

Flushing stop gets makeover from the LIRR

BY MADINA TOURE

Riders who take the LIRR train at the Flushing-Main Street station are in for a treat: new signage and platform railings as part of a \$24.6 million project to renovate the long-neglected station.

Elected officials and community leaders gathered at the station last Friday to formally unveil the upgrades. The lawmakers gave a media tour highlighting the new “Flushing-Main Street Station” sign and the new platform railings.

The upgrades are the first phase of a project to completely revamp the station and make it handicap-accessible.

The next phases of renovations include the installation of elevators, a new ticket window and new staircases, platform shelters, entrances and lighting.

The dilapidated station has one entrance off Main Street for the eastbound side and another off 40th Road for the westbound

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Shelters are too violent: Mayor

Avella rips new measures to improve resident safety with NYPD's help

BY BILL PARRY

Two state senators, who have both criticized the homeless shelter for families at the former Pan American hotel in Elmhurst, had

vastly different reactions to the program Mayor Bill de Blasio announced Tuesday to improve safety at the city's shelters.

The NYPD will immediately begin retraining all Department

of Homeless Services security staff and send an NYPD management team to DHS to develop an action plan to upgrade security at all shelter facilities, restore a domestic violence program for

family shelters, and create an extensive reporting system for incidents that occur in shelters.

The reforms are a response to data on violence in shelters developed as part of the 90-day review of homeless services ordered by the mayor, officials said. While state Sen. Toby Ann Stavisky (D-Flushing) applauded the new safety measures, state Sen. Tony Avella (D-Bayside) eviscerated the move.

“I am very happy with Mayor de Blasio's plan to improve safety in our city's homeless shelters,” Stavisky said. “Since the Pan American shelter opened, I have encouraged more communication between the NYPD, the Elmhurst community and shelter staff members—something I feel is vital in maintaining a stable and safe facility for families. I am especially happy the domestic violence program in DHS shelters is being brought back.

“In the last year or so, the 110th Precinct reported sending officers to address domestic disputes at the Pan American seven times a month, on average. That is un-

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A DAY AT THE BEACH



The Special Olympics held its “Freezin’ for a Reason” swim at Jacob Riis Park in the Rockways to raise money for this year's games.
Photo by Julie Weissman

Anti-Asian hate crimes examined during forum

BY PATRICK DONACHIE

Elected officials, community advocates and members of the NYPD's Hate Crimes Task Force gathered during a forum at the Queens Library in Flushing last week to encourage New Yorkers to report potential hate crimes.

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Councilmen Costa Constantinides (l.) and Jimmy Van Bramer confer before calling for the permanent closure of Club Purlieu in Dutch Kills.
Photo courtesy William Alatrste

Shut Club Purlieu: Lawmakers

BY BILL PARRY

Two City Councilmen are turning up the heat on Club Purlieu, the Dutch Kills strip club that state Sen. Michael Gianaris (D-Astoria) called a “danger to local residents” after an

unlicensed livery cab driver was shot in the head on March 4.

Councilman Jimmy Van Bramer (D-Sunnyside) and Councilman Costa Constantinides (D-Astoria) rallied with members of the Dutch Kills Civic As-

sociation outside the club Monday calling for its permanent closure due to numerous violent incidents over the past year.

“Every week the NYPD has to waste precious resources patrolling this bad business,” Van Bramer

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Borough's regent member holds talk

Common Core was not launched properly, but is heading in the right direction: Judith Chin

BY MADINA TOURE

In what educators described as a fireside chat-style discussion, Queens Regent Judith Chin said the Common Core launch was flawed but the Board of Regents was heading in the right direction.

At a March 11 meeting hosted by state Assemblywoman Nily Rozic (D-Fresh Meadows) at her district office on Union Turnpike, Chin fielded questions from principals, educators and superintendents from School Districts 25 and 26 as well as representatives from unions and parents.

