



## AIA BRONX CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Published by

Bronx Chapter AIA Publications Committee [Info@studio360's.com](mailto:Info@studio360's.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 AIA2The premier AEC industry event in San Diego, California.
- **AIA New York State Education Design Summit**  
February 10 – April 30, 2026 Virtual  
Five Sessions • February – April 2026 • Certificate Program  
<https://www.aianys.org/event/education-design-summit/>
- **AIA New York Build Expo 2026**  
March 18, 2026 9:30AM – March 19, 2026 4:30PM  
JAVITS CENTER, NEW YORK, NYC.  
<https://forms.reg.buzz/new-york-build-2026/aia-new-york-state>

### **Table of Contents**

#### I Current Activities:

Chapter Virtual Meeting Minutes of January 22, 2026,

Page 2

#### II Next Chapter Virtual meeting – February 19, 2026,

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

Page 7

#### III Appendix

Page 8

## I Current Activities



January 22, 2026

## AIA BRONX CHAPTER MEETING MINUTES

The virtual meeting started at 6:04PM.

### Attendees:

Antonio Freda  
Bryan Zelnik  
Hunter Perez  
Jerin Lisha  
Julian Misiurski  
Ken A. Koons, Jr.  
Ken H. Koons, Sr.  
Hirinha Pena  
Linda Infante  
Michael Goldblum  
Matthew Rezkallo  
Nico Zapata  
Ofe Pearson  
Robert Esnard  
Sara Djazayeri

### Guest:

**Michael Conboy**  
sales Representative  
Wausau Tile  
631 645 4331  
[michael.fmconboy@gmail.com](mailto:michael.fmconboy@gmail.com)

### Agenda

#### **1 Seminar Presentation**

The meeting began with a **Continuing Education Unit (CEU)** presentation by **Michael Conboy** of **Wausau Tile Think FMC**, on various terrazzo products and their specifications, emphasizing the benefits of epoxy terrazzo over cement for large-scale projects due to its larger tile sizes and faster installation time. He highlighted a case study where a crack in a terrazzo floor was easily repaired using crack isolation membrane. He also introduced Ground Events, a new partnership with a Portuguese company offering cost-effective architectural precast concrete products.

#### *Precast Concrete Applications and Innovations*

Michael focused on precast concrete products, including raw materials, manufacturing processes, and customization options. He discussed various applications and innovations, such as the use of algae-based additives and recycled aggregates, and highlighted the importance of installation methods. His discussion covered different types of machines, mold options, and customization techniques, including examples from projects like 270 Park Avenue and East Midtown Greenway in New York City. Also addressed was the impact of wind resistance in roof deck pavers, and the use of hidden lockdown systems rated for high uplift pressures.

*Terrazzo and Precast Concrete Applications*

The presentation reviewed various aspects of terrazzo and precast concrete work, including utilizing, aggregate materials, and specific construction examples in several building projects. Michael explained his company's ability to match furniture and other materials in polished concrete floors and detailed the use of sustainable aggregates like fly ash and slag to reduce carbon emissions. He illustrated with photos to showcase several notable projects; including Ohio State, Dr. Phillips Performing Arts Center, and the New York Stock Exchange, all demonstrating different applications of terrazzo stairs, tiles, and custom designs.

*Conclusion and Q&A Session*

Michael Conboy concluded with an overview of poured-in-place epoxy terrazzo work, highlighting its artistic quality and the skilled craftsmanship required for installation. He summarized and reviewed the durability, scratch resistance, lead times, residential applications, and installer qualification manufactured precast concrete tiles in modern construction.

In an inquiry about the Wausau manufacturing locations of the products mentioned in the presentation, that all their products are domestically sourced except for the granite from Portugal and explained how timing and logistics might differ for only those projects using granite in the manufacturing process.

Chapter members formally thanked Michael for:

- o Delivering a clear, well-paced presentation within the allocated time
- o Providing extensive real-world project examples
- o Offering transparency around cost, limitations, and installation risks

Michael Conboy provided the links below to some of the products including pavers, precast concrete, precast terrazzo and site furnishings.

website: [FMC](#)

Links: [Urbastyle Architectural Site Furnishings](#)

[Hidden Lock Down & Pavers](#)

[Precast terrazzo including stairs](#)

[Cement based Terrazzo Tile](#)

**Michael Conboy**

Sales Representative - Wausau Tile - Key Resin - Terralite terrazzo tile - Granidense Granite

Territory: NY / NJ / PA

Cell: (631) 645-4331

[Wausautile.com](#)[thinkFMC.com](#)

Oakdale, NY 11769

**2. Adoption of Minutes**

Following the seminar, **Bob Esnard** the chapter secretary started the Business portion of the meeting. He noted that we had a guest, Hunter Perez Associate AIA, who introduced himself and is an architect intern with the NYC School Construction Authority and a graduate student at CCNY. He was welcomed and invited to participate in our activities. Sara Djazayeri chapter president reaffirmed the chapter commitment to:

- o Welcoming emerging professionals,
- o Supporting academic-to-professional pathways, as well as,
- o Strengthening relationships with CCNY and other NYC architectural institutions.

