



COMMUNITY BOARD #5

*Honorable Vanessa L. Gibson, Bronx Borough President**Chairperson
Angel Caballero**District Manager
Kenneth Brown*

Bronx Community Board 5

General Board Meeting Minutes

April 23, 2025

Attendance: Mario Acosta, Nekeisha Afful, Yazmin Benitez, Eloise Bennett, Phyllis Bowdwin, Angel Caballero, Bakary Camara, James Coger, Catherine Cudjoe, Osiris Guzman, James Lin, Maribel Maria, Nanette Matthews, Theresa Mims, Robert Nieves, Juan Parra, Dilletta Pina, Benjamin Richardson, Shenja Rudolph, Argenis Santiago-Payamps, Charles Shorter, Beverly Smith, Cheryl Westbrook, Chef Geneva Wilson

Excused: Bobby Akumah, Chantal Allison-Konteh, Erachie Brown, Carrie Cuthbertson, Lucia Deng, Roxana Gonzalez-Jimenez, Michele Heath, Marlene Jimenez, Brenida Parsons

Absent: Julian Cleveland, Tisha Hatch, Gail Hill, Tierra Pais

Meeting started: 6:12 pm

Quorum: 6:18 pm

Welcome and Chairperson's Report:

- Angel is awaiting an update from elected officials who are returning to the district from their legislative sessions. An update is more likely during the May or June meeting. He offered a recap of the summary from last month: Some smaller businesses are planning to close. 75 employees have lost their jobs due to the fire. Fortunately, no lives were lost.
 - o BJT Bronx Merchant Association is working on economic development efforts in the community.
- Many families are looking forward to and planning for the summer. They are:
 - o There may be cuts within agencies, and there may be cuts to programming in the summer. It is very possible that many organizations and nonprofits will not run their programming throughout the whole summer.

BCC Campus * Gould Hall, Room 200 * 2155 University Avenue * Bronx, New York 10453
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Serving these Neighborhoods:
Fordham, Morris Heights, Mount Hope, University Heights

- Angel also reminds the audience that we have translation services from English to Spanish available.

Approval of Minutes:

- Cheryl: The minutes from March 2025 must be amended to include the second person who motioned to grant the after-hours variance during the March 2025 General Board Meeting. The person to motion was Nanette, the person to second the motion was Dilletta.
- Dilletta motions to accept the minutes from March with amendments, James Lin seconds the motion.
- Vote: 20 Yes and 1 Abstention. The motion passes.

District Manager's Report:

- The District Manager was out for this meeting. Below is a selection of his report, which was provided to members in the packets:
 - City Limits, a prominent investigative journalism resource in New York City, has a paid internship program called CLARIFY (City Limits Accountability Reporting Initiative for Youth). The program is open to high schoolers with an interest in public service journalism. The deadline to apply is April 30:
<https://citylimits.org/clarify-youth-program>
 - A job fair will be held on June 4th at the South Bronx Job Corps. This fair is part of the job fairs hosted by HRA. A flyer is being created. If there are local employers that are seeking to hire, they must complete a registration form by May 16. Please contact Ken Brown, District Manager, at KBrown@nyc.gov.
 - Requests for street lighting have been submitted to the Department of Transportation for the following areas:
 - 182nd Street and Webster Avenue. A study is being conducted, which should be completed in May.
 - Sedgwick Avenue and 174th Street. A study is being conducted, which should be completed in July.

Presentation: Alex Kipp, Director of Education & Engagement, New York City Conflicts of Interest Board (COIB)

- Offers free confidential legal advice for community board members. Helps answer questions like when can I vote?/When can I not? Contact via phone or their website: (212) 442-1400 or www.nyc.gov/site/coib/contact/contact.page
 - COIB will answer confidentially
- The COIB was established by Charter Revisions that occurred from 1986 – 1988.