Chin began her three-year term in March 2015. Her election to the Board of Regents by the state Legislature made her the first Asian-American member in the board's 231-year his-



At a discussion hosted by state Assemblywoman Nily Rozic, Queens Regent Judith Chin discussed changes on the board and the Common Core. Photo by Madina Toure

tory.

Before joining the state Board of Regents, she served as the Regional Su-

perintendent Chief Education Officer for School Districts 25 and 26.

Chin shot down rumors

that the Common Core curriculum is going to be dropped, although she acknowledged that certain states have eliminated it.

The Common Core State Standards are a set of academic standards indicating what K-12 students should know in math and English language arts/literacy.

But she criticized the way in which the Common Core was rolled out, saying there were not enough professional development and resources to support the teachers, placing the blame on the state Education Department.

"It was forced down folks' throats without much understanding of what these standards were supposed to be intended for," Chin said.

She also commended the parents who participated

in the opt-out movement, noting that about 200,000 students across the state refused to take the Common Core tests. Chin predicted the opt-outs will continue even with major changes, such as a smaller number of questions and passages as well as the elimination of timed testing.

"I applaud the parents for finally speaking out about it," she continued. "This is not going to happen to my child."

Chin said there has been a shift in the board's leadership with both Chancellor Merryl Tisch and Vice Chancellor Anthony Bottar stepping down.

She said a new member is joining the board, which makes three board members - all being some form of educators, including superintendents and school

board members.

"There is a minority group right now and unfortunately, we've been named the Gang of Six (of the board) and we've been considered renegades ... because we go against the system," Chin said.

She also said she is encouraged by the fact that state Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia is a "lifelong career educator," unlike her predecessor, new U.S. Education Secretary John King. She said King's tenure "may be very short-lived" given that there will be a new U.S. president next year.

Rozic said she is thrilled to have Chin representing her district in Albany and that the Assembly put out its listing of their priorities, which includes \$25.4 billion just for education.

Schools' free tampon pilot project expands in Dist. 24

BY BILL PARRY

Young women at more than a dozen high schools and middle schools in District 24 will have access to free feminine hygiene products now that the Department of Education has expanded a pilot program launched by City Councilwoman Julissa Ferreras-Copeland (D-East Elmhurst) last September.

A free dispenser was installed in the girls' room at Corona's High School for Arts and Business and attendance jumped 2.4 percent as fewer girls asked to be excused from classes throughout the day.

The groundbreaking initiative was rolled out Monday at Newtown High School in Elmhurst, which will get its dispenser by the end of the month. Ferreras-Copeland is set to introduce legislation for free feminine hygiene products in all city



Councilwoman Julissa Ferreras-Copeland announces her pilot program that provides free feminine hygiene products is expanding. Courtesy Council member Ferreras-Copeland

public schools and eventually in prisons and homeless shelters.

"Every young person should have their essential needs met in order to do well in school," Ferreras-Copeland said. "Feminine

hygiene products are as essential as toilet paper, helping women fulfill their daily activities uninterrupted by nature and prevent health risks. Providing young women with pads and tampons in schools

will help them stay focused on their learning and sends a message about value and respect for their bodies. No young woman should face losing class time because she is too embarrassed to ask for, can't afford or simply cannot access feminine hygiene products."

DOE Deputy Chancellor Elizabeth Rose will oversee the program, the first of its kind in the nation. It is estimated to cost nearly \$160,000 for installation of dispensers and supplies. In addition, the DOE will provide menstrual education in health classes and supplemental information and assemblies for families.

"Having easy access to feminine-care products is essential to ensuring that girls in our schools have the support they need to focus on learning and feel comfortable during classes," Rose said. "This pilot marks a major step in pro-

viding additional resources to students in need."

U.S. Rep. Grace Meng (D-Flushing) said feminine hygiene products should never be a luxury—they are a basic and essential part of women's health.

"Too often, society attaches stigma and shame to menstruation, depriving young girls of resources, access and knowledge about their bodies," Meng said. "Our young women should have unobstructed access to quality healthcare, and this first-of-its-kind initiative goes a long way to this crucial goal."

