BRAVO Back in 911 Loop
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Restored After Protests

By Harold Egeln
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BRAVO, the Bay Ridge Ambulance Volunteer Organization, is back in the 911 loop after a torrent of protests called for the voluntary ambulance service to be restored to city’s emergency call service, announced Councilman Vincent Gentile.

Cheered as a victory for neighborhood-based volunteer health services, Gentile said, “This is a huge win for residents, the services and public health and safety.”

BRAVO, along with other community-based volunteer ambulance services across the city supplementing hospital and Fire Department ambulances, was removed from the 911 system in October. But this fact was not discovered by officials until January, raising alarms and protests.

BRAVO is back online and will once again be allowed to contact the Fire Department and report its availability. The department operates the city Emergency Medical Services.

The official announcement came recently from Queens Councilwoman Elizabeth Crowley, who chairs the council’s Fire and Criminal Justice Committee. She hailed an agreement with EMS Chief John Peruggia restoring the policy that allows voluntary ambulance services to log on to the 911 system “as a victory for all New Yorkers.”

Peruggia had informed the council committee of the restoration at a committee hearing at the end of February. The initial removal of voluntary ambulance services was a cost-cutting measure, said city officials. The Fire Department is the first responder but would call on the volunteer services when the department’s crews were unavailable.

South Brooklyn relies on volunteer ambulance services like BRAVO and the Bensonhurst Volunteer Ambulance Service, Gentile noted. In June 2008, greater Bay Ridge lost its full-service Victory Memorial Hospital on Seventh Avenue at 92nd Street, at the site since 1900, due to bankruptcy. It was replaced by the
SUNY at Bay Ridge urgent care unit, a facility without full emergency room services.

The closest emergency rooms are currently at Lutheran Medical Center in Sunset Park and Maimonides Medical Center in Borough Park.