



## AIA BRONX CHAPTER MARCH NEWSLETTER

Published by

Bronx Chapter AIA Publications Committee [Info@studio360s.com](mailto:Info@studio360s.com)

Highlighting activities and information of interest to the Practicing Architect

### Events and Education Opportunities

- **AIA Conference on Architecture & Design 2026**  
June 10-13, San Diego  
Save the date for AIA2 The premier AEC industry event in San Diego, California.
- **AIA New York State Education Design Summit**  
April 7 – April 30, 2026, Virtual  
Two Sessions • April 2026 • Certificate Program  
<https://www.aianys.org/event/education-design-summit/>
- **AIA Architecture Week 2026**  
April 12-18, 2026  
Celebrate students exploring architecture and design.  
<https://www.aia.org/community/events/architecture-week-2026>
- **AIA Bronx– Spring Tour 2026**  
University Heights May 30, from 10:00AM to 12:00PM  
Bronx Community College, Bronx, NYC.  
[besnard@dzco.com](mailto:besnard@dzco.com)

### Table of Contents

I	<b>Current Activities:</b> Chapter Virtual Meeting Minutes of March 19, 2026,	Page 2
II	<b>Next Chapter Virtual meeting – April 16, 2026,</b> <a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9948476766">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9948476766</a>	Page 8
	<b>Appendix I</b>	Page 9
	<b>Appendix II</b>	Page 10

I Current Activities



March 19, 2026

## AIA BRONX CHAPTER MEETING MINUTES

The virtual meeting started at 6:03PM.

Attendees:

Antonio Freda  
Bryan Zelnik  
Hirinha Pena  
Julian Misiurski  
Ken A. Koons, Jr.  
Pedro Auquilla  
Matthew Rezkallo  
Mishelle Jimenez  
Nico Zapata  
Robert Esnard

Guest:

**Joey Feldman**  
Technology Educator  
&  
Design Engineer  
RAPSI A/V Consultants  
[jfeldman@rapsi-co.com](mailto:jfeldman@rapsi-co.com)

### Agenda

1 **Seminar Presentation**

The meeting began with a presentation by **Joey Feldman** of **RAPSI A/V Consultants**, an audiovisual and technology consultant, who presented a comprehensive overview of how architects can successfully integrate emerging technologies into the built environment. He discussed residential and commercial projects, covering audio/video distribution, lighting control, motorized shades, security systems, and smart home integration. His presentation included a **Continuing Education Unit (CEU)** seminar, **Balancing Technology and Design**.

*Integration of Systems*

Mr. Feldman began by outlining the range of systems typically encountered in contemporary construction projects, including distributed audio, concealed and motorized video displays, lighting and environmental controls, motorized window treatments, security systems, and network infrastructure. Emphasis was placed on the growing demand for “invisible” technology—solutions that minimize visual clutter through integration within walls, ceilings, and millwork. Examples included flush-mounted or plastered-in speakers, recessed lighting controls, and concealed HVAC sensors, all of which support a cleaner architectural expression.

*Architects' Importance*

He believes the role of the architect is basic and emerges as a central theme throughout the seminar. Architects can be responsible for accommodating technology within the physical framework of a project but also for helping clients define priorities and make informed decisions. Whether balancing

competing preferences among stakeholders or aligning system capabilities with budget realities, the architect serves as both design leader and project coordinator.

#### *Documentation*

Mr. Feldman also highlighted the importance of thorough documentation and coordination across disciplines. Drawings such as reflected ceiling plans, wiring diagrams, and equipment schedules play a vital role in ensuring clarity among architects, contractors, and technology integrators. Proper coordination is particularly critical when systems such as panelized lighting or motorized components require deviations from conventional construction practices

#### *Summary, Questions and Contact Information*

The seminar concluded with a clear message: as technology becomes increasingly embedded within the built environment, architects must take an active and informed role in its integration. Through early coordination, thoughtful planning, and careful selection of collaborators, architects can ensure that technology enhances—rather than detracts from—the spatial and aesthetic qualities of their projects. The discussion that following the presentation reinforced many of these themes. Questions regarding consultant engagement highlighted that successful outcomes are most often achieved when technology consultants collaborate closely with architects, ensuring alignment with design intent and project goals. Additional dialogue explored issues of power reliability, system redundancy, and long-term cost considerations, with the consensus that technology investments are typically driven more by convenience and user experience than by direct financial return.

