, significant construction on the Route 9W corridor, which is the main commercial corridor for Stony Point, and, Haverstraw, and we saw the impact on the small businesses who have put blood, sweat, and tears into their livelihoods, into supporting this community, and we wanted to do everything we could to support them because of the very real challenges that were created by this infrastructure project."

<https://youtu.be/e76mE1qKZPg>

"So again, I want to thank everybody for being here. these businesses aren't just storefronts, they're family livelihoods, job creators, community anchors, and we want to make sure that they have the support that they need. Before I open it up to, some of our speakers, I do want to read two statements, on behalf of both CHPE and the Community Foundation, Jen White, Senior Vice President of External Affairs, of Transmission Developers, released the following statement."

*The Champlain-Hudson Power Express team is incredibly proud of the significant support that we have provided to New York's communities along the entire 339-mile project route, including sponsorship of local community events, purchasing from small businesses along the route, and supporting local profits. The Good Neighbor Fund is a further reflection of that commitment. We are grateful to all of the community leaders, elected officials, and local stakeholders who supported us during our construction and are pleased that CHPE is set to begin commercial operation later this month.*

In addition, Elizabeth Rowley from the Community Foundation of Orange Sullivan and Rockland, said the following: *The Community Foundation of Orange Sullivan and Rockland looks forward to playing a role in helping the local businesses. Forward to playing a role in helping the local businesses that were affected by the pipeline project, we are able to help manage an open and transparent application process for the funds and support the review committee and with collection & organization of appropriate documentation and backup.*

Lawler continued, "We will be working in short order with the chamber, the community foundation to establish the guidelines, to establish the application process, the review process, and the release of the funds. My intention is to have this done in swift order. These businesses have waited long enough. We want to have an open, fair, transparent, and swift process, to release these funds, so we will be working, expeditiously with all of the relevant stakeholders, to get that done. I want to ask our county executive Ed Day to say a few words, and then I will ask our town supervisors as well.

<https://youtu.be/W5KJOXmVRS0>

"Before I bring up two of our town supervisors, I do want to also acknowledge, Senator Bill Weber. John Mulgrew is here on his behalf. Senator Weber has been a great partner in this effort as well and really been pushing to support the businesses. Thank you to your office.

I now want to introduce our host, the Supervisor of the Town of Stony Point, Amy Stamm.



Amy Conklin Stamm – Stony Point Supervisor

Good afternoon. I'm joined today, here from Stony Point with Councilman Todd Rose who's behind me here. I first wanted to say thank you, Congressman Lawler, for your leadership and for delivering this critical support to our community. I'd also like to recognize former town supervisor Jim Monahan, who was part of the effort that helped move this forward. Jim continued to assist with this even into his retirement because he understood the impact that the CHPE project had on the Stony Point and North Rockland community.

This project has brought real challenges to many of our businesses, reduced access, traffic disruptions, impacts to their day-to-day operations. These are businesses that are the backbone of Stony Point. They are our neighbors, our gathering places, and a vital part of what makes Stony Point special. This \$1 million commitment from Blackstone is a meaningful step in recognizing these impacts and helping our business community continue to move forward. It's especially fitting that we're making this announcement during National Small Business Week, which is a time dedicated to supporting the small businesses that keep our communities strong. So on behalf of myself and the town board, thank you once again, Congressman, for your efforts.

<https://youtu.be/BYvMf3V0D00>

"Now I want to recognize and ask to say a few words on behalf of the North Rockland Chamber of Commerce, Stephanie Melowsky who really has been, at the, the tip of the spear here, fighting for, the small businesses in North Rockland, and working with the elected officials to try and get. This done, and I thank Stephanie for her leadership and all of her hard work, in delivering on this."

"Good afternoon, everyone. On behalf of the North Rockland Chamber of Commerce and more importantly, on behalf of the small businesses who are the backbone of North Rockland community, I said so appropriately, I stand here today to accept this \$1 million investment in North Rockland. This is more than a number. This represents survival. It represents hope. Over the past 2.5 years our small businesses have faced extraordinary challenges."

"The construction disruptions caused closed roads, dismantled parking, closed off access, limited visibility, and difficult decisions about staffing hours and even whether these businesses could keep their doors open. This project created a devastated, a devastating ripple effect, weakening confidence among consumers, especially outside of North Rockland. These are not just businesses that were affected. These are the families that live here, their livelihoods, and the heart of our neighborhoods." She explained.