- This informed what is confidential. It is up to members to disclose what they want to.
- Crucial advice from this presentation is to ask for advice before the act or vote in question
- Information on voting
 - Something to remember when thinking about conflicts of interest: Disclose/discuss/don't vote
 - Disclose conflicts before discussions or before votes
 - Disclose/Discuss/Don't vote on things that directly impact or touch you
 - Examples provided and the factors to consider:
 - Liquor licenses: License for own business vs for a neighboring business
 - Sitting on a nonprofit board: Sitting on a board vs being a dues-paying member
 - Working for a city agency/working for the city: Being primarily employed
 - Chairing a committee: Can sit on a committee, but cannot chair a committee where you need to disclose, discuss, don't vote
 - Vote tabulation: To pass a vote on an issue, a majority of yeses is needed. The total count would be the total of people eligible to vote.
 - Seeking personal favors or favorable treatment. Saying "Do you know who I am?"
 - Don't.
 - City business vs personal business: Don't use seals, letterhead, etc. for personal business
 - Gifts: Don't take gifts from people trying to gift to you because of who you are/wanting to sway your opinion.
 - Example: accepting a gift or getting your bill paid by a restaurant
 - Not okay: if voting on their liquor license
 - Okay: a waiter offering you a free dessert at the end of a meal you paid for (they don't know who you are)
 - Don't try to use Community Board sway in representing your firm
 - Dilletta: Regarding making a complaint. What is your responsibility if you know someone may have committed a violation?
 - Can make confidential complaints. Once you complain, it gets handled, but any findings are not fed back to you.
 - Bakary: Scenario: someone with a restaurant. A competitor, a known enemy next door, is applying for a liquor license.
 - Yes, can vote.
 - Juan: Does this meet board members' training requirement for conflict of interest?
 - Yes, can be used in place of attending a training (as long as present at this meeting).

Public Session:

- Katherine Belka, Department of Sanitation
 - Composting is mandatory for all NYC residents, including those in residential buildings.
 - Specifics: Labeled bin, or any bin 55 gallons or less with a secure lid
 - Line with a garbage liner/compostable liner
 - Through the end of the calendar year, DSNY will be conducting outreach and education around the mandate. During this time, they will still be issuing warnings and, in some cases, summonses
 - Upcoming educational session on May 29 at 4 pm
 - Customer service unit: 212-291-1220 / customerservice@dsny.nyc.gov
 - Bureau of Community Affairs: 646-885-4503
- Ariana Bon, WHEDco
 - WHEDco is a Jerome Avenue Revitalization Collaborative (JARC) member
 - They are encouraging community members to become familiar with elected officials and what local government looks like. To encourage this, they put together a civic resource guide. It is available in English and Spanish and is magnetic for people's convenience.
 - There is also a digital version at Jarcbx.com
- Erika Diaz, Community Liaison for Harmony Hub Family Enrichment Center
 - April recap: It has been a very successful and eventful month
 - Harmony Hub will have another Community Boutique on April 29th, 11 am – 1 pm. Clothing available for men, women, and children
 - Will be hosting several Mother's Day events in May.
 - HH FEC will be tabling at an event at 2467 Bathgate Avenue with LINK from 11:30 am - 2 pm
 - They will be providing info on what Harmony Hub does and promoting literacy by giving out books and conducting a raffle.
 - Contact: 929-703-0485
 - Address: 2001A Creston Avenue
- Robert Montalvo, Community Resident
 - Came to ask for advice with his Con Edison bill. The bill is \$500+ a month without using electricity. He has contacted the governor's and mayor's offices
 - Tyreke Israel, representing Councilmember Althea Stevens' office, asked several questions about the bill.
 - Does your home have a smart reader? Yes

- Is it a private home? Yes
- Recommends that Mr. Montalvo call Con Ed and ask if there is a possible 3rd party on the bill. Market rate is not regulated by the government.
- Mr. Montalvo will speak to some members after the meeting
 - Bakary: This issue is unique to Bronx/our area, and he believes it should be spoken about. Has heard from many about this issue.

