



NORWOOD NEWS

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LAYOFFS WORRY BRONX VETS



Photo by David Greene

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT of Veterans Affairs announced Feb. 13, 2025, layoffs of 1,000 employees. Officials say the targeted \$98 million in savings will go back into the system. Pictured is the James J. Peters Veterans Administration Hospital on West Kingsbridge Road in Fordham Manor on Friday, Feb. 14, 2025.

By **DAVID GREENE**

Hours after rumors circulated on social media on Feb. 13 that members of the new U.S. Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), run by unelected billionaire Elon Musk, would visit the Bronx VA Medical Cen-

ter in Fordham Manor on Feb. 14, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced the dismissal of 1,000 employees at unspecified VA sites.

According to a VA press release dated Feb. 13, the resulting savings would "enable VA to redi-

rect over \$98 million annually to health care, benefits and services for VA beneficiaries."

The release continued, "Those dismissed today include non-bargaining unit probationary employees who have served less than a year in a competitive

service appointment or who have served less than two years in an excepted service appointment."

VA officials said, "There are currently 43,000 probationary employees across the department, the vast majority of whom

(continued on page 11)



Norwood Fire Displaces 93-Year-Old Widow
pg 2



Unity Democrats Announce Endorsements for 2025 | pg 6



Kingsbridge Woman Stabbed on Valentine's Day
pg 8

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Norwood Fire Displaces 93-Year-Old Widow

By **SILE MOLONEY**

There were no reported injuries after a basement fire broke out in a six-story, residential building in Norwood in the early hours of Sunday, Feb. 16, but the fire caused damage to at least two apartments and shocked its residents who were woken up and evacuated amid temperatures of around 33 degrees, and continuous rain and sleet.

Police said they received a 911 call at 5.20 a.m. for a report of a fire in a multiple dwelling at 3551 DeKalb Avenue, located between East Gun Hill Road and East 212th Street. The fire was in the basement, they said firefighters brought the blaze under control at 5.58 a.m., and FDNY fire marshals are investigating the cause.

At the scene, we spoke to Ajoub, who lives on the fourth floor. “The fire started somewhere in the basement of the Super’s apartment and went up to the first floor here,” he said. “He lives with his family; everybody’s out.” Asked if all residents had been evacuated, Ajoub said, “Well, they didn’t tell us, but everybody [exited] for safety. Almost everybody came outside.”

The basement apartment appeared badly damaged with all DeKalb Avenue-facing windows shattered. The Super was busy and unable to talk but confirmed the Red Cross were on the way to help any affected residents with housing.

Frederic Klein with Red Cross NY later said it registered one household (one individual) for emergency assistance, including temporary lodging and financial assistance after the fire. “Our casework team will follow up with this resident in [the] coming days to help connect her with longer-term recovery resources from government and/or non-profit partners based on her individual recovery needs.”

Asked if there were many elderly people living in the building, Ajoub said, “One right here,” gesturing to one apartment on the first floor. “Elderly lady, very old lady; she’s inside.”



Photo by Sile Moloney

NINETY-THREE-YEAR-OLD WIDOW, JUANITA, suffered damage to her first-floor apartment following a basement fire at 3551 DeKalb Avenue, The Bronx, on Sunday morning, Feb. 14, 2025.

We later visited Juanita, a petite, frail-looking, elderly resident living on the first floor, but not directly above the Super’s basement apartment. She was wearing a facemask, no coat, clutching a heavy plastic bag, a handbag, and holding an inhaler. She appeared in shock and a bit tearful. One of the side-facing windows in her apartment to her kitchen had been knocked in, presumably by firefighters in efforts to gain access to the building, and her electricity was out.

Her son, Benjamin, was with her. “It’s so cold!” Juanita exclaimed, visibly upset. “I’m looking for my medication.” Referring to her son, she said, “He don’t live with me. He came to see me, and he called the wife [and told his wife], ‘I’m going to stay with my mother because always she’s by herself.’ He’s married. He come to see me and sometimes when he comes, he stay on Saturday to make company because I lost my husband a couple of years ago.”

Juanita continued, “It’s okay that

he visit me, and make company for tonight. I live alone. I lost my husband in 2022, leukemia. He died at Montefiore Hospital, and a patient of Montefiore.” She added that she, herself, had asthma, among other illnesses.

The 93-year-old widow said in part of the night before, “I went to sleep. My son stayed on the telephone. He said, ‘I’m going to stay with you, mommy.’ He called his son that he was going to stay, and then I fall asleep.”

Juanita said she had taken some medication before going to bed. “I was really sleeping peacefully when I hear the lady outside of the building,” she said. “I wake up in front of the bedroom that is on that side and I say no way! When I see the smoke....and they are here, the fire department!”

She said she was determined to get out right away. “I tell my son, ‘Benjamin! you see?’” she said. “Look, you make company to me and look what happened!” She said she told her son, “Get out and put your pants [on]!” adding, “Even *he* was sleeping, and he said, ‘No! What?’ and then he put the pants on, and we get out.”

Another female resident called Suzie told us, “There was a lady outside screaming, ‘Fire! Fire!’ on the street, so I smelled the smoke from my window because I live right [inaudible] the Super, so I ran out of my bed and I opened my window to the front, and I saw all the smoke, and then I ran back to my daughter and I tell her, ‘There’s fire! Get out the bed.’ She fell. She hurt her back.”

Suzie continued, “And then, we grab our jackets and our clothes. When I was running, I was hitting everybody’s door. So, we ran out, and then we were hitting everybody’s [door] and we have relatives in the building, so we were calling on them and they came out.” Asked if her apartment was destroyed, Suzie said, “No, it’s very smoky so we leave the window open.”

Back outside, we spoke to a young male resident who said, “Nothing really happened. I mean, a lot happened; there was smoke everywhere.” He added that he had also seen flames.

Two days earlier, the FDNY said they responded to a three-alarm, Norwood residential fire, the cause of which is still under investigation, at nearby Rochambeau Avenue (3514) on Valentines Day, Friday, Feb. 14, injuring six, and drawing 33 units, comprising 138 fire and EMS personnel to the scene. The Red Cross said it registered ten households (21 adults and nine children) for emergency assistance, including temporary lodging after the fire.

The FDNY said all hands were also called to another fire at 3301 Olinville Avenue between Rosewood Street and Magenta Street in Olinville around the same time on the same day. No injuries were reported.

Meanwhile, FDNY said a car fire had also broken out on Rochambeau Avenue in a parking lot close to Montefiore Medi-



Photo by Johandry Jimenez

ONE VEHICLE WAS completely destroyed after it caught fire on the fifth floor of parking garage at 120 East 210th Street in Norwood on Thursday, Feb. 13, 2025.

(continued on page 6)

Poultry Markets Reopen & Zoo Tackles Bird Flu

By DAVID GREENE

Live poultry markets in New York are back open after a five-day closure was implemented by New York Gov. Kathy Hochul on Friday, Feb. 7, after the avian flu/bird flu or H5N1 virus was discovered in bird flocks at seven live bird markets in The Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn. Officials said the ordered closures were mandated for testing, cleaning and disinfection of poultry markets in New York City, Westchester and Long Island.

On Jan. 28, the New York State Department of Agriculture (DOA) issued a health alert for the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), writing, "To date, 30 flocks in New York State have tested positive for HPAI since February 2022."

According to a 2015 USDA document, there are two types of the H5N1 bird flu virus; one is low pathogenic (LPAI) referring to the ability of the virus to produce disease, and the other highly pathogenic (HPAI). HPAI H5N1 is often referred to as the "Asian" H5N1, and LPAI H5N1 as the "North American" H5N1. However, HPAI has been identified in the United States since January 2022.

According to the health alert, DOA worked closely with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), as well as NYS Department of Health and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation to stop the spread of the virus.

