



NORWOOD NEWS

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CHAOS FOLLOWS SEPÚLVEDA ARREST



Photo by David Greene

STATE SEN. LUIS Sepúlveda leaves reporters high and dry as he exits a toy giveaway in the South Bronx on Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2021. They said they understood he would comment, at the event, about his Jan. 12 arrest but the senator refused to answer any questions.

by **DAVID GREENE**

State Sen. Luis Sepúlveda has been stripped of his title as Chair of the Senate Committee on Crimes, Crime Victims and Corrections following a

domestic dispute during which he is alleged to have attempted to choke his estranged wife.

According to NYPD detective and spokeswoman, Sophia Mason, officers from the 48th

precinct responded to a 911 call regarding a domestic incident at 5:45 a.m. on Saturday, Jan. 9, at Sepúlveda's Daily Avenue home in West Farms. "Police were met by a 40-year-old fe-

male and a 56-year-old male who both stated the other party assaulted them," Mason said.

The New York Times reported on Tuesday, Jan. 12, that
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New Landlord to Tenants: Happy Holidays, Now Get Out

by **DAVID GREENE**

Just days before Christmas, some 15 families renting apartments in one Norwood residential building received a letter from One Vesta Property Management, on behalf of the new landlord, advising them they had to move out on or before Mar. 31, 2021, as their apartments are being sold.

According to Real Estate Weekly, the impacted rental cooperative apartments, located at 3245 Perry Avenue in Norwood, are among 255 units located in nine different buildings in the Bronx and Manhattan, which were purchased in November 2020 as part of a \$23 million deal by Glacier Equities, a real estate investment firm led by Myles Horn. Alex Horn is a partner at the firm.

The other Bronx-based buildings are located in Bedford Park, Concourse, Fordham/University Heights and Spuyten Duyvil, while two others are based in the Inwood section of Manhattan. A two-bedroom apartment at Perry Avenue currently rents for \$1,300.

Joseph Conzo, Jr., a recently retired FDNY EMT and former vice president of the FDNY union, lives at the Perry Avenue building and had just finished a round of chemotherapy for a 9/11-related pancreatic and liver cancer days before he received the unofficial letter of eviction.

In the letter dated Dec. 1 but postmarked Dec. 21, tenants were told, "Please be advised that your lease agreement expires on 1/31/21. We are writing to inform you that BRX Perry Apartments, LLC will not be continuing your tenancy, and this will serve as a 90-day notice to vacate." The letter was signed by Michael Lago on behalf of the property manager.

Multiple attempts by *Norwood News* to reach both Horn and Lago in an effort to clarify the exact relationship between Glacier Equities and BRX Perry Apartments LLC proved unsuccessful.

Standing outside his home on Sunday, Jan. 17, Conzo told the *Norwood News*, "My family has been living here since 1985. At one point, we had [rented] four apartments in this building." He went on to describe the local neighborhood of Norwood as "phenom-

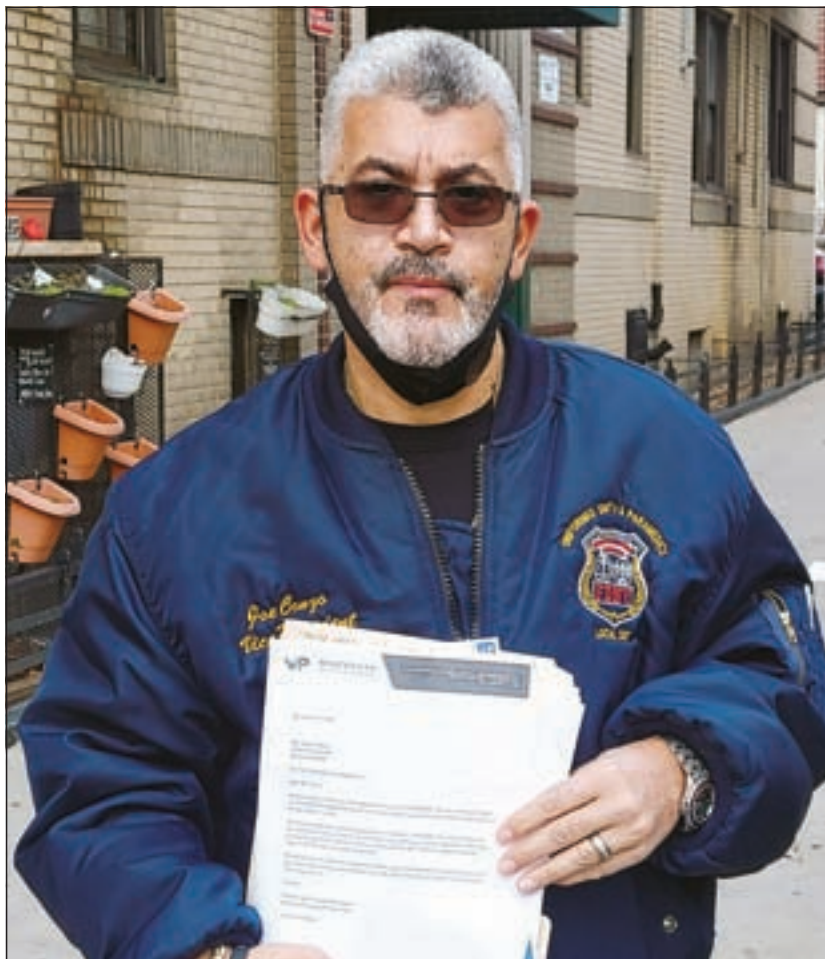


Photo by David Greene

STANDING OUTSIDE HIS home at 3245 Perry Avenue in Norwood on Sunday, Jan. 17, 2021, Joseph Conzo, Jr., displays a letter he received just days before Christmas from the building's property manager informing him he had just 90 days to move out of the rental apartment he has lived in for the last 25 years.

enal."

Conzo added, "To get a letter two days before Christmas saying that your lease is not going to be renewed, you have 90 days to vacate, was shocking.. shocking news."

Conzo confirmed that he, personally, has been renting two apartments in the 41-unit building for the last 24 years. Describing the warm and friendly bond that exists among the building's residents, he said they would often knock on each other's doors and gather in the lobby during the holidays to put up festive lights and ornaments.

"It's hard. It's frustrating. It's stressful," Conzo said, confirming he has written to most if not all local, Bronx elected officials on the matter. In reference to former Councilman Andrew Cohen's recently vacated seat, Conzo said he had not followed up with City Council Speaker, Corey Johnson,

who is overseeing Cohen's former constituency office until such time as a replacement is found.

Cohen resigned on Dec. 31, before the end of his final term, which would normally have ended in June, to take up a judicial position on the Supreme Court based in the Bronx.

On the advice of Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, who represents the 81st Assembly District, residents of the Perry Avenue building are now working with the West Bronx Housing and Neighborhood Resource Center, which provides eviction prevention assistance, mediation, and housing preservation services in the western Bronx, and a complaint has been filed with the New York State Attorney General, Letitia James.

Conzo recalled once praising Alex Horn who, in 2018, donated an apart-

(continued on page 8)

Nonprofit Run by Teens Helps City's Homeless

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

A new generation of nonprofit organizations are lending a hand to help with homelessness in the city. Some are even being led by passionate twenty-somethings, and one was founded by a teenager not yet old enough to vote.

SustainABLE Start is run by more than 80 high-schoolers across the country. Founded by Chloe Trujillo, a 17-year-old, high school senior, the organization pays special attention to the hygiene needs of the homeless population.

By distributing what are described as eco-friendly hygiene kits throughout the city, the group hopes to make an impact on one of the most vulnerable populations in NYC. "Within shelters, and also on the street, people need to find ways to keep themselves clean and hygienic, but often that's not their top priority," Trujillo said. "It's often food and clothing."

Indeed, although food and clothing are usually the main drivers of the group's efforts to help the homeless, Trujillo sees a particularly somber reason to get the hygiene kits to the shelters, and into the hands of those living on the streets. "Transmittable diseases spread at one of the highest rates among people experiencing homelessness," she said.

Indeed, in July 2020, *Norwood News* reported on how residents of the Jerome Avenue Men's Shelter (JAMS) in the Norwood section of the Bronx were quietly moved to a hotel in Manhattan due to concerns over coronavirus transmission.