Dr. Acklema Mohammad, chair of pediatrics at Urban Health Plan, pointed out that each woman needs 17,000 sanitary pads or tampons in her lifetime and they are expensive.

"For families struggling to afford food, purchasing feminine hygiene products adds another financial

burden," said Margaret Purvis, president and CEO of Food Bank in New York City. "When feminine hygiene products are available in Food Bank in New York City's network of food pantries and soup kitchens, it comes as welcome and much-needed relief to women and girls whose families are already making sacrifices to put food on the table."

Many of the women who spoke, as well as City Councilman Daniel Dromm (D-Jackson Heights), complained about the 4 percent state tax on feminine hygiene products. Items like prescription drugs, sunscreen and condoms are exempt from tax in New York state under the premise that they are essential to a person's health. The tax adds 88 cents to an \$11 pack of 50 tampons in New York, an added cost that many call a "woman's penalty."

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Francis Lewis students fill the hallways between classes.

Francis Lewis is No. 1 in citywide applicants

BY PATRICK DONACHIE

Public high schools in the northeastern area of Queens are continually some of the most popular schools in the city, and Francis Lewis High School in Fresh Meadows is at the top of the list. Aside from the city's specialized high schools, it was the public high school with the highest number of applicants in the city in 2015.

"This is the strongest year we've ever had, I think," Dr. David Marmor, the principal of Francis Lewis, said. "We're a safe, well-run, organized and happy place to be."

Forest Hills High School in Queens was the second most popular high school in terms of the number of applications, according to information supplied by the city Department of Education. Midwood High School in Brooklyn was No. 3, while Bayside High School and Benjamin N. Cardozo High School, two other Bayside schools, rounded out the top five. According to the DOE data, there were

9,468 applications to Francis Lewis in December.

Marmor lauded the school's reputation and its JROTC program, calling the program one of the primary reasons that the school was so popular among eighth graders applying to high schools. He also said that Francis Lewis' science program (the most competitive program in the city) is headed by three educators with Ph.Ds in the sciences.

Marmor also stressed that there was no correlation between the school's high number of applicants and its overcrowding. Francis Lewis, like several other nearby high schools, has long struggled with overcrowding in its facilities. The school is operating at about 190 percent of capacity, according to Marmor.

He said the high enrollment stemmed from Francis Lewis' status as a zoned school, offering space to those from the community who apply. Marmor said that about 65 percent of the students were enrolled in the school because there

was guaranteed space for zoned students.

"Our overcrowdedness is due to the fact that we do not turn anybody away who lives in our zone," he said. "We're at capacity. We are at the limit, but we've been at the limit for 15 years. Everyone is fully aware of our situation and have made sure that we stay out of crisis."

Marmor expects that the high number of applicants will continue in the years to come and perhaps even rise, citing Francis Lewis' reputation as a desirable school. He said he remains enthusiastic that so many incoming high school freshmen continue to express interest in the school each year.

"If Francis Lewis continues to do the thing that it does right, if it continues to put out science winners, robotics winners, the JROTC, I see demand continuing to increase," he said. "Why would you not want demand to increase? I want people to be here."

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Street named after late Latina women's rights activist

QUEENS WEEKLY, MARCH 20, 2016

BY MADINA TOURE

A street in Woodside has been renamed in honor of Alice Cardona, a prominent Puerto Rican women's rights activist from Woodside who died in 2011.

Cardona, a leader in New York City's Puerto Rican and Latino community who advocated for women's rights, minority rights and bilingual education, died in November 2011 at the age of 81.

From 1983 to 1995, she served as assistant director of the New York State Division for Women during then-Gov. Mario Cuomo's administration, where she fought to combat HIV/AIDS, breast cancer and domestic violence.

