

**BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 8 BRONX
MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON APRIL 19, 2022
MEETING HELD ONLINE VIA ZOOM
(Pending Approval)**

PRESENT

Edward Green (Chair)	CB8 Public Safety Committee
Christopher Calhoun	CB8 Public Safety Committee
Stephen Vazquez	CB8 Public Safety Committee
Sergio Villaverde	CB8 Public Safety Committee
Robert Kaplan	CB8 Public Safety Committee
Georgia Santiago	CB8 Public Safety Committee

Committee Members absent: Myra Joyce, Margaret Donato, N. Fazio, T. Morris.

Guests: Bronx District Attorney Darcel Clark, Eric Sawyers (BXDA, Community Affairs Unit) Captain Girven (50th Pct.), Sachi McClendon (Riverdale Press), David Gellman (BXCB8), Lisa Fittanto (resident), Susan (resident), Joan Henchy (Gaelic Athletic Association).

Chair Ed Green called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm

Roll call of committee members.

1) Introduction of Committee Members and Guests

Bronx DA Darcel Clark introduced herself and provided an overview of her background, professional experience and qualifications.

2) Guest Speaker: Darcel D. Clark, Bronx County District Attorney

Chair Ed Green presented an overview of criminal justice reform laws (topic of discussion):

- January 2019 - Bail reform laws legislatively passed.
- Elimination of cash bail for most misdemeanors and felonies.
- Overhaul of criminal discovery laws requiring the prosecution to disclose information and materials to the defense within 15 days of arraignment and whenever there is a plea offer.
- Speedy trial mandates: Prosecutors failure to be ready for a trial within the speedy trial timeframes will result in dismissal of the case.
- Defendants with multiple arrests being released without bail, only to commit further crimes.
- Prominent Elected Officials calling for key changes in bail reform laws.
- Sienna College poll citing more than 65% of New Yorkers want stricter bail reform laws.
- Recent NY State budget passed, modifying bail reform laws.

Bronx County District Attorney Darcel Clark presented:

- There were inequities in how bail was handled in NY City and State. People should not be sitting in jail because they don't have the money to pay bail for committing low-level, non-violent crimes.
- DA's and Judges have the ability to set bail for violent felonies at their discretion.

- A small percentage of those released without bail are recidivists.
- Defendants taking advantage of court backlogs: They are committing crimes while waiting for their cases to be tried.
- Desk appearance tickets: Defendants can no longer have multiple DATs before a Judge can set bail for them (As per new changes to bail reform laws passed in State budget).
- Mental health problems, drug addiction and homelessness all contribute to quality of life crimes. Law enforcement should be the last resort when dealing with individuals facing these issues. Many societal issues are not being addressed.
- When Bronx DA asks for bail, it is up to Judges to grant that request. Certain Judges are less inclined than others to grant the DA's bail request. With new budget changes, Judges have more discretion.
- Rikers Island is a terrible place, but when the DA requests bail, that is the jail they'll go to if they can't make bail. Regardless of that, people that commit serious crimes need to be held accountable.

Chair Green asked DA Clark about supervised release programs and cited a murder in Chinatown where a man in a supervised released program had 3 open court cases and then stalked and stabbed a woman 40 times, killing her.

DA Clark stated that a lot of the mandates like supervised release programs are underfunded and are not run effectively because of the lack of resources these programs have. These programs and some of the systems in place need to be revamped.

BXCB8 Chair Laura Spalter asked DA Clark about staffing shortages in the DA's office. Is this related to discovery timeline laws and how does this effect public safety in the Bronx?

DA Clark explained the discovery law process and the effects of the timelines: The 15-day timeline was too short and it was almost impossible to turn over all the evidence in such a brief time period. They have since extended the timeline to 20 days, under the new changes. For those not incarcerated, the timeline is 35 days. There is an overwhelming amount of evidence that needs to be turned over, as per the 2019 bail reform laws, that had never previously been needed to be turned over, making it extremely difficult for DAs to submit evidence in a timely manner.

DA Clark stated that DA staff members are leaving because the workload of evidence gathering has become too overwhelming. They have basically become paralegals that are pushing papers rather than preparing cases and they don't get paid enough. They are under an enormous amount of pressure. Her office has lost 104 Lawyers, as a result.

