



# NORWOOD NEWS

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## DEKALB AVE BUILDING EXPLOSION



Photo by David Greene

**ACCORDING TO THE** New York City Department of Buildings, two 6th floor apartments at 3521 Dekalb Avenue in Norwood (pictured Sunday, Jan. 24, 2021) were damaged after an explosion was reported on Saturday, Jan. 23, 2021.

### *Con Ed Investigates*

by DAVID GREENE

At least one resident of a Dekalb Avenue building in Norwood had a close call after he said his kitchen exploded for no apparent reason, prompting a substantial response from police, firefighters and paramedics.

According to the FDNY, the incident was reported at 9:30 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 23. In an initial call from an NYPD dispatcher that was rebroadcast over the Citizens App, the dispatcher reported, "52 precinct, unconfirmed 59-explosion, 3521 Dekalb Avenue." The dispatcher added, "Explosion in the kitchen; cabinets have been blown out."

Video from the Citizens App showed several fire trucks and an NYPD emergency service unit truck on Dekalb Avenue, a two-way street, blocking vehicles from turning off East Gun Hill Road, as well as traffic coming from the other direction.

Citizen App users were initially provided an incor-

(continued on page 19)



### Bronx BP Race Heats Up pg 8



### Giving Dad A Shot pg 16

### Norwood News Notice

A frontpage story headlined "Chaos Follows Sepúlveda Arrest" appeared in the Jan. 21, 2021 print edition of the Norwood News, and was subsequently published on our website. The printed story attributed quotes on page 17 to an individual who the reporter understood to be on the record.

Following publication, the individual quoted told the Norwood News that he intended for his comments to be off the record. The quotes have since been removed from our website. Norwood News regrets and apologizes to the individual in question for this apparent misunderstanding.

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# District 11 City Council Candidates Debate on BronxNet

**By JOSÉ A. GIRALT**

The challenge of representing multiple diverse communities across District 11 was evident during the televised debate between the five candidates running in the March 23<sup>rd</sup> District 11 special election, which aired on BronxNet on Feb. 2. Each is seeking to replace former Councilman Andrew Cohen, who was elected as a judge to the Bronx Supreme Court in November 2020 and resigned as a councilmember on Dec. 31, cutting short his final year in office.

The 90-minute debate was co-moderated by Michael Hinman, editor of The Riverdale Press, and Sonyi Lopez, BronxNet producer, host and reporter with a few, additional pre-recorded questions from the CD 11 Voters' Forum, Lehman College and the *Norwood News*.

An additional 30 minutes were dedicated to concerns raised by Lehman College students during a Q&A session to assess the candidates' views on issues like food insecurity, job opportunities after graduation, and the rising costs of a college education, among others.

Responses from the five candidates - Carlton Berkley, Eric Dinowitz, Jessica Haller, Mino Lora, and Daniel Padernacht - were kept short and concise due to the rapid-fire questioning and time management skills of the moderators.

Notable in the responses were the differing perspectives of the candidates based on the zip codes and communities represented. Berkley, a retired New York City detective, questioned whether the needs of District 11 were being driven by the wealthier residents on the western boundary, namely Riverdale.

Indeed, within District 11, poverty rates recorded in the latest City Planning community district profiles for Community Board 7 and 8 show there was a clear, wealth disparity among, at least, these two community boards, even before the pandemic hit.

In CB8, which includes Fieldston, Kingsbridge, Marble Hill (MN), North Riverdale, Riverdale and Spuyten Duyvil, 15.8 percent of residents lived in poverty. Meanwhile, the poverty rate in CB7, which includes Norwood, Bedford Park, Fordham, Kingsbridge Heights, and University Heights, was almost double, at 27.4 percent. Given the economic downturn since last March, those rates are likely higher now.

In response to a question by a Lehman student about prioritizing the interests of such a diverse district, if elected, Berkley said, "We have to share. I'm going to look and see who needs a little bit

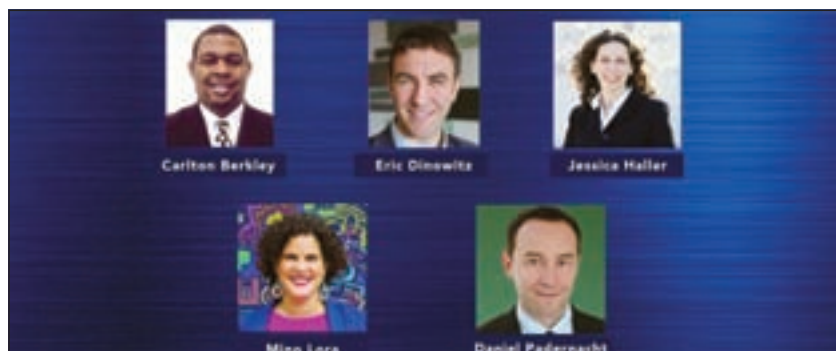


Image courtesy of BronxNet.

**DISTRICT 11 CITY** Council special election candidates participated in a debate broadcast on BronxNet on Feb. 2.

more, as opposed to who has a lot." He added, "We're in this all together."

Staying on the topic of poverty, some candidates questioned why certain neighborhoods, like Norwood, have homeless shelters located within them while others don't. Padernacht, lawyer and CB8 Traffic & Transportation Committee chair, urged a re-imagining of how the city deals with the homeless population. He proposed a group home approach where smaller numbers of people live together with access to supportive services. "We really need a new approach to it," he said.

"I think that by doing the smaller group home concept we can also put some shelters in Fieldston as well, for more group homes, and actually go throughout the entire district."

Dinowitz, teacher and male district leader for the 81<sup>st</sup> Assembly District, and perhaps the candidate with the most name recognition, his father being Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz who represents the same district, has received some heat for, apparently, having an unfair advantage in the race, and for being part of the so-called "Bronx Democratic political machine."

The district leader said that although there are issues on which he disagrees with his father, ultimately, it would be up to voters to decide if he, as an individual, would win their votes or not. Referencing his position as a teacher, Dinowitz downplayed the impact of his father's name recognition. "When I'm in the classroom as a public-school teacher, I'm Mr. Dinowitz. My students don't care who my father is," he said.

In the context of that discussion, Berkley commended the younger Dinowitz for his work with special education students.

Equity in education is indeed another pressing issue in a district that includes some of the most exclusive private schools in the country, many of which

are college preparatory schools, located in Riverdale.

According to pre-pandemic, educational level data obtained from the City's community district profiles, 16.6 percent of residents in CB7 aged 25 and over have earned a bachelor's degree or higher. In stark contrast, within CB8 that number jumps to 40.3 percent.

Lora is a theater educator who started a nonprofit with \$400 in 2009, and now has an operating budget of \$1 million. In terms of assessing students' educational progress, she stressed the importance of trusting teachers more than high stakes testing. "Teachers know how to differentiate the learning for their students," she said. She pledged to focus on downsizing classrooms and to ensure investment in on-going assessments and holistic assessments in order to track students' learning and growth.

Meanwhile, Haller, a tech entrepreneur and environmentalist, said the disparities in environmental justice have affected certain communities more than others in District 11.

"Here in the Bronx, we should not be surprised that communities living around infrastructures, highways, Hunts Point, garbage transfer stations, bus depots are dying at a higher rate," she said. "It's historic environmental racism." To alleviate this, Haller sees opportunities within the district to expand bus lanes, especially with regard to east-west routes in the borough.

The debate will be rebroadcast on Thursday, Feb. 4 at 11 a.m. and at 9:30 p.m., on Saturday, Feb. 6 at 6 p.m., and on Sunday, Feb. 7, at 3 p.m. and at 9 p.m.

NW Bronx Indivisible and Riverdale Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture will be hosting a further virtual debate among District 11 candidates on Sunday, Feb. 7, from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. To register, go to: <http://bit.ly/35iv8Dn>.

*\*Sile Moloney contributed to this story.*

# Bedford Park Residents Concerned Over New NYBG Apartments

By DAVID GREENE &  
SILE MOLONEY

When members of the Bedford Mosholu Community Association (BMCA) held their usual, virtual, monthly meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 6, concerns were raised over the impact of New York Botanical Garden's (NYBG) plans for two new housing developments at East Bedford Park Boulevard and Webster Avenue, which form part of a 2011 re-zoning plan to revitalize 88 blocks of Webster Avenue.