Elected Officials Reports:

- Tyreke Israel, Councilmember Althea Stevens (District 16)
 - Stevens' Deputy Chief and District Director
 - Because of redistricting, Stevens has a smaller, though still important, part of CD5
 - Office: 1377 Jerome Avenue
 - Office helps with immigration, housing/HPD complaints, case management, Department of Building issues, and more.
 - Tyreke's focus as Director: Quality of life issues
 - The office paid for supplementary sanitation services at 181st Street / Washington Heights Bridge
 - Removing abandoned cars near Major Deegan
 - Contact: 718-588-7500
- Miguel Pena, Councilmember Oswald Feliz (District 15)
 - Recent event: Community Day at Bronx Zoo on 4/18
 - The CM is currently at an event in the Bronx Library Center regarding the future of the old library building in Fordham
 - Legislation: Intro 1237- would require NYPD criminal complaints and arrest records to be available to the public
 - Free public notary services are now available in the office. Contact for an appointment.
 - Also shared a resource to help dispute bills: Public Utility Law Project of NY: 877-669-2572
 - Phone: 718-842-8100
- Jack Shaevitz, Assemblymember Yudelka Tapia (District 86)
 - The assemblymember continues to work on passing the budget. Therefore, she is in Albany most weeks.
 - Introduced housing bills:
 - A07582- Requires landlords to provide more notice when repairs are going on in the building
 - A07589 - Increases penalties for landlords on the worst landlord list
 - Office held a successful Women's History Month event at Monroe

- Office hosts housing clinics every month with NMIC
- Personal: 917-414-5323
- (AB) Abou-Bakhr Meite, Assemblymember Landon Dais (District 77)
 - The assemblymember continues to work on passing the budget in Albany.
 - Asks community members and attendees not to be stingy with information (email, phone). Their office has a resourceful email newsletter. Their most recent newsletter had resources for homeowners.
 - Also shares important information, such as the \$250 fine imposed for not picking up dog waste
 - Dilletta: Would the office fund or look into finding funding for free doggy bags for the community?
 - AB: This may be an issue, but can look into it
- The office also has WhatsApp groups in English, French, and Spanish
- Lia Guzman Genao, State Senator Gustavo Rivera (District 33)
 - The senator continues to work on passing the budget in Albany.
 - Monthly clinic with NMIC: May 16
 - Flyer in the back about an upcoming virtual training on homeownership with NYLAG on May 1
 - Office: 718-933-2034
- Vincent Sepulveda, State Senator Luis Sepulveda (District 32)
 - Legislation
 - S04308A - Diversity in Education Act
 - Requires NY public schools to have DEI policies and an officer to be appointed
 - Highlights the importance of representation
 - The state budget is still being negotiated.
 - Constituent services include: NMIC, NYLAG visits every month, and Bridgebuilders biweekly. Appointment-based.
 - Office: 718-991-3161 / Address: 975 Kelly Street
- Edgar Tavarez, State Senator Robert Jackson (District 31)
 - The senator is in Albany working on passing the budget.
 - Edgar highlighted several of Senator Jackson's bills:
 - S415A- Fair Wage Bill. Fair wages for miscellaneous industry workers to reduce reliance on tips. Make it a more equitable line of work.
 - S182A- Qualified immunity

- Rent Guideline Boards: Urges the public to go to these meetings. Confront landlords
- Immigration clinic services are available by appointment, call or email
 - Citizenship rights, power of attorney.
- Office: 212-544-0173 / Address: 5030 Broadway Suite 701
- Joanna Rivas, Congressmember Ritchie Torres (District 15)
 - RESCUE Act- Repatriation of Expelled Sovereign Citizens and Unjustly Exiled. Deportation protections.
 - Community Project Funding for FY2025: Email Ny15appropriations@mail.house.gov
 - Phone: 718-503-9610
- Jackeline, Borough President Vanessa Gibson
 - Annual Gospel Fest Concert – May 3, 12 pm at Dreiser Loop Auditorium, RSVP using the QR code on the flyer.
 - Community Board Recognition – May 7, 5 pm – 8 pm at the Pelham Bay Split Rock Golf Course
 - Bronx Week: May 5 – 18th Theme: Thrive and Strive in '25
 - Visit: ilovethebronx.com
 - Constituent services: Handle all types of issues. Office can help connect you to a case worker.
 - Wants to thank the District Office staff, Ken and LaShawnda for their emails and their work.
 - Jackeline was a former member of the board, was dissatisfied, and left
 - Several board members mentioned an issue accessing NYCLearn – an issue with the system to access sexual harassment training