According to DOA, the first detection of bird flu in New

York at a live poultry market occurred on March 22, 2023, in Queens, and the most recent outbreak began on Jan. 17 on Long Island. The virus was found at two unidentified live poultry markets in The Bronx on Feb. 4 and 6.

In issuing the temporary closure of live poultry markets on Feb. 7, Hochul said, "My top priority will always be to keep New Yorkers safe, and I have directed our state agencies to use all available resources to ensure we are taking every measure necessary to keep the risk to the public low."

State Health Commissioner Dr. James McDonald previously said of the outbreak, "While there is no immediate threat to public health, and no known cases of HPAI in humans in New York State, we support the Department of Agriculture and markets' latest proactive measures to prevent the spread of the disease between animals and humans by temporarily closing live bird markets in New York City and surrounding counties."

Meanwhile, Michelle Morse, NYC Health Department Acting Commissioner, added, "The current risk to New Yorkers of bird flu (H5N1) remains low. Avian influenza viruses only present a wider risk if the virus develops the ability to transmit between people—which we have not seen." Morse added that government agencies would work with live bird markets to provide "essential information" to staff as well as providing any treatment if "symptoms present themselves."

According to the State health department, avian flu "is a disease that is spread among birds and is caused by a flu virus. Water birds (such as ducks, geese, gulls and swans) can carry bird flu without looking sick, and bird flu can cause sickness and death in poultry birds (such as chickens and turkeys). Infected birds spread the virus through their saliva, nasal fluid, and feces."

After reports of an outbreak at both the Queens and Bronx zoos, the Wildlife Conservation Society issued a statement that read in part, "We have assessed and reviewed our protocols regarding risk to our birds from avian influenza. We implemented steps at our zoos and aquarium to limit exposure to our animals to wild birds."

The statement continued, "Three ducks at the Queens Zoo have died due to avian influenza. There are also nine wild birds and three collection ducks that have died at the Bronx Zoo that may have had exposure to the virus." The statement concluded, "As a precaution, over the last two weeks, we moved vulnerable bird species to protected areas in our parks."

On Sunday, Feb. 16, Robert, who lives across the street from the Bronx Zoo, told *Norwood News*, "Wild birds, geese and pigeons, those are the two wild birds that are just mainly in the zoo." Gesturing, he said, "The geese are over there on the opposite side of the zoo." Asked if he was concerned, Robert replied, "It's going to affect the stray cats more than anything."

During a visit to the Cross Bronx Live Poultry market located at 1863 Jerome Avenue in Morris Heights on Feb. 16, we observed hundreds of chickens in cages and a pair of customers in the market. A man behind the counter who declined to be identified, said, "We cleaned everything for the inspection." He added that once informed of the latest bird flu outbreak and the closure order, the market "immediately" closed.

Asked if their birds were checked, the man replied, "Of course! The moment they said close, we didn't have any birds here. They went to a farm. That's why we closed, and we did an inspection and cleaned."

On Tuesday, Feb. 18, *Norwood News* contacted the Macca Vivero Live Poultry, Inc., located at 605 Morris Park Avenue in Van Nest, another live poultry market now back in business. A man who answered



Photo by David Greene

THE MACCA VIVERO Live Poultry, located at 605 Morris Park Avenue in Van Nest, was back open on Sunday, Feb. 16, 2025, after a mandated closure temporarily shut all live poultry markets in some New York State counties.



Photo by David Greene

A CUSTOMER SELECTS a caged hen at Cross Bronx Live Poultry, located at 1663 Jerome Avenue in Morris Heights, on Sunday, Feb. 16, 2025.

the phone at the market was asked about the closure. "Call the USDA inspector," he said. "We can't talk about anything. Have a good day." He then hung up.

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Photo by David Greene

THE BRONX ZOO, located at 2300 Southern Boulevard, the entrance of which is seen here Sunday, Feb. 16, 2025, reported that nine wild birds and three collection ducks recently died from avian flu, and the zoo has taken precautions to protect its animals from the virus.

INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER

By **DAVID GREENE**



This week, we asked readers their opinion on the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) memo dated Monday, Feb. 10, directing the U.S. Attorneys Office for the Southern District of New York to drop, for now, the bribery and other charges brought against New York City Mayor Eric Adams stemming from an investigation into his 2021 mayoral campaign and related campaign financing. As reported, on Thursday, Feb. 13, Reuters reported that U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York Danielle Sassoon was one of three senior Justice department officials to resign rather than comply with the order to dismiss the corruption charges, according to an internal Justice department memo seen by Reuters and people familiar with the matter. The mayor continues to deny any wrongdoing and is presumed innocent unless and until convicted in a court of law.



"They've got to fix the system. This is no good, no good. He's got to pay for what he did and what [U.S. President Donald] Trump did. Both of them have done the same s—t. Trump's not going to admit it; they're both in the same boat."

**Maria Delgado,
West Farms
(Photo by David Greene)**



"I don't know if he did it. I don't know if it's fair that they dropped the charges against him. I think it's kind of arbitrary. I didn't vote. The politics today is hard to understand."

**Everet (last name withheld),
Tremont
(Photo by David Greene)**



"I think dropping the charges was a mistake. I think they should have continued looking into his ethics, because when you take the oath of office you must possess a higher standard of ethics. So, in my opinion, I feel that the charges should not have been dropped. It's just sad that, at the end of the day, a politician should have higher standards of ethics. If he did do it, and they're dropping the charges, it's sad that they're dropping the charges."

**C.J. Rivera,
Kingsbridge
(Photo by David Greene)**



"I hadn't heard that. That's actually pretty crazy. In my opinion, the entire justice system is corrupt. Everybody in the highest positions need to be changed. There needs to be new people. I really don't know if [U.S. President Donald] Trump is making more of a swamp. You don't know who to trust really. You have to have discernment. You've got to look at everything through a certain lens. You have to look people in the eyes and see they are real and try and gauge their intentions. I don't know about Trump to be honest. He's been rich for a long time, so he knows how to maneuver and lie and cover his tracks. But right now, I feel he's the only thing that we could hold on to, to get America great again."

**Alberto Cedano,
Kingsbridge resident visiting Norwood
(Photo by David Greene)**



"I do not think there was any kind of deal. I basically think that Adams was already protesting the immigration issue, for he saw it was killing the City. And I suspect they were trying to discipline him, which is not to say there might not have been a few problems, and maybe some things got flushed out."

**Rogier Fentener Van Vlissingen,
Parkchester
(Photo courtesy of Rogier Fentener Van Vlissingen)**

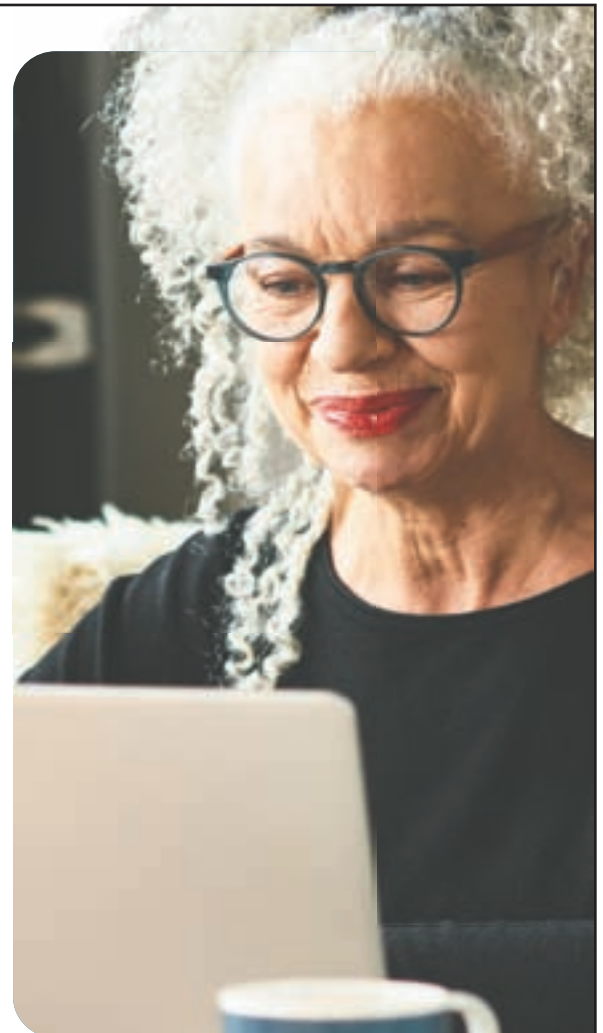
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NEWS BRIEFS

