

OFFICE OF THE BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT  
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May 27, 2009

Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta  
Fire Department of New York  
9 Metrotech Center  
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11210

Dear Commissioner Scoppetta:

I am writing to urge you to reconsider the plan to close Ladder 53, located in the great Bronx community of City Island.

While I could not support the closing of any firehouse in The Bronx, I find the potential closure of Ladder 53 to be particularly dangerous. City Island is an isolated community, separated from the rest of The Bronx by significant physical barriers, both man-made and natural.

The island is also a magnet for traffic, due to the popularity of its many world-class restaurants and its adjacent location to Orchard Beach. Upcoming projects, such as the impending bridge replacement near Bartow Circle, which will narrow an access road to the island from four lanes to two; and the replacement of the City Island Bridge in 2010, will only make the island's traffic situation worse.

We all know just how fast fire can move, and we know just how critical a quick response can be when it comes to saving lives and protecting property. Closing Ladder 53 will undoubtedly raise fire response times on City Island, doubling them to at least ten minutes, even in a best-case scenario; that is unacceptable.

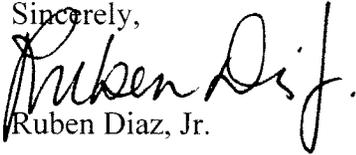
But it is the worst-case scenario that concerns me the most. A fire on a weekend night, with traffic backed up to City Island for miles in all directions, would have the potential to be absolutely devastating to the City Island community. There is no guarantee that any emergency vehicle could navigate that traffic nightmare, and the minutes wasted by a fire company traveling from another community could mean the difference between life and death.

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City Island deserves the same fire coverage as any other community in the city, and it is unfair to make that community rely on a fire company located four miles away in Co-op City for its overnight coverage. While I understand that our city is facing a serious financial crisis, it is wrong to balance the budget by putting Bronxites at risk.

I look forward to your response and invite you to contact me personally if you would like to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruben Diaz, Jr." in a cursive style. The signature is written over the printed name below it.

Ruben Diaz, Jr.