"So today we say thank you for some relief, Congressman Mike Lawler. Your advocacy and your willingness to listen helped make this possible. You didn't just hear our concerns; you acted on them and for that we are deeply grateful. The hard work from the North Rockland Chamber Board. Mary Rodriguez Morrison, Lauren Isaac Shimco, Julia Kushner, and of course Rocky and Michelle Alexander was pivotal as we are a 100% volunteer organization and without your help we just were not loud enough. To our small business owners, this moment is for you, for the early mornings, the late nights, the risk, the resilience and the commitment to this community, even when the path forward was uncertain."

"This funding is a recognition of your perseverance and a bridge to a stronger future. The North Rockland Chamber is proud to stand beside you, not just today but every day as your partner, your advocate, and your voice. We look forward to putting these funds to work in a way that is transparent, impactful, and meaningful, helping businesses stabilize, recover, and grow. Today is a reminder of what can happen when government and community come together with a shared purpose. North Rockland small businesses didn't ask for special treatment. They asked for a fair shot. Today, because of this investment, they get that chance, a chance to rebuild, a chance to breathe, and a chance to remind everybody exactly who we are trusted, dependable, empowering, and purpose driven."

She concluded, "So again, thank you Congressman Lawler, Ed Day, the Community Foundation of Orange Sullivan and Rockland, and all of our community partners and most importantly thank you to our small businesses for never giving up on North Rockland. We accept this with gratitude and with determination to make every dollar count."

Lawler then asked Ron Gara from Titan Fitness, to speak as one of the businesses impacted. "I want to thank Congressman Mike Lawler for all the help he did. Also, Stephanie, we all put our heads together to basically try to get this done. It affected me because it was in front of my business for about a year and a half. It took up the whole parking lot. I own a gym and I'm a consumer-based business. You've got to come to me. If there's no place to park, they can look elsewhere. I'm also right in 9W by the corner of 9W and 202, so I'm truly affected that. But again, the main thing we're here for, to thank Congressman Mike Lawler for his efforts and what he put forth to get this job done. I appreciate it.

Lawler came back to the podium, "As we conclude and take some questions from the press. This is a year in the making, obviously a lot of impact on our local communities here in Stony Point and Haverstraw, a lot of impact on our small businesses and ultimately I think the sustained advocacy by the chamber business owners, and our local elected officials helped deliver this moment.

I want to thank everybody for their work and also, the press, a lot of the members of the press, really did a great job helping, highlight this issue, and make people aware, and that's always vital in trying to get, a positive result, and ultimately in dealing with, the folks at Blackstone and CHPE, I am grateful that they came to the decision to help create this fund and invest in it to support our businesses. There is a lot of opportunity, for growth, & prosperity and it works best when everybody is working together."

I think when Blackstone and CHPE recognize the value and the importance of our small businesses and are willing to help invest in it, that makes a difference and so I think this

was, in the end, a positive outcome, and we will continue to work to make sure that these funds get to the businesses, as expeditiously as possible. I appreciate everybody being here, happy to take questions from the press.

"The original, settlement offer from CHPE was \$100,000 and now it's \$1,000,000, shorter than the high-water mark. Would you say that there was a certain point in the negotiations where there was a realization and the constituents would offer a certain amount, but they wouldn't go above it to any leverage that was put on by New York State or any other entities to help to make that number."

<https://youtu.be/TPSSUh6r9UI>

"Looking for details on the framework, when can businesses start applying for this help, and are there any stipulations if these businesses accept it?"

"Yes a few things. One, we are going to have, expeditiously as possible a meeting with the community foundation with the chamber to establish the process and specifically what documentation is needed, what financials, etc., so that way. we want everybody to be treated fairly. We have a million dollars. It's got to be divvied up. The question is how to divvy it up and, and do so fairly across the board, which means you need to be able to provide documentation so we can have an independent auditor or accountant evaluate everything and ultimately make a determination. I think the reality of a fund like this is if you apply obviously and you, and you receive funds, you're foregoing any type of litigation, moving forward, but the objective here to me is this saves everybody time, resources, energy, allows them to focus on growing their businesses and to be able to recoup some of the losses, that they may have endured as a result of this construction. So, this was an effort to get financial support into the community and get to them as quickly as possible."

"I wanted to confirm two things. One, for Ed, does that mean that the PILOT program is back on track and that you're agree to sign the pilot agreement for question one and just, for Mike, is the money coming from Blackstone or CHPE?"

Lawler said he one owns the other, but just to clarify the money will be coming from CHPE

Ed Day who put the PILOT project on hold months ago "As far as the PILOT project is, as far as I'm concerned, is still on hold. We held it back until we were satisfied that what was being done was in the best interest of the people of this community. We now have a major step in that direction thanks to our congressmen and other elected officials and local merchants kicked in to get something done. So, I'm going to wait and see. I'm going to see exactly how this plays out. We'll talk to the IDA, I'm not rushing to do anything until I don't know for sure."