By **SÍLE MOLONEY**

Mosholu Library Update

After Norwood's Mosholu Library didn't reopen on Feb. 8 after required repairs, we followed up with New York Public Library (NYPL) and a spokesperson said on Feb. 18 the branch was closed due to lack of heating. They added this was being addressed, and envisaged the branch reopening by Friday, Feb. 21. They added that Pelham Parkway branch is closed for HVAC renovations until late 2025.

Court Reviews Case for Non-Citizen Voting in Local Elections

Law.com reported Feb. 11 that New York's top court heard arguments in *Fossella v. Adams* on who qualifies as a "citizen" in municipal elections, after no referendum was held to allow non-U.S. citizens to vote in such elections.

The outlet reported that New York's Court of Appeals received an appeal from the City Council, which approved a 2022 local law to open voting to an estimated 800,000 non-U.S. citizens who possess green cards or work authorizations, though former Mayor Bill de Blasio and Mayor Eric Adams declined to either sign or veto the bill, which took effect in January 2022.

Law.com reported that under the 2022 law, that group would be allowed vote for mayor, public advocate, comptroller, borough president, and council members in local elections. The outlet reported that a Republican group previously won a judgment in another court declaring that the 2022 law violates the State constitution and home-rule law since the constitution says only citizens are entitled to vote in local elections.

Law.com reported that this applies to citizens, 18 or older, who are New York residents for 30 days preceding a local election. The outlet reported that Republicans argue the term "citizen" means U.S. citizen for the purposes of voting in such elections.

Law.com also reported that Republicans contend the 2022 law violates the State constitution, which provides that local government and legislative representatives be elected by "the people," defined as persons entitled to vote as provided in section one of article two of the state constitution.

Law.com further reported that Republicans also alleged the 2022 local law ran afoul of the Municipal Home Rule Law because it did not come via a citywide referendum, and that it violated another State Election Law, which provides that no person who is **not** a U.S. citizen shall be qualified to register for and vote in any election. The parties await the court's decision.

Hochul Rejects Trump Move on NY Congestion Pricing

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul and MTA

Chair and CEO Janno Lieber said New York has filed a lawsuit in response to a letter dated Wednesday, Feb. 19, from the U.S. Department of Transportation which attempts to rescind federal approval for New York's congestion pricing program which took effect on Jan. 5, and which created a \$9 toll for drivers entering Manhattan south of 60th Street during peak traffic hours.

Hochul said U.S. President Donald Trump later tweeted that congestion pricing in New York was dead, adding, "Long Live the King!" In response, Hochul said, "I'm here to say, New York hasn't labored under a king in over 250 years and we sure as hell are not going to start now!"

She added, "The streets of this city, where battles were fought; we stood up to a king, and we won then, and in case you don't know New Yorkers, when we're in a fight, we do not back down, not now, not ever." She said New York was fighting for residents, commuters, riders, drivers, and emergency personnel, and that life has improved since congestion pricing took effect for those with asthma and illnesses.

Lieber said since tolling began, traffic was down 9 percent in January, and 1.2 million fewer vehicles entered the Central Business District, which meant bus speeds, and all speeds, went way up. He said cross streets were safer with half as many crashes, less injured pedestrians, and the Central Business District has had a surge in pedestrian traffic with restaurant reservations up 7 percent, Broadway audience attendance up 20 percent, and yellow cab drivers "seeing a lot more money."

MTA officials say some of the projects funded by congestion tolls include subway accessibility improvements, new electric buses, structural repairs, power system improvements, and upgrades to bus depots. Hochul said six million riders who use the MTA to get to work, including first responders, would be affected by the proposed reversal, adding there were a lot of legal arguments for New York to win the suit. She described the federal move as "an attack on our sovereign identity, our independence from Washington."

"We are a nation of states," she said in part. "This is what people like Alexander Hamilton and others fought for, to set up a system where we are not subservient to a king or anyone else out of Washington. So, this is the fight we're in."

Hochul said she had spoken to Trump on congestion pricing many times "in a reasonable way, in a calm way," and appealed to him as a New Yorker who knows how essential safe, reliable public transit is for both the City's and nation's economies. "That's how essential we are, and one would think he would know that," she said.

She concluded, in part, "Last thing I'll say.....If in some world they are successful, the next time you're stuck in traffic, the next time your train is delayed, the next time you're in a flooded station because infrastructure repairs were not made, I want you to think of this. We know where the blame goes."

Former Bronx Prosecutor Pleads Guilty to Fraud

By **SÍLE MOLONEY**

NYC Department of Investigation ("DOI") officials announced Friday, Feb. 14, that a former Bronx County prosecutor, her brother, and her mother pleaded guilty to fraudulently obtaining affordable housing in Manhattan via NYC Department of Housing, Preservation & Development (HPD). They said the defendants obtained housing for which they were ineligible, as well as hundreds of thousands of dollars in benefits, by providing false information on applications to rent and own affordable housing units. DOI officials said they investigated the matter with the Office of Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, which prosecuted the case.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, "New York City's affordable housing is a precious resource, and it is only available to those who qualify. When ineligible applicants falsify housing applications, they steal from the City and from fellow New Yorkers in true need, and they will be held accountable, as these defendants are today." She thanked both HPD for bringing the matter to DOI's attention, and Bragg for his office's partnership.

Officials said Jennifer Jacques, 42, her brother, Samuel Jacques, 35, and their mother, Marielle Jacques, 67, each from Manhattan, were charged in December 2023. They said Jennifer Jacques pleaded guilty to grand larceny in the second degree, a class C felony, scheme to defraud in the first degree and offering a false instrument for filing in the first degree, both class E felonies.

As part of her guilty plea, officials said she is required to admit in documents filed with HPD that she violated the residency requirement of City-funded affordable mortgages and subsidies. They said from September 2008 to September 2013, Jennifer Jacques, an attorney licensed to practice in New York State, worked as an assistant district attorney in the Bronx County District Attorney's Office and is currently in private practice.

Officials said as a result of the conviction, her license to practice law is revoked by operation of law, she is scheduled to be sentenced in April and faces five years' probation plus 500 hours of community service.

They said Samuel Jacques, 35, pleaded guilty to grand larceny in the second degree, a class C felony; scheme to defraud in the first degree, a class E felony; and attempted scheme to defraud in the first degree, a class A misdemeanor. As part of his plea agreement, prosecutors said he vacated the affordable apartment he recently occupied, and is scheduled to be sentenced two years after the date of his plea.

They said he has a court appearance scheduled in August, and added that if he completes 500 hours of community service, and has no new arrests for two years, he may withdraw his guilty pleas to the felony charges and will receive a

sentence of three years' probation on the remaining class A misdemeanor.

They said Marielle Jacques, 67, pleaded guilty to falsifying business records in the second degree, a class A misdemeanor on Jan. 16. They said she was sentenced that day to a conditional discharge as part of her plea agreement.

According to the investigation, the defendants applied for a unit within an HPD-sponsored affordable housing development located on West 42nd Street in October 2017. The defendants' application, along with subsequent recertifications, contained forged ADP payroll records for Samuel Jacques.