Committee Reports:

Youth Committee: Eloise Bennett

- Five candidates for the Yankee Community Council Youth Leadership Award
 - Extension, so they are waiting to approve.
 - The following candidates were selected: Kayla, Kayli, Taeshan, Wildaliza, Aminata

Education Committee: Osiris Guzman

- First meeting as chair was April 1: looking to partner with schools and build momentum.
 - Gather the available resources in the district

- Another goal is to expand access to trade education and technology. Wants to make sure it is prioritized.
- Next meeting Tuesday, May 6
- Councilmember Kevin Riley's recent bill, Intro 643, concerning indoor safe spaces for young athletes during inclement weather.

Immigration Committee: Mario Acosta

- Committee did not meet this month, may not meet in May.
 - More likely to meet in June
- Meetings are on the 2nd Thursday of the month
- Fun meetings!

Governing Committee: Cheryl Westbrook

- Meetings may not be as "fun" but are very important. Working on reviewing bylaws and looking at the language around elections.
- Next meeting: May 13, 6:30 pm after Veterans

Housing Committee, Nanette Matthews

- Has lived in the area for around 50 years. Chair of this committee for about 2.5 years
- Provided an overview of the committee's recent meeting with the Supportive Housing Network of New York (SHNNY)
 - Funding, planning, and allocation of funds for 62,000 units statewide
 - There is an anticipated funding shortfall of 9000 apartments. These units are expected to be put back into market value rent rolls.
 - Looking at ways to prevent that
- Ideas for developing a Housing Collaborative that would act as a brain trust.
 - Group of interested citizens, agencies, and nonprofits that could all share their ideas for eliminating homelessness in the community
- Also discussed the 197A process, which gives Community Boards authority to develop plans for their communities
 - The committee is researching ways to connect with and submit a proposal to the NYU Wagner School regarding helping with the plan
- Looking for ways to reach more members of the community who should be at these meetings. The need is urgent.
 - According to the Department of Planning, the risk of Displacement in this community is almost 98% (due to emergencies, pricing out, etc.)
 - However, she sees a lot of complacency. Complacency has led to a lot of issues/deterioration. She urges people in the audience to come even when they don't have to come.

- Committee meets 3rd Thursday of the month at 6:45 pm
- Tyreke Israel, representing CM Althea Stevens' office: What does outreach look like?

Health and Human Services Committee: Chef Geneva Wilson

- Next meeting: April 24
- Will provide information on WARM (We All Really Matter), a domestic violence awareness organization, and other community updates
- Please use the QR code to share interests and questions/register.

Veterans Affairs Committee: Juan Parra

- Recent meeting discussed the Benefits for Grown Children of Deceased Veterans program. Some highlights of the benefits are below:
 - Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA): helps assist with education and training for children aged 18 to 26.
 - Fry Scholarship: program designed for surviving spouses and children of service members who died in the line of duty after September 11, 2001.
 - CHAMPVA: Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs- helps share health care costs with eligible beneficiaries.
 - Andersen Windows discount: several military discounts with a minimum purchase.
 - Next meeting: May 13, 6 pm

Old Business:

- Nanette and Jack Shaewitz (Office of Assemblymember Yudelka Tapia): Tapia's office is trying to find a time when the office can come to speak about NY A06554, a bill she is sponsoring regarding the Opioid Settlement Fund.

New Business:

- Benjamin Richardson: A moment of silence for the loss experienced by the Dominican community in DR, as well as in the Bronx, at Jet Set club in Santo Domingo.
- James Coger: Community Justice Connect will host an Immigration Workshop on April 30, 2 pm, at 3213A Third Avenue in the Bronx. He will share a flyer with the district office for distribution.

Next meeting: May 28th

Meeting end: 8:00 pm