**Joey Feldman** indicated and requested that members not hesitate to reach out if they have any questions as he would be happy to provide further information or assist with any projects with low voltage and electric smart home technology.

**Contact Information: Joey Feldman**

**Technology Educator & Design Engineer**

**RAPSI A/V Consultants**

[jfeldman@rapsi-co.com](mailto:jfeldman@rapsi-co.com)

347 9071803

## **2. Opening of Business Meeting**

Following the seminar, **Bob Esnard**, the Bronx Chapter of the American Institute of Architects secretary convened the March Business Meeting. Leadership welcomed attendees, acknowledged both long-standing and newly visible participants, specifically AIA Associates Hirinah Pena and Pedro Auquilla. Bob also reviewed the Meeting Agenda that outlined discussions concerning including continuing education, Chapter governance, committee updates, upcoming events, and discussion of regulatory and professional practice issues affecting architects in New York City. He also reaffirmed the Chapter's commitment to inclusive engagement, professional development, and an open dialogue.

## **3. Adoption of Minutes**

The minutes of the February 2026 Business Meeting were then presented for review. A motion was made by **Julian Misiuriski** and seconded by **Hirinah Pena** to approve the February 2026 minutes as submitted. The **motion carried unanimously**. In approving the minutes, members acknowledged prior recognition, of Sara Dajazeri's elevation to AIA Fellowship and the continued engagement of

senior Chapter oldest active member Ken Koons Sr. at 92 years young., as well as documentation of ongoing coordination with the Department of Buildings and Architects Council advocacy efforts.

#### 4. Schedule for Next Meetings

A short discussion concerning the organization of chapter meetings and attendance. It was stated that CEU programming remains a core benefit to members while also serving as a key fundraising mechanism in support of the Chapter's scholarship program. Discussion followed regarding the current sponsorship model in the virtual environment. Leadership reported that while sponsorship contributions have decreased from pre-pandemic, in-person levels, the Chapter has maintained consistent sponsor participation. Members discussed strategies to strengthen outreach, including standardized sponsor communications, targeted engagement of manufacturers and consultants, and broader use of professional networks. There was a consensus that supported continued refinement of sponsorship efforts through volunteer participation.

Therefore, the chapter's meetings in the foreseeable future and for **April and June** will continue to be held in a **virtual** format. However, the **May meeting will be in person** and be the Chapters **Annual Awards Event**. The scheduled dates of the next meetings were outlined, with the proposed next chapter meeting dates as:

April 16, 2026,	6:00PM – (Virtual)
May 21, 2026,	<b>In Person Award Event</b>
June 18, 2026,	6:00PM – (Virtual)
September 17, 2026,	6:00PM – (Virtual)

#### 5. Committee Reports

##### Student Competition

Sara Djazayeri reported that the Student Design Competition Committee reported that they are proceeding on schedule, with coordination underway with CCNY as the participating academic institution, Jurors, and public representatives such as local stakeholder organizations, Borough President's Office and NYC's Economic Development Corporation (EDC). have been proceeding as planned. This year's CCNY **student design project** will focus on a proposal for the revitalization of the **Arthur Avenue Public Market in the Bronx**. The project invites students to explore architectural strategies that address modernization, accessibility, and urban revitalization while preserving the market's historic role as an important neighborhood institution. Interim reviews are ongoing, and final jury deliberations are anticipated in advance of the Chapter's annual awards event in May.

