



**THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**BOROUGH OF THE BRONX**

**COMMUNITY BOARD #5**

**Honorable Vanessa Gibson., Bronx Borough President**

**Chairperson  
Angel Caballero**

**District Manager  
Kenneth Brown**

**Bronx Community Board 5  
General Board Meeting Notes  
January 22, 2025**

Attendance: Mario Acosta, Nekeisha Afful, Bobby Akumah, Yazmin Benitez, Eloise Bennett, Wilfrido Bonilla, Erachie Brown, Angel Caballero, Bakary Camara, James Coger, Carrie Cuthbertson, Lucia Deng, Roxana Gonzalez-Jimenez, Osiris Guzman, Tisha Hatch, Michele Heath, Stacy Infante, Marlene Jimenez, James Lin, Maribel Maria, Nanette Matthews, Robert Nieves, Tierra Pais, Juan Parra, Brenida Parsons, Dilletta Pina, Shenja Rudolph, Argenis Santiago-Payamps, Charles Shorter, Beverly Smith, Carlos Veras, Cheryl Westbrook, Chef Geneva Wilson

Excused: Chantal Allison-Konteh, Phyllis Bowdwin, Annette Dejesus, Theresa Mims, Patricia Rojas,

Absent: Julian Cleveland, Catherine Cudjoe, Gail Hill, Benjamin Richardson

Meeting start: 6:05pm

Quorum reached: 6:05pm

**Welcome and Approval of Minutes**

- Charles motions to approve the minutes, Dilletta seconds
  - o The motion passes with the following vote: Yes- 24, Abstaining- 6

**Chairperson's Report**

- The chair asks that committee chairs put in their agendas and do more to promote their meetings to the public. Let's think out of the box when possible to spread the word.
  - o The committee schedule is by the entrance of the Davidson center
  - o A lot of work requires that the public attend meetings. It is important for the community at large.
- SYEP applications are out for youth between ages 14-24
  - o Flyers are in the back. The chair is happy to help with any interested in applying. This is the time to advocate for our youth.
- Flyers in the back for a coat drive being held January 31 from 2-4pm. Coats should be gently used or new. Location: 85 West Burnside in Morris Heights

**District Manager's Report**

- Wishes a happy new year to all members and the public.

BCC Campus \* Gould Hall, Room 200 \* 2155 University Avenue \* Bronx, New York 10453  
Telephone (718) 364-2030 \* Facsimile (718) 220-8426 \* bx05@cb.nyc.gov

Serving these Neighborhoods:  
Fordham, Morris Heights, Mount Hope, University Heights

- He thanks Lashawnda for all of her efforts and for stepping up when Kenneth had a family emergency during January.
- Jerome Avenue Revitalization – hosted a lunch on 1/16 for all the workforce collaboratives in the city. Met to discuss common practices, collaborate, and standardize reporting in order to report the same data across the city.
  - o Kenneth was representing JARC
- Police Precinct meeting: 24 new officers are in the process of training and will be assigned to the precinct
- St. Barnabas – community health concerns. The presentation was about the eye and ophthalmology clinic. Clinic is available for walk-ins and scheduled surgeries.
  - o Phone: 718-960-6392. Monday-Friday 9am-5pm
- Applications are available for the Community Board. Flyer in the back has a QR code that will take you to the Borough President site: <https://form.jotform.com/250137007893153>

#### **Voting Item: Personnel Matters**

- Mario and Michele spoke on behalf of the ad-hoc committee.
  - o The recommendation was as follows: The ad hoc committee recommends that the board vote to remove Benjamin Richardson as treasurer of Bronx Community Board 5. This was discussed during the 1/8 Executive Board Meeting.
  - o Michele emphasized that moving on amicably made sense in order to continue with board functions.
- Beverly motions to remove Benjamin as treasurer, and Tisha seconds the motion.
  - o The motion passes as follows: Yes-19, No- 3, Abstaining- 7, Recuse-3
- Cheryl: Benjamin has the right to object in front of the board. He is not present during this meeting.