Underscoring the importance of protecting the homeless population during the pandemic, Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced during his recent State of the State address on Jan. 11, that people who work and live at homeless shelters would be included in Phase 1B of the COVID-19 vac-



Photo courtesy of SustainABLE Start
THE LEADERSHIP TEAM
(above) at SustainABLE Start:
(L-R) Phillip Fuhrman, Olivia Wang, Chloe Trujillo, Nina Hissnauer, and Samantha Salcedo.
(right) Chloe Trujillo, founder of SustainABLE Start, sits next to 600 hygiene kits prepared for distribution to the homeless community.



cine roll-out. The governor went on to describe the growth of the homeless population as a "national urban crisis."

Trujillo may not have the resources to tackle a national crisis just yet, but her efforts are being felt across the city at 55 locations. A recent report by the NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS) dated Jan. 14, 2021 showed that, citywide, 52,895 individuals were housed in shelters, 17,256 of whom were children.

Last November, the *Norwood News* reported how the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York (EDNY) approved a class action settlement in *C.W. v. The City of New York*, which had the effect of expanding access to essential, life-saving youth programs and services for runaway and homeless youth aged 16 to 20 in New York City.

Under the settlement, the City was required to implement procedural changes regarding how city agencies would manage homeless

youth, improving the system for all young people ages 16 to 20 who would enter it in the future.

In the Bronx, SustainABLE Start has partnered with BronxWorks to distribute hygiene kits to places like JAMS. They also provide kits to Maya's Place, a shelter for young women in Morris Heights. The kits include items such as masks, socks, wet wipes, deodorant, a toothbrush, toothpaste, hand sanitizer, and menstrual products, among others. The kits are put together in a community space in the building Trujillo lives in with her family on the Upper West Side of Manhattan.

Now that it's off the ground, Trujillo said the nonprofit is positioning itself for sustained success with her team developing an ability to listen, reassess, and adapt to the needs of the

people they serve. Through BronxWorks, for example, the group has received feedback on how popular the socks (included in the kits) have been among shelter residents. "They mentioned the socks were super helpful," Trujillo said. "We keep receiving donations of socks. I always have them sent to BronxWorks and I know a lot of them do go to the Jerome Avenue Men's Shelter."

The idea for SustainABLE Start was set in motion when Trujillo and Victoria Buendia-Serrano, both students at the Dwight School, an independent college-prep school, needed help finding a subway entrance in Manhattan. A homeless person helped them find one, and from that encounter, they decided to pick up hygiene products at a local dollar store to distribute to people they saw in the subway who appeared to

need help. They said creating SustainABLE Start was their way of "paying it forward."

Since March 2020, the nonprofit has raised \$18,000 to buy the items needed for the kits. "We used the momentum from getting all this attention, and making all the initial kits, to partner with local companies," Trujillo said. "Our current price per kit that we have to pay out of pocket is around \$4 but... all of the value of the items is around \$40."

Helping the homeless stay hygienic is not the only way in which young people are giving back. In 2011, at 19, Andrew Heinrich founded Project Rousseau, a nonprofit organization that seeks to help young people who are facing issues like hunger, poverty, and homelessness, to continue their path to higher education. When Heinrich was looking for a partner organization with outreach capabilities, SustainABLE Start caught his attention. "We were particularly drawn to them because they are team-led and team-run," Heinrich said. "So, we reached out to them and in true fashion, they were very enthusiastic."

With ten years of successful nonprofit management behind him, Heinrich sees special qualities in Trujillo when it comes to such work. "She's a phenomenal leader and learner at the same time which is, ultimately, the best form of leadership," he said.

Currently, Trujillo is busy filling out college applications and writing admission essays, but by next fall, she hopes to expand the nonprofit by establishing a chapter in Philadelphia. She is aware, however, of the challenges ahead in growing the organization. "I think the challenge that we're definitely trying to overcome now is to establish ourselves as a nonprofit that didn't just do a lot in the beginning, and that we're continually helping," she said.

INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week, we asked readers for their thoughts on the January 6th riot at the U.S. Capitol.



"I've been in a daze. I'm very upset. I feel for these people's lives, and I walk around afraid because you never know; they could shoot and I could get hit, you know? It's very scary. I hope the transition will be peaceful. So far, it's nice and quiet. It's so sad but yes, [President-elect Joe] Biden will bring the country together, yes. You've got to have faith."

Roxanne Home
Morris Park



"I think [President Donald] Trump is definitely to blame. He incited the riot - not just Trump but everybody in Congress backing Trump. Even after the riots, even after they, themselves, were victims of this crime, they still sat up there and said the election was rigged, [that] it was fake, that it needed to be investigated...the election that had been investigated several times... I also blame Trump and all the white supremacists who went up to Congress. Also, there needs to be an investigation regarding the policing, and the fact that they were able to get into the Capitol building that easily."

Milagros Quinones
Norwood



"I feel that President (Trump) was guilty, and he should be held accountable. There are words I can use like 'disgraceful,' 'disgusting,' but the word I'd really use is 'disturbing.' - that it's 2021, and we're still dealing with the Civil War, it's just antiquated thinking. There's alternate universes, there's cult of personality, man, and it's counterproductive, and we just have to stand up to the bullies. Donald Trump represents the past. Half of me likes him - I think he's as unique as steak and eggs. He's iconic, and the other half of me thinks he's a threat to national security, I think he, and his administration, have acted like Russian nationals since day one. America is not stupid, and not everyone is drinking the kool-aid Donald Trump is serving."

Ray Torres
Bedford Park



"I think the people don't feel okay with the recent elections and they are angry. And for that reason, the riot took place and we're in danger, but it's not Trump's fault. Yes, he won the election, and I think it was stolen, yes. The country is taking the road of socialism, and it has a lot of influence. That's really all I can say of my opinion. I don't know what's going to happen now. Believe me, you saw what happened before, but I don't know. I would like it if he runs again in 2024, of course."

Hector Delgado
Fordham Manor

[Editor's Note: Various courts have ruled that the election was not stolen.]



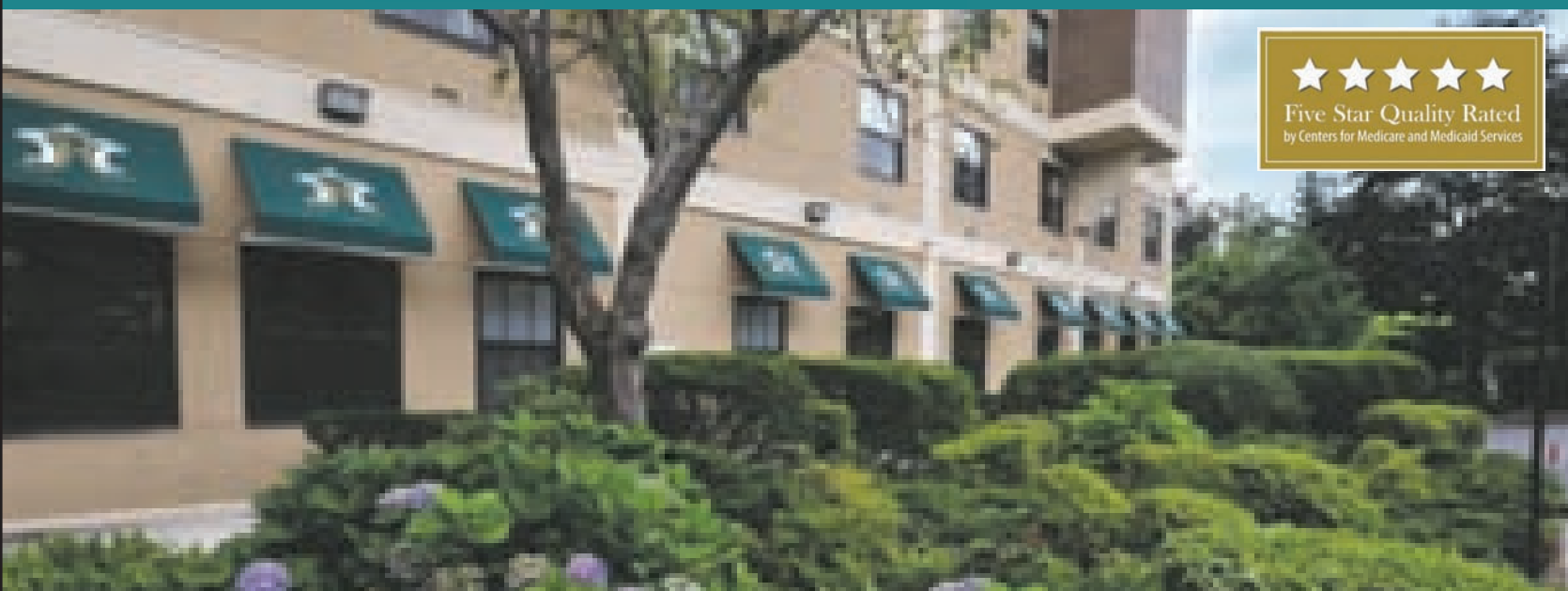
"The one concern across the board was security breach - that was the consistent underlying issue. What happened? Was security enough? Seriously though, that's the one concern, and who is the infiltrator of the security? How many security [members] were in on it? Because I said it early, and Michael Moore said it the other day, is that this was an inside job. The people with Trump - they are a cult. They're going to do something rash, and now security has upped its arms, Trump's not showing up... but something's going to happen because you cut off their social media - you're really legitimizing their paranoia now that you are targeting this community."