According to Barbara Stronczer, president of BMCA, and as reported by the *Norwood News* in February 2020, the \$93 million housing and retail project was due to incorporate 188 reduced-income apartments for seniors at 2856 Webster Avenue in 2020. This was to be followed by an additional 250 units of affordable housing for the general public which were to be built, as part of a second phase, next to the first building at 410 Bedford Park Boulevard.

The project has been delayed but the 12-story senior center is still taking priority. BMCA residents are concerned that the building did not seem to have any plans for additional parking, and they also have reservations about the overall impact of the project on local amenities like schools, once the second building is finished.

Resident and BMCA member, Sirio Guerino, said, "We want to stop this overdevelopment. It's going to destroy this community." He added, "We're going to be overburdened with people that aren't going to have jobs, and where are they going to go? They're going to be out in the streets."

In February 2020, the unemployment rate in New York City stood at just 3.4 percent, and at 4.6 percent in the Bronx, according to the New York State Department of Labor. The latest available citywide unemployment rate is 11 percent as of December 2020, while in the Bronx, the rate stands at 15.1 percent, the highest in the City and State. Brooklyn is next at 11.3 percent.

Douglaston Development and Fordham Bedford Housing Corporation are partners behind the project and negotiated the housing and other



Photo by David Greene

**THE CHERRY VALLEY** Supermarket pictured on Saturday, Jan. 9, 2021 and located at East Bedford Park Boulevard and Webster Avenue, will eventually be moved next door to the first floor of a 12-story apartment building for seniors.

services to be offered. Douglaston Development availed of the Department of City Planning (DCP)'s Food Retail Expansion to Support Health (FRESH) program, which provides zoning and financial incentives to build grocery stores in target neighborhoods.

Currently, the Cherry Valley supermarket, located at 2870 Webster Avenue, is one of the buildings at the site location which, along with some adjacent small businesses, is expected to be demolished to make way for the new 250-unit affordable housing structure.

Stronczer said that asbestos abatement was underway in relation to two small businesses located next to the supermarket. Asbestos abatement is utilized during general construction in areas containing asbestos materials, particularly when those materials are being removed, encapsulated, or repaired. Abatement is needed in order to protect construction workers and members of the general public from the many negative health impacts of asbestos.

Russell Lang, senior vice president for Douglaston Development had previously said the supermarket would stay open at its current location until the second phase of development was underway at which point it would relocate to the first floor of 410 Bedford Park Boulevard.

A 99-year lease of the one-acre site has been secured from NYBG and the developers were expected to apply for tax credits from the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA).

Involved in the early stages of the re-zoning plan discussions in 2011 were Montefiore Health System, Fordham University and the Bronx Zoo. The project later got the green light from Bronx Community Board 7 (CB 7) Housing, Land Use and Zoning committee in February 2020, in the form of a letter of non-objection on the project design.

As reported by *Norwood News*, during the public discussion segment of that meeting, concerns had also been raised as to how local residents would benefit from the new buildings. Local resident, Anthony Riviaccio, noted a pattern whereby new residential buildings tended to fill up with more than 50 percent of tenants from other boroughs, and less than 20 percent with locals.

Addressing John Garcia, executive director of Fordham Bedford Community Services, who was handling the lottery process, Riviaccio asked, "If this [new building] is for the community, as you indicated, is there any way within your plans jointly to be sure we get more than 20 percent?"

Garcia pointed to the group's past work at Serviam Gardens, Serviam Heights, and Serviam Towers as an example of how the project would be inclusive of Bronxites. *Norwood News* reached out to Garcia to follow-up on the latest unit allocation for Bronxites. We did not receive an immediate response.

During the Jan. 6, 2021 discussion, one resident asked if there was not a requirement for the City to provide additional parking whenever new developments

were planned in a specific neighborhood. In response, Stronczer said, "Well, our mayor claims that we are a sufficient distance from public transportation, subways, buses, whatever and he has a special name for that terminology, and for that reason the developers get away with [no additional] parking."

*Norwood News* reached out to DCP for further comment. We were advised that as the project is in a transit-accessible area, there is no required parking for the residential units. DCP officials confirmed there would be 45 parking spaces included for the grocery store.

According to DCP, the project necessitated a detailed Environmental Impact Statement when it was first discussed in 2011. Since then, officials said the only "land use action" taken on the site has been the FRESH certification, which allowed one extra story to be built outside of the norm, and 20,000 additional square feet of surface area to facilitate the construction of the grocery store.

In terms of schools, DCP referred the *Norwood News* to the City Planning Commission report for the 2011 Webster Avenue rezoning plan, in which it was detailed that the School Construction Authority amended their Capital Plan in September 2010 to allocate 2,800 new school seats to Community School District 10. We reached out to the School Construction Authority to ask if those additional seats have materialized in the meantime. We did not receive an immediate response.

DCP officials added that the required environmental review of the 2011 plan only found adverse impacts on "transportation" by which it appears to mean road traffic. It identified two intersections, Webster Avenue and Bedford Park Boulevard, and Webster Avenue and East Fordham Road, with five lane groups which would be significantly impacted during peak traffic hours.

Mitigation measures for the former encompassed, among others, prohibiting parking on the south side of Bedford Park Boulevard for

a distance of 150 feet west of Webster Avenue and restriping for three lanes – a Select Bus Service only lane that also allows right turns for vehicles, a through lane and a left turn lane.

Mitigation measures for the latter included, but were not limited to, prohibiting parking on the west side of Webster Avenue for a distance of 150 feet north of East Fordham Road and restriping the approach for an exclusive right turn lane, plus two through lanes, and an exclusive left turn lane.

Stronczer told members she had invited Aaron Bouska, the vice president for community affairs and intergovernmental relations at NYBG, to the next meeting. "I asked him to give us an update on some programs at the garden, and also on the construction on Webster Avenue," she said.

In February 2020, Bouska told the *Norwood News* that the housing project fit a community need. However, circumstances have clearly changed since then. Some attendees at the January 2021 meeting agreed that with alternate side parking suspended to just one day a week currently, drivers across the district are leaving their vehicles illegally blocking crosswalks, fire hydrants and access ramps used by people with disabilities, and seniors using walkers or canes.

Representing the NYPD at the meeting was 52nd Precinct Community Affairs officer, Stephen Echevarria, who suggested residents take a photograph of any illegally parked vehicles and send it to the 311 service.

Another topic discussed during the meeting was the continuing glue attacks of area mailboxes. Members reported that the mailbox outside the Botanical Square Post Office on Webster Avenue was recently hit, and a second mailbox at East 201st Street and Perry Avenue was also glued shut and had to be replaced.

BMCA held its latest meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 3. Visit the group's Facebook page or email [bedford-mosholu@verizon.net](mailto:bedford-mosholu@verizon.net) for details of future meetings and other information.



# INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By DAVID GREENE



This week, we asked readers for their thoughts on “de-platforming” conspiracy theorists who have spread misinformation on conventional social media sites like Twitter and Facebook. We asked readers if such people then congregate on alternative social media platforms like Parler, will this just ultimately create silos of people with opposing views operating in their own echo chambers.



“The Bible talks about a time when right will be called wrong and wrong will be called right. We are in that time. Twitter allows child porn, but anything from conservatives, Donald Trump or others is banned. Of course, Trump and other conservatives should not have been banned or censored by Twitter when they have done nothing wrong except to go against and speak truth against the evil deep state agendas. Your beliefs are attacked. It's not if it will happen. It's when it happens because it will happen, and you're kicked off. Freedom of speech should be for all.”