#### **Elected Officials**

- Bronx Borough President, Vanessa Gibson: The BP spoke at length about her public service, her record, and her hopes for the borough. Below is a summary of her remarks.
  - o Welcomes and thanks all the CB members for their work. She has been traveling across the Bronx to try to attend all board meetings.
  - o Over the past 3 years of service, she has represented the 1.4 million people in the Bronx. Her tenure has been marked by several achievements and challenges.
    - This January marks the 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the horrific Twin Parks fire, in which 17 people, including 8 children, lost their lives. The BP recognizes the lives lost and celebrates their memory.
      - Her office is looking at government and landlord accountability. Too many New Yorkers are forced to make a choice between safety and being warm during the winter.
      - Fires continue to affect the Bronx. There was a fire in CB11 at Allerton on January 10 which displaced 300 individuals, which resulted in a full

vacate order. Another fire at Heath Avenue in CB7, also resulted in a full vacate order. Both fires remain under investigation.

- The Bronx is overwhelmed by social services, but this responsibility needs to be equitably shared across neighborhoods. She finds it unacceptable that those displaced by recent fires have had to enter temporary housing with a curfew.
- Education efforts:
  - \$4 million total to Bronx Community College to transform Ohio Athletic Field, with a match from the state in capital funds
  - Gould Memorial Library modernization
  - Celebrates the recent appointment of Melissa Aviles-Ramos, a former principal and part of the DOE for over 20 years. Ramos hosted a listening tour across the city, BP participated.
- Community Board work:
  - About 600 appointments to CBs every year. The office tries to make sure boards are diverse and representative of neighborhoods. Diversity in background, age, race, and employment. But acknowledges that more needs to be done in terms of recruitment.
  - As a result of community board reforms, the application is available online in English and Spanish.
- Looking at hosting more events in areas where the office may not have been as present over the past 3 years.
  - Pushing to bring a blood center back to the Bronx
  - Bronx STEAMM (science, technology, engineering, arts, math, music) school. Creativity in their approach and looking at multiple angles in addressing the systemic inequalities in the neighborhood. Especially now as the importance of community and community input are very crucial.
- Economic development and job opportunities:
  - Kingsbridge Armory: \$2 million investment, the community re-imagining work continues. But, also asking that many conditions be met: union jobs, local hiring at the Armory.
  - Supporting merchant associations through many efforts
    - Savor the Bronx – was around before the pandemic. Functioned as the Bronx Restaurant Week. This year it will be from 2/18 to 2/23. Restaurants will be participating to highlight their businesses and attract new customers. It's an opportunity to talk about all the good things happening in the Bronx.
  - Jobs are transformative for our communities. Borough Hall hosts a job fair roughly every three months.
    - Focusing on hard-to-reach communities: African American men, LGBTQIA+, people with disabilities
- Community health, mental health and chronic health issues

- Has allocated additional funds to Health Bucks, which helps people afford fresh food at green markets.
- Has called for increased canopy coverage – or trees/greenery in areas to help offset heat
- Fires and lithium ion batteries made worse by aging infrastructure.
- Expansion of various NY Health+Hospital medical facilities and their technology
- Office has many task forces, including LGBTQIA+, Public Housing, Higher Education
  - Taskforce on higher education: Will host a College/Higher Education Fair – March 12 10am-2pm at Mercy University
- Despite everything, filled with hope and optimism. Looking to lead in things that are positive, a lot of work happening.
- Recognizes Martin Luther King Jr. Day this past Monday. In his words, “You can kill the dreamer, but you can’t kill the dream”