Bob briefly outlined the January meeting agenda and then reviewed the November Newsletter and the appendices which included an **adopted 2026 Budget** as well as illustrating the seminar

introducing new members to the chapter. He then called for a motion to adopt the **November 2025 Newsletter**:

**Motion: To adopt the Newsletter as submitted.**

**Moved by: Julian Misiurski**

**Seconded by: Bryan Zelnik**

**Result: Motion carried unanimously**

**3. Schedule for Next Meetings**

From the last meeting several members asked that the chapter review if there were other ways to modify the meeting format and how future meetings should be organized. Bob briefly outlined how the current format evolved. Members desired to “easily or painlessly” accrue CEU licensing credits with a AIA CES **sponsored** presentation followed by a business meeting. In addition as we are a volunteer organization without staff, having a regularly scheduled meeting with a “sponsor”, allows for predictability for ease of member participation, and the value of combining education, securing funding for student grants with chapter governance discussions. There was consensus that the **current meeting format will remain unchanged.**

The scheduled dates of the next meetings were outlined; The next meetings will be virtual with the proposed next chapter meeting dates are:

February 19, 2026, 6:00PM – (Virtual)

March 19, 2026 6:00PM – (Virtual)

April 16, 2026, 6:00PM – (Virtual)

**4. Committee Reports**

Student Competition

Michael Goldblum has successfully led this effort for several years, and is working with CCNY, has found an actual funded public project and a site which is the Arthur Avenue, city-owned public market. Engagement is underway with: Local stakeholder organizations, Borough President’s Office and NYC’s Economic Development Corporation (EDC). The focus of the students is to redesign an actual government funded community needed construction project. The concept is to experience issues related to the public-sector ownership constraints and the user issues of the merchants in the market who as stakeholders, will drive program development. For the Bronx Chapter it is of strategic significance to allow and reinforce our role as a **connector** between academia, city agencies, and the community. It helps our public efforts to support experiential learning beyond traditional studio environments for the students and the chapter as well as garner some public positive exposure. Michael outlined the timetable that has the students working on their proposals over the next two months with a jury ultimately selecting two winning designs. They will be celebrated at the May Bronx Chapter Awards’ Event in Manhattan. In addition, the Bronx, Borough President Vanessa Gibson, will hold a second event at Bronx Borough Hall.

Empowerment Grants

Sara Djazayeri indicated that she and Bryan Zelnik have started the process to select the

architectural student awards for this year which will also be presented at the May Chapter Award Event. Bryan and she will start this **early outreach to schools** to avoid last-minute coordination issues that occurred in 2025. Some of the schools did not understand, or had trouble fulfilling the timeline and submission requirements. The awardees should be; 3 or 4<sup>th</sup> year architectural students, Bronx residents, in academically good standing and economically deserving of the cash grants. As we have done in the past we are inviting the six architectural schools in NYC: CCNY, Columbia, Cooper Union, Pratt, New School and NYIT to participate.

Women in Architecture & Emerging Professionals

Sara discussed the newest committee, the Women in Architecture & Emerging Professionals Leila Pena and Sara will serve as co-chairs. The committee developed a first initiative providing design assistance utilizing a design competition for redesigning a space for a small Bronx-based business (Public Gym project in Riverdale). Competition will invite the participation of students and emerging professionals to submit proposals that will be utilized by the gym operator. The committee has organized the required administrative and legal framework as well as a timetable. The project outcome is hoped to be finished in time to be presented at the May chapter Awards Event. The gathering which includes; awards to the winners of the CCNY Studio Competition Market, Student Grants from NY City architectural schools, and can supplement the event with the addition of a winning design for the Gym.

**5. AIA Bronx Chapter Accreditation**

Bob Esnard updated the chapters AIA Chapter Accreditation process. Every four years, each AIA chapter must undergo a review by AIA National to be assured the chapter members are providing the appropriate services to its members, the profession and the public. Bob was happy to report that with the help of our president Sara and Ken Jr. our treasurer, the AIA chapter accreditation submission was completed. The submission reflected over six months of preparation, coordination, and documentation. This will be the third time this detailed review of AIA Chapter accreditation process was required by National AIA. It is a time-consuming effort for volunteer chapters such as ours. However, this is the first time our chapter applied without any assistance from consultants and submitted **ahead** of the January 15 deadline.

We now must await national AIA's review. If there are clarification requests, or if any accreditation requirement not satisfied for this current cycle we will then have to respond. Our hope is that the comments, if there are any, will be minor and we will receive accreditation and not have to spend any more effort on this. Historically, we have succeeded in maintaining our accreditation and are optimistic not to have to work on this for another four years.

**6. DOB – Update**

Last week the new mayor **Zohran Mamdani**, appointed **Ahmed Tigani** as the 27<sup>th</sup> DOB commissioner. His first public communication was a letter to the construction industry to introduce himself and how he hoped to create a dialogue as well as to enforcing the city's Code, as well as seeking ways to improve service levels, reduce wait times, and foster move development in New

York City. Tony Freda , Ken Koons Jr. and Nico Zapato led a discussion that concluded with Ken volunteering to draft a letter from the chapter that would suggest some strategies that have worked in the past, such as the Boro Commissioner meetings once or twice a year, to develop a “professional” understanding of each other's positions and addressing inefficiencies and recommending solutions to problems.