##### Empowerment Grants

The discussion then turned to the chapter's student grants program, an initiative designed to encourage emerging designers while strengthening relationships with architecture schools throughout the region. **Bryan Zelnik** indicated the scholarship program has reported strong participation, with multiple accredited architecture schools confirming involvement. **He** reported that grant materials had been distributed to all **six architecture schools** in NYC: CCNY, Columbia, Cooper Union, Pratt, New School, and NYIT, that have participated in past years. Early responses were except for the **New School**. They have a minor issue to find a student as most of their students are not Bronx residents. They are reviewing their graduate program for a suitable student candidate. The overall outlook is positive, with expectations that qualified student candidates will be

identified and all the schools can be represented. This initiative remains a cornerstone of the Chapter's mission, to directly support the next generation of architects in the Bronx and their careers in architecture.

The awards presentation is scheduled for **May 21, 2026**, and organizers remain optimistic that participation will be strong. These grants continues to serve as an important opportunity for the chapter to recognize student achievement while introducing young architects to the professional community.

Women in Architecture & Emerging Professionals

Updates were also shared regarding **Women in Architecture (WIA) and Emerging Professionals (EP)** initiatives, continue to expand outreach and engagement. These programs are actively promoting participation through digital platforms, institutional partnerships, and targeted communications. The integration of these initiatives into the Chapter's broader programming reflects a commitment to inclusivity, diversity, and professional development across all stages of practice. Working with committee leadership, **Lila Peña, Sara Djazayeri**, and colleagues are progressing with a design exercise focused on the adaptive reuse of a **commercial retail space into a fitness facility**. The initiative is planned, to hopefully result in a presentation or exhibit displaying the design concepts at the chapter **May 21 Awards Event**.

6. **Bronx Chapter Spring Tour**

The Chapter's Spring Architectural Tour, scheduled for **May 30, 2026**. The tour will focus on the **University Heights** neighborhood, offering participants an opportunity to explore a site of considerable historical and architectural significance. The tour is planned to begin at Bronx Community College—formerly the campus of New York University—the tour will examine the evolution of the campus, its architectural legacy, and its relationship to surrounding urban development. The discussion highlighted the unique history of the site, including its origins as a major university campus, its transition following World War II, and its current role within the City University system. Emphasis will be placed on the integration of infrastructure and landscape, including the historic Croton Aqueduct, which remains a defining feature of the area. The tour, organized in collaboration with local historical expertise, is intended not only as an educational experience but also as a means of reinforcing the Chapter's connection to the built environment of the Bronx. These tours are a bi-annual event that brings together architects, historians, and members of the public for an exploration of architectural history within the Bronx. Specifically, it is organized jointly with **Julian Misiurski** representing the chapter and with the **Bronx Historical Society's Roger McCormick** coordinating historical research and programming.

**Appendix I – Spring Tour.**

7. **DOB Update**

**Tony Freda** led a substantial and highly engaged portion of the meeting addressing current challenges within the professional and regulatory landscape, particularly those associated with the New York City Department of Buildings. (DOB). Members shared concerns regarding delays in application processing, difficulties in obtaining approvals, and limited access to agency personnel. These operational challenges have tangible impacts on practice, affecting project timelines, client expectations, and overall efficiency.

### DOB Budgeting

The discussion acknowledged that these issues are not isolated but reflect broader systemic constraints, including staffing shortages and budgetary limitations. While the Department generates significant revenue through permits and fees, these funds are absorbed into the broader municipal budget, limiting the agency's ability to reinvest directly in its own operations. This structural reality underscores the need for continued advocacy and dialogue between the profession and city leadership. Perhaps talking to industry leaders and/or elected officials to increase DOB staff and improve performance.

The meeting also explored efforts to improve communication and coordination across boroughs. Industry meetings organized at the borough level present an opportunity to share information, identify common challenges, and develop collective strategies. The Chapter expressed interest in increasing participation in these forums and contributing to a more unified professional voice across New York City.