Dion Sanders
Crotona



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NEWS BRIEFS

By SÍLE MOLONEY

New Music School in Norwood

Starting February 2021, a new Bronx School of Music will be opening in the Norwood-Bedford Park neighborhood. The school will welcome all students and their families to come and use its space for lessons, practice, rehearsal, and enjoyment. The school will be based at 3348 Perry Ave., Bronx, NY 10467. Its website is currently under development, but prospective students can reach out to Philip Kwoka, president and founder at info@bronxschoolformusic.org or by phone on (347)-202-5402 for more information.

Free Transportation for Seniors to Get Vaccine

Mayor Bill de Blasio announced on Sunday, Jan. 17, that beginning Monday, Jan. 18, seniors aged 65 or older who are unable to make their own arrangements and need transportation to and from a COVID-19 vaccination appointment can sign up for transportation through the City. Seniors who require transportation will be screened and directed to transportation options, including Access-a-Ride, ambulette services, cab service via Curb and, in a few weeks, transportation by select Senior Center programs. The City's Department for the Aging has said it will reach out and link seniors to transportation through phone outreach, ensuring that every senior knows the range of available options. In total, the City will offer approximately 10,000 rides per week.

Two Bronx Lottery Winners in 48 Hours

The New York Lottery announced on Friday, Jan. 15, that one, top-prize winning ticket was sold in the Jan. 14, Take-5 lottery drawing. The ticket, worth \$63,584.00, was purchased at UMK Inc, located at 5582 Broadway in the Kingsbridge section of the Bronx. On Saturday, Jan. 16, the lottery announced that another top-prize winning ticket had been sold in the Jan. 15, Take-5 drawing. The ticket, worth \$74,021.00, was purchased at BP gas station, located at 824 Allerton Avenue in Allerton.

District 15 City Council Race Expands

Troy Blackwell, a former aide on the Biden-Harris campaign and Obama White House aide, announced his candidacy in the District 15 City Council race on Monday, Jan. 18. According to Blackwell's campaign, his campaign policies focus on housing

City Will Arrange Transportation for NYC Seniors to Get Vaccinated

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Beginning Monday, Jan. 18, seniors aged 65 or older who are unable to make their own arrangements and need transportation to and from a COVID-19 vaccination appointment can sign up for transportation through the City, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio announced on Sunday, Jan. 17.

"We are moving heaven and earth to get our senior neighbors vaccinated", said de Blasio via a press release. "Now, seniors who need a ride to an appointment will get one, ensuring our vaccines go to those who need them most."

In response to the announcement, Department for the Aging (DFTA) Commissioner Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez thanked the network of senior centers and providers, who she said worked tirelessly during the pandemic providing critical services to thousands of older adults, and who are ready to mobilize transportation services and assist the seniors in getting to their vaccination appointments.

"I also would like to thank the City, the Vaccine Command Center, and partners for ensuring we never forget our commitment to older adults as New York is an age inclusive city," she said.

City officials said that older New Yorkers aged 65 and over who make an appointment for a vac-

cine at a City-operated site will be asked whether they have a way to get to and from their appointment. If they require transportation, they will be screened and directed to transportation options, including Access-a-Ride, ambulette services, cab service via Curb and in a few weeks, transportation by select Senior Center programs.

City officials added that DFTA providers will be able to reach out and link seniors to transportation through phone outreach, ensuring that every senior knows the range of available options. In total, the City will offer approximately 10,000 rides per week.

To reach all those New Yorkers aged 65 and over, the City said it will broaden its outreach in partnership with nonprofit partners and trusted community leaders. With a comprehensive outreach campaign that will be led by the City's Vaccine Planning Workgroup for Older New Yorkers, the City will be partnering with local organizations to get the word out about safe and accessible vaccinations - knocking on doors, placing direct calls and robocalls, holding virtual town halls, delivering flyers, partnering with local health providers and more.

City officials added that on-site vaccination clinics for seniors living in NYCHA developments

are also up and running, providing on-site vaccinations for residents aged 65 and older. Clinics at Van Dyke I & II Houses in Brooklyn, Cassidy Lafayette Houses in Staten Island, and Polo Grounds Towers in Manhattan are currently open, with plans to move to different sites across the city in the coming weeks.

Council Member Margaret S. Chin, who represents parts of lower Manhattan, said, "Coordinating with our aging service providers to connect older adults with information and transportation is the most effective way to achieve herd immunity for older New Yorkers."

She added, "To ensure priority populations are vaccinated as soon as possible, we must have multi-lingual outreach in tandem with immunization. I am confident that pop-up sites at NYCHA facilities will be the fastest way to bring vaccines to the city's most vulnerable seniors, and I am hopeful that this effort can be replicated city-wide."

Norwood News recently reported that the City expects to run out of vaccines the week commencing Monday, Jan. 18, and that the State has called on the federal government to increase vaccine dose distribution to respond to the need.

justice, education, and criminal justice reform. He joins Kenny Agosto, Ischia Bravo, Elisa Crespo, Oswald Feliz, Latchmi Gopal, John Sanchez and Altagracia E. Soldevilla in the race. Julian Sepulveda suspended his campaign in November and endorsed Crespo.

Cuomo Seeks to Buy Pfizer Vaccine Directly

On Monday, Jan. 18, Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced he asked drug company, Pfizer, which is based in New York, if the State could purchase the COVID-19 vaccine directly from the company. He said, unlike Moderna, Pfizer is not bound to commitments under Operation Warp Speed, the federal government's vaccine plan. Both the governor and NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio had

announced the weekend prior that vaccine supplies were due to run out the following week, even though the mayor had previously set a goal of administering one million vaccine doses by the end of January.

On Jan. 18, the governor also alleged the federal government had made a false promise that vaccine doses held in physical reserve would be shipped to New York, following Cuomo's request for more doses. He said he was initially informed they were on the way but that the federal government did not follow through, and New York was set to receive just 250,000 doses during the week commencing Jan. 18, which was 50,000 fewer than the previous week. The governor said whether it was an act of incompe-

tence or intentional falsehood, the public deserved a full explanation.

Espaillet Tests Positive for COVID-19

Congressman Adriano Espaillat, who represents parts of the Bronx and Manhattan, announced on Thursday, Jan. 14, that he tested positive for the coronavirus, and was quarantining at home. The congressman was first vaccinated with the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine at the United States Capitol on Sunday, Dec. 20, 2020. On Jan. 14, Espaillat said he had received the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine the previous week and that he understood it took some time for the vaccine to take effect. He added that he planned to be tested reg-

ularly, wear his mask, and follow the recommended guidelines. He also said he would be continuing with his duties remotely until he received clearance from his doctor. He encouraged all residents to follow public health guidelines.

Bronx Dems Endorse Eric Dinowitz in District 11

The Bronx Democratic Party posted on its Facebook page on Jan. 6 that it was endorsing Eric Dinowitz in the District 11 City Council race. *Norwood News* reached out to the party to check if there was any formal press release issued at the time of the announcement as it appeared quite low-key. We did not receive an immediate response.

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INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER:
GOV'T. SHUTDOWN | PG. 4

STATE OF THE CITY: DE BLASIO
OUTLINES PLANS FOR BX. | PG. 10

STAGG TENANTS BATTLE FOR QUALITY OF LIFE

Vocal tenants ramp up demand for fixes at Webster Ave. bldgs.

NEIGHBORS ZXAVIER SIMPSON (l) and Shannon Terrell (r) inside Terrell's third floor apartment at 2985 Webster Ave. Terrell has filed papers at Bronx County Housing Court for an HP action, violations and alleged harassment against her landlord.

By **DAVID CRUZ** and **JOSEPH KONIG**
Residents of three fairly new buildings on Webster Ave.

fight waged by tenants over conditions at the buildings at 2985, 2987, and 2989 Webster Ave. Since the *Norwood* responsive and made improvements to the properties, known collectively as Bedford Park Manor.