The court heard that the application also falsely represented that Samuel Jacques would live in the apartment, whereas in fact, Jennifer Jacques, who was ineligible to rent an affordable housing unit due to owning an affordable apartment in Manhattan, lived in the West 42nd Street apartment.

Prosecutors said that while living in the West 42nd Street apartment, she rented out her own apartment in Harlem, purchased in part with City subsidies that required her to live in the unit for 15 consecutive years.

They said from 2021 through 2022, Samuel Jacques and two other members of the Jacques family applied for another HPD-sponsored apartment on West 43rd Street. They said several application documents submitted by Jennifer Jacques and Samuel Jacques contained false information.

They added that Jennifer Jacques also notarized some of those documents, and the application was referred to DOI for investigation by HPD staff responsible for reviewing housing applications.

For his part, Bragg, Jr., said in part, "In a housing crisis, every affordable unit counts, and we will not tolerate fraud from ineligible applicants."

The prosecution team was led by Assistant District Attorney Jaime Hickey-Mendoza, and supervised by Assistant District Attorney Christopher Beard (deputy bureau chief of the Rackets Bureau), Assistant District Attorney Judy Salwen (principal deputy bureau chief of the Rackets Bureau), and Assistant District Attorney Jodie Kane (chief of the investigation division).

Strauber also thanked HPD Commissioner Adolfo Carrión Jr. and his staff for their cooperation. At DOI, the investigation was conducted by Special Investigator Eric Tyszka in DOI's Office of the Inspector General for HPD and was supervised by Inspector General Michael Morris, Deputy Commissioner for Strategic Initiatives Christopher Ryan, and Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella.

DOI investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City. To provide tips to DOI, call (212) 3-NYC-DOI or email Corruption@DOI.nyc.gov.

Unity Democrats Announce Endorsements

By **ARIEL PACHECO**

The Unity Democrats recently announced their official endorsements for multiple political races in the upcoming 2025 elections. These included Council Member Justin Brannan (C.D. 43) who represents parts of Brooklyn for NYC comptroller, City Council Member Rafael Salamanca Jr. (C.D. 17) for Bronx borough president, Danielle Herbert Guggenheim, Unity Democrat vice-president, for City Council District 11, and incumbent City Council Member Pierina Sanchez for District 14.

The club's endorsements come after multiple candidates in the aforementioned races made their respective pitches to club members and answered questions. Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson lost out on the club's endorsement to Salamanca Jr.

During the Unity Democrats meeting held Feb. 4, Gibson was asked about endorsements she gave last year to two candidates for district leader in Assembly District 81, opposed by the Unity Democrats. They were for Ben Jackson and Emily Hausman, members of Democratic rival club, the Benjamin Franklin Reform Democratic Club.

"What I will say about what transpired last year is I need to understand who's who and who's out there," Gibson said. "I was asked to support two candidates that I knew from colleagues that I have great respect for and not knowing some of the history. Certainly, I would have done my own homework had I known at that time, and so I thought it was fine and I decided to support my colleague's request."

Gibson continued, "I would say that Unity Democratic Club, as a viable part of our infrastructure in The Bronx, needs to make sure that you reach out to the elected officials and let them know that you are running if you're an incumbent or if you're a new candidate because it's really hard to keep up with everyone that is running, and since I no longer serve as a district leader."

She added, "When I was in the city council, I represented District 16 and really had a better understanding of all of the party leaders that were running. Now, as borough president, I'm honestly removed from that process. I don't know all the district leaders. I don't know all the state committee members."

Gibson was also asked about her plan to tackle the drug epidemic in The Bronx if elected to a second term. "We need to make sure that there is an all-hands-on-deck approach because it's not just adding more police presence to some of these areas that is not going to solve the issue," she responded. "We need to make sure that individuals that need assistance are given access to programs, wraparound services, and affordable permanent housing."

The borough president was also asked about her non-support of the Just Homes supportive housing proposal, a plan to house formerly incarcerated people with medical issues in one section of the Jacobi Medical Center campus in Morris Park.

Gibson said, "My hope is that the city council, when they vote, will not support this and instead force [NYC] Health + Hospitals to repurpose that site for something that has community support that makes sense, that is responsible, and is a project that we can all support." While some Bronx residents support the project, others oppose it. Some say it cost former Democratic District 13 City Councilwoman Marjorie Velázquez her seat in 2023, when she was defeated by now incumbent Republican City Council Member Kirsty Marmorato.

Salamanca Jr., current chair of the Land Use Committee at the City Council, spoke to the Unity Democrats on Jan. 23, and was asked what he would do differently from Gibson, if elected as borough president.

"Well, for one, I'm a unifier," he said. "I try to bring in coalitions and those individuals. There are many pockets in the borough of The Bronx that are divided, and I do want to bring in that coalition. The borough of The Bronx is going through a major redevelopment."

He added, "If you travel, especially in the southern part of the district or in the northern, the west part of the district, there's a lot of development that is happening. I have a proven track record of negotiating with developers, those that are building affordable housing or those that are building housing to ensure that we're building responsibly in every part of the district."

Salamanca Jr. also took aim at Gibson's alleged support for a new shelter in the South Bronx. "I am pushing back on this administration on the 2,200 men's shelter that they're placing in that community," he said. "Why? Because the South Bronx is overburdened for homeless shelters. I have over 60 homeless shelters in my district. That may not be my district, but that is right across the street, not to mention that, directly across the street from that shelter, is the Bronx jail that's coming."

He added, "Now, the current borough president voted for that Bronx jail there. Where did that Bronx jail belong? It belonged to her district when she was council member."

When Norwood News interviewed Bronx District Attorney Darcel Clark in 2023, in the context of the closing of Rikers Island jail, she talked about the opening of the new Bronx County jail on the grounds of the former Lincoln Hospital and NYPD compound at 745 E 141st Street in the South Bronx. The site is located in City Council District 8, represented by Council Member Diana Ayala.

Clark said while she supported smaller jails, she wasn't necessarily happy with the new Bronx jail location, saying it should be at the Bronx courthouse (on 161st Street) like in every other borough so that families could visit detainees both when they go to court, and while their family members are being detained. Norwood News has reached out to Gibson for comment and will share any feedback we receive.

The Unity Democrats endorsed Sanchez for City Council District 14, who made her

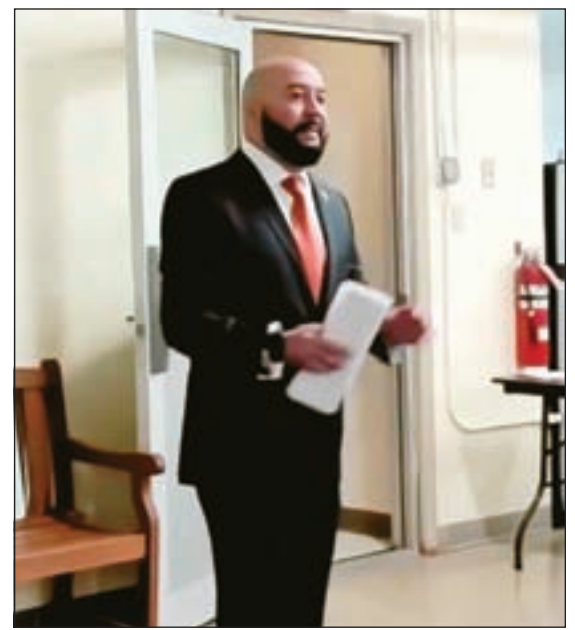
case against her predecessor and opponent in the upcoming election, Fernando Cabrera. "My predecessor, before running for office, was a registered Republican, right? So, he is someone who espouses much more conservative views than I do."