**Evelyn “Foxy” Torres**  
Schuylerville

*Editor's Note: Twitter's policy states, “Twitter has zero tolerance towards any material that features or promotes child sexual exploitation, one of the most serious violations of the Twitter Rules.”*



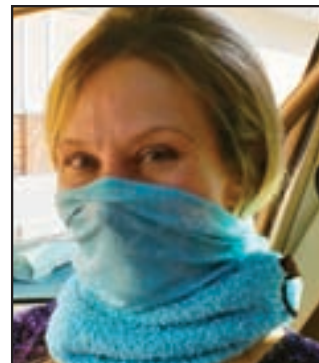
“That is stupid because you have two different parties, the Republicans and the Democrats, so how come they are going to go to different platforms? That's stupid, what they are doing right now. They need to pay attention to what they're supposed to do, help the people, and stop this stupidity with Donald Trump. What they are doing is stupid.”

**Jeanette Olevence**  
Fordham Manor



“As a veteran, I fully support freedom of speech, but just as you can't shout, ‘Fire!’ in a crowded theater, you cannot incite an insurrection on The Capitol. Leaders must be held accountable for what they say. Losing your platform for spreading hate speech or fake news is appropriate. If you need to find alternative sites to spread your lies, it just shows how weak their agenda is. For those that go with them - bye-bye trolls! The media is headed in that direction, and most people only want to hear their own views anyway.”

**Christopher Perkins**  
Norwood



“I think what happened at the Capitol was frightening, but so was the Boston Tea Party. Historically, these incidents happen at times of social upheaval. We need to ask ourselves as a nation how we can address our entire population's needs, instead of further splintering into increasingly radicalized factions.”

**Rozsa Gaston**  
Bronxville



“I am well aware of the First Amendment of the Constitution. However, social media outlets are not government platforms nor official policies that are put in place. Before creating your own social media account, you must first agree to the terms and conditions that are listed by the specific outlet. If we agree to the rules of each platform, then by all means follow them. What's so hard about that? But whenever someone's rhetoric can result in “increased harm” to someone, then you should be banned, or shut down permanently. You breached the company's terms of service.”

**Jason Gonzalez**  
Olinville



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# NEWS BRIEFS

By SÍLE MOLONEY

## District 11 City Council Race Expands

The District 11 City Council special election race has expanded with freelance filmmaker, Kevin Pazmino, the latest candidate to join Carlton Berkley, Eric Dinowitz, Jessica Haller, Mino Lora and Dan Padernacht. Meanwhile, Haller announced on Feb. 2 that she has contracted the coronavirus, the second candidate, after Lora, to fall ill from the virus in recent months. Candidates are required to gather a minimum number of signatures from local residents in order to qualify for the ballot in the special election.

That minimum had been 450 until Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced on Jan. 7 that he was reducing it to 315. Some candidates had raised concerns about the impact of the signature collection process on people's health and had called for the requirement to be waived amid fears of exacerbating the spread of the virus through mass person-to-person contact. Abigail Martin and Marcos Sierra dropped out of the special election race in January citing concerns over health risks, though both say they will participate in the June primary.

## NYC Sheriffs Shut Down 400+ Gathering

NYC Sheriffs shut down an illegal bottle club at 2368 Westchester Avenue in Westchester Square on Saturday, Jan. 30 at 10.30 p.m. where 400+ people were gathered. They cited violation of emergency orders, no liquor license or warehousing license and a number of health code violations. Two people were charged with multiple offenses.

## New President at Lehman College

The Board of Trustees of The City University of New York (CUNY) voted on Monday, Feb. 1, to appoint Dr. Fernando Delgado, executive vice chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of Minnesota Duluth, as the next president of Lehman College. Dr. Delgado's appointment will be effective July 1. The child of immigrants, and a first-generation college graduate, Delgado said he could relate very personally to the values of Lehman and CUNY, what they offer their students and the difference they make in students' lives.

## Black History Month

February marks the beginning of Black History Month. Four ways to honor and celebrate this

# Report on Nursing Home Response to COVID-19 Pandemic Released

By SÍLE MOLONEY

The Office of the New York State Attorney General (OAG) released a report on Jan. 28, entitled, "Nursing Home Response to COVID-19 Pandemic."

On its release, Richard Mollot, executive director of the Long Term Care Community Coalition (LTCCC) said, "This shocking yet unsurprising report must serve as a wake-up call that vulnerable residents and their families deserve better." He added that many of the failures documented in the report had been going on for years and had only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report included the following preliminary findings.

A larger number of nursing home residents died from COVID-19 than Department of Health (DOH) data reflected. There was a lack of compliance with infection control protocols that put residents at increased risk of harm during the COVID-19 pandemic in some facilities. Nursing homes that entered the pandemic with low staffing ratings, according to the U.S. Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS), had higher COVID-19 fatality rates than those facilities with higher recorded CMS staffing ratings.

Insufficient personal protective equipment (PPE) for nursing home staff put residents at increased risk of harm during the COVID-19 pandemic in some facilities. Insufficient COVID-19 testing for residents and staff in the early stages of the pandemic put residents at increased risk of harm in some facilities.

The report found that the current state reimbursement model for nursing homes gives a financial incentive to the owners of for-profit nursing homes to transfer funds to related parties (ultimately increasing the nursing homes' own profits) instead of investing those funds in higher levels of staffing and PPE.

Lack of nursing home compliance with

the executive order requiring communication by nursing homes with residents' family members caused avoidable pain and distress. Government guidance requiring the admission of COVID-19 patients into nursing homes may have put residents at increased risk of harm, in some facilities, and may have obscured the data available to assess that risk. Below is a summary of the recommendations included in the report.

- Ensure public, accurate reporting by each nursing home of the COVID-19 residents' deaths, and those that occur during or after hospitalization, avoiding any double-counting of residents' deaths at hospitals.

- Ensure nursing homes provide adequate care and treatment of nursing home residents during times of emergency.

- Nursing homes must comply with labor practices that prevent them from pressuring employees to work while they have COVID-19 infection or symptoms, while also ensuring the homes are adequately staffed.

- Ensure direct care and supervision staffing levels are in a ratio of residents to Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, and Certified Nursing Assistants, require that ratio to be adjusted based on average residents care needs, ensure the ratio is above the current level reflected at nursing homes with low CMS staffing ratings and ensure sufficient care for residents' needs is reflected in their care plans.

- Enforce more transparency by for-profit nursing homes, including on financial transactions and financial relationships between nursing home operators and related parties, and on relatives of all individual owners and officers of such entities who have contractual or investor relationships with the nursing home.

- Ensure nursing homes invest sufficiently in effective training so staff can fully comply with infection control protocols and hold operators accountable for failure to have clinically appropriate policies in place and failure to effectively train staff to comply with them.

- Manufacture PPE to ensure sufficient supply for purchase by nursing homes, require nursing homes to keep a sufficient inventory of PPE for all staff to be able to fol-

low infection control protocols.

- Ensure adequate COVID-19 testing is available to nursing home residents and employees and enforce the testing in accordance with DOH and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) evidence-based guidelines.

- Eliminate recently enacted immunity provisions that can provide financial incentives to for-profit nursing homes that put residents at risk of harm. Examples include not using public funds to obtain sufficient staffing to meet residents' care needs when it was needed, not purchasing sufficient PPE for staff, and not providing effective training to staff to comply with infection control protocols during pandemics and other public health emergencies.

- Ensure nursing homes communicate with family members of residents promptly, but not later than 24 hours of any confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection and of any confirmed or suspected COVID-19 death.

- Increase staffing at DOH to ensure sufficient skilled resources for oversight, complaint assessment, surveys, inspections, and immediate responses to information requests from state agencies in support of health care and law enforcement efforts.

- Ensure nursing homes engage in thoughtful planning regarding post-mortem care needs and implement and train staff on policies for dignified care of the remains of deceased residents.

- Urge families to consult the CMS Care Compare online database ([medicare.gov/care-compare](https://www.cms.gov/medicare/compare)), ask questions of nursing homes relating to staffing, policies, procedures, and recent and current COVID-19 infections of staff and residents, and obtain information relevant to their current or future long-term care decisions for their loved ones.

- Where possible, visit family member residents in person and through "window" visits and videocalls even if residents are unable to communicate, to provide emotional support and to enable observation of the residents' physical appearance and condition.

- Ensure family members know to report suspected neglect or abuse to DOH and OAG.

are by reading books and poetry written by Black authors, seeking out and supporting Black-owned businesses, donating to Black nonprofits, if possible, and being an ally by learning about the legacy of historical injustices and how they affect Black people today. Lehman College has launched a six-part series that shows why Black poetry matters amid a wealth of other Black History Month offerings.