#### **Appendix I - DOB Commissioner's Letter**

**Tony Freda** as the chapter representative at the **ACNY (Architects Council of New York)**, attended the first meeting of the year. There were only two issues discussed the **change of the ACNY president** and issue of achieving **access to adjoining properties** for repairs or new work.

- The new president is **Ida Galea, AIA** a Brooklyn Architect, who replaced **Raymond Peebles**. The important thing is that Ida is committed to trying to improve communication with the government regulatory agencies and assisting architectural businesses and construction practice issues in New York.
- The ACNY discussion concerning getting permission and approvals to perform **work on adjacent property** that is necessary and often related to safety issues can be very, very difficult and expensive. Clients have had to negotiate with neighbors regarding access to adjoining properties for repairs and having to pay excessive fees (+\$3,000/day) for access when the work is simple and the cost of the actual work is a fraction of the fees demanded. The problem is NY State and local laws allow and have a regulatory process to handle this kind of necessary of work which in practice is ignored. However, the **permission is almost always delayed** and/or becomes a court proceeding that seems to only help the litigators. All agreed that work on adjacent property is a challenge for the profession and can only be resolved with **new legislation** with elected officials to create a fair and expeditious new process.

#### **7. New Business**

No new business was presented or issues raised'

8. **Adjournment**

As there being no further business, all attendees were thanked for their participation.  
The **january 2026** meeting ended at **7:37PM**.

II **Next meeting:**

**Thursday, February 19, 2026 @ 6:00PM**

**Virtual - ZOOM meeting link**

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

### III Appendix

## **Appendix I** **DOB Commissioner's Letter**

NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS

Emailed

1/19/26

### LETTER TO THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY – NEW BUILDING COMMISSIONER

Good Morning Industry Partners,

My name is Ahmed Tigani, and today with humility and purpose, I step into the historic halls of 280 Broadway to serve as the 27th Commissioner of the New York City Department of Buildings. Today is my first official day in the office, and I am excited to get to work.

Recognizing the important relationship between this agency and our industry partners, I wanted to take time during my first day to introduce myself to licensees, registrants, and construction professionals working here in New York City. Some of you may already know me from my time at the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), where I most recently served as Acting Commissioner. For others, this is the first time you are hearing my name.

The early days of a new administration working in city hall is a time of excitement of new things to come, but also potentially uncertainty for those who regularly interact with the government as part of their business. Planned initiatives might be launched and regulatory priorities shifted, that may impact your projects. In an effort to allay some of that uncertainty, let me list off for you a few of the things that are not going to change.

Under my Commissionership, DOB will continue its long-standing commitment to enforcing the city's Code and Zoning regulations in every neighborhood across the five boroughs fairly and equitably. We will continue to strive for a strong record of customer service for the industry, continuously looking at ways we can improve service levels, reduce wait times, and promote code-compliant development. We will also maintain the practice of building new connections between the agency and the industry as we work towards common goals of improved safety, greater innovation, and continued growth in our shared city.

Mayor Zohran Mamdani has been clear about the priorities of his administration. Our city faces twin affordability and housing emergencies, small businesses and community organizations are adapting to changing needs, and the construction industry faces rising costs and regulatory complexity. Already, under this administration we are working to tackle these issues head on, including considering ways to better support the development of housing, and implementing a recent executive order to reduce fines and fees that impact small businesses. When initiatives are announced and regulations change that impact our industry, we will include them in our [Buildings News industry newsletter](#). If you are not already subscribed to that newsletter, [I strongly encourage that you do so](#). If you have specific questions for the agency about how any new changes might impact your projects, I also encourage you to join us for one of our regularly scheduled [upcoming virtual Q&A Sessions or in-person Industry Meetings](#).

Mayor Mamdani has also said that the safety of our people will always be a top priority for this administration. In 2025, we saw a major decline in building construction-related incidents and worker injuries, compared to the previous year. At the same time, we tragically had ten construction workers who lost their lives in 2025, up from seven the year before. Any death on a work site is one too many and DOB is committed to working with contractors and site safety professionals to drive those numbers down. I would like to remind everyone that as of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026, [new regulations have been fully implemented for Construction Superintendents](#), limiting them to overseeing a single job at a time. This is an important enhancement to site safety oversight on larger work sites, which will allow Construction Superintendents to direct their full undivided attention to a single site. We have seen direct evidence in this city that worker safety training, increased safety supervision, and robust enforcement procedures have made construction work sites safer. As Commissioner I want to double down on what we know works to reduce the number of preventable building construction-related incidents here in the five boroughs.

We'll have more to share on these initiatives in the coming months. In the meantime, please don't hesitate to reach out, introduce yourself, and share your perspective. We'll need all hands on deck to identify the most practical solutions that will move the needle in the right direction. Thank you for your time—both now and in the future.

Sincerely,



Ahmed Tigani  
Commissioner  
NYC Department of Buildings

**The End**