### Public Session

- Ms. Sallie Smith
  - Wants to express her concerns about how the two-minute policy is enforced.
  - Specifically, during the November meeting, there were three residents who seemingly did not have that policy enforced.
    - One was a woman who spoke through an interpreter.
    - Another young lady spoke for 7+ minutes
  - Equal time for equal people/participation. This was not fair, and she did not like it.
  - Angel/Cheryl: we will discuss this during the next executive meeting
- Kimberly Troncoso, Oyate Group
  - Brandon Hendrick scholarship: applications now open
    - [oyategroup.org/brandon-hendricks-scholarship](http://oyategroup.org/brandon-hendricks-scholarship)
  - Beyond Rising internship: workforce development for undocumented youth 16-20 years old. The internship would require participants work 30 hours a week, earning 500\$ a week
    - Applications open the second week of February and close on April 7: [oyategroup.org/beyond-rising](http://oyategroup.org/beyond-rising)
  - Oyate Global Rising scholarship: Available to seniors in Dominican public schools
    - Oyate would sponsor their visa to study in the US. Eligibility: [oyategroup.org/dominican-republic](http://oyategroup.org/dominican-republic)
- Raidiris Dominguez, Neighborhood Shopp/NY Connects Bronx
  - The group has provided services in the Bronx for the past 40 years, including case management, visits, and case assistance.
  - They also run the Lafayette Naturally Occurring Retirement Community and the NYConnects program
  - Address: 975 Kelly Street / Phone: 718-542-0006
  - Website: [nshopp.org/contact](http://nshopp.org/contact) / Email: [info@nshopp.org](mailto:info@nshopp.org)
- Steve Crawford, Primerica Financial Services

- Provide financial literacy for communities, college planning, insurance, and focus on helping people retire with dignity
- Services are complementary. Can help with entrepreneurship. Can help sponsor licenses. He will be in the back with additional information.
- Kristina Lozano, Housing Crisis/Foreclosure at 2025 Valentine
  - Works as a community school director
  - She is joined by several shareholders of the 2025 Valentine co-op board (HDFC) in the back. Her co-op has contacted Maria Villalobos.
  - The co-op is concerned about a misappropriation of funds. The property is in foreclosure. Residents do not want to lose their homes. They are looking for any help, any legal advice. They have taken their concerns to various agencies and representatives
    - Wilfrido: advises that she makes a report with the NYS attorney general (she did), also that she find an attorney (she will speak to Wilfrido)
- Julia Marcano, 1520 Sedgwick Avenue
  - Concerns about the BX18 reroute (BX18A and B). These bus routes run through a loop after 170th Street. The Bx18A goes through Undercliff Avenue while the Bx18B follows Sedgwick Avenue until turning back to 170th Street.
    - Her and her neighbors' issue with the bus is that once residents of Sedgwick get to University and W Tremont, there is no way direct back to Sedgwick.
      - How do residents that live on Sedgwick get back once they are on University and West Tremont, or coming from the Metro North?
      - Residents have been told to take 18a to then walk down the dangerous, isolated steps.
    - Angel recommends that she attend the Municipal Services committee.
    - Cheryl: we work on it in 2 ways- Addressing concerns directly to district manager and to a related CB committee.
  - Ms. Marcano has spoken to 511 but was not given a case number
    - Lashawnda: will call 511 to create a case on her behalf. Will forward the information to an MTA liaison

### **Elected officials**

- Esperanza Diaz, Councilmember Oswald Feliz (District 15)
  - The Preliminary Budget has been proposed, the Council will hold hearings during March and April
    - Reach out to Baena, budget director, [sbaena@council.nyc.gov](mailto:sbaena@council.nyc.gov) with questions
  - Constituent Services include: citizenship and immigration services, tax assistance (during tax season)
  - Office: 718-842-8100
- Maria Villalobos, Councilmember Pierina Sanchez (District 14)
  - Echoes the announcements and points made during the Borough President's speech.
  - Constituent Services include: Housing, immigration services
  - Office: 347-590-2874