New 5-2 CO Attacks
Crime Spike of '18
pg 2

Bodies found in Two
Separate Norwood
Incidents | pg 7

Achieving Student
Balance at PS/MS 95
pg 8

New Landlord to Tenants: Happy Holidays, Now Get Out

(continued from page 2)

ment to the family of slain NYPD officer, Miosotis Familia. Conzo now says, "He will not be remembered for that. He will be remembered for kicking people out during a pandemic."

In a 2013 feature article, Miles Horn told The New York Times how he first got into real estate, saying, "I bought my apartment for \$37,500. It was a one-bedroom overlooking Central Park. I sold it a few weeks later for a lot more money. It didn't take much for a light bulb to go off, for me to figure out a way to make money."

Back at Perry Avenue, a worker was spotted exiting the building on Jan. 16, having completed a day's renovations and repairs on an already vacated

apartment.

The new landlord sent a follow-up letter to tenants in the new year, apologizing for the prior "untimely letter" sent before the holidays. In it, tenants were informed that the landlord would try to work with each individual family to reach a satisfactory arrangement for both parties, but were also informed of the landlord's intention to eventually sell the impacted apartments.

Norwood News has reached out to Bronx Community Board 7 to check if the matter was discussed at any of the previous committee meetings. A special election to find a replacement City Council Member for District 11 was called by Mayor Bill de Blasio on Jan. 4 and will be take place on March 23.



Photo by David Greene

A WORKER EXITS 3245 Perry Avenue in Norwood after the first day of repairs and renovations carried out on an already vacated residential building unit on Saturday, January 16, 2021.



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CRIME FILE

By SÍLE MOLONEY

**Fordham Manor: 8-Year-Old Shot in Head**

The NYPD reported that on Monday, Jan. 18, at 12.30 in the afternoon, at Fordham Hill Oval in the Fordham Manor section of the Bronx, an 8-year-old boy was shot in the head. He was transported to New York (Columbia) Presbyterian Hospital in critical condition. Referring to the incident in a press release issued earlier that day, Councilman Fernando Cabrera wrote that the gunshot had been self-inflicted, and that it was unknown if the gun owner was in legal possession of the gun or not. In a press release about an hour later, the councilman wrote that the gun used in the shooting had been legally registered with the owner. In a later press release, he wrote that the gun had been illegally held. *Norwood News* is not in a position to corroborate whether the firearm was legally or illegally held or whether the gunshot was self-

inflicted or not. In a phone call with the NYPD, officials said the incident was under investigation.

Norwood: Search for 16-Year-Old Missing Girl

The NYPD is asking for the public's assistance in locating Asiamarie Ortiz, 16, of 3424 Gates Place in the Norwood section of the Bronx. Asiamarie was reported missing in the 52nd precinct and was last seen at her home at 3 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 17. She is described as 5 feet, 5 inches tall, weighs 130 pounds, has brown eyes and brown hair. She was last seen wearing a black coat, black shirt, and a black/red baseball hat.

Fordham Manor: Suspect Arrested in Attempted Rape

On Friday, Jan. 8, at 7 p.m., a 33-year-old woman was walking up the stairwell of her apartment building, located in the Fordham Manor

section of the Bronx, when an unknown man grabbed her from behind and attempted to rape her. During the encounter, the victim bit the suspect's right hand. He fled to parts unknown. The victim was not injured but was transported to NYC Health + Hospitals/ North Central Bronx for evaluation. Surveillance video and photos showing the suspect inside the location were obtained and shared with the public.

Police confirmed on Jan. 18 that on Friday, Jan. 15, 2021 at 3.10 p.m., Fausto Perez, 33, of Nelson Avenue in the Morris Heights section of the Bronx was arrested and charged with attempted rape in the 41st precinct. An arrest is not proof that a person is guilty of an offense.

University Heights: Suspect Sought in Stabbing

The NYPD is seeking to identify the man who is wanted for questioning in con-

nection with an assault. On Friday, Jan. 8, at around 2.55 p.m. in front of 2301 Jerome Avenue (Family Dollar store) in University Heights, the suspect approached a 48-year-old man from behind and stabbed the victim in the upper back.

The suspect then fled, on foot, northbound along Jerome Avenue before entering a black van which then left the location. The victim was transported to an area hospital in stable condition, where he was treated, and later released. The suspect is described as an adult male in his 30s or 40s, has a medium build, is dark-skinned, bald and was last seen wearing black sunglasses, a dark blue long-sleeved shirt, dark colored pants and blue sneakers.

The getaway vehicle was a black van with white signage on the side, and green and red pin-striping towards the bottom frame.

Kingsbridge: 74-Year-Old**Man Punched in Face**

The NYPD is seeking to identify a man sought in connection with an assault. On Tuesday, Jan. 5, at 11.20 a.m., inside Kingsbridge Road subway station (D Line) in The Bronx, a 74-year-old man was entering the subway turnstile when the suspect, who was exiting at the adjacent turnstile, punched the victim in the face. The suspect subsequently fled the station. The victim reported the incident to police, and later sought medical attention at Montefiore Hospital for neck pain.

Anyone with information with regard to these incidents is asked to call the NYPD's Crime Stoppers Hotline at 1-800-577-TIPS (8477) or for Spanish, 1-888-57-PISTA (74782). The public can also submit their tips by logging onto the Crime Stoppers website at WWW.NYPD-CRIMESTOPPERS.COM, or on Twitter @NYPDTips. All calls are strictly confidential.

Graffiti Clean-Up at Kingsbridge Armory

By MIRIAM QUINOÑES & SÍLE MOLONEY

On Thursday Jan. 7, Councilman Fernando Cabrera, representing District 14, joined the 52nd Precinct Community Affairs Unit and the NYPD Explorers in painting over graffiti that had been sprayed on the walls of the Kingsbridge Armory at Kingsbridge Road and Jerome Avenue.

Speaking to the *Norwood News* after the bulk of the work had been completed, Cabrera, who is serving his final term as a council member and is currently running for Bronx borough president, said, "We're right here at the Kingsbridge Armory. This was full of graffiti. News 12 reached out to us about all the

graffiti that was here, so we got together - the 52nd precinct, [NYPD] Explorers, the young people came out. I came out, and we just covered it all."

The councilman continued, "Right now, the city does not have the graffiti removal [service], so this is the next best thing that we can do." Cabrera said the group wanted to respect public buildings and honor them. He said they worked on a large section of the armory wall all the way up to the end of the block. "These young people, they are making a difference," he said. "This is so awesome, and this is us taking care of our community. This is awesome, man. If we don't take care of it, who's going to do it? And so, everybody here [is] making a difference. God Bless."





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Why Biaggi Backs Stringer's Run for Mayor

By SÍLE MOLONEY

Integrity, leadership, the ability to listen and craft creative policy that's fair to everyone - these are the core attributes State Sen. Alessandra Biaggi sees in New York City Comptroller, Scott Stringer. Passionate in her expression of just how aligned she is with his way of thinking, the progressive senator, who represents parts of The Bronx and Westchester, spoke to the *Norwood News* about why she was among the first, if not *the* first, in a hefty list of elected officials to immediately throw support behind Stringer when he officially announced his mayoral bid on Sept. 8, 2020.

Having grown up in Manhattan's Washington Heights, a place where Stringer said a single mom like his could afford to give her boys a middle-class life, the comptroller chose to launch his campaign in nearby Inwood. Later that day, he crossed over into the Bronx, accompanied by Biaggi, who *he* had previously endorsed when she ran for her Senate seat in 2018. There, they chatted with Riverdalians about what they wanted to see in their next mayor.

Though he is not the first city comptroller to run for mayor, Abe Beame being at least one other, as the person who has, since 2013, overseen the largest municipal and regional economy in the United States, Stringer's financial experience is central to his platform, and is clearly an asset at a time when the City seeks to emerge from the economic downturn caused by the pandemic.

While conservatives would argue that many campaign policies touted by progressive candidates are overly idealistic, [since every government program has to be funded] Stringer already has the inside knowledge of how best a fiscally responsible budget can be achieved.

"Bringing leadership back to City Hall means dealing with the budget crisis," Stringer said at his campaign launch. In tackling the \$4.2 billion budget deficit reported around September time, he said, "I'll root out waste. I'll enact smart, targeted revenue generators."

The comptroller also warned that any borrowing would have to be limited to ensure the City didn't get stuck in a cycle of reliance on debt, and that bringing leadership back to City Hall meant that the City's economy could not be reopened the same way it had been closed. One of the ways he plans to do this is through investing in small businesses and bringing back traditional retail corridors.