### Updated NYC Building Code

A central topic of discussion was the forthcoming revision and consolidation of the New York City Building Code. **Tony** who is the chapter representative at the **ACNY (Architects Council of New York)**, reported on this DOB initiative which represents a significant evolution in regulatory practice, aiming to reconcile multiple historical code frameworks into a more coherent and accessible system. The intent is to facilitate work on existing buildings by aligning requirements more closely with contemporary standards, while avoiding unnecessary burdens associated with full compliance to new construction criteria.

Members recognized both the potential benefits and the complexities of this transition. While the simplification of code structures is broadly welcomed, the process of implementation will require substantial education and adaptation within the profession. The city has indicated an interest in partnering with industry organizations to support this effort, creating opportunities for architects to contribute directly to training and knowledge dissemination. The **Chapter encourages experienced members to consider participating** in these initiatives, emphasizing the importance of professional leadership in shaping how new regulations are understood and applied. Two long-term chapter members were mentioned, **Tony Freda and Ken Koons Jr.**, and are encouraged to volunteer to join this implementation of the code to add their **valuable expertise** to this training process.

### Federal Law

There was an extended review of a new significant federal law concerning the definition of architecture as not a profession not eligible for federal loans. This is very significant as a broader professional concern as for architectural education and practice. Reports of federal changes impacting the classification of architectural degrees—and the potential implications for student financial aid—prompted vigorous debate among attendees. This issue, along with ongoing challenges related to professional liability and legal exposure, highlights the need for continued advocacy at multiple levels of government local, state and national.

### State Liability Law

The discussion of federal regulation brought up the issues related to an architect's liability, particularly under New York State's **unique** statute of **repose** framework, generated considerable discussion. Members expressed concern regarding the long-term exposure faced by architects relative to other project participants, noting the complexities of professional responsibility in an increasingly litigious

environment. These issues reinforce the importance of both legal awareness and collective advocacy within the profession.

This agenda item of the meeting concerning the business practices of members concluded on a collegial note, with recognition of member contributions and achievements, including acknowledgment of representation within broader professional organizations. The overall tone of the session reflected our Chapter that attempts to be actively engaged, both internally and within the larger professional industry and regulatory context.

## 8. New Business

There are two new business items to report on: one Julian Misiurski the chapter Vice President reported on: **Julian Misiurski Report** and **2026-2028 Component Accreditation Approval**.

### Julian Misiurski Report

**Julian Misiurski**, on behalf of the Chapter attended a recent AIA National strategic planning session held at the TWA Hotel at JFK Airport. He noted that a request had been made for a Chapter representative to serve as a liaison to the College of Fellows, and he volunteered to take on this role. While not a Fellow himself, Julian indicated he would coordinate as needed with senior members, including Sara, to ensure appropriate communication and understanding of the College's activities. He also summarized his attendance at the meeting which focused significantly on the dual challenges of attracting younger members to the profession and improving member retention across the Institute. Among the ideas raised was the potential for AIA to explore group healthcare solutions, particularly to support small firms with limited staff, where access to affordable benefits remains a major concern. While the topic generated interest, Julian observed that it did not gain significant traction at the national level, likely due to the complexity and scale of the issue. Nonetheless, the broader conversation underscored the importance of developing new strategies to engage emerging professionals.

**Julian** further reported that he had spoken with a representative from AIA New York regarding resources for associates preparing for the Architect Registration Examination (ARE). He noted that AIA New York continues to offer ARE "bootcamp" sessions and intends to share additional information as it becomes available. Drawing from his own experience, Julian recommended these sessions as a valuable supplement to individual study, particularly for their practical guidance on approaching exam sections and understanding testing strategies. He encouraged members and associates to explore these opportunities through the AIA New York website.

In related discussion, **Sarah Jazayeri** highlighted the Chapter's ongoing efforts to support licensure pathways, including a recent presentation at the City College of New York, where approximately 45 students attended a session on the licensure process. The presentation, delivered by a Chapter representative, **Linda Perez-Infante**, was well received. This demonstrated the value of direct outreach to academic institutions. Plans are underway to expand similar programming to additional schools, including Cooper Union, as part of a broader initiative to raise the visibility of AIA Bronx and support the next generation of architects.