Sanchez said in part, "There's many differences, but that's why I unapologetically and very loudly and boldly say, I will stand up and I will protect and defend our LGBTQ New Yorkers. I will continue to be as progressive as I have been." Sanchez mentioned she has also been endorsed by the Bronx Democratic Party.

Prior to endorsing Brennan, current chair of the City Council's Finance Committee, for city comptroller, club members asked about his plans for the role.

"The way that we're going to bring the cost of living down, the way that we're going to make this city more affordable for working people and working families is how we spend our money," Brennan said. It's really not that complicated. If we have a \$115 billion budget, if we invest in the programs and priorities that would make life more livable for working people, then we bring down the cost of living for working people."

He said this meant investment in early childhood education, getting serious about universal childcare, funding parks, and mak-



Screenshot by Ariel Pacheco

CITY COUNCIL MEMBER Rafael Salamanca Jr. (C.D. 17) seeks (and received) the endorsement of the Unity Democratic Club at a meeting on Jan. 23, 2025 in Norwood.

ing sure that public schools have what they need. "It's making sure that we have libraries that can stay open seven days," he said. "It's making sure that the grass gets cut in our parks. Making sure our streets are clean."

The Unity Democrats used a ranked-choice voting system where members of the club decided who they would be formally endorsing in each race.

The club hosted a mayoral forum with six mayoral candidates on Tuesday, Feb. 18, at Lehman College. More to follow.

*Sile Moloney contributed to this story.

Norwood Fire Displaces 93-Year-Old Widow

(continued from page 2)

cal Center's Moses campus one day prior to the residential fire, on Feb. 13, causing damage to nearby vehicles as well. Fire marshals are investigating the cause.

In Fordham Heights, FDNY said two people were killed in a Buddhist Temple fire at 2086 Anthony Avenue, between East Burnside Avenue and East 180th Street, on Wednesday, Feb. 12. FDNY of-

ficials said a parked vehicle blocked access to a fire hydrant, hindering their response.

After a track fire broke out at Woodlawn Subway Station on the Norwood/Woodlawn border on Jan. 29, FDNY said there were no reported injuries. Visit <https://www.fdnysmart.org/> to read FDNY's fire safety tips. "During a fire, always close the door behind you!" fire officials say.



Photo by Johandry Jimenez

A FIREFIGHTER STRUGGLES to connect to a fire hydrant across the street from a Buddhist Temple located on Anthony Avenue in Fordham Heights where a fire broke out as a car blocked access to the hydrant on Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2025.



Letters To The Editor

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

Bryan Briggs Feb. 6 Letter re MTA/BeeLine Bus Drivers

Firstly, what rule can Mr. Briggs cite that states a bus driver must give "a middle-aged OG" with arthritis a free ride? Secondly, exactly what Bx40 bus does Mr. Briggs take to Gun Hill Road? I lived near the 40 bus for 17 years. It crosses Boston Road. It goes nowhere near Gun Hill Road.

Thirdly, the author does not tell us how or when the bus drivers were discourteous to him.

Fourthly, Mayor Eric Adams has nothing to do with the buses. The buses are run by MABSTOA, which is under New York State.

**Nat Weiner,
Parkchester**

Editor's Note: Norwood News followed up with both BeeLine and the MTA on Mr. Briggs' original letter, and BeeLine asked for dates and times of the alleged discourtesy shown to him. Mr. Briggs is due to provide the requested information. We also asked him for a response to this letter. We did not receive an immediate response.

Bronx Dems Have It All Wrong

A Bronx father of four children, Trevor Hughes, 49, was killed on Fowler Avenue

in Morris Park on Saturday morning, Feb. 8, after returning home from work. Why? Because he went into an illegal social club down the street to complain about a patron inside blocking his driveway with a car. That patron came out and allegedly shot Mr. Hughes before fleeing the scene and is on the loose.

I read about the rich liberals in Riverdale who have the time and money to campaign for that babbling idiot Kamala Harris, who could not put two cohesive sentences together in Pennsylvania for the last presidential election. But none of these people have the time to reach out to the poor in The Bronx and help pay for the funeral expenses of victims like Mr. Hughes.

In The Bronx, you can urinate in public, and jump turnstiles without fear of arrest or prosecution, all because of woke, Democratic politicians. That lack of fear only leads to more criminal behavior such as murder. Wake up my fellow Bronxites and join either the Republican or Conservative Parties of the Bronx to improve our quality of life!

**Richard Marias
Norwood**

Editor's Note: A 46-year-old man from Williamsbridge has been arrested and charged with second-degree murder in connection with the incident. He is deemed innocent unless and until convicted in a court of law.

Opinion

The Impact of DOGE on Catholic Relief Services

By **LOIS HARR**

The Catholic News Agency reported on Jan. 31 that U.S. bishops have asked Catholics to reach out to their members of Congress and request the resumption of foreign aid programs following the Trump-Vance administration's decision to temporarily pause funding for many programs, including those provided by Catholic Relief Services, pending review.

The pause has been proposed by the U.S. Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), run by billionaire, Elon Musk, who is an unelected bureaucrat.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is an organization receiving public and private funding including USAID support. I've visited CRS aid and development projects in five countries.

In Kenya, I saw peacemaking projects that engaged rival tribes living in

a slum in Nairobi and visited a hospital providing life-giving HIV/AIDS care on the outskirts of the city, supported by CRS.

In Ecuador, I learned about Fair-Trade as an alternative to dangerous flower-farming practices, supported by CRS.

In Haiti, I visited the site of the reconstruction of a key hospital after the earthquake in 2010, and the building of recreation space to promote community building, supported by CRS.

In Palestine, I visited a Fair-Trade olive wood workshop, purchased embroidered textiles from a women's group, and I shopped at the Holy Land Handicraft Cooperative in Beit Sahur, supported by CRS.

In Rwanda, I met women, some genocide widows, learning new techniques to grow more nutritious sweet potatoes more efficiently. They grew enough for their families and could sell excess to a local processing plant making flour, oils and other value-added goods, supported by CRS.

I am a witness to life-giving training, support, and profound respect for the human dignity of all, supported by CRS.

(In five countries on three continents, I didn't run into a single "radical lunatic," in case you were wondering.)

Lois Harr is a Bronx resident, lifelong activist, and retired director of campus ministry & social at Manhattan University.

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CRIME FILE

BY SÍLE MOLONEY

**Belmont: Two Arrested after Fatal Shooting**

Police said two people have been arrested on various charges in relation to the killing of a 56-year-old man in Belmont. Police launched a murder investigation after the victim died following a fatal shooting on Monday, Feb. 17, at around 6.21 p.m. in front of 717 East 187th Street. They said upon arrival, the victim was discovered unconscious and unresponsive with a gunshot wound to the chest and that EMS responded and transported him to St. Barnabas Hospital where he died.

Pursuant to an ongoing investigation, police said Tony Harris, 62, of Belmont and Shantelle Degout, 35, undomiciled, were arrested and charged on Tuesday, Feb. 18, within the confines of the 48th Precinct. Harris was charged with second-degree murder, first-degree manslaughter, and two counts of second-degree criminal possession of a weapon. Degout was charged with first-degree manslaughter, first-degree assault, and second-degree assault. The deceased has since been identified as Emilio Rosas, also of Belmont. The defendants are presumed innocent unless and until convicted in a court of law.

**Off Duty Firefighter Arrested on DUI Charge**

The NYPD said an off-duty, New York City employee was arrested and charged on Saturday, Feb. 15, at 2.39 a.m. within the confines of the 50th Precinct, which covers the Bronx neighborhoods of Kingsbridge, Marble Hill, Riverdale, Fieldston and Spuyten Duyvil. They said the Jonathan Muniz, 30, an FDNY firefighter, was charged with driving while intoxicated, operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and driving with impaired ability. Muniz is presumed innocent unless and until convicted in a court of law.