## St. Valentine's Day Sweethearts Shop Local

The Jerome Gun Hill BID, along with 43 other associations made up of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), chambers

of commerce, merchant associations and other community-based development organizations across the five boroughs have joined forces to deliver messages of love and support to the city's small businesses, all in time for St. Valentine's Day. In order to support local businesses, the "St. Valentine's Day Sweethearts Shop Local" program encourages New Yorkers to order direct, write a positive review, give a shout out on social media, buy a gift card or send a love letter.

## Save the Snow Day

Following three "traditional snow days" so far this season, and with an emphasis on making mental

health a priority, the Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of New York have joined Campbell's® effort to "Save the Snow Day," and pledge their support to keep a cherished winter tradition alive. The Archdiocese is encouraging parents to share photos of students safely enjoying the snow day across social media with the hashtag #SaveTheSnowDay. Campbell's will be donating 10,000 cans to various food pantries located at schools throughout the Archdiocese of New York, to help fight food insecurity.

## Robotic Joint Replacement at Montefiore

In January, Montefiore

Health System launched its new robotic joint replacement program led by Dr. Carlos Alvarado who recently joined the Department of Orthopedic Surgery. Montefiore is one of the first in the area to utilize the new surgical robot called ROSA - Robotic Surgical Assistant. Alvarado uses the new technology to make a 3D model of the patients' bone anatomy by taking x-rays, as opposed to most robotic devices which require CT scans. CT scans can be more costly and difficult to access, so by using x-rays, more patients may be eligible for this state-of-the-art approach.



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# New Assembly Members Back Fernández in Tense BP Race

By JOSÉ A. GIRALT

Two of the newest assembly members representing the Bronx have endorsed Assemblywoman Nathalia Fernández in her bid for the Bronx borough presidency. Both Chantel Jackson and Kenny Burgos were elected to the State Assembly last November, and on Wednesday, Jan. 27, all three assembly members showed up at Starlight Park, close to Crotona Park East, to make the endorsement public.

"I've known the assemblywoman for a few years now," Burgos said. "I've worked with her in different capacities. I know she's one not only qualified and incredibly intelligent, and competent for this position, but also [is able to] inspire not only our elected leaders, but our community here."

Burgos, who represents the Bronx's 85th Assembly District, went on to describe Fernández's candidacy for borough president as "a historic campaign." Indeed, if elected as borough president, she would become the first woman to hold that position. "Historically, the Bronx has been [represented] by men only," he said. "We do know women have led this borough for a very long time. As someone who was raised by a strong, ambitious, and intelligent

Latina woman here in the Bronx, I really am proud to endorse Nathalia Fernández."

Bronx borough president candidate endorsements are coming at a time when the race is still reeling from some recent jarring news. On Jan. 22, Councilman Rafael Salamanca abruptly withdrew his candidacy, saying, right now, as the city aims to reemerge from the pandemic, he feels he can better serve the community by seeking reelection to City Council.

Ten days prior, State Sen. Luis Sepúlveda, also a candidate in the race, was arrested and charged on Jan. 12 for allegedly attempting to choke his wife. Sepúlveda is estranged from his wife and filed a report counter-alleging that it was she who assaulted him. He is due back in court on Feb. 24.

On the day of the senator's arrest, Fernández, who represents the 80th Assembly District, posted her reaction on Twitter to the alleged incident, which reportedly took place on the Saturday prior. She condemned Sepúlveda's alleged conduct, saying, "We need leadership that empowers women. I'm calling for the senator to submit his resignation."

To date, the senator has not done so,



ASSEMBLYWOMAN NATHALIA FERNÁNDEZ

maintains his innocence, and his lawyer Marvin Ray Raskin, was quoted on Jan. 12, saying, "The senator is committed to, and will proactively provide, full transparency [regarding the domestic incident] as the matter is resolved." The senator has, in the meantime, been stripped of his committee duties at the New York State Senate.

Meanwhile, at the Jan. 27th media event at Starlight Park, Jackson described her endorsement of Fernández as an "honor." Although the Democratic primary is still more than five months away, the recently elected assemblywoman, representing the 79th Assembly District, didn't need any more time to consider who she believes is best qualified to lead the borough.

Referring to Fernández, Jackson told the *Norwood News* after the formal announcement, "She's shown over the years that she's about the work, and that's what I care about." She added, "I feel that Nathalia comes with this good energy, and she wants the better for the people."

In December, fellow former assembly member, Michael Blake, also endorsed Fernández in the race. Last year, he co-sponsored Fernández's Andrew Kearsse Act, which requires police officers to attend to the medical and mental health needs of people in their custody. Blake's former assembly district is now represented by Jackson.

On Jan. 25, the NYPD Sergeants Benevolent Association endorsed Councilman Fernando Cabrera, who represents the 14th City Council District, and who is also running for the borough presidency.

On Jan. 28, Fernández retweeted a post which included the letter of endorsement by the SBA of Cabrera and added, "@FCabreraNY is looking to foster a 'healthy relationship' with the SBA -- who has called @RitchieTorres a 'first class whore' and defended the confederacy -- and their racist, QAnon, conspiracy-believing president, Ed Mullins."

On July 17, Business Insider reported that Mullins had appeared on a Fox News show with a QAnon mug visible in the background of the screen. Mullins reportedly refused to say whether the mug was his or whether he endorses the QAnon conspiracy in a call with Business Insider.

HuffPost reporter, Christopher Mathias, later tweeted that Mullins told him that the mug was not his, that he had borrowed the office for the interview and had no idea what QAnon was.

The *Norwood News* reached out to both the SBA and to Cabrera for a comment on the matter. We did not receive an immediate response.

In terms of her campaign platform, Fernández's focus is on criminal justice, reducing gun violence, improving public health and housing, protection and empowerment of women, and defending LGBTQIA rights.

Financially, the Fernández campaign has received \$48,781 in contributions as of Jan. 15, according to the latest statement filed with the New York City Campaign Finance Board. Just two other candidates have received more contributions: Cabrera, with \$155,535 and Councilmember for the 16th District, Vanessa L. Gibson, with \$89,526.

Meanwhile, Sepúlveda trails Fernández with \$48,560, and rounding out the remaining six candidates in the race, Sammy Ravelo follows with \$15,583, and Victor H. Hernandez with \$1,147.

Fernández, 32, is the youngest candidate to aspire to the borough presidency and sees her latest endorsements as indicative of a new chapter in Bronx politics. "I am very honored to have these two endorsements," Fernández told the *Norwood News*. "I feel it's symbolic to show that the Bronx is ready for new and different leadership. Together, we have the ideas and the passion to really make sure that the Bronx is moving forward in the direction it needs to."

*\*Síle Moloney contributed to this story.*

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## CRIME FILE

By SÍLE MOLONEY



### Fordham Manor: Two Children Assaulted in Subway Station

The NYPD reported that two complaint reports are on file in relation to aggravated assault incidents that occurred on Friday, Jan. 22, in the 52nd precinct. At around 9 p.m. on the subway station platform inside Fordham Road station, in Fordham Manor, a 7-year-old boy and a 9-year-old boy were struck about their body by a man. It has since been reported that the man in question is the boys' father.

Video footage of the incident had been circulated on social media. Norwood News reached out to the Bronx District Attorney's office to inquire on the latest case status. We were informed that the only thing the office could say at this time was that it was investigating the case with police.

### Suspect Arrested in Murder Investigation

On Monday, Jan. 11, at 11.47 p.m., inside 3560 Webster Avenue, between the Norwood and Olinville sections of the Bronx, opposite Woodlawn cemetery, a man wearing a blue jacket discharged a firearm at two individuals on the 9th floor hallway of the building, and then proceeded to the 8th floor of the building where he shot another victim, who later succumbed to his injuries.

The suspects then fled the scene on foot in an unknown direction. On Jan. 15, police confirmed that Desire Louree, 19, of Webster Avenue was arrested and charged with murder and Deshaun Grier, 21, of Webster Avenue was arrested and charged with criminal possession of a weapon. The deceased has been identified as Kahlik Grier, 16, of Webster Avenue.