Julian also noted his interaction with **Valerie Brown** from the AIA Westchester Chapter, expressing appreciation for her continued support and collaboration. He indicated that, as details for the upcoming Bronx Chapter Spring Tour are finalized, outreach will be made to coordinate promotional efforts across neighboring chapters.

2026-2028 Component Accreditation Approval

The Chapter received this terrific news after the meeting and before the March Newsletter was sent out, that the AIA National sent the Chapter a 2026-2028 Component Accreditation Approval.

Whew...

**Appendix II – Chapter 2026-2028 Accreditation Approval.**

**9. Adjournment**

As there being no further business, the meeting concluded with brief closing remarks and acknowledgments. Members expressed appreciation for the participation and contributions of attendees, including those who joined toward the end of the session. It was confirmed that the next Chapter meeting will be held virtually on April 16, with anticipation of an additional event in May. The meeting then adjourned with thanks to all participants all attendees were thanked for their participation.

The **March 2026** meeting ended at **7:43PM**.

**II**

**Next meeting:**

**Thursday, April 16, 2026 @ 6:00PM**

**Virtual - ZOOM meeting link**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9948476766>

Appendix I

Spring Tour



**University Heights Walking Tour**

The Bronx County Historical Society (BCHS) and the Bronx Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA).

Tour will begin and end at Bronx Community College front gate entrance, located at 2155 University Ave, Bronx, NY 10453.

**Saturday**      **May 30, 2026**    @    **10:00 A.M- 1:00 P.M.**      **Rain or shine**  
Contact      Bob Esnard      [besnard@dzco.com](mailto:besnard@dzco.com)

Join The Bronx County Historical Society (BCHS) and The Bronx chapter of the American Institute of Architects for a walking tour exploring the history and architecture of the University Heights section of The Bronx.

The tour will begin at the Bronx Community College Campus, former site of New York University, exploring the famed Stanford White designed Guild Memorial library, renowned for its classical, Neo-Renaissance design, the brutalist Breuer designed academic buildings, and the Hall of Fame of Great Americans.

The tour will then proceed to the Old Croton Aqueduct Trail (Aqueduct Avenue), focusing on the establishment of the Croton Aqueduct in 1842 and its impact on The Bronx and New York City, when clean drinking water became available to New York City residents for the first time.

Next, the tour will proceed to University Avenue, focusing on the general history of the area with a focus on the neighborhood’s architectural gems, which include a number of pre-war Art-Deco designed buildings. We will focus on the development of infrastructure in University Heights, especially the introduction of the elevated No. 4 train in 1917.

The tour will conclude with a brief exploration of Jerome Avenue and Fordham Road and will conclude at the Bronx Community College Campus.



library



academic building

**Bronx Community College Campus**

Appendix II

## Chapter 2026-2028 Accreditation Approval.

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Robert Esnard  
AIA Bronx

March 20, 2026

The American Institute of Architects  
1735 New York Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20006

T (800) 242 3837  
F (202) 626 7547

[aia.org](http://aia.org)

Dear Robert,

It is my pleasure to inform you that the accreditation for AIA Bronx has been renewed for 2026-2028. Your status as an accredited component of the American Institute of Architects is effective immediately.

If you wish, you may now use the 2026-2028 digital accreditation badge to demonstrate your status as an accredited component, showing your component's commitment to excellence in providing quality service for the members and communities you serve. The badge and usage guidelines are found in your component's Brandfolder account.

Meeting the Core Member Services takes skill and dedication, to meet the fast-changing needs of the profession. Congratulations to you and your leadership on this significant achievement. We are grateful for your continued partnership as we work together to serve AIA members around the world, and I wish you and your leadership team continued success in the year ahead.

Sincerely,

Josh Flowers, FAIA  
2025-2026 Institute Secretary

**The End**