Indeed, Stringer said the measure of the City's success in recovering from the pandemic cannot be whether the Dow Jones continues to rise. "The measure of



Photo courtesy of Stringer for Mayor

NEW YORK CITY Comptroller, Scott Stringer, and his wife, Elyse Buxbaum, join Sen. Alessandra Biaggi as they campaign in Riverdale on Sept 8, 2020 as part of Stringer's run for mayor.

our success must be, instead, whether we finally build a city for everyone," he said during his launch. "I will ask the most fortunate among us to pay a bit more in taxes. We asked frontline workers to be heroes, and the wealthiest New Yorkers should do their part."

Saying New York had lost control of how to manage the City, Stringer added that there should be "no more giving away the store to developers." Included in his platform is a commitment to building permanently affordable housing that working people can actually afford.

He also plans to triple the number of new apartments built for homeless families, saying [economic] disparities that begin at birth have to be addressed. "We will enact my plan, #NYCUnder3, to extend childcare assistance to all families making less than \$100K a year," he said. "It'll more than triple the number of kids in city-backed childcare."

With so much emphasis on budgetary policy, we asked Biaggi if she thought the comptroller would have voted in favor of the City's contentious adjusted budget last June amid widespread calls to "defund the police," and after it became common knowledge that the NYPD's annual budget was in the region of \$6 billion, and many feeling that that money could have been better spent elsewhere.

"It's hard to speak in a hypothetical but I know the comptroller's values and his principles, and I think that he has led with them for his entire career," she said, adding that Stringer had proven himself to be someone who made sure there was enough money for social services, education, and basic necessities, when such services had previously gone underfunded.

Referring to her belief in the comptroller's ability for creative policy, she said reimagining how the city budget is managed was a must. "I think that that's very much in line with how he thinks, but I don't know how he would have come down necessarily on the budget, up or down," she said.

Norwood News reached out to Stringer's campaign with the question and was informed that the comptroller was ultimately critical of the final outcome of the June revised budget. Like others, he believed the police budget was not ultimately cut in the manner people had

expected, and that the budgetary actions taken were really more akin to creative accounting.

"Having a police budget as large as we do in the NYPD, when you compare that to education or to mental health, those are things that we've got to look at, so that we can make sure that police officers are not responding to mental health calls, because they don't have the training to do that, and they should not be doing that," Biaggi said.

On the topic of mental health, and in order to safely diffuse what are often volatile situations, we asked Biaggi if she agreed that it was perhaps necessary to reimagine the mental health system itself. In making it a 24/7 service, mental health experts could then be on standby to accompany police to locations where there may be mentally unstable people who are armed, or people whose abilities may be impaired by illicit substances, and who may pose a risk to themselves or others.

"I think that that's a very smart idea," she said. "Yes, I think that that's right. When you're in an emergency, you and I know to call 911, and I think that people use 911 as the emergency service call number for *every* emergency, and not every emergency falls within the purview of the police department."

She added, "One of the many reasons why I'm supporting him [Stringer] is because he listens, he is reasonable, he is rational, but he also has a growth mindset, and having a growth mindset is absolutely essential right now in our government."

In an effort to further understand the apparent reticence to cut the NYPD budget, and acknowledging the recent increased security threats posed by domestic, White supremacists, we asked the City's Independent Budget Office (IBO) how much of the NYPD's budget is allocated to counterterrorism and intelligence gathering.

We were informed that in 2020, the City spent \$228.2 million on intelligence and counterterrorism, that the 2021 budget includes \$187.9 million in this regard and that \$189.7 million has been allotted for 2022. The IBO could not confirm what was behind the reduction from 2020 to 2021.

A representative said this may have been in part a reflection of federal dollars not yet received since the City doesn't account for some federal money until it's actually allocated. The IBO confirmed that last year, the NYPD got over \$424 million in federal and other revenue, while this year only \$168 million is currently budgeted. The representative said in the two prior years, the City had gotten in the \$200 million+ range.

When it comes to criminal justice reform, law enforcement and police brutality, Biaggi said Stringer is someone who likes to bring all sides to the table, which she said was incredibly unusual in the current political climate. Referencing a speech he gave last summer in the context of respect and honor, she said

he talked about how nobody deserves respect for respect's sake. "You earn respect. You earn the honor," she said. "Those are privileges."

In terms of his relationship-building abilities, we asked the senator if, in her experience in Albany, she felt the reported dysfunction between Gov. Andrew Cuomo and Mayor Bill de Blasio impacted negatively on everyday New Yorkers, and if she felt the comptroller would better navigate that relationship if elected mayor.

She agreed that the alleged friction between the two leaders was not good for ordinary New Yorkers and she was critical of the seemingly frivolous way their relationship was characterized and covered in the media, though she commended The New York Times for an opinion piece in which it was suggested the two should stop the quarreling.

"There's a lot of joking that goes around on it, where it's like, 'Oh, look! They're fighting again,'" she said. "I actually don't find it funny at all. I think it is one of the most damning things to New Yorkers. New York City - one of the largest cities in the world - managing it well requires partnership. It requires thoughtfulness."

Biaggi said there would always be disagreements between leaders because that is the essence of leading. "Different people have different opinions, but what has been created here [with Cuomo and de Blasio] is really troubling," she said.

"It's all about getting there first. It's like a rush to the finish line - who can announce what the new idea or policy is first, and that's childish." By contrast, Biaggi said good leadership entailed leaders collectively using their power to help the most people.

In this, she said Stringer is committed to uniting. "That's a very broad thing to say, but he doesn't stoke division," she said, adding that even when he disagrees with people, he can work with them and said he has done so throughout his entire career.

The senator added that in the current political environment there was also an absence of rewarding creative thoughts, behaviors and programs. "When you ask somebody walking down the street, 'Do you think government's creative?' I think the first thing that they would say is, 'No.' Nobody thinks government's creative. That's like a joke but it's not even a funny joke because the lack of creativity in our government actually is damning to all of us."

Another reason she supports the comptroller is due to his zero-tolerance stance on sexual misconduct, saying he was ahead of the game even before the #MeToo movement became a global phenomenon. She said Stringer has a growth mindset and never accepts the status quo. "Scott is someone who has proven that the progressive issues of today are his issues," she said. "The greatest city in the world deserves the greatest leader — and that's Scott Stringer."

New Elevator at Gun Hill Road Station

By RACHEL DALLOO

The new year ushered in some good news for seniors, non-driving shoppers, people with disabilities, and parents with small kids in strollers as the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) officially opened another ADA compliant elevator in the Bronx on Wednesday, Jan. 6, in the presence of a number of Bronx elected officials.

The elevator at Gun Hill Road subway station in Olinville, which serves the number 5 and 2 subway lines, is a welcome development for those who had previously struggled climbing the many flights of steps in order to access the upper platforms, all while carrying strollers, bags, wheelchairs and carts.

The project was part of the MTA's 2020-24 Capital Plan, which went into effect on January 1, 2020, and included \$54.8 billion in investment in the State's subways, buses, commuter railroads, bridges and tunnels.

The station was the final of eleven stations across the city to become fully ADA accessible in 2020, which included the Bronx's Bedford Park Boulevard station which serves the B and D lines. At least eight additional stations are set to undergo ADA-related improvements this year.

Present for the opening was MTA Board Member and Commissioner of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, Victor Calise, and MTA's President of Construction & Development, Janno Lieber.

Apart from the elevator improvements, Lieber said improvements were also made to the subway tracks and platform. These included stairway renovations, a customer service booth, and the expansion of the building to facilitate more access to the elevators.

In addition, the MTA control house at the Gun Hill Road station was expanded by 26 feet, and the upper platform was modified to accommodate the new elevator. MTA crew members also upgraded the station's communication system with new mechanical and electrical fixtures.

Lieber said overall the project was great news for the people of the area, not just those conventionally described as disabled, but also for New Yorkers who are older, parents with strollers, and for people who do their shopping by subway.

In June 2020, Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced that the MTA had planned



Photo by Rachel Dalloo

PRESIDENT OF MTA Construction 7 Development, Janno Lieber, delivers remarks at the opening of a new elevator at Gun Hill Road subway station in Olinville on Wednesday Jan. 6, 2021.