She was also involved in the city's first Head Start program, served as a counselor for ASPIRA and was an active member of the Na-



Diana Cruz, Alice Cardona's sister (l-r), City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, City Councilman Jimmy Van Bramer and state Assemblywoman Cathy Nolan hold the street sign for Cardona during the ceremony.

Photo by Madina Toure

tional Conference of Puerto Rican Women.

In February 2015, City Councilman Jimmy Van Bramer (D-Sunnyside) passed legislation renaming 56th Street between Wood-

side and Skillman avenues "Alice Cardona Way."

"It is an incredibly important thing that we do today to honor and thank Alice, and to remember that she is never forgotten here

in Woodside or anywhere," Van Bramer said.

Debbie Quinones, a personal friend of Cardona's, was an advocate for having the street renamed and was fundamental in organizing

the weekend ceremony.

Sandy Moya, coordinator for SCO Family of Services' SCO Queens Single Stop program, also played a role in the effort.

Diana Cruz, Alice Cardona's sister, said she was "in a state of shock and in a state of numbness" about the street being renamed for her sister.

She said she was in the background witnessing all of the work that Cardona was doing.

"We used to live down here on 57th Street and then we lived over here around the corner," Cruz said. "But Alice was nonstop, nonstop, nonstop. Idea, idea, idea."

City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito said Cardona was her mentor and founded a lot of the organizations that are important to Puerto Ricans in the city.

"For me personally, it

was important to be here," Mark-Viverito said. "I came to New York in '87. One of the first people I met was Alice in terms of activism and she really paved the way for me and many others, so it was a personal reason that brought me here today."

Cardona also co-founded Hacer/Hispanic Women's Center to help Latinas achieve their personal goals. She donated her papers to El Centro Library at Hunter College and was the first Latina to receive the Susan B. Anthony Prize.

State Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan (D-Ridgewood) said she first met Alice at the 1974 Democratic State Convention. Nolan also mentioned that in 1984, shortly after Cardona went to work with Cuomo, she helped her in her first run for the Assembly.

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6 More traffic concerns

Parents request additional crossing guards for Dist. 26 schools

BY PATRICK DONACHIE

Parents concerned about school safety and overcrowding in District 26 schools downed coffee, enjoyed breakfast and met with lawmakers at a Friday morning event at the Bayside Diner. The breakfast was organized by the district's Presidents' Council and attendees discussed the need for more crossing guards to direct traffic at school arrivals and dismissals.

During the breakfast, Alan Ong, president of Community Education Council 26, unveiled the results of an informal survey of District 26's school principals about traffic around their schools. The CEC asked them about traffic incidents and infractions that occurred near their schools in the past year.

The most common complaints were incidents of double/triple parking, speeding, making illegal U-turns and ignoring stop signs, according to the survey. Principals from 13 schools also reported traffic accidents near their schools' premises during arrival or dismissal in the previous year.

"Traffic issues have been like a broken record," Ong said, bemoaning the frequency of complaints from frustrated parents.



Members of School District 26's Presidents' Council welcome parents and lawmakers to a legislative breakfast held at the Bayside Diner last week. Photo by Patrick Donachie

The survey indicated that every school in the district except MS 172 had at least one crossing guard, though Ong said that one guard alone often did not suffice because of heavy traffic. He remarked that parents have requested more crossing guards, to no avail.

"We either hear that there's no budget or people don't want to do the job," he said.

City Councilman Rory Lancman (D-Hillcrest) said it can be difficult for the city to find and keep people interested in working as crossing guards, as the hours are few and the pay is low. Crossing guard

jobs pay \$11.50 to start, according to the NYPD's website.

Renee DiRe, co-PTA president at PS/IS 266, said there were no crossing guards assigned to her school. She had been told that since PS/IS 266 shares a campus with two other schools off of the nearby main roads, a crossing guard would be unnecessary.

"All you need is one person to double park, and boom, it's a mess. The school buses can't get by," she said. "There are times when I wait for 20 minutes or more."