### Van Cortlandt Park Robbery of Livery Driver

The NYPD is looking for a man, seen below in the at-

tached photo, who is sought in connection with a gunpoint robbery that occurred in the 50th precinct. On Tuesday, Jan. 26, at 1 p.m., in the vicinity of Hudson Parkway and Mosholu Parkway, in Van Cortlandt Park, a 28-year-old male livery driver stopped to offer assistance to a vehicle that appeared to have mechanical trouble on the side of the road. When the suspect got into the victim's livery car, the suspect displayed a firearm and demanded money from the driver.

The driver then drove to an undisclosed bank location and removed approximately \$1,400 from his bank account and gave it to the suspect. The suspect then exited the victim's livery vehicle and got into a gray SUV that was being driven by an unknown accomplice and fled the location to parts unknown. No injuries were reported as a result of the incident.

The suspect is described

as male, 20 to 30 years of age. A photo of the individual was taken from the vicinity of the incident location by the victim, during the incident.



### Norwood Burglary Pattern

The NYPD is asking for the public's assistance identifying the man seen in the attached photo below inside 33-66 Decatur Avenue on Saturday, Jan. 2, at 2.28 a.m. who is wanted for questioning in connection with a burglary pattern in the 52nd precinct. Between Wednesday, Dec. 23, 2020 and Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2021, in the vicinity of East Gun Hill Road and Decatur Avenue in Norwood, the

man unlawfully entered five residential apartment buildings by forcing open the lobby doors with a screwdriver. Once inside the buildings, he used a screwdriver to force open various mailboxes, and removed multiple contents before fleeing the locations.

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.NYPDCRIMESTOPPERS.COM](http://WWW.NYPDCRIMESTOPPERS.COM), or on Twitter @NYPDTips.

All calls are strictly confidential.



## Additional Bronx Communities Prioritized for Vaccination

By DAWN CLANCY

On Jan. 31, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and the City's taskforce on racial inclusion and equity announced a plan to prioritize vaccine availability to an expanded list of 33 neighborhoods hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. The initial list of priority neighborhoods already included parts of the Northwest Bronx like Fordham Heights, Fordham Manor, University Heights, Kingsbridge, and Kingsbridge Heights.

The expanded list now includes the Bronx neighborhoods of Williamsbridge, Baychester and Edenwald. Also previously included were Mott Haven and Melrose, Belmont and East Tremont, Parkchester and Soundview, Highbridge and Concourse, Morrisania and Crotona and Hunts Point and Longwood.

As part of the "Vaccine for All" initiative launched to ensure equitable distribution of the vaccine, the plan will prioritize vaccines for residents in

neighborhoods identified by the Taskforce based on a range of factors including high COVID-19 mortality and case rates, high prevalence of chronic illness, presence of overcrowded housing, the number of individuals experiencing poverty, and other preexisting health disparities.

"We launched our vaccine effort with a clear commitment to provide a vaccine for all New Yorkers," said the mayor in a Jan. 31 press release. "Now we are going even further to ensure the vaccine reaches everyone, equally, with a focus on the neighborhoods we know have borne the brunt of COVID-19."

Additionally, in the targeted areas, eligible front-line workers will have access to the City's family plan allowing them to schedule vaccine appointments for eligible family members.

To support the City's Vaccine for All initiative, New York City Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced at his regular press conference on Friday, Jan. 29, a

plan to convert Yankees Stadium into a large-scale COVID vaccination site specifically for Bronx residents.

The joint effort between New York State, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, The Yankees, Somos Community Care, and the New York National Guard will help expedite vaccine distribution and alleviate the borough's sustained battle against the spread of the coronavirus. Details on exactly when the site will be operational are still to be confirmed.

Currently, the Bronx's COVID-19 positivity rate is the highest in the City at 7.06 percent over a seven-day average. Meanwhile, Manhattan's average is the lowest at 3.47 percent. According to City and State officials, the surge in cases can be traced back to an increase in social gatherings during the holiday season, roughly between Thanksgiving and New Year's. During his Jan. 29th press conference, Cuomo acknowledged a steady statewide decline after the initial post-holiday

surge. However, the Bronx still struggles as one of the City's hardest-hit boroughs by the pandemic.

At this month's Bronx Community Board 7 (CB 7) Health and Human Services Committee meeting, Anita Reyes, executive director of the Bronx Neighborhood Health Center for Health Equity and Community Wellness, emphasized the need for Bronxites to adhere to mask-wearing, social distancing, and hand hygiene guidelines to tamp down the borough's recent surge, and stop the spread, especially in areas drawing increased concern, which include Kingsbridge, Kingsbridge Heights and Fordham Heights.

"If you're sick, if you have any symptoms like a quick cough or a fever in the morning, stay home. Treat it like it's COVID," said Reyes. "We have to continue wearing the facemask. It's important. Sometimes I'm walking down the block, and I see people wearing it on their chin. That's not going to (continued on page 19)





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# NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

## Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants

New York City's online Tenant Resource Portal has been created to help residential renters access free public and private resources to help prevent evictions and stay stably housed. Residential renters can receive legal advice, counseling, and access to other relevant resources based on their specific needs by calling 311 and asking for the "Tenant Helpline" or by texting 311-692. TTY service for people with disabilities is also available by dialing 212-504-4115.

Learn more at <https://www1.nyc.gov/content/tenantresourceportal/pages/>.

Eviction cases filed before March 16, 2020 (pre-COVID) may proceed, but if you received an eviction notice before March 16, 2020, your landlord must file a motion and get permission from the court to evict you. If you receive a motion like this, or if you receive a warrant of eviction, HRA's Office of Civil Justice can provide free legal assistance to help you with your case. For more information, call 311 and ask for the "Tenant Helpline" for connection with free legal help. You should call as soon as possible.

## Food Resources

The City has created the GetFoodNYC Emergency Home Food delivery program to provide food for coronavirus-vulnerable and food-insecure New Yorkers not currently served through existing food delivery programs. Learn more here: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/contact/services/COVID-19FoodAssistance.shtml>.

## Food Bank Events in Feb

Food Bank for New York City has organized a series of food distribution events throughout the month of February at 3101 Kingsbridge Terrace in The Bronx. Residents are required to bring ID and only one food distribution per household is allowed. Recipients must be present to receive distribution and distribution is on a first-come, first-served basis. The food distribution time slot is between 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. and the next dates are on Friday, Feb. 5, Thursday, Feb. 11, Monday, Feb. 22, Friday, Feb. 26.

## NYS Emergency Paid Sick

LeaveOn March 18, 2020, Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed emergency legislation guaranteeing job protection and pay for New Yorkers who have been quarantined as a result of the coronavirus or COVID-19. Some employers in New York State are now required to provide at least five days of job protected, paid sick leave to employees who need to take leave because they are under a mandatory or precautionary order of quarantine or isolation due to COVID-19.

The amount of paid sick leave an employer is required to provide depends on the number of employees they have and the employer's net annual income. If your employer does not provide the required paid sick leave, you may file a complaint with the NYS Department of Labor. Call (518) 457-9000 or go to: <https://labor.ny.gov/workerprotection/>

[laborstandards/coronavirus-complaints.shtml](#)

## COVID-19 Vaccine

New York City officials are aiming to make COVID-19 vaccines available to most New Yorkers by mid-2021. Currently, some people like health care workers, those over 65, people at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19, teachers, school staff, childcare workers, Department of Corrections staff, first responders, public transit workers, grocery store workers and those working and living in group homes and homeless shelters can currently get vaccinated.

Residents are encouraged to get vaccinated, as doing so helps protect the community at large. People with disabilities should take precautions and consult with their health care provider first. To find out more information, talk to your health care provider, call 311 or text 311-692. TTY service for people with disabilities is also available by dialing (212) 504-4115.

Residents can also visit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/covid/covid-19-vaccinesfaq.pdf>.

## COVID-19 Testing

The City is continuing to expand capacity for COVID-19 testing. For more

information, call 311 or text 311-692. TTY service for people with disabilities is also available by dialing (212) 504-4115. Learn more at: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-testing.page>.