Photo by Rachel Dalloo

MTA BOARD MEMBER and Commissioner of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, Victor Calise, delivers remarks at the opening of a new elevator at Gun Hill Road subway station in Olinville on Wednesday Jan. 6, 2021.

to work on a number of Capital projects across the state, costing approximately \$2 billion, during the period of reduced ridership caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The MTA officials were joined at the elevator opening by recently elected City Councilman for the 12th District, Kevin Riley, Assemblywoman and Bronx borough president candidate, Nathalia Fernández, State Senator and Bronx Democratic Party Chair, Jamaal T. Bailey, Speaker of the New York State Assembly Carl Heastie, and

Bronx Borough President Ruben Díaz Jr.

"As the Bronx Borough President, I believe, as we start talking about how to get to the other side of COVID-19 and how we plan that, infrastructure is important," said Díaz. "What happened here, it created good jobs for those who were building this train station." He added that [despite the pandemic] it was important to move forward with infrastructure and transportation to make sure corners were not being cut, and all voices were being heard.

Meanwhile, Bailey said, "We have to redefine what we consider to be disabilities." He added, "Sometimes there are things that we don't necessarily see that prevent people from accessing these spaces. There are people that have these invisible disabilities that are not able to access public transportation. Let's be clear, public transportation should be accessible to the entire public, not just a subsection of the public."

For his part, Riley said Gun Hill Road subway had been part of a transit desert in the community. "To address the transit desert, we have to focus on the revitalization of our train stations within our community," he said. "It's very imperative that we revitalize all of the other train stations in the Bronx."

The MTA said that a small number of remaining fixtures still need to be installed at Gun Hill Road station, in order for the station's upgrade to be fully completed. These relate to the area around the station's entrance and are projected to be completed by the end of January.

Meanwhile, Fernández said accessibility should be the number one priority for everyone. "We are not the only ones in the city," she said. "We have many, many friends and neighbors who might need more assistance in different ways. Every train station should have an elevator so New Yorkers [can] get by."

Out & About

Compiled by DAWN CLANCY

Events

The Mosholu Montefiore

Community Center will hold its annual gala on Tuesday, Jan. 26, at 6 p.m. Hosted by former NFL Denver Bronco, Reggie Rivers, the event will honor Melissa Bindra, a real estate executive and affordable housing developer in the Bronx, and Stephen Ritz, the founder of Green Bronx Machine. MMCC will also bestow special honors on its COVID Superheroes. The event is virtual, and tickets must be purchased in advance. For more information and for ticket pricing, visit <https://www.mmcc.org/>.

Are you itching to travel, and want to have fun while testing your U.S. geography knowledge? Then join the **Pelham Bay Library's** virtual "Travel the U.S.A." trivia game on Tuesday, Jan. 26 at 2 p.m. To register, search for "Travel the

U.S.A. Trivia" at <https://www.nypl.org/>.

The Bronx River Foodway will host its first virtual Foodway team meeting on Jan. 20 at 5 p.m. Participants will get a sneak peek at the edible plants, berries, and vegetables that will be planted during the 2021 growing season. Visit <http://www.bronxriver.org/> to register, or for more information, email Nathan Hunter at Foodway@bronxriver.org.

Join Dr. Robbin Moran, **New York Botanical Garden's** Curator Emeritus, for a virtual discussion on Charles Darwin's passion for plants and learn the pivotal role they played in shaping his revolutionary theory of evolution. The event takes place via zoom on Jan. 22 from 11 a.m. to noon. To RSVP, visit <https://www.nybg.org/> and search for "Darwin's Passion for Plants."

The **Bronx Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority** presents the Battle of the Decades Virtual Bingo, an afternoon of non-stop fun and games to benefit the alumnae chapter's scholarship and community programming. The event will be held on Saturday, Jan. 23 at 4 p.m. Guests must be 21 years old to participate, and bingo playing cards must be purchased in advance. To buy tickets and learn more, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/> and search for "Battle of the Decades Virtual Bingo." Ticket sales end on Friday, Jan. 22 at 6 p.m.

Art

Want to explore your artistic side in the comfort of your home? Then join **The Bronx Museum of the Arts, Virtual Family Art Making Affair** from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 23. Registration is required, and free art materials for the event will be available for pickup during the museum's open hours on Wednesday, Jan. 20, Thursday, Jan. 21, and Friday, Jan. 22. For more details and registration, visit <http://www.bronxmuseum.org/>.

Artist Tania Dirks and The Bronxworks Leadership Council present the first **Bronxworks Virtual Paint and Sip** on Friday, Jan. 22 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are available for purchase at <http://bronxworks.org/events>. All proceeds benefit the Bronxworks Building Better Future Funds.

Movement

From Jan. 6 until April 1, a Free Walking Program for Adults and Seniors will be held every Wednesday from noon until 1 p.m. in Williamsbridge Oval Park. Join the fun! The program will start with a group warm-up, led by a **Shape Up NYC** instructor, followed by a walking workout appropriate for all levels and paces, and will end with a cool down and stretch. The group meets at the track, except during inclement weather or when temperatures fall below 40 degrees. Please dress for the weather, wear a face covering and maintain social distancing of 10 feet during class. Wash your hands frequently and stay home if you're sick. Instructor: Lia 'Miran

Every Monday night, the **Bronx Nomads** host an hour long run / walk for anyone interested in joining the group. The event starts at Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center at 6 p.m. More information can be found on the group's Instagram here: <https://www.instagram.com/bronxnomads/>.

Every Wednesday at 9 a.m. at Bronx Works, there is a free **Vinyasa Yoga** class at 1130 Grand Concourse, and yoga mats are provided. For more information, go to <https://www.eventbrite.com/> and search for free vinyasa yoga.

Early Saturday Works Approved on Fordham Road

By DAWN CLANCY

The Bronx Community Board 7 Housing, Land Use, and Economic Development Committee approved a request on Tuesday, Jan. 13, by the Stagg Group for an early work permit in relation to construction work at 140 West Fordham Road in University Heights, permitting the group to start work at the site at 8:30 a.m. on Saturdays.

To expedite construction at the site, Stagg Group project manager, Chris Miele, had attended the meeting and requested a letter of support from the committee to obtain the required early start work permit from the Department of Buildings (DOB). Work is typically permitted from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekends.

"In the construction world, the difference between starting at 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. is really critical," said Miele. "All the action happens in the morning, all the

deliveries, and all the subcontractors arrive. The earlier start time will allow us to complete the building faster and get out of the neighborhood as quick as possible."

Currently in the foundation phase of construction, the Stagg Group's project includes a 52,000 sq. ft., seven-story residential building with 54 rental units and a parking enclosure with 27 parking spaces. According to Miele, once the foundation is complete, construction could wrap in two to three months.

Housing committee member Sandra Erickson was the first to suggest that 8 a.m. on a Saturday was too early for construction to begin and requested a compromise of 8:30 a.m. Members of the community, including Danielle Guggenheim, agreed. "I know me, as a teacher, 8:00 a.m. on Saturday is too early. I need my rest," she said. "I feel my quality

of life is going to be impacted."

Erickson also raised concern over how little the committee knew about the Stagg Group's construction plans before Tuesday's meeting.

"Did you come and notify us about the project?" she asked. "Because we didn't even know you had the foundation in. We feel a little hurt about that. We like to know what's going on."

Fellow committee member, Erick Ascencio, also weighed in asking the group about its logistics plan for the construction of this project. "What do the street closures and sidewalk closures look like?" he asked. "It would have been good to see some of that information."

According to Miele, during construction, parking and the bus lane will remain on Fordham Road. However, all parking, approximately seven spaces in total, has been eliminated on the

Loring Place side to create a driving lane, and a pedestrian walkway has been added. It was noted that deliveries will take place on both Fordham Road and Loring Place, and there are no plans for any street closures.

Ultimately, the committee compromised with the Stagg Group and voted to approve the 8:30 a.m. work start time. However, committee chair, Alex Karmann, noted that votes on the matter would also be required from the Bronx CB7's Executive Committee and General Board for final approval. Miele said the group would aim to provide the requested construction logistics and general project information to all committees before the executive committee meets on Thursday, Jan. 21.

The next Housing, Land Use, and Economic Development committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 9 at 6:30 p.m.



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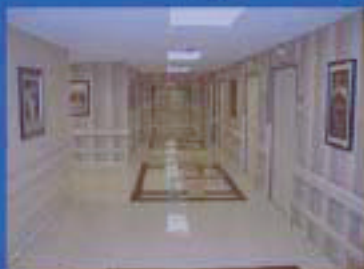
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Letters To The Editor

MTA Fare Evasion

Here is one way to keep any fare increase in 2021 to the previously scheduled 4 percent level or less. In 2019, the MTA estimated it lost over \$300 million to fare evasion. A report by the MTA Office of the Inspector General last September found that "NYC Transit's past practices for tracking how many bus and subway riders failed to pay their fare were unreliable and contained sampling shortcomings."