Parents also expressed their continued annoy-

ance about the overcrowding at Bayside schools. Council Co-president Cathy Grodsky said that 37 students at MS 172 had not matched into any of the area schools for which they applied (the school had 326 eighth-graders enrolled in 2014-2015, according to data from the Department of Education).

"If you're that child with no match, what are you going to do?" she said, and called attention to the stress the process entails for children and parents. "A 14-year-old should not have that anxiety like they're applying to medical school, and that's what it's become."

Two area pols oppose Flushing West plan

BY MADINA TOURE

State Sen. Tony Avella (D-Bayside) and state Assemblyman Ron Kim (D-Flushing) have joined forces to oppose the city's plan to redevelop Flushing West.

The Flushing West plan seeks to clean up and rezone 60 acres on the Flushing waterfront and create a planned community with waterfront access, housing and commercial space.

The 32-acre study area runs from Prince Street on the east to Flushing Creek on the west, and from Roosevelt Avenue on the south to Northern Boulevard on the north.

At a news conference on the traffic island at the intersection of 37th Avenue and Prince Street last Friday, Kim and Avella said the neighborhood already has a hard time meeting the needs of its residents. The 7 train line, which frequently has service disruptions and congested trains, is an especially pressing problem, with people unable to stand on the platform.

"The 7 train is so over-

crowded that you can't get on a train," Avella said.

Kim said his wife and Avella's ride the 7 train every day, saying that he and Avella want to ensure that the city and the state work together in a comprehensive way to address the issue. Both wives have complained about packed trains and crowded platforms.

He said that there has to be a full assessment of transportation options. "Instead of actually fixing the problem, we want to add more congestion to it," he said.

The elected officials have introduced a bill that would require municipalities served by the MTA to conduct a study on the environmental effects of a comprehensive rezoning plan to determine whether mass transit could handle the ridership increase. They said the bill could affect the entire state if passed quickly enough.

In a Feb. 24 letter to Avella, City Planning Director Carl Weisbrod said Mayor Bill de Blasio asked him to respond to Avella's Feb. 19 letter.



State Sen. Tony Avella and state Assemblyman Ron Kim have come together to condemn the current Flushing West rezoning proposal. Photo by Madina Toure

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Vision Zero's goal elusive: Commissioner Bill Bratton

BY BILL PARRY

The ultimate goal of the de Blasio administration's Vision Zero initiative to have zero pedestrian fatalities by 2024 is unlikely, according to NYPD Commissioner Bill Bratton. The city's top cop kicked off the Vision Zero Cities conference with that stunning admission at NYU last week.

"You're not going to get to zero," Bratton said. "The reality of it will probably remain elusive, much the same as the reality of no crime in the city of New York. As long as we have humans who are walking, riding bicycles, cars, as long as we have people, we will have crime."

During a January visit to Woodside, the mayor declared his initiative was working and that 2015 was the safest year on city streets since record keeping began in 1910 with traffic fatalities down 22 percent with 66 fewer lives lost in 2015 than in 2013.

De Blasio defended Bratton's comments Monday.

"We say Vision Zero because it's our goal, and we are audacious in trying to reach that very goal," he said. "We know there are human factors, we know how hard it is, but it's the right goal because each and every one of these crashes is preventable."

Jackson Heights resident Cristina Furlong, a



NYPD Commissioner Bill Bratton has upset street safety advocates with recent comments calling Vision Zero's goal unrealistic.

Photo by Michael Shain

founding member of Make Queens Safer, believes the initiative is making strides. She pointed to two of the borough's most dangerous roadways as proof.

"We did, in fact, get to zero on parts of Northern Boulevard, where 2013 saw three fatalities and 2014 none," Furlong said. "The same happened with Queens Boulevard in 2015

for the first time in 25 years. If we take this goal street by dangerous street and precinct by precinct, it's worthy. It's getting done."

Reach reporter Bill Parry by e-mail at bparry@cnglobal.com or by phone at (718) 260-4538.