## Free testing is available at the following North Bronx locations:

NYC Health + Hospitals/Jacobi  
1400 Pelham Parkway South  
Bronx, New York 10461  
718-918-5000

## COVID-19 Testing and Antibody Testing Offered Here

### Flu vaccines available here

Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
Saturday – Sunday, 9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

NYC Health + Hospitals/North Central Bronx  
3424 Kossuth Avenue  
Bronx, New York 10467  
Appointments: 844-692-4692  
General Information: 718-918-5700

## COVID-19 Testing and Antibody Testing Offered Here

### Flu vaccines available here

Monday – Sunday, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

NYC Health + Hospitals  
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Monday – Sunday, 9 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Rain Boston Road Senior Center  
2424 Boston Road  
Bronx, NY 10467  
Monday – Sunday, 9 a.m. – 7 p.m.

## Flu vaccines available here

Co-op City Retail Space  
105 Dreiser Loop  
Bronx, NY 10475  
Monday – Sunday, 9 a.m. – 7 p.m.

## Rapid Antigen Testing Available Here

Flu vaccines available here  
St James Rec Center  
2530 Jerome Avenue  
Bronx, NY 10468

Monday – Sunday, 9 a.m. – 7 p.m.  
**Rapid Molecular Testing Available Here. Rapid testing availability may be limited at this time.**

## Health Insurance

NYC Care is a health care access program for people who are not eligible for or cannot afford health insurance. It is now available in every borough. To learn more, visit <https://www.nyccare.nyc/> or call (646) 692-2273.

## NYC Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP) Alerts

Residents can get the latest DCWP alerts and information on all COVID-19 resources, including in additional languages, at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dca/media/DCWP-Alerts-During-COVID19.page>

Alternatively, call 311 and asked for "DCWP Alerts." Residents can also text 311-692. TTY service for people with disabilities is also available by dialing (212) 504-4115.

## Price Gouging

Effective June 26, 2020, the NYC Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP) issued a permanent rule that makes price gouging illegal for any products or services essential to health, safety, and welfare during a declared state of emergency. Learn more by calling 311 and saying "Overcharge."

## NYC Human Resources

### Administration:

You may be eligible for an emergency cash grant if it will meet certain special needs. For more information, call HRA's infoline at 718-557-1399 or visit: <https://a069-access.nyc.gov/accesshra/>

## NYC Department of Education

The NYC DOE will be offering childcare to eligible families through their Learning Bridges program. Learn more by calling 311 or go to: <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enrollment-help/learning-bridges>.

## NYC Campaign Finance Board

Ranked Choice Voting will be used in all Special Elections taking place after January 1, 2021. The first special election with Ranked Choice Voting in District 11 and District 15 will be held on March 23.

Ranked Choice Voting means a voter can rank up to five candidates in order of preference, instead of choosing just one. If a candidate receives more than 50 percent of first-choice votes, they are the winner. If no candidate earns more than 50 percent of first-choice votes, then the counting will continue in rounds. At the end of each round, the candidate with the fewest votes will be eliminated.

If a voter ranked the eliminated candidate as their first choice, then the voter's next highest ranked candidate on their ballot will be taken into account. This process will continue until there are two candidates left. The candidate with the most votes wins. More information on ranked choice voting can be found here: <http://www1.nyc.gov/elections/ranked-choice>

[www.nyccfb.info/nyc-votes/ranked-choice-voting-faqs/](http://www.nyccfb.info/nyc-votes/ranked-choice-voting-faqs/), by emailing [nycvotes@nyccfb.info](mailto:nycvotes@nyccfb.info) or by calling 212-409-1800.

## Returning to Work During COVID-19

Learn more about important guidelines and resources available to workers under Phase 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the reopening at [www.nyc.gov/workers](http://www.nyc.gov/workers) or by calling 311 or (855) 491-2667. Important information for domestic workers and their employers can be found here: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dca/downloads/pdf/workers/ReturnToWork-Information-for-Domestic-Workers-and-Employers.pdf>.

## Funeral Planning During COVID-19

Important Information for New Yorkers who have lost loved ones can be found here: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dca/downloads/pdf/consumers/Funeral-Planning-During-COVID-19-English.pdf>

## Funeral and Burial Guidance and Assistance

The New York City Human Resources Administration will provide financial assistance to individuals who need assistance to meet qualifying funeral expenses. For more information, call 311 or visit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hra/help/burial-assistance.page>.

## Taxi and Limousine Commission

TLC licensees can take advantage of the Driver Resource Center, which provides financial counseling and legal services and other useful free City resources such as health care insurance, mental health resources and more. <https://portal.driverresourcecenter.tlc.nyc.gov/>. Are you at risk of losing your home? NYLAG's Foreclosure Prevention Project Attorneys can help you avoid Foreclosure at no cost. Call 212-946-0349 or email [contactfpp@nylag.org](mailto:contactfpp@nylag.org).

## Free Tax Prep Services

New Yorkers can now use NYC's Free Tax Prep Services to file their tax returns for free and keep their whole refund. Anyone who has earned \$65,000 or less in 2020 can file for free, from home, with the help of an IRS-certified VITA / TCE volunteer preparer. Preparers can already help residents prepare to file their taxes safely now, and then transmit the returns to the IRS when the agency opens the tax season on Friday, Feb. 12.

Residents are reminded that any preparer promising a tax refund before Feb. 12, may be selling a Refund Anticipation Loan (RAL), which may come with fees and high interest rates. Tax Prep Services are available in English, Spanish, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Korean and Russian. Additional languages are available through phone interpretation. Learn more by calling 311 and asking for tax preparation assistance or by going to [nyc.gov/taxprep](http://nyc.gov/taxprep).

The deadline to file a 2020 tax return is April 15, 2021. NYC Free

Tax Prep services include in-person tax preparation, drop-off services, virtual tax prep, and assisted self-prep to file taxes for FREE. Filers will need access to a computer, tablet, or smartphone and a stable internet connection for virtual free tax prep services.

## NYC Financial Empowerment Centers

Professional financial counselors can help New Yorkers manage their bills and credit amidst the coronavirus crisis, understand student loan repayment options, and more in a confidential setting. For the health and safety of providers and clients, most Financial Counseling sessions will be conducted over the phone. Book an appointment by calling 311 or go to: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dca/downloads/pdf/consumers/DCA-Template-Cease-Debt-Collection-Communication-Letter-for-Consumers.pdf>

## Student Loans

Has your income or family size changed? Get important information about payments and resources by calling 311 or go to: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dca/consumers/Student-Loans.page> where you can learn about Income-Driven Repayment (IDR) plans that can lower your monthly payments. Book an appointment for free financial counseling at 311 or go to: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dca/consumers/get-free-financial-counseling.page>.

## Debt Collection

DCWP has created a letter template that you can fill out and mail (required by federal law) so debt collectors can't contact you until the State of Emergency in New York City has ended. Learn more by calling 311 or go to: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dca/downloads/pdf/consumers/DCA-Template-Cease-Debt-Collection-Communication-Letter-for-Consumers.pdf>

## COVID-19 Scams and Safety Tips

Important information that describes common COVID-19-related scams and tips can be found by calling 311 or going to: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dca/downloads/pdf/consumers/COVID-19-Scams-and-Safety-Tips-English.pdf>

## NYC Commission on Human Rights

Harassment and discrimination based on race, national origin, age, and disability, including having COVID-19 or another serious illness, is illegal. If you have faced harassment or discrimination in housing, at work, or in any public place, contact the Commission by filling out our online form or by calling 311 and asking for "human rights." Learn more at: <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/cchr/index.page>







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# Out & About

Compiled by RACHEL DALLOO & SÍLE MOLONEY

## Events

Marking 20 years of service, the Bronx River Alliance is hosting their annual **Bronx River Assembly** on Feb. 4 from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. To join this virtual celebration, please email [info@bronxriver.org](mailto:info@bronxriver.org) or call (718)-542-4284.

Want to lend a helping hand to those in need, especially during this time? Then join the Bronx River Alliance on Feb. 6, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. for their **Winter Workdays at the Foodway** event which will be held at Concrete Plant Park, 1357 Westchester Avenue Bronx, NY 10459.