In our COVID-19 world, ridership is significantly less. Does this translate into a significant decrease in fare evasion, as fare collection resumed? It will be interesting to see the MTA's statistics for fare evasion during 2020.

When the MTA is successful in One Metro New York (OMNY) replacing the old MetroCard, coming online in 2021, will the MTA become more efficient in reducing fare evasion over the coming years? According to the MTA's own McKinsey Consultants' report, if all goes well, perhaps 80 percent of the pre-COVID-19 ridership will return, some time in 2024.

Whatever happens over the coming months and years, every dollar counts. The MTA, including NYC Transit, Long Island and Metro North Rail Roads, need to do a far better job in dealing with fare evasion.

It is unfair to honest commuters who pay their fair share every day if they have to continue to see so many who routinely go unpunished for not paying their fare as well.

Larry Penner
Great Neck

City Council District 11

I admired the responses of the Inquiring Photographer question concerning the departure of our NYC Councilman Andrew Cohen to take a judgeship. I want to commend the ap-

preciation expressed by Ms. Quaranta and Ms. Leighton in their responses concerning the past assistance they received from the councilman. He, indeed, was a good man.

However, I ask all of Norwood and the rest of District 11 to be aware of the controversy surrounding the endorsement of one of the candidates, Mr. Dinowitz, by the Ben Franklin Reform [Club]. I am sure Mr. Dinowitz is a fine and good man, but the apparatus that was out of his hands [that] gave him the endorsement has to be reformed.

I am not making an official endorsement to my neighbors as of this time for any of the candidates, but Mr. Dinowitz will have to prove why he should receive anyone's vote after that shady endorsement he received.

Also, a pet project of mine is to help foster children when they age out of the system, via Covenant House. I was pleasantly surprised to learn, through the *Norwood News* profile of her, that one candidate in the NYC District 11 race has worked specifically on this topic. That is Ms. Abigail Martin. Someone who has shown compassion for that area and topic deserves a closer look for a possible vote in the June primary election! However, the other candidates are also worthy of your dedicated attention and support.

Only 25 percent of the world population have the privilege of voting for their governmental leaders. In a future column, I will demonstrate for the *Norwood News* readers how one vote made a difference, but please make sure you are registered to vote, and do plan on voting in June. Thank you.

Richard Marias
Norwood

Editor's Note: We reserve the right to edit letters for space, clarity, civility, and accuracy.



"Long COVID" is Real but Help is Available

By Dr. SETH CONGDON

More than 24 million Americans have been infected with COVID-19. Over 400 thousand have died from it. Many survivors, for reasons we do not yet understand, continue to suffer symptoms for months. The condition is often called "long COVID," and the people struggling with it described as "long-haulers."

In a survey of people with a positive COVID-19 test who were treated at Montefiore Medical Center from March to December 2020, more than 20 percent of respondents reported continued symptoms six months after testing positive. These were not only people treated in the hospital, but also people seen in their primary care clinic and at the emergency department who were not hospitalized. Indeed, "long COVID" seems to be just as common in people who were not hospitalized as in those who were.

The symptoms of "long COVID" vary. They can include headaches, joint pain, diarrhea and muscle aches. More commonly, people report fatigue, shortness of breath, chest pain, and difficulty with memory and concentration. For many people, their sense of smell and taste has not returned to normal. New or worsening anxiety and depression is common. People often worry that they will never get better, or that they will get COVID again and get even sicker. It can be incredibly difficult for "long-haulers" when multiple members of a household get COVID-19, but they are the only ones still feeling the consequences, weeks or months later.

Right now, we are going through the City's second wave of the coronavirus. The Bronx is averaging over 1,000 new cases a day. It is crucial that we do everything we can to protect ourselves and our loved ones from getting COVID-19. The following are some important precautions to continue taking this year:

- Wear a face mask in public or around people with whom you don't live.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.
- Get tested if you develop symptoms of COVID-19 or are potentially exposed to someone who has it. Testing is free and does not require an appointment. Find a test site near you by going to <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/find-test-site-near-you> or texting COVID TEST to 85548.

In response to the large number of community members affected by "long COVID," Montefiore has started the COVID-19 Recovery and Engagement (CORE) clinic. Along with my colleague Dr. Aluko Hope, we have seen over 300 patients since June 2020. If you or someone you know is struggling with "long COVID," you can make an appointment by calling (844) 556 6683, and then, choosing extension 36.

Vaccine distribution is bringing hope that someday soon this pandemic will be over, but we cannot forget that some people will continue to suffer for months and maybe years with the effects of the virus. We are here to help them.

Dr. Seth Congdon is co-director of the Montefiore COVID-19 Recovery and Engagement (CORE) clinic.

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Chaos Follows Sepúlveda Arrest

(continued from page 1)

Sepúlveda had that morning turned himself in at the 48th precinct in the context of Saturday's incident and had been charged with criminal obstruction of breathing.

At his arraignment more than 12 hours later, at Bronx Criminal Court on East 161st Street, Sepúlveda wore a grey shirt, black slacks and a facemask as he watched a monitor of the virtual courtroom from "Interview Booth 5G," at just after 11 p.m.

After Criminal Court Judge Beth Beller told Sepúlveda he would be released that night but would need to come back for his next court date, she warned the senator, "You need to stay away from the complaining witness, Ms Sepúlveda." She added, "You're not to have any contact with her by any means. If you have any contact with her at all, you would face a contempt proceeding, do you understand?"

Sepúlveda, an attorney, whose Senate website boasts that he "oversaw the historic criminal justice reform in ending cash bail" in New York City responded with a simple, "Yes, your Honor."

After attempting to block two media requests for the release of the audio recording, video footage and photographs in the context of the arraignment, Sepúlveda's attorney, Morgan Ray Raskin, who also connected virtually and remotely and was not in the same room as his client, asked for permission to address the senator at one stage.

"May I just suggest to my client, your Honor, that he be mindful that there may be press outside, and that we're sending somebody from the family, at least, to try and meet him." Judge Beller replied, "Okay."

It is unknown if the three burly men who jumped out of an SUV parked at the prisoner release exit at Bronx Central Booking on Sheridan Avenue were members of "the family," or not, but the men positioned themselves outside the door in such a way as to impede the taking of any photographs. After one of the men received a phone call, the others jumped back in the vehicle, and sped around the corner towards Sherman Avenue where it's believed Sepúlveda was allowed exit the building via an alternate door.

At around midnight on Jan. 12, "Nancy," from Concourse Village was pulling a shopping cart down Sherman Avenue when she was informed of her senator's arrest. Recalling a rally she attended in Albany on Sepúlveda's first day in office, Nancy said, "We took pictures with him and everything."

Asked how she felt about the senator's job performance, she replied, "To be honest with you, I've been so caught

up with the pandemic, I haven't noticed too much of what he's done." She added, "One thing I could say is, I don't hear too much about him. So, he's like missing in action a lot of times."

As reported by the *Norwood News*, on the afternoon of Jan. 12, Raskin released a brief statement in reference to the senator's arrest, saying, "Mr. Sepúlveda has been the victim of recurring physical abuse by his estranged spouse for approximately nine years, a situation he has endured because of the young child they share together. This false accusation [of domestic violence] is a calculated attempt, by a disgruntled party, to leverage a divorce settlement."

Divorce proceedings were referenced during the course of the senator's arraignment and it was noted that they are ongoing in the State of Florida. Raskin requested that the order of protection take into consideration any potential visitation rights which might ensue as they pertained to the senator's 9-year-old child. It was noted that no visitation rights are currently in place, and Beller agreed that the protection order would be made subject to any family court orders relating to visitation rights in both the State of New York and the State of Florida.

In his statement issued earlier that day, Raskin added, "The senator is committed to, and will proactively provide, full transparency [regarding the incident] as the matter is resolved."

Condemnation of domestic violence by elected officials on Jan. 12 was swift and severe following news of the senator's arrest, with the New York State Senate quickly removing Sepúlveda from all committee duties while he was still detained.

New York City Councilman for the 14th District and majority whip, Fernando Cabrera, issued a statement that read in part, "It is unconscionable that Senator Sepúlveda could remain in his position as a State Senator following multiple domestic violence incidents, and a charge of obstruction [of breathing]."

