

Community Board 11

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FILE

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On April 26, Community Board 11, in the north central section of the Bronx, held a highly charged discussion concerning the state of disrepair at many Amtrak railroad tracks especially in the Melville and Tremont area, where a thirteen-year-old boy had been electrocuted in mid April

District Manager, John Fratta, revealed that he and fellow board member, Kenneth Gelnick, met with Amtrak officials at the Melville and Tremont area just two weeks before the tragic accident.

According to Fratta, the officials were less than accommodating when discussing the necessary security and clean-up issues. Fratta explained that during the meeting the

officials became irate when they noticed an elevated switch box with graffiti on it and made immediate plans to remove the box. When Fratta asked why removing the box was so urgent, the officials replied they were only concerned with the aesthetics passengers are exposed to during their trip.

The group also discovered gaping holes in the fences at the Melville and Tremont railroad. Fratta pointed out that children could gain access onto the tracks through those holes and Amtrak officials promised to repair the problem fences.

But for the most part, Amtrak officials maintain they are not responsible for any debris be found on their tracks or beyond their fences. In their inaction they defy a New York City law that makes property owners responsible for property up to 18 inches into the curb.

At the community board meeting, Fratta expressed he did not think Amtrak would make any effort to clean up their property, and they would need to somehow make Amtrak take responsibility.

Many expressed their outrage at Amtrak's lack of interest in acknowledging the role their tracks play in the community. "In my eyes, Amtrak has relinquished all responsibilities," said a distraught Van Nest resident, Melissa Pescali. "About three years ago, a friend of the family was electrocuted on one of their tracks. The boy spent several days in the hospital."

Others at the meeting thought of ways to take action. "It's obvious Amtrak only responds to the press and that's where we need to go with this," said Marilyn Bisetti, a school librarian.

"Why don't we take pictures of the prop-

erty and bring them to the press to show how Amtrak takes care of their tracks," suggested community board member, Pamela Dorsen.

Community Board 11 is not alone in their fight against Amtrak. According to Fratta, Morris Park residents have spent years trying to get Amtrak to keep the promises they've made concerning cleaning up their railroad tracks.

According to a few community board members the problem with Amtrak has been on going for at least twenty years. "I became aware of this issue in 1980," said Marsha Gaynor, a retired social worker.

Whatever the outcome, it seems that this issue will remain unresolved for the time being.

Another issue brought up at the April 26 meeting was the police department's decision to take on a zero-tolerance approach to double parked cars in the neighborhood's shopping district. This news was greeted with applause from both community board members and residents who have been urging the police department to take an active role in this area.

This decision affects Eastchester, Gun Hill, Morris Park, Williamsbridge Road, Boston, White Plains Road, and Allerton.

The police now tow away any un-attended double-parked vehicles and issue drivers tickets even while in the vehicle.

Fratta says the drastic change in procedure is because community board 11 has the most pedestrian accidents in all of New York City, most of which are often caused by double-parked cars.

The plan went into effect the week of April 29.

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