



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**

General Board Meeting Minutes – December 13, 2023

Meeting start time: 6:05 pm

Quorum reached: 6:05 pm

Attendance: Nekeisha Afful, Bobby Akumah, Eloise Bennett, Wilfredo Bonilla, Phyllis Bowdwin, Erachie Brown, Angel Caballero, Bakary Camara, Carrie Cuthbertson, Annette Dejesus, Shannon Goodson, Michele Heath, Marlene Jimenez, Maribel Maria, Nanette Matthews, Theresa Mims, Basil Moore, Robert Nieves, Benjamin Richardson, Shenia Rudolph, Charles Shorter, Carlos Veras, Cheryl Westbrook, Chef Geneva Wilson

Excused: Esmeralda Herrera, Patricia Rojas, and Juan Parra.

Unexcused: Felix Ceballos, Catherine Cudjoe, Lucia Deng, Alisha Jackson, Kay Lopez, Suri Medina, Brenida Parsons, Julius Roberts, Beverly Smith

- Approval of Minutes
 - Benjamin Richardson made a motion to approve the minutes for November 2023, Charles Shorter seconded.
 - Bakary Camara abstained as he was not present
 - 23 yes, 0 no, 1 abstention
- Chairperson's Report
 - Collapse at 1915 Billingsley Terrace
 - No injuries reported. No tenants have been able to return yet.
 - Police are still in control of area.
 - The Red Cross was able to place many families in temporary accommodations.
 - Air quality is being monitored.
 - Christmas Tree lighting celebration:
 - On Aqueduct Avenue 3-6pm Friday
 - In January, Three Kings celebration at the Davidson Center
- District Manager's Report
 - November 14: for landmarking of Aqueduct Park- testimony was provided by Borough President, by District Manager on behalf of CB5. Public is allowed to submit testimony at testimony@lpc.nyc.gov
 - Revitalization/better utilization of Fordham Plaza
 - November 29: City of Yes virtual presentation
 - **Board will need to vote in January 2024**
 - **Governance meeting on the January 11th at 6pm will discuss this matter**

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

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- Last Thursday of every month: Friends of Echo Park
 - City Parks Commissioner was at the last meeting
 - Public is welcome to attend
- Collapse at 1915 Billingsley Terrace
 - BMCC Roscoe Brown Student Center is working as operational center for relief: open from 10am-6pm with various services including the Red Cross
- Committees must restart meetings in January
- Special thanks to Lashawnda Dodson, Community Board 5 Community Coordinator for her help coordinating all the cannabis applicants
- Voting Item, Letter of Support for a Cannabis Dispensary located at: 2438 Grand Concourse
 - Applicant: Ms. Suzanne Hein
 - Brief remarks from Committee Chairs Annette and Shannon

Question from Member Benjamin: What is the benefit to the community?

- Told to refer to minutes from the joint committee meeting
- Question from Member Nanette: Why was the joint committee meeting that hosted the applicant held during the holiday season?
 - It was an urgent meeting as we have 30 days to respond to requests.
- 12/18 is the deadline for applicants to request a letter of support from community boards
- Benjamin Richardson motions to vote, Annette Dejesus seconded
 - 11 yes, 12 no, 1 abstention
 - The no's carry. CB5 will not write a letter of support for the dispensary applying at 2438 Grand Concourse
- Public Session
 - 46th Precinct
 - Represented by Officer Kennedy and Captain Garcia
 - New commanding officer: Jeremy Scheublin
 - New Commanding Officer was unable to attend as he is currently on site of the building collapse
 - Member Nanette Mathews: asked about fentanyl deaths
 - Captain Garcia: will need to get back to her with specific information.
 - Member Roxanne Gonzalez-Jimenez: concerned about notable increase in homeless population and public consumption of drugs near Featherbed Lane
 - Captain Garcia: NYPD addresses homelessness by speaking to people on the street and trying to get them into shelter/connected to services. Noted the importance of acting with compassion when handling.
 - Regarding building collapse at 1915 Billingsley Terrace
 - Looking to restore power in the next few days so that they can bring in residents to collect necessary items.

- Member Cheryl Westbrook: Have any residents that need to gather medicine/important documents been able to enter?
 - Captain Garcia: Residents have been unable to enter as it hasn't been deemed safe by FDNY.
 - Precinct will hold Community Council on the evening of 12/19 at 7pm
 - Toy Giveaway next Wednesday 12/20
 - Is aware of concerns regarding scooter/moped traffic violations
 - Member Benjamin Richardson: How are they tracking people that are riding mopeds without plates?
 - Captain Garcia: 46th has confiscated over 3000 mopeds in the last year. When mopeds are confiscated, the rider needs to provide a license and proof that they own the bike.
 - How is the NYPD addressing this on the Cross Bronx/Major Deegan
 - Garcia: Have to address it safely, oftentimes have to use helicopters
 - There was a crash with 2 motorbikes and a van on Webster, but all drove away. How does the NYPD investigate situations like this?
 - Garcia: Happened in 48th precinct, difficult to investigate when people involved do not stay in the area.
 - Question about a Winnebago on Cedar Avenue
 - 46th: They have tried to ask them to move, but they cannot evict them as they have license plate + have been living there
 - Member Robert: There is a van that has been parked near Anthony and Grand Concourse for several years
 - Public: Noted that cars have been parked for extended periods of time at another location in CB5 and have received summonses twice
 - This is under a different agency's purview
 - Member Phyllis: Question about the popup car wash, on Third Avenue as well as Sedgwick
 - Hasn't seen it but will look into it
- Ms. Sally Smith
 - Shared remarks about the conditions in the community, she has seen some improvements and wants to show her appreciation during the holiday season.
- Deacon Celeste Burns- President of the Resident Association at River Park Towers
 - Approximately 8000 residents
 - Is new to the role, has been sharing information from CB5 meetings with residents
 - Building collapse
 - Since the incident, Bx 40 has been making its last stop at Webster and 180th