The criminal complaint obtained from the Bronx District Attorney charged Sepúlveda with assault in the 3rd degree, criminal obstruction of breathing, and harassment. It made no mention of a second or prior domestic violence incident.

Norwood News reached out to the Bronx District Attorney's office for information on any prior arrests or convictions and was informed that there were none.

Cabrera's statement concluded, "As a strong advocate for domestic violence victims and programs, I'm

calling on Senator Sepúlveda to immediately resign from the Senate."

Meanwhile, Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernández, who represents the 80th Assembly District, issued a statement that read, "Unfortunately, this is not the first time these allegations have been brought against the Senator." Again, *Norwood News* cannot currently corroborate these assertions and can only

confirm that the District Attorney's office said the senator had no previous arrests or convictions.

According to John Perez, the former District Leader of the 87th Assembly District, who may have his eye on Sepúlveda's Senate seat, Fernández and Cabrera may have been referring to a 2015 incident that was referred to Family Court, where the records are sealed.

Fernández, along with Sepúlveda and a host of other candidates, is currently running for the Bronx borough presidency, a position currently held by Ruben Diaz, Jr. In her statement released on Jan. 12, Fernández added, "I am calling for the senator to drop out of the race for Bronx Borough President, and submit his resignation from the Senate immediately."

On Thursday, Jan. 14, Sepúlveda was present at a Three Kings Day toy and mask giveaway held in the lobby of a New York City Housing Authority building at 1471 Watson Avenue in Soundview. On the eve of the event, he issued a press release announcing his planned attendance.

At one point, a crowd of 25 or 30 had gathered in the lobby, creating a potentially dangerous environment in the context of the pandemic. As various media and camera people began setting up outside on the sidewalk to interview the senator, a representative from his office announced that residents attending the giveaway did not want to come outside, appearing to suggest, at the same time, that the media should therefore enter the building if they wanted to catch the senator in action.

A WPIX cameraman refused to go inside the building, saying, "You want coverage? Come out here. You don't want it?" The cameraman then turned to a handful of other members of the media and said, "I don't know about you, but I want to live." The Sepúlveda rep then said he would try and accommodate the journalists' requests for interviews.

Inside the building lobby, News 12, The Bronx reported that the toy giveaway organizer, Rev. Carmen Hernandez, had been discussing the general topic of domestic violence when she seemed to indicate that Sepúlveda had confessed to the charge of domestic violence against his wife.

News 12 The Bronx reported that Sepúlveda appeared uncomfortable and said, "First of all, this [event] is for the kids today. It's a wonderful event. I don't know if the reverend misspoke. I have not admitted to any acts of domestic violence. I want to make that clear. I am not.... We'll deal with that in another forum, but right now, it's really about the children."

Sepúlveda then walked directly past the media cameras and headed for his car, as one staffer was overheard saying to him, "One day at a time."

A News 12 reporter later attempted to stop the senator from driving away, saying, "Do you want to comment? The only reason why we came is because we were told you would speak." Sepúlveda replied, "I'm sorry guys, thank you." The News 12 reporter then asked, "Is this a cover up? You bring us out here for the toy drive, and then you don't talk?" The senator did not respond.

Attempts to reach Elizabeth Sepúlveda for comment on the alleged domestic violence incident were unsuccessful. Sepúlveda is due back in court on Feb. 24.

Anyone suffering from domestic violence is urged to call 311 or 1 (800) 861-HOPE.

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Public and Community Meetings

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the **52nd PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meetings have been held via ZOOM. The next meeting will be held on **Thursday, Jan. 28, at 6 p.m.** Call the 52nd Precinct Community Affairs office at [718-220-5824](tel:7182205824) for further details.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March, **BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 7** meetings have been held via ZOOM. The next full Board meeting will be held on **Tuesday, Jan. 26, 2021 at 6.30 p.m.** Zoom details will be circulated ahead of the meeting. Contact mirosario@cb.nyc.gov to be added to the distribution list.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March, **BEDFORD MOSHOLU COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION** meetings have been held via ZOOM. Generally, the meetings are held virtually **on the first Wednesday of the month at 8 p.m.** For further details, contact bedfordmosholu@verizon.net.

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Opinion

Community Resources for Dealing with Disputes

By LYNN WILLIAMS

In the wake of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Weekend, I can't think of a better time to evaluate how much of a part I play in the peaceful resolution of conflict or think of a better way to evaluate Dr. King's legacy of nonviolence, than to discuss mediation.

Mediation is a dispute resolution intervention tool used to resolve conflict. During intervention, a neutral party assists in facilitating a conversation between two or more disputing parties with the aim of finding a resolution.

All parties must decide if they are willing to participate in mediation because it is a voluntary process. The Institute for Mediation and Conflict Resolution (IMCR) is a mediation center that serves Bronx County. Such centers have been serving the New York City community for over fifty years.

IMCR was the first mediation center in New York City, and the second

mediation center in New York State. It is also home to New York State's only certified Spanish speaking Basic Mediation Training trainer, Dr. Steven Slate, who serves as the executive director of the center.

IMCR has a various pool of mediators to serve the diverse communities in Bronx County. The center provides free mediation services and restorative justice practices, such as conflict coaching, to name one.

We mediate a wide range of issues, such as special education, workplace concerns, family (parent/child) situations, custody and visitation needs, small claims court matters, housing complaints (such as landlord-tenant, neighbors, roommates), child support modifications, etc.

Our center also has a program (Community Resolve) which collaborates with the Department of Probation to work with court-involved youth aged 16 and 17. This program works with youth to assist them in

resolving any harm they may have caused.

The center also gives fee-based trainings on anger management, diversity, conflict resolution, etc. We also provide training and an apprenticeship program for those interested in becoming mediators.

We are sensitive to the needs of our fellow community members. As a result, we provide mediation services during the daytime, and after work hours in the evening. Due to our concern for and compliance with public safety, we provide virtual and telephone mediation services only, at this time. This gives everyone an opportunity to have access to justice (for court cases) and the option of mediation services for other types of disputes.

Mediation allows people address problems without involving law enforcement or the court system. It also allows the parties to have an active role in deciding the outcome of the dispute. Mediation also gives community members the ability to address quality of life issues.

Finally, mediation can allow things not seen at a first glance, to become visible. The possibility of peace and resolution can inspire hope. The process can help parties

see where the other side is coming from in the conflict. It can move a person to a clearer understanding of the matter and can make feelings tangible.

The feelings of being heard and understood are valuable. When the neutral party summarizes what a person says, both in terms of content and emotion; it's priceless. It can help move the impossible to possible.

Dialogue can facilitate movement in a conflict. Sometimes it takes a neutral party for someone to have a productive conversation, moving the impossible to possible. Conflicts *can* be resolved.

If you are interested in mediation services, booking a fee-based training session or facilitation, please feel free to call us at (718) 585-1190.

Lynn Williams is a mediator at The Institute for Mediation and Conflict Resolution, located near The Hub in the Bronx. She works with families in the community and in court. Williams provides fee-based dispute resolution and youth and women's ministry development training to religious communities. During her hiatus from the classroom, she mentors law students and apprentices as they provide mediation through the court.

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CORRECTION

In edition Vol 34. No 1. dated January 7-20, 2021, both the headline and story on page 6 entitled, "Sammy Ravelo Runs for Bronx BP" were correct. However, in our print edition, in the smaller sidebar headline on page 1, we incorrectly stated that Mr. Ravelo was running for mayor. We corrected this in the pdf version and reached out to Mr. Ravelo to apologize. We apologize for this oversight to our readers also.

In the same edition, on page 16, in the story entitled, "Two Restaurant Fires in Bedford Park," we reported that two fires occurred in Bedford Park. In fact, one was in Fordham Heights. We apologize for this oversight.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Gateway Counseling Center Inc. is posting a bid request for foodservice companies wishing to provide meal service for adults, compliant with the CACFP program.

Sealed bids will be received at Gateway Counseling Center Inc. office at 1776 Eastchester Road Suite 220, Bronx, New York 10461 until 12 pm on January 25th, 2021 for meal catering service delivered to 4500 Furman Ave, Bronx, NY 10470, and 175-41 Liberty Avenue, Jamaica, NY 11433. Specifications for at least 200 breakfasts, lunches, dinners, snacks on weekdays in addition to limited weekend service. This may only be obtained by contacting Jordana Velazquez at Gateway Counseling Center Inc. from 9-5 at 718-885-4992 or via email at Jordana.Velazquez@gccnyc.org. All work will be conducted in strict accordance with bid specifications. Bids will be opened and read on January 28th, 2021 at 2 pm.

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