Shake the wintertime blues and lend a hand this winter at the **Bronx River Foodway!** Help us lay mulch, prune plants, and more as we prepare the foodway for its 2021 spring revival. COVID-19 social distancing guidelines apply. Extra masks will be available onsite. Visit <http://bronxriver.org> to register, or for more information, email Joseph Sanchez at [foodway@bronxriver.org](mailto:foodway@bronxriver.org).

From December 2020 to June 2021, the **Norwood Farmstand** will be open to the community on Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at E. Gun Hill Road and Dekalb Avenue, with fresh, affordable fruits and vegetables grown by regional farmers, year-round. Be a part of GrowNYC's Wholesale program, designed to bring the freshest, highest quality, regionally grown farm products to the New York City community. To learn more about this program, visit <https://www.grownyc.org/farmstand/norwood>.

Are you a big fan of 90s movies? Then join Pelham Bay Library for "Back to the 90s Movie Trivia" on Tuesday, Feb. 9, from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. via Google Meet to test your 90s movie knowledge! To register for this event, search "**Back to the 90s Movie Trivia**" at <https://www.nypl.org>.

Are you interested in improving your public speaking skills and sharing your views? Join the **Bronx Toastmasters Club of Riverdale** on Wednesday, Feb. 10 at 7:30 p.m. on Zoom. To RSVP for this event, please send an email request to [BronxToastmastersClub@gmail.com](mailto:BronxToastmastersClub@gmail.com).

Would you like to be a part of a group that supports the rehabilitation of others, who are currently recovering from a situation? Then join the **JJP VAMC Amputee Peer Support Group** on Feb. 12 from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the James J. Peters VA Medical Center, located on 130 West Kingsbridge Rd, Bronx, NY 10468. For more information, contact Irina Agranova-Breyter at [irina.agranova-breyter@va.gov](mailto:irina.agranova-breyter@va.gov) or call 718-584-9000.

Explore our online exhibit, **Black Botany: The Nature of Black Experience**, which seeks to acknowledge the complex relationship between enslaved Black people, nature, and the colonial environment and reconsider the conscious omission of Black knowledge of the natural world. The exhibit focuses on five plants—cotton, rice, the peacock flower, peanut, and vanilla orchid. These plants offer a unique lens through which to explore the documentary record about the lived experiences of Black people related to the innovation and impact of these plants.

The exhibit features several works from the LuEsther T. Mertz Library and Archival Collections of The New York Botanical Garden, along with plant specimens from the William and Lynda Steere Herbarium. The exhibit was curated by Rashad Bell, MLIS, Collection Maintenance Associate at the Mertz Library, and Nuala Caomhánach, former Humanities Institute Andrew W. Mellon Fellow and Ph.D. candidate at New York University. To learn more, go to: <https://www.nybg.org/event/> and search for "Black Botany: The Nature of Black Experience."

## Art

The Scott Bleu Studios is hosting a **Winter**

**Portrait Event** to raise money to build one of the Bronx's only black and female-owned podcasting studios and build up the studio to serve local artists. Join owners, Bleu and Paula, for ten-minute headshots, ideal for your profile, LinkedIn page or your business. Wine and light refreshments are included. The location will be sent via email after the purchase of a ticket. Mask and hand sanitizer will be available and non-contact temperature will be taken at the door. To register, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com> and search "Scott Bleu Studios Winter Portrait Event."

## Movement

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/>.

Join NYC Parks on Feb. 7 from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. at the Van Cortlandt Nature Center in Van Cortlandt Park for the **Historic New York: Old Croton Aqueduct** event and learn about the history and architecture of selected New York City neighborhoods and parks. Urban Park Rangers specialize in the interpretation of historic turning points, both natural and man-made, in the city's long history.

NYCParks asks participants to stay home if sick, maintain six feet of physical distance between households, wear a face covering, keep hands washed and carry hand sanitizer. For more information, please contact (718) 548-7070.

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## Letters To The Editor

### District 11 Deterioration

Retiring City Councilman Andrew Cohen sent out his farewell newsletter, bragging about all his major accomplishments. What a slap in the face to Cohen's constituents!

In our district, there is more and more violent crime, continuing deterioration in the quality of life and increased abuse of tenants. Many more developers are planning to take over affordable housing, like the *Norwood News* article about the Perry Avenue tenants.

But Andy Cohen doesn't care. He's getting his long wished-for judgeship, while one of his cronies will take over Cohen's former position. What a racket!

No wonder long-time Bronxites are moving away.

Bill & Anne Cohen  
Van Cortlandt Village

### Heartbreak on Perry Avenue

It's freezing right now in January as I read the latest edition of the *Norwood News*, and read that sad story about the residents not having their leases renewed at 3245 Perry Ave.

The tenant profiled gave his life as an NYC EMT and now has cancer. First question - where are the candidates running for political office, and I want them there being interviewed to help

these tenants.

Second, everyone is going after the companies, especially banks, that did business with former President Donald Trump. May I ask what banks are financing Glacier Equities that purchased this building last November?

Are we, as consumers, contributing to our own downfall by banking with such companies? And I noticed they bought the buildings, but have a separate company, One Vesta Property Mgt., to run the day-to-day affairs of the building. This has happened at nine other buildings in the Bronx and in Manhattan per the article.

So, this is all about money, right? I commend the *Norwood News* for their reporting on the tenants' plight, but now we need the mayoral candidates and elected officials to stand with these tenants, and pass laws allowing them to stay when a building goes co-op.

Where is Ms. Sally Dunford when you need her? She did a great job on tenant advocacy. I would like to see someone contact Ms. Nina Pineda of WABC to do a profile segment on this company led by Mr. Horn. No one living in an apartment for over thirty-five years should lose it over these equity hedge fund companies.

Richard Marias  
Norwood

# Bronx Father Gets Precious COVID-19 Shot from Daughter

By DAVID GREENE

Norwood dad, Tarek Ahmad, called it a "privilege" to get the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, but having the shot administered to him by his daughter was a complete surprise.

On Monday, Jan. 25, Ahmad told the *Norwood News* about the sweet moment that unfolded on Friday, Jan. 22 at the 168th Street armory vaccination site in Manhattan through a chance encounter with his daughter. "Initially, I was scheduled [for a COVID-19 vaccination] in one of the city hospitals in the Bronx, but they called and cancelled my appointment."

He added, "Thankfully, I was able to get an appointment at the [168th Street] armory." Ahmad's daughter was working at the Manhattan vaccination site that day. (Her name cannot be disclosed.) However, Ahmad said he knew she was at the location that day, where 1,500 to 2,000 people were getting vaccinated a day, despite other locations having already exhausted their supplies.

Explaining his luck of the draw, the proud pop recalled, "I was very surprised. I did not plan on getting it from my daughter. My turn came and my daughter was available."

Ahmad said he had recently been a little bit worried, having heard that the City was running out of vaccines. "I would really like my son, who is at high risk of getting COVID, to get it," he said, adding that if there was a shortage, this would not be possible.

Ahmad already had, and has recovered from, the coronavirus. "I am also worried that if there's a shortage, I will not be able to get the second dose." He said for now, he has, at least, an appointment for the second dose in February.

One year since the first confirmed case of the coronavirus was announced in Washington state on Jan. 21, 2020, as of Jan. 26, 2021, more than 95 million people have been infected worldwide with COVID-19, and the death toll now stands at just over 2 million.

Meanwhile, the current death toll in the United States has surpassed 450,000 according to data from John Hopkins University of Medicine. Meanwhile, the New York State Department of Health reports 35,631 deaths statewide as of Feb. 3 and 3,812 in the Bronx.

However, as deaths and hospitalizations continue to fall, there is talk of Governor Andrew Cuomo possibly loos-



Photo courtesy of Tarek Ahmad

**NORWOOD DAD, TAREK** Ahmad, has his COVID-19 vaccination administered to him by his daughter on Friday, Jan. 22, at the 168th Street armory in Manhattan.

ening some COVID-19 restrictions. On Feb 2, amid news of additional COVID vaccine doses arriving from the feds, Cuomo said it would allow the city and other local governments to expand eligibility. A 4 percent supply increase on top of current shipments means additional frontline workers like restaurant workers, taxi drivers and people in developmentally disabled facilities can now get vaccinated also.