- Some drivers have been rudely stopping/not explaining why the route ends abruptly. Driver last night was unaware why that is the last stop.
 - Deacon Burns called 511 and they were unaware, representative is looking to see why this is happening
 - Deacon Burns has been asked to attend the Municipal Services meeting, board will try to contact the government affairs liaison at MTA
- Elected Official's reports
 - CM Pierina Sanchez:
 - Regarding building collapse at 1915 Billingsley Terrace
 - 50 unit building, with about 46 families
 - Families are receiving case management to find housing or any necessary services. Have to report to Red Cross to initiate.
 - If you know of anyone in need of services, they can go to the CM office.
 - CM Sanchez and staff have been at the site since the collapse to ensure families are receiving services/being placed in temporary accommodations.
 - HPD and Department of Buildings are containing the site as they need to make sure the area is safe. Area around the building will likely be cut off from traffic for 6-8 weeks.
 - Donations: office is not putting out a public call for donations. Have been working with corporations.
 - Member Benjamin Richardson: Feels that landlords have been able to skate responsibility/accountability
 - CM Sanchez: Recommends that people call their landlords with issues and then call 311
 - CM Sanchez: Considers looking into why the landlord was able to have so many violations to be the most important issue. She is currently the chair of the Housing Committee in City Council.
 - Member Theresa Mims: She and a neighbor have made many calls to landlord for repairs. Have called 311
 - CM Sanchez: Important to call 311 as it is the way to track/hold landlords/agencies accountable.
 - Mayor's Office
 - Leonardo Coello: asked people to contact him regarding the issue with Bx 40
 - Information regarding response to building collapse at 1915 Billingsley Terrace
 - Night of: able to place 40% of residents in hotels
 - Respite center at BMCC for the next 3-4 days where residents can get services

- Engineers are ensuring that the building is safe for habitation and for people to enter to retrieve items
- Member Theresa Mims: Is it possible to have more building inspectors come into the position so that they can inspect older buildings
 - Coello: Unlikely now due to hiring freeze
- Public: Did the scaffolding have anything to do with the collapse?
 - Coello: Unknown for certain, but likely no
 - Member Bakary Camara: Lives nearby the collapse, the building collapse occurred in front of his children. Many buildings have scaffolding due to façade issues. Many absentee landlords. Feels that the Bronx is being forgotten by elected officials.
 - Coello: Wants to make sure that we don't generalize people as not caring. Many people from various agencies were on site every day.
 - Mayor is very limited in how he can respond as it is private property. Can't seize the property. It's important that people continue to report violations/report their landlords.
- Member Roxanne Gonzalez-Jimenez: How concerned should we all be about budget cuts?
 - By law, the mayor has to balance the budget every year.
- Borough President
 - Ciara Gannon
 - Regarding building collapse at 1915 Billingsley Terrace
 - BP has been on site
 - Con. Ed has been contacted to try to restore power at the unaffected side to allow tenants to retrieve personal items. As of now, it seems that the building won't be fully demolished
 - Dispensary licenses
 - Hears the board's/public's concerns. BP met with Director of OCM. BP's office has been letting people know to ask for extensions as soon as applications come in to allow more time.
 - Meeting on budgets with District Manager and staff
 - CM Board Applications are opening up soon, will be electronic this year.
 - The Bronx is the only borough to offer the application in two languages
 - Member Roxanne Gonzalez-Jimenez: Regarding illegal stores that have opened up. How is the BP addressing this?
 - OCM is aware. OCM's opinion is that opening legal sites will help to run the illegal sites out of business. BP understands that

the public and the board are concerned about new sites, legal or not

- Chair Angel Caballero: What will happen with new appointments who have not been attending?
 - CB5 is able to move forward with removals of members that have had unexcused absences
- Ms. Sally Smith: How many illegal smoke shops have been shut down?
 - Ciara: would need to look into this statistic
- Member Benjamin Richardson:
 - Ciara Gannon: CB would send a letter of no support and that would influence the OCM's decision
- Public: The landlord of the building was on the Public Advocate's worst landlords list. The data is there
 - It is still important to report in order to collect data
- Member Nanette Matthews: Has heard conflicting info from CM Sanchez and Mayor about what can happen with the buildings of irresponsible landlords.
 - 3rd party transfers
- State Senator Gustavo Rivera
 - Staff member Luz, is new to the role
 - 718-933-2034
 - Signed into law the Fair Medical Debt Reporting Act
 - Asks the public to call the office with complaints about illegal shops. They will help refer to right agency
- Congressman Ritchie Torres
 - Joana Rivas
 - Toy Drive at the Bronx Zoo on December 22
- State Senator Sepulveda
 - Office continues to help with SCRIE and DRIE applications
 - Bridge Builders are visiting the office to help people with SNAP/HRA applications
 - Office is relocating to 975 Ogden Street
- Old Business
 - No old business.
- New Business
 - District 9 is getting a bilingual school
 - Next general meeting January 24

Meeting End: 8:20pm

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