Fordham Manor Woman Arrested for Assault on Senior

The NYPD said they've arrested a 39-year-old woman for an assault on an 83-year-old man in Marble Hill. Police had sought the public's help identifying the person seen in the accompanying photo at right, who they said was wanted in connection with the assault on Thursday, Feb. 13, at around 1.15 p.m. in front of 90 West 225th Street.

They said the victim had been walking along the sidewalk when the assailant pushed him, causing him to hit his head on the pavement.

They said the victim incurred a laceration, pain, and swelling to the head, was transported by EMS to St. Barnabas Hospital in stable condition, and the assailant fled the location on foot to parts unknown. Pursuant to an ongoing investigation, police later said Chloe Mitchell of Heath Avenue in Fordham Manor was arrested on Wednesday, Feb. 19, at 8.30 a.m. in the confines of the 52nd Precinct. They said she was charged with second-degree assault, third-degree assault, and harassment. She is presumed innocent unless and until convicted in a court of law.

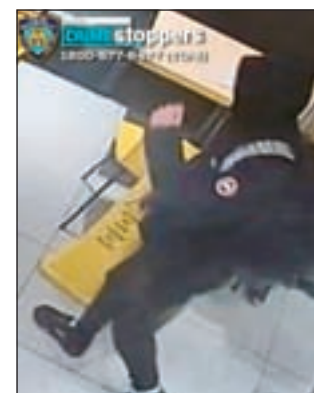
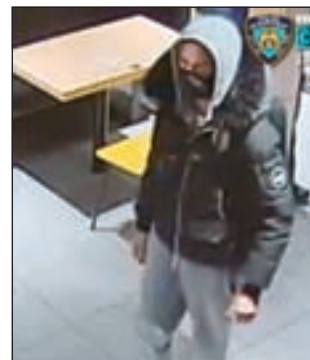
ing (covertly taking photos/videos up a person's skirt in public) might be regarded by some as trivial offenses, in 2024, a police investigation which ultimately led to the conviction of now infamous, French serial rapist, Dominique Pelicot, for the repeated rape, while drugged, of his now-72-year-old ex-wife, Gisèle Pelicot, along with 72 accomplices over the course of 10 years, was triggered when he was seen upskirting various women inside a supermarket by a security guard who convinced the fourth upskirting victim to press charges against him.

**Kingsbridge: Group Wanted for Assault & Robbery**

The NYPD is asking for the public's help identifying the people seen in the accompanying 4 photos at right, who they say are sought in connection with a group assault and robbery in Kingsbridge. Police said that on Wednesday, Feb. 5, at around 8.25 p.m. inside 5765

Broadway (a McDonalds restaurant), four people approached a 15-year-old male victim.

They said the group began punching and kicking the victim several times in the face and body, stole his coat, and fled the location on foot to parts unknown. They said the victim sustained minor injuries and pain to his face and body but refused medical attention at the scene.



Anyone with information regarding 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 <https://crimestoppers.nypdonline.org/>, or on Twitter @NYPDTips. All calls are strictly confidential.

Fordham Manor: Man Sought for Groping Woman

The NYPD is asking for the public's help identifying the person seen in the accompanying photo who they said is wanted in connection with a groping incident that occurred in Fordham Manor. They said that on Wednesday, Jan. 29, at around 8.30 p.m., at the Fordham Road subway station serving the 4 train, a 30-year-old female victim was approached by an unidentified man while walking on the mezzanine.

They said the suspect grabbed the victim's buttocks and then fled on foot, exiting the train station and traveling eastbound on Fordham Road to parts unknown. They said the victim was not physically injured as a result of the incident. Police said the suspect is described as male, has a medium complexion, a slim build and is around 30 to 40 years old. They said he was last seen wearing a black coat, a yellow, hooded sweatshirt, black sneakers, and blue sweatpants with a white stripe.

Though groping and upskirt-

Kingsbridge: Woman Stabbed on Valentine's Day

By SÍLE MOLONEY

A 27-year-old woman was hospitalized following a Valentine's Day stabbing in Kingsbridge, police said. They said they received a 911 call at 5.50 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 14, regarding the victim who they said was stabbed at 3410 Kingsbridge Avenue. Police said upon arrival, officers discovered the woman with multiple stab wounds throughout the body, she was taken to NewYork-Presbyterian Allen Hospital (in Manhattan) and was in stable condition.

Police said they were questioning one person regarding the incident. A large pool of blood splatterings was seen on the corner of Kingsbridge Avenue and West 234th Street where a parking lot is located and the block on West 234th Street between Kingsbridge Avenue and Broadway was blocked off by police. We later asked the NYPD if the stabbing took place at the parking

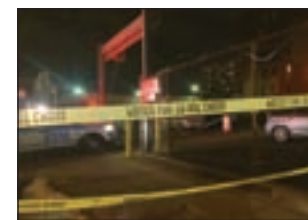


Photo by Síle Moloney

POLICE CORDON OFF a parking lot at the corner of West 234th Street and Kingsbridge Avenue in the Kingsbridge section of The Bronx on St. Valentine's Day, Feb. 14, 2025. A 27-year-old woman was stabbed inside nearby 3410 Kingsbridge Avenue, police said.

lot or elsewhere and they said it took place inside an apartment but may have expanded to the wider area.

Footprints mental health clinic is located across the street from the parking lot. The manager of MyUnique Thrift store on West 234th Street said customers had come into the

store earlier saying something had happened outside on the street but when he later went to check, he said he just saw police and a lot of commotion but didn't see what happened. He confirmed nobody came into the store seeking assistance.

We spoke to a local male resident who declined to be identified and asked him for his reaction to the stabbing. He spoke about another incident he had just witnessed that day when he saw a man reportedly stealing two bunches of flowers from a local deli.

"The attendant ran after him, and he caught him," the man said. "And I come, I turned around the corner, and there's a crime scene here where somebody got stabbed in the parking lot." The man continued, "I don't know if there was a robbery or an argument over a parking space. I have no idea, but there's a lot of crime going on and it's a shame what's go-

(continued on page 11)

NEIGHBORHOOD NOTES

COMPILED BY ARIEL PACHECO & SÍLE MOLONEY



Youth Leadership Award

Bronx Community Board 7 (CB7), Bronx Community Board 8 (CB8) and the New York Yankees are partnering to select youth to be considered for the annual Youth Leadership Award, which includes a stipend of \$750 and recognition on the field during a pre-game ceremony at Yankee Stadium. This award is open to Bronx Youth ages 14-18 who live in CB7 and CB8. To apply to Bronx CB7, the deadline for which is March 20, visit bit.ly/4gM3ZuD. To apply to Bronx CB8, the deadline for which is March 14, visit <https://tinyurl.com/yankees-2025>.

Comeback Kid Achievement Award

Bronx Community Board 8 is seeking nominations for its Comeback Kid Achievement Award to acknowledge students who have overcome challenges and demonstrated improvement over time. For more information, visit <https://tinyurl.com/cbkaa-2025>. The deadline is April 11.

Track Work at Burnside Ave & Fordham Rd Subway Stations

Scheduled renewal of the mainline between Burnside Ave and Fordham Rd Subway Stations (4 train) is scheduled for four consecutive weekends from Friday, Feb. 28, to Sunday, March 23. Preparatory work at the crane sites listed below will take place on Fridays from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. and track removal and installation will take place on Saturdays and Sundays from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Crane & Road Closures Locations

East 181st Street, between Jerome Ave & Walton Ave (closed 5 a.m. - 9 p.m. Saturday & Sunday).

Jerome Ave, between East 181st St & East Burnside Av (closed 5:00 a.m. - 9 p.m. Saturday & Sunday).

Jerome Avenue Detour

Northbound: right on Burnside / left on Morris Ave / left on E.183rd St / and right on Jerome Ave.

Southbound: left will run normal on the southbound service lane.