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Hate crimes

Continued from Page 1

The forum was focused on the city's Asian-American community and followed a pair of assaults in Flushing earlier this year against two Chinese women. Those attacks have been classified as hate crimes.

State Assemblyman Ron Kim noted that his office has received many calls from victims of potential hate crimes, but the callers often said they never reported their claims to the police.

"If you don't report it, how do we actually go to the NYPD to say there's a trend, there's a problem?" he said, and urged the Asian community to report crimes if they occurred. "We want to encourage our folks to work with us and work with the NYPD so they report all the crimes."

Deputy Inspector Mark Magrone, head of the NYPD Hate Crimes Task Force, detailed how community members could report a suspected hate crime and discussed police statistics on hate crimes from previous years.

Assault, criminal mischief and aggravated harassment were consistently the most common types of hate crimes reported, according to Magrone. He noted that incidents often spike in the aftermath of global events,

such as the recent terrorist attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, Calif. He attributed the large jump in the number of hate crimes against Asians in New York City (from two in 2014 to 10 in 2015) at least in part to Tyrell Shaw, who was suspected of multiple assaults against Asian women in Manhattan in June. He was found dead of an apparent suicide before he was arrested.

Some worried, however, that the number of the anti-Asian hate crimes belied the true story.

"Those are seriously underreported," said Karlin Chan, the senior council for the Chinese Freemasons Athletic Club. "A lot of people are undocumented and are scared. People don't want to put themselves on the radar."

He pointed to a corrosive combination of fear and confusion that often dissuades Asian New Yorkers from alerting the NYPD about possible hate crimes. He believes undocumented Asian immigrants are often scared they will be deported if they report a crime, and others feel the process of reporting a hate crime is too onerous.

"Most immigrants work 10 to 12 hours. They'd have to take a day off of work," he said. "If you get bopped on the head and the guy doesn't take a plea deal, it could take a year before

trial."

Some attendees were frustrated that all the presentations and reading materials offered at the forum were in English. Magrone said reading materials in other languages should be available in the coming weeks.

Magrone also stressed that undocumented immigrants will not be deported if they report a crime. Magrone said NYPD officers are barred from asking the immigration status of someone who reports a crime, as mandated by an executive order signed by Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Early last month Mayor Bill de Blasio announced new visa certifications that would allow undocumented immigrants who are crime victims to legally remain in the country while they assist in the investigation. Those new rules could also potentially provide a path to legal permanent residence status for immigrants.

Chi Loek, the co-executive vice president of the Organization of Chinese Americans' New York chapter, hopes that more Asian hate crime victims will be emboldened to come forward. He recalled a delivery man who was assaulted in East Harlem's Wagner Houses in February, and after encouragement from his brother, the victim decided to report the incident.

Nightclub

Continued from Page 1

said. "These fights and violence put the residents of Dutch Kills, a family-oriented community in danger every night. This club is a clear and present danger and it needs to be shut down before someone dies. We're calling on the State Liquor Authority to revoke Club Purlieu's license and close the doors for good."

According to the 114th Precinct, between June 2015 and March 7, 2016, a total of five criminal reports and 12 criminal court summonses were issued at Club Purlieu. A multi-agency raid shut it down March 10, but it reopened the next day after fixing the violation.

"This establishment has a history of criminal activity including violent assaults, fire safety violations and alcohol-related violations," Costantinides said. "The most recent incident, the tragic shooting of an innocent livery driver, further demonstrates the escalating violence at this establishment has brought to our community."

The driver, Roberto Castillo, 37, was shot outside the club, located at 36-04 34th St., after a fight erupted inside. He drove two blocks before crashing into several cars and a utility pole on 35th Street and 37th Avenue.

Castillo needed emergency surgery at Elmhurst Hospital Center and survived, according to the

NYPD.

There have been no arrests and the investigation continues, according to the NYPD. Van Bramer and Costantinides requested that the NYPD's office of Citywide Club Enforcement shut down the nightclub based on its violent history, citing among other incidents a gang-related brawl in which three people were stabbed in March 2015.