Committee Member Robert Kaplan stated there is a lack of investment in alternative to incarceration programs. How do we approach the root causes?

DA Clark stated we need to invest in services like supported housing, job programs and mental health services.

Committee Member Sergio Villaverde stated that recidivists committing low-level crimes have terrorized our community. How many arrests are enough to get someone locked up? He inquired about statistics of recidivism.

DA Clark stated the statistics are hard to get and the system is not built to capture all the necessary data. She sympathizes with residents that have to deal with quality of life crimes like auto theft.

Resident, Lisa Fittanto stated that quality of life crimes are out of control in our neighborhood and the police aren't arresting people for crimes that are harming members of our community.

David Gellman stated that we have to be sure we are not incarcerating innocent people.

Chair Green thanked Bronx DA Clark for accepting the invitation to speak at our Public Safety Committee meeting and hoped we could keep lines of communication open and continue our dialog on this issue.

DA Clark stated that she would be available to BXC8 whenever we need her.

3. Approval of the March 15, 2022 Public Safety Committee Minutes

Approve in favor: 6 (C. Calhoun, E. Green, R. Kaplan, G. Santiago, S. Vazquez, S. Villaverde,)
Opposed: 0
Abstain: 0

4. NYPD Report

Captain Girven presented the NYPD report:

Property crime is way up and it's a citywide trend.

Compstat Report		
28 days, ending 4/17/22		
	2022	2021
Murder	0	0
Rape	2	1
Robbery	11	3
Fel.	18	9
Assault	13	7
Burglary	13	7
Gr.	47	22
Larceny	31	13
G.L.A.	31	13
TOTAL	122	55

- 50th Precinct has 2 anti-crime teams operating 18 hours a day.
- Catalytic converters are being stolen. 50th has made several arrests but Judges keep letting them out because of the bail reform laws.
- There was a recent shooting, drug dealing and drug selling at 5223 Broadway near Flowers by Zenda.
- 2 firefighters sustained injuries at a fire at Riverdale Diner.
- Many complaints about the establishment that was previously Barcelona Bites for noise and various other disturbances. Captain Girvin stated he would be monitoring this business.
- Loud music late at night is beginning to occur again. 50th Precinct is working with the Parks Department to address this issue.
- 4pm-8am patrol cars are patrolling the streets for auto theft crimes.

5. FDNY Report

No report.

6. NYS Liquor Authority: Renewals

Gaelic Athletic Association of Greater New York – 201 West 240th Street

- Joan Henchy representing.
- Chair Green noted the address on the application was incorrect. Joan Henchy stated she would contact SLA in the morning to have the address corrected.
- 50th Precinct stated there have been no problems with this establishment or at this location.
- Committee Member Sergio Villavarde made a motion to approve the application, as amended, based on the Chair's notation of the incorrect address.
- Committee Member Georgia Santiago seconded the motion.

Approve in favor: 6 (C. Calhoun, E. Green, R. Kaplan, G. Santiago, S. Vazquez, S. Villaverde)

Opposed: 0

Abstain: 0

7. Old Business

Finalization of Public Safety Capital & Expense Budget Request Items:

Capital Budget Requests:

- Argus Cameras: W231st St & Kingsbridge Avenue; W234th St Bailey Ave; W260th St & Riverdale Ave; University Ave & Reservoir Ave.
- FDNY Paramedic Unit.
- Park lights for crime prevention between Sedgwick Ave & Reservoir Ave
- Park lights for crime prevention between Sedgwick Ave & Goulden Ave.

Expense Budget Requests:

- Police Athletic League (PAL) after school program & youth crime prevention services:
- Additional School Safety Officers for JFK High School.
- School Crossing Guard at PS 95 (Hillman & Sedgwick).

8. New Business

Committee member Stephen Vasquez stated next month's guest speaker is scheduled to be Rafael Mangual from the Manhattan Institute, a criminal justice reform think tank.

Committee member Robert Kaplan suggested the Manhattan Institute is a conservative think tank and he recommends the committee hear from a policy institute that represents a different point of view, to provide a balanced perspective.

Stephen Vasquez stated he reached out to the Vera Institute about this topic, as well, and will continue to have dialog with them.

9. Meeting was adjourned at 8:48pm

Minutes submitted by Committee Chair, Ed Green.