Parking will not be allowed on Jerome Ave, between Burnside Ave and East 181st Street to allow traffic diversions, maintaining one lane open at all times for buses, trucks, and emergency vehicles only. Parking will also be restricted for 150 feet along each curb lane at each crane location to allow the placement of a crane and materials.

Fordham Rd (4) Subway Station Elevator Replacement

The elevators at the Fordham Rd (4) station will be taken out of service for replacement starting on or about Monday, March 3. The project is expected to be completed in Q4 2025.

2702 Creston Ave Closure

UA Builders Corp. will close Creston Ave and continue mobile crane operations at 2702 Creston Ave from Jan. 25 to April 25 three times weekly at their discretion on weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Community Food Giveaway

Assemblymember John Zaccaro Jr. (A.D. 80) is hosting a community food giveaway on Friday, Feb. 28, at 1 p.m. while supplies last at Zimmerman Playground, 650 Britton Street, Bronx. For more information, call (718) 409-0109.

Lady Buccs Cheerleading Recruiting

Lady Buccs Cheerleading will begin recruiting youth aged 6-14 beginning March 15. For more information, contact Ms. Leslie at (347) 822-5424.

Join your Local Community Board

Make a difference in your locality, while gaining valuable life skills and experiences by joining your local community board by March 9. Apply online now at <https://form.jotform.com/250137007893153>.

Pet Adoption

City Councilwoman Kristy Marmorato (C.D. 13) is hosting a pet adoption event. District 13 residents are invited to join on Feb. 22 from noon to 4 p.m. at 1925 Williamsbridge Road, Bronx, to learn more. For more information, call (917) 227-1878.

Help the MTA Prioritize Stations for Accessibility Upgrades

Help the MTA prioritize subway stations that are in need of accessibility upgrades by completing a form located at bit.ly/42yvv7w.

Summer Youth Employment Program

Apply now to NYC Department of Youth & Community Development for the 2025 summer youth employment program geared towards youth aged 14-24. Find more info and submit your application at on.nyc.gov/YouthEmploy.

Planned Service Change to 4 Train in February

Due to track maintenance, the Manhattan-bound 4 train will skip Moshulu Parkway and Bedford Park Boulevard-Lehman College from Saturday, Feb. 22, from 6.45 a.m. to Sunday, Feb. 23, at 6 p.m. For service to these stations, take the 4 to Kingsbridge Road and transfer to a Woodlawn-bound 4. For service from these stations, take the 4 to Woodlawn, and transfer to a Manhattan-bound 4.

Applications for Brandon Hendricks Scholarship Opens Up

Applications are open for Oyate Group's \$20,000 Brandon Hendricks Scholarship, which will go to two college-bound Bronx high school seniors for each to use toward their education over a four-year period. Applicants must be from The Bronx and graduating high school seniors headed to college. This scholarship is open to students in The Bronx, regardless of immigration status. Applications close March 31. For more information, visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/5QL6VZP>.

Give Feedback on Citi Bike Station Locations in Bronx Community Board 7

The Citi Bike service will be expanding in Norwood and Riverdale in Fall 2025. Residents can identify locations where they would like to see Citi Bike locations, and where they would not like to see Citi Bike locations via an online feedback portal, which is open until mid-April. For more information, visit <https://nycdotprojects.info/project-feedback-map/suggest-station-bronx-cb7-cb8>.

NYC DOT Art

NYC Department of Transportation's Public Art Program is looking to partner with community-based nonprofit organizations and professional artists to present temporary public artwork on eligible NYC DOT infrastructure such as asphalt, bridges, fences, jersey barriers, medians, plazas, sidewalks, step streets, and street-light poles. For more information, visit <https://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/pedestrians/dotart.shtml>.

Out & About

Compiled by ARIEL PACHECO

EVENTS

The Office of Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson is hosting a celebration of **Black History** on Wednesday, Feb. 26, at 6 p.m. at Eastwood Manor, 3371 Eastchester Road, Bronx, NY 10469. For more information, email brivera@bronxbp.nyc.gov.

Assemblyman George Alvarez (78 A.D.) is hosting a **Black History Month Event** on Friday, Feb. 28, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Bronx Library Center, 310 East Kingsbridge Road, Bronx, NY 10458. Numerous organizations will be in attendance to help celebrate Black History Month. For more information, call (718) 579-4244.

LITERATURE

One Book One Bronx is hosting a **Book Talk** on *Freedom Is a Constant*

Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement by Angela Y. Davis on Saturday, Feb. 22, and Saturday, March 1, from noon to 1.30 p.m. via Zoom. For more information, visit <https://onebookonebronx.com>.

The NYPD Community Affairs Bureau is hosting a **Books and Badges** event for kids on Friday, Feb. 21, at 2 p.m. at the Chick-fil-A on 201 East Fordham Road Bronx, NY, 10458. Kids will get the chance to read with police officers and receive free books. For more information, call (718) 220-5824.

MUSIC

An Béal Bocht Cafe is hosting the **Alex Owen Trio** on Saturday, March 8, from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. at 445 West 238th Street, Bronx, NY, 10463. This will be a night of New Orleans Jazz, Swing, and Great American Songbook Standards. For more information, call (718) 884-7127.

Join the Bronx River Art Center for **DanzaNova: A World Music Quintet Performance** on Friday, Feb. 21, at 7 p.m. at 1087 East Tremont Avenue,

Bronx, NY 10460. DanzaNova is a virtuoso world quintet that explores and re-imagines music originating from the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Latin America. For more information, call (718) 589-5819.

Join the Lehman College Center for the Performing Arts for a **Tribute to Selena** on Saturday, March 8, at 8 p.m. at 250 Bedford Park Boulevard West, Bronx, NY 10468. This high-energy performance will feature Selena's most memorable hit songs including Como la Flor, Bidi Bidi Bom Bom, Amor Prohibido, and more. For more information, call (718) 960-8000.

KIDS

Join The St. James Park Recreation Center for **Young Billiards with Kelize** on Friday, Feb. 21, from 4 p.m. to 5.30 p.m. at 2530 Jerome Ave, Bronx, NY 10468. Participants will learn the fundamentals of playing pool. Beginner or pro, come show off your skills on the table and practice and learn the rules of 8Ball pool. This is for participants who want to understand and learn the fundamentals and body structure of the sport. For more information, call

(718) 367-3657.

FILM

The Bronx Library Center is hosting **Friday Flicks: Family Movie Time** on Friday, Feb. 21, and Friday, Feb. 28, from 4 p.m. to 5.45 p.m. at 310 East Kingsbridge Road, Bronx, NY 10458. Come join for a family-friendly movie. For more information, call (718) 579-4244.

MOVEMENT

The Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center is hosting **Adult Fitness and Health** on Saturday, Feb. 22, from 10 a.m. to noon at 3225 Reservoir Oval East, Bronx, NY 10467. Participants will complete certain body conditioning, endurance training, and/or resistance training using high-intensity workouts. For more information, call (718) 543-8672.

Join Shape Up NYC for **Gentle Flow Yoga** on Thursday, Feb. 27, from 6.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. at the Williamsbridge Oval Recreation Center, 3225 Reservoir Oval East, Bronx, NY 10467. This is a gentle, low-impact practice to help improve flexibility, release tension, and energize the body. All levels are welcome. For more information, call (718) 543-8672.



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Public and Community Meetings

The next 52nd **PRECINCT COMMUNITY COUNCIL** meeting will be held virtually via Zoom, Thursday, Feb. 27, at 7 p.m. Meeting details to follow. Call the 52nd Precinct Community Affairs office at (718) 220-5824 to be added to the email distribution list.