Up to now, the vaccine, was mainly being administered to anyone over 65, teachers and school staff, childcare workers, Department of Corrections staff, first responders, public transit workers, grocery store workers and those working and living in group homes and homeless shelters.

New York City Department of Health data shows that, currently, the highest rate of infection in the Bronx is in Charlotte Gardens and Hunts Point with a rate of 12.73 percent, followed by Fordham, Kingsbridge and University Heights at 12.2 percent and Allerton, Pelham Parkway and Williamsbridge at 11.36 percent.

For more information, call 311 or visit the city's website at:

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-vaccines.page>.

*\*Sile Moloney contributed to this story*

## CORRECTION

In edition Vol 34, No 2, dated January 21-February 3, 2021, on page 17 of the story entitled "Chaos Follows Sepúlveda Arrest," we incorrectly referred to Mr. Sepúlveda's defense attorney as Morgan Ray Raskin. His name is Marvin Ray Raskin. We apologize for this oversight.

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## Public and Community Meetings

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the **52<sup>nd</sup> PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meetings have been held via ZOOM. Meetings are usually held **on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month at 6 p.m.** Call the 52nd Precinct Community Affairs office at **718-220-5824** 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, Feb. 23, at 6.30 p.m.** Zoom details will be circulated ahead of the meeting. Contact [mirosario@cb.nyc.gov](mailto: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. The meetings are held **on the first Wednesday of the month at 8 p.m.** For further details, contact [bedfordmosholu@verizon.net](mailto:bedfordmosholu@verizon.net).



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# Dekalb Avenue Building Explosion: Con Ed Investigation Continues

(continued from page 1)

rect address for the site of the explosion of 3512 Dekalb Avenue, the former site of the Nathan Straus Jewish Center and, most recently, home to the Mosholu Montefiore Community Center North, the Educational Counseling Center, and the MMCC Childhood Development Center.

Early on Jan. 24, Stanley Jones, a resident at 3521 Dekalb Avenue, was standing in the doorway of his building, waiting for investigators when he was asked by the *Norwood News* about the incident. Jones replied, "I mean, nothing really happened to me. The closet blew up and they don't know what the cause was."

Jones added matter-of-factly, "My kitchen exploded," before adding, "They don't know what it was." Pressed if the likely cause was a gas oven, Jones replied, "No, it was just an explosion that originated in the kitchen. They don't know where it started. I'm waiting on the building inspector now."

Jones said that at the time of the explosion, he had not been cooking. "I was in the bedroom watching a movie," he said. He acknowledged being lucky and was thankful nobody was injured as a result of the incident. Asked if his landlord would make the needed repairs, Jones said, "Yeah, I hope he does."

On Monday, Jan. 25, in response to an inquiry from the *Norwood News* citing what looked to be a substantial emergency response by the NYPD and emergency units to the incident, NYPD spokesperson, Detective Denise Moroney, said, "There are no complaint reports on file with the information you provided."

On the same day, an unidentified official from the FDNY press office offered a brief report recap of the incident, which was described as a fire rather than an explosion, saying, "21:30 hours, 3521 Dekalb Ave (Bx), for reports of a stove fire. Building is a 6-story multiple dwelling. Seven units responded. DOB notified. Incident placed under control at 23:09. No injuries reported."

Asked if the cause of the inci-

dent was definitely a stove fire, given the resident had told the *Norwood News* he had not been cooking at the time of the alleged explosion, the FDNY press officer responded, "I can confirm it was a stove fire. You do not need to be cooking for your stove /oven to catch fire." The officer added, "No reports of an investigation at this time."

On Tuesday, Jan. 26, Andrew Rudansky, a press secretary at the New York City Department of Buildings (DOB) provided a more detailed report of the incident, saying, "DOB inspectors were called to the scene to conduct a structure stability inspection." He continued, "Our inspectors confirmed that a small explosion had occurred in the cockloft of a 6-story building, causing cracks to form on the walls and ceilings of two separate apartments on the top floor."

The investigation determined that the explosion caused no serious damage to the building. However, a partial vacate order was issued "out of an abundance of caution" to one of the two damaged apartments, due to the cracks in the ceiling. The report added that inspectors were on the scene on Jan. 23 and 24 and ordered the building's owner to hire a master plumber to confirm the gas lines in the building were safe.

One resident, who was ordered to vacate the apartment, was allocated a second apartment by the landlord to stay in temporarily.

On Monday, Jan. 25, *Norwood News* noticed a letter from Con Edison had been posted in the building's elevator dated Dec. 29, informing residents that contractors would be upgrading the building to "smart gas meters" that day. It's not yet known if the switching of the gas meters may have caused or been a factor in the explosion.

According to DOB records, the building has 28 violations on file, with three violations categorized as "open" and pertaining to the building's elevator. In 2019, the owner of the building, listed as 3521 Dekalb Avenue Associates, paid \$1,270.78 of a \$1,500 civil penalty leveled against the group for "failure to maintain [the] eleva-

tor."

On Tuesday, Feb. 2, several attempts to reach the landlord of the building proved unsuccessful. When contacted by telephone also on Tuesday, Feb. 2, Chris Perez, the building's managing agent, said the cause of the explosion had not yet been determined.

Meanwhile, Bob McGee, a Con Edison spokesman said on Feb. 2 that he was working to determine if

Jones' oven was gas or electric. If it was gas, he said it would have had to have had a converter installed as part of the switch to the smart gas meter, on or around Dec. 29. McGee committed to following up and providing that information to the *Norwood News*, once available.

According to one real estate website, studio apartments in the 88-unit building at the location start at \$1,350 per month.

## Additional Bronx Communities Prioritized for Vaccination

(continued from page 10)

protect folks. You have to make sure it's covering your nose, even if you've had the vaccine."

The first COVID-19 vaccine to be administered in the United States was on Dec. 14, 2020 in Queens, to Long Island Jewish Medical Center ICU nurse, Sandra Lindsay. Since then, the City has operated a phased roll-out of the vaccine, prioritizing eligible front-line workers and New Yorkers 65 years and older. However, as *Norwood News* reported, a month after the first vaccine was administered, the mayor announced on Friday, Jan. 15, during an interview on WNYC, that the City was poised to run out.

"We will run out of vaccine next week in New York City," said de Blasio. "The supply should go to where there is an infrastructure to get it into people's arms. We know there is supply in this country not being used."

With the vaccine most likely not becoming available to the broader public until summer 2021, Bronx resident and Health and Human Services Committee member, Alfred Grant, voiced his concern during the CB7 committee meeting on whether the supply will meet demand.

"But now the question is, since we are entering into the realm of having vaccines for the community, are we going to be running out? Because if you listen to the news of the governor and the mayor, they tell different stories," Grant said. "Is there any truth to that or is there enough for the community?"

On Jan. 29, Cuomo announced that New York State had used 100 percent

of the vaccine supply it had been allocated over the past six weeks. "That does not mean we've run out," he said. "We [will] start to receive the next week's allocation. That's where we are now. We get another 250,000 doses that's starting to be delivered."

Since distribution began in early January, the federal government provided a weekly allotment of roughly 250,000 vaccines for the over seven million New Yorkers eligible for immunization.

As of Feb. 2, although 2 million people in New York State have now received the vaccine, supply has fallen way short of demand, and local health centers like Bronx Neighborhood Health have struggled to vaccinate their most vulnerable. "We need additional vaccines. The supply is limited," Reyes said. "We're waiting on the federal government to give us more because we need more."

President Joe Biden announced in late January that New York State would receive 16 percent more COVID-19 vaccines (now 20%), for the next three weeks, increasing supplies at city and local health departments. However, health centers such as Bronx Neighborhood Health have yet to receive updates on how that supply increase will be distributed.

CB 7's next Health and Human Services Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 16, at 6.30 p.m. The event will be held virtually. For more on the City's Vaccine for All initiative, visit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-vaccines.page>. To find a vaccination site near you, go to <https://vaccinefinder.nyc.gov/>.



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