"Club Purlieu is a blight on our neighborhood and a continued threat to our quality of life and safety," Costantinides said. "I thank the 114th Precinct for their continued work keeping this area safe and join the call for this establishment to remain closed permanently."



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Shelter

Continued from Page 1

acceptable and makes for a stressful environment for the hundreds of children residing there. If these families are to overcome the tremendous obstacle that is homelessness, we must provide a safe space for them to do so."

Avella, who led several rallies at the Pan American hotel opposing a permanent contract for the shelter, which was finally approved on a fourth attempt in last month, offered a scathing rebuke of the mayor's plan.

"Ask the experts and advocacy groups about their thoughts on de Blasio's action combating homelessness and they'll tell you the same: Too little, too late," Avella said. "It's the hallmark of reactionary politics. Not doing anything until conditions spiral out of control and public outcry forces your hand. The playbook is predictable: superficial actions, postured press

releases and a policy more concerned with downplaying the state of affairs than uplifting them."

The mayor's reforms were announced a day after a blistering report from NY1 based on documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Law that detailed violent and critical incidents that were reported in all city shelters in 2015. The statistics showed 416 reports of domestic abuse in addition to 153 assaults that resulted in arrest and 90 reported sexual assaults, rapes or attempted rapes.

As a result thousands of homeless chose life on the streets because of the violent reputations of the shelters, according to Avella.

"Having the NYPD train DHS security doesn't help eliminate that perception," he said. "It is a half measure when what's desperately needed is a doubling down on shelter security."

Avella offered a suggestion in light of the recent decision by the NYPD and Manhattan District Attor-

ney Cyrus Vance Jr. that gives officers discretion on petty crimes arrests.

"If the city is no longer policing petty crimes with arrests, forego DHS security and redirect NYPD to a new shelter beat," he said.

The de Blasio administration said the NYPD review will bring an expert perspective on how best to upgrade a security system and provide the safest conditions for shelter residents, staff and security officers.

"This administration has increased spending for security by 35 percent since taking office, which has led to increased security staff and tools, including X-ray machines, magnetometers at our shelters," spokeswoman Ishanee Parikh said. "No one is disputing that more needs to be done, and the NYPD is the best choice to assess our security at all shelters and make plans to enhance them."

LIRR

Continued from Page 1

side.

U.S. Rep. Grace Meng (D-Flushing) has pushed for the station's rehabilitation since the project was announced in 2012. "This is really exciting for a station that is really one of the city and state's busiest LIRR train stops but also in an area that we believe more people could utilize the LIRR station," she said.

State Sen. Toby Stavisky (D-Flushing) said upgrading the station is necessary given the area's growth. "There is a need to improve the transportation," she said.

In February, the MTA reached a settlement with Ou Jiang City Supermarket, which it seized through eminent domain to clear the way for making upgrades to the station.

Stavisky said the ongoing issue between the MTA and the supermarket owner contributed to the delay in the project getting



Congresswoman Grace Meng, state Sen. Toby Stavisky and state Assemblyman Ron Kim show the new Flushing-Main Street sign at the train station.

Photo by Madina Toure

started.

City Councilman Peter Koo (D-Flushing) called the station a "disgrace," pointing out the trash and bugs at the station's entrance.

He called it "one of the worst of LIRR stations," comparing it to the Bay-side LIRR station, which he said is better kept. "Our station is worse than LaGuardia Airport," he added.

State Assemblyman Ron Kim (D-Flushing), who sits on the Committee on Corporations, Authori-

ties and Commissions, which oversees the MTA at the state level, said the committee always presses MTA Chairman Thomas Prendergast to improve stations, which he said would create more jobs.

"This is obviously very personal for the mayor of Flushing (Koo) because he takes the train almost every single day to go to City Hall and so I often see him commuting on the train," Kim said. "We take the train together, so we witness some of the declining quality of life."



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