The next **BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 7 (CB7)** general board meeting will be held Tuesday, Feb. 25, at 6.30 p.m. at Monroe College's King Hall (Mintz auditorium), 2501 Jerome Avenue, Bronx, NY 10468. Contact KCabreraCarrera@cb.nyc.gov to be added to the distribution list. All meetings are in person unless otherwise notified by Bronx CB7.

The next **BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 8** full board (hybrid) meeting will be held in March (date tbc). Contact BX08@cb.nyc.gov to be added to the distribution list.

The **BEDFORD MOSHOLU COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION** meetings are held the first Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. at 400 E. Mosholu Pkwy. South in Apt. B1 (lobby floor). For more details, please contact bedfordmosholu@verizon.net.

CORRECTIONS

In the News Brief item on page 7 of our Feb. 6th edition entitled, "Trash Piles Up at Bainbridge Ave Fire Site," we incorrectly referred to the address of the Oct. 10, 2023, Norwood commercial fire site as "3117-3335 Bainbridge Avenue by East 206th Street."

In fact, while 3117 Bainbridge Avenue is the correct street number for one of the affected businesses on that block, 3335 is actually the tax block number, which incorporates 3109 – 3123 Bainbridge Avenue. We apologize for this error.

NOTICE

Dear Readers,
Apologies for the shorter print edition this time. I'm pretty sure I had the norovirus earlier this week which impacted upon production.
Stay safe & warm,
Sile Moloney
Editor

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Layoffs Worry Bronx Vets

(continued from page 1)

are exempt from today's personnel actions because they serve in mission-critical positions, primarily those supporting benefits and services for VA beneficiaries, or are covered under a collective bargaining agreement."

According to the VA, the dismissals are part of "a government-wide Trump Administration effort to make agencies more efficient, effective and responsive to the American people."

VA Secretary Doug Collins said, "At the VA, we are focused on saving money so it can be better spent on veteran care. We thank these employees for their service to the VA. This was a tough decision, but ultimately, it's the right call to better support veterans, families, caregivers, and survivors the department exists to serve." Collins said the layoffs would not negatively impact VA health care, benefits or beneficiaries.

Meanwhile, the Military Times reported that the firings follow the imposed White House buyout deadline whereby tens of thousands of federal employees were offered eight months' severance pay in exchange for their resignations. The outlet reported that about 75,000 employees had accepted that offer, well short of the 200,000 administration officials had hoped would consider it.

According to the VA, the dismissals were effective immediately and were communicated directly to each employee. VA officials said as an additional safeguard to ensure VA benefits and services would not be impacted, the first senior executive service (SES) or SES-equivalent leader in a dismissed employee's chain of command could request that the employee be exempted from removal.

Hours before the VA's announced firings on Feb. 13, Joe Bello, a local veterans activist, posted on X, "Multiple sources are reporting DOGE will be on-site at the @VABronx & @HinesVAH (Chicago) tomorrow!" Bello added, "It's unknown what DOGE will be doing, why these two medical centers were chosen, or how long they will be visiting."

On Friday, Feb. 14, a man entering the James J. Peters Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, located on West Kingsbridge Road in Fordham Manor, was asked if he was worried about DOGE repercussions. He said, "Yes, I am, because my job is on the line." We asked the man for his views on Trump's frequent claims that he is a supporter of veterans. The VA worker replied, "Yes, that was just to get our votes."

The employee said he had five years on the job and was a member of the on-site EMS team. As he began to walk into the main gate of the hospital, he added, "I'm concerned about all of the firings."

Philip, a resident of Dyre Avenue, was exiting the hospital when he was also asked if he was concerned about what the Trump administration may do with the VA Hospital health care system. He replied, "Yes, regarding all (of) that."



Photo by Miriam Quiñones

RESIDENTS ATTEND AND wave American flags at Bronx Community Board 7's 2nd Annual Veterans' Memorial Flagging event held at the Bronx Victory Memorial on Mosholu Parkway in Bedford Park on Saturday, May 13, 2023.

He continued, "They got in the paychecks [system] and he [Trump] wanted to f—k with Social Security." Philip continued, "So all this time, you work and pay into Social Security, and all of a sudden, he wants to come and take it. He lost his mind! He [Trump] just wants to load his pockets with money." Asked if he had voted for Trump, Philip replied, "No." None of the employees we spoke to said they had seen any DOGE employees on site.

Norwood News made three calls to the Bronx VA's public information department and at one point was connected to the wrong department. We asked a man who answered the phone about the announced firings by the federal government. He replied, "Oh, I'm so sorry! I'm so sorry! I can't answer any questions. I'm not the right person to do anything for you."

We also sent email requests to the VA press office to find out if DOGE was in fact on site at the James J. Peters VA Hospital on Feb. 14, how many workers at the Bronx facility were let go, if any, and what jobs those workers held. We did not receive an immediate response but will continue to monitor the situation.

BronxDistrict Attorney Darcel D. Clark announced on Oct. 9, 2024 that Unique Allen, 34, of Buck Street, The Bronx, a former nursing assistant at the Bronx VA Medical Center, was sentenced to five years' probation after pleading guilty to stealing a patient's credit card and purchasing food deliveries, shoes and other items.

According to City data, New York City is home to 135,138 veterans, including 23,482 Bronx veterans. The City Council held an oversight hearing on addressing the needs of homeless veterans on Feb. 19. According to a NYS Comptroller's report, despite decreases in veteran homelessness in recent years, the State has seen a jump in homelessness between January 2023 and January 2024 of 53.1 percent, more than four times the rate in the rest of the nation.

Kingsbridge: Woman Stabbed on Valentine's Day

(continued from page 8)

ing on in this world." The 50th Precinct stationhouse is located two blocks from the crime scene at Kingsbridge Avenue and West 236th Street. We asked the man if he was interested in seeing more police in the area.

"Yeah, well, it's not a question.... Yeah, you need more police, but Jesus, it's just that you never know where a crime is going to be committed," he said. Asked if there was generally much crime in the area, the man said, "Well, yeah, it's been a while since any kind of crime has been around here." He added, "But this one is starting to.... it's a wake-up call from the neighborhood you know what I mean? There should be more patrolling on these blocks. But the holidays usually bring trouble, you know? People just don't have the money to buy, so they go out and steal it, you know?"

We spoke to another woman who was walking down Kingsbridge Avenue towards the crime scene carrying a bunch of flowers. She was not aware of the stabbing. Once informed, she said, "Oh my Lord!" and declined to give any further comment.

We spoke to another male resident at the crime scene itself and asked if he had seen what happened. He said, "Someone was... someone was hurt. Yeah, I don't know the severity of it but, you know, we shall see what happens. God willing, everything is going to be okay."

Asked if he lived in the area, the man said, "Yes, I do." Asked how he felt about his general safety, he said, "It's... anything can happen anywhere, anytime and place. You know, this is a fairly safe neighborhood. I've been here quite

a while, and things like this are very rare." We mentioned the mental health clinic located across the street from the crime scene and asked if residents had experienced any safety-related or other issues with patients attending the clinic, and the man said, "Oh no, that is fairly new, and no, no issues, thankfully."

We also spoke to another male resident, Randy, on Kingsbridge Avenue and asked for his assessment of crime in the area. "To be honest with you, this is a very calm area," he said. "The only other time that anything has ever happened was, like, maybe eight, seven years ago." He said there had been a stabbing at the McDonalds on 238th Street. He mentioned that someone had been stabbed and had died.

Randy added, "That was it but this is very quieter. That's why I was completely shocked when I walked by. I was like....oh, they taped off the area and everything." We asked Randy if in his experience, there had been any issues with patients at the nearby mental health clinic. "No, we don't really have any, like, homeless or mentally sick people around here," he said. "It's like I said. It's extremely quiet." Of the victim, he added, "Yeah, I hope the person gets better."

Anyone with information regarding this incident 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 <https://crimestoppers.nypdonline.org/>, or on X @NYPDTips.

All calls are strictly confidential.

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