- 3030 Heath Avenue fire: 4-alarm fire, displaced over 20 families. Office visited site.
- Kingsbridge Armory: Kingsbridge Vision Plan. A developer has been selected to redevelop. Vision Plan emphasizes equity for the surrounding neighborhood.
- Jack Shaevitz, Assemblymember Yudelka Tapia (District 86)
  - Office hosted a toy distribution last month that distributed about 800 toys
  - Next month is Black History Month and Dominican Heritage Month. The office will participate in events to commemorate both.
  - Will host a Town Hall focused on mental health at the end of February. More details to come
  - Work on after-school availability, sending out surveys to understand needs
  - The legislative session has started, and Tapia will be spending more time in Albany
    - Introduced a bill banning construction of new schools within 500 hundred feet of a controlled-access highway
    - Encourages people to reach out if they are in Albany
  - Address: 2175 Jerome Avenue / Office Phone: 718-933-6388
- Lia Guzman Genao, State Senator Gustavo Rivera (District 33)
  - Event with Part of the Solution (POTS) - signing residents up for SCRIE/DRIE (rent exemptions) or homeowner tax breaks.
    - 2/7/2025, 9am – 4pm at 2450 Grand Concourse, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor
  - Constituent services include: Housing and immigration services. NMIC clinic on Friday, 1/24. Occur monthly. Housing clinic on Monday, 1/27 in collaboration with West Bronx Housing.
  - Office: 718-933-2034
  - Senator in Albany for next few months for the legislative session.
- Vincent Sepulveda, State Senator Luis Sepulveda (District 32)
  - Vincent was recently promoted to senior community liaison
  - Constituent Services include: Help with public assistance, One Shot Deals, and recertifications. Many of the organizations they partner with work on a biweekly basis. NMIC comes in monthly
    - NYLAG – civil legal matters, NAICA – eviction and housing matters
  - Office: 718-991-3161 / Address: 975 Kelly Street
  - Virtual Bronx Senate Delegation Budget Forum - February 6, 6-8 pm
    - Registration details are in the back. Speakers will have two minutes to testify
- Edgar Tavarez, State Senator Robert Jackson (District 31)
  - Many senate bills in focus: About public safety, transportation, schools, tenant protections, and worker protections.
    - His staff are attending community board meetings, receiving phone calls, and paying attention to the necessities that bring people into office.
  - Office: 212-544-0173 / Address: 5030 Broadway Suite 701
    - Will be opening a Bronx office on the Bronx Community College campus later this year
- Joanna Rivas, Congressmember Ritchie Torres (District 15)

- 2910 Wallace Avenue fire: Hundreds of Bronx residents displaced,
  - Joined Vanessa Gibson, Senator Jamaal T. Bailey, Councilmember Kevin C. Riley, others to hold Community Relief Drive.
- Called on the City and State to dismantle the open-air drug market in The Hub (South Bronx). Has been publicly asking for action for several months.
- Office: 718-503-9610
- Trevon Blondet, District Attorney Darcel Clark
  - Re-Entry Employment Fair at BronxWorks Betances Community Center
    - Bring cover letters and your resume.
    - Free professional attire and interviews on site.
    - Address: 547 East 146<sup>th</sup> Street, 1/28/2025, 10am – 2pm
  - Cell: 917-946-3438 / Address: 198 East 161<sup>st</sup> Street
  - Clothing Drive for prom attire (dresses, suits, shoes) in May. More details likely in April.

### **Committee Reports**

- Health and Human Services Committee: Chef Wilson
  - Next meeting: February 27
  - On the agenda: Food stamp skimming, security measures for EBT cards
- Municipal Services Committee: Lucia Deng
  - Has a conflict and will reschedule
  - The next meeting will discuss proposed street renaming guidelines and other issues. An agenda will be shared
- Economic Development Committee: Tisha Hatch
  - Next meeting: February 3
  - There will be speakers. All members of the public are welcome
- Cultural Affairs: Robert Nieves
  - Next meeting: January 28
  - Looking to hold an event at Echo Park this year. Will also discuss several showcases of different art forms.
- Parks Committee: Erachie Brown
  - Looking for public participation. Interested in ideas for events and how to use parks to strengthen the community.
  - Next meeting: January 28
- Veterans Committee: Juan Parra
  - Is looking to have someone from NYS Veterans Services speak
  - Next meeting: February 11
- Immigration Committee: Mario Acosta
  - Next meeting: February 6
  - Is hoping an elected official will send a representative
    - People attend and have questions. Anticipates questions about the changes to federal regulation with new administration

**New Business**

- Kenneth: the community district office was experiencing an email issue. He wants to provide an update regarding the matter. He got in touch with tech support. The glitch seemed to only impact group emails.
  - o This impacted emails going to board members since he emails board members via a mass email group. Emails did not go through fully over the past couple of weeks. Technology services recommended a fix that would mean he would essentially have to input emails individually.

Next meeting: February 26

Meeting end: 8:06 pm