

**Minutes of the Economic Development Committee for Bronx Community Board 8  
Tuesday, December 2, 2025 @ 7:00 PM**

**Committee Members in attendance (5):** Constance Barnes-Watson (Chair), Caesar Tobar-Acosta (Vice Chair), Richard Perez, Daniel Nunez, Angel Ortega

**Absent Committee Members (4):** Nick Fazio, Laura Levine-Pinedo, Ashley Medina (Community Committee Member), Karen Walker

**Community in attendance:** Kimberly Kendall (Lehman College), Kahdija Jabbi (Planning Fellow), Maria Liriano (Owner Artizen NYC)

Meeting started at 7:00 PM

**Welcome and Introductions**

*Artizen NYC owners: Maria Liriano & Adam Castillo*

- Notes
  - Been in the neighborhood for 3 years + lived in Riverdale for 20 years
  - Need for coffee and a coworking space
  - Also owns Opex Gym in Riverdale
- Upcoming event
  - Annual Tree Lighting on Sunday 12/7 from 4-7 where people are asked to bring their own ornament
  - Annual Christmas Market on Sunday 12/14 from 2-6
  - Comedy Night Friday 12/19 from
- Questions
  - Where do you source your coffee?
    - Source from farms
  - Liquor license?
    - There is an evening crowd that is in this area
    - We are here to offer something different
      - Coffee
      - Specialty wine
      - Specialty beers
  - Trends on business for the coffee shop or gym?
    - Coffee shop
      - Business has been great after the pandemic
      - Post-election has been slow
      - Expenses have gone up
    - Gym
      - Currently in transition to the Artizen brand
      - Website is under construction
      - A lot of transitions to do (Fitness by Artizen)
      - There has always been personal training or personalized fitness
      - Flooding is the big issue
      - The plumber that they must use is under the landlord and he said that if a pump is put in, it is illegal
  - Next steps for Artizen NYC?

- Social media
  - Liquor license
- How many staff members do you have?
  - There is always turnover at a cafe
  - At this time, there are 3 people including Maria and Adam
- How do you do your hiring
  - Reach out via social media
  - If you are a good barista, people know you and if you are a great barista, you are expensive
  - It is difficult to find consistent hard-working people
- Have you ever had interns for support for different areas of support?
  - They are mainly a two-person team
  - The challenge is finding the time to sit down and organize
- How is the co-working space?
  - Rented out offices for 6-12 months
  - There is also a hot desk for people to drop in or to book online
  - Small office and conference room?
- Do you offer classes?
  - They do not because of the lack of time
  - Have spoken to Fieldston to learn about coffee
- Holiday Market: What kind of vendors?
  - Varied vendors (horchata, candles, coquito)
- Social media campaign
  - Just hired someone now to work professionally on the social media side
- Space set up
  - Most of the items can fit in the conference room
  - 60 max
  - CO - 70

### **CHAIRPERSON'S report**

Mainly have been working on the Walkthrough Summary

### **Small Business Presentation and Opportunity by Kimberly Kendall, Interim Dean of Lehman Colleges School of Adult Education/Continuing & Professional Services**

- Notes
  - Continuing Education
    - As business owners, people are continuing their education
    - A lot of the classes are related to Workforce Development
    - Continuing Ed is not a degree nor does it require paper
    - Prices are kept low as a public institution
  - Adult Degree program
    - 35% of people in the Bronx have a bachelors degree
  - Small Business Programs
    - We know that people need space, money, talent and training
      - Space: Incubator at Grand Concourse + Fordham Road
        - 26000 square feet

- Money: Small Business Development Center
    - Free for Small Business Owner
    - Financial Advice
    - Research to connect with capital and financial plans
  - Talent:
    - 15.000 students, mostly from the Bronx
    - Host an Intern
    - Small Businesses internship practice where small businesses develop a project to help your business
      - Social media campaign
      - Accounting
  - Education/Training:
    - There are a lot of webinars and pick-up classes around the painpoints that people are hearing in the Bronx
- Questions
  - How long is the process to get an intern?
    - The project based is 60-hours
      - This does take a while, but it is done at the beginning at their semester and would be done before the midterms of the quarter
    - The career development center also have semester long interns as well
    - There are also multiple interns and multiple projects that can be happening at the same time
  - What about if you do not have a storefront or alternative hour?
    - They still want to meet them at the match making, but they do not have the paperwork.
    - The job needs to make sure that they have the bandwidth and structure to host interns
  - Can we do a call to action for these businesses?
    - Involvement fair for these businesses
    - The deadline for the next round of businesses, they would want new businesses in the New Year (early January)
    - Looking for financing to have a certificate for businesses on Ethical Businesses Spaces
  - What is the retention or hiring rate for interns?
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  - How do you get small businesses the supports?
    - This is why a lot of the supports are virtual and try to flex their hours
    - This is when interns and hiring are important for the business's hours
    - If Lehman knows some of the specifics for the businesses,
  - Do you provide interns more for the administrative side?
    - Lehman can help
    - It is possible for an intern to write the Unique Value for more general
  - Lehman can have a standard NDA between the business and the students especially for the finance students

## Roll Call



~~Constance Barnes-Watson (Chair)~~



~~Caesar Tobar-Acosta (Vice Chair)~~



Nick Fazio



Daniel Nunez



Laura Levine-Pinedo



Angel Ortega

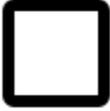


~~Richard Perez~~



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Karen Walker



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Ashley Medina (Community Committee Member)

### **Approval of Committee Meetings (November 5)**

Unanimously approved

### **Resolutions**

*None*

### **Old Business**

#### *Corridor Walkthrough Summary*

- Please think about how we are going to stay in contact with the businesses in the Neighborhood. We have the list and phone numbers of the organizations in the BID over the next few months.
- Main takeaways: Trash + homelessness + drugs + construction
  - Businesses are suffering because of the construction as Uber/Lyft drivers have been
- Question on lights being out in various neighborhoods and how to best resolve these as they are a hazard

#### *Whatsapp*

- What would we want to see on a one-way call?
- We would want to send Google form to merchants to see what people would want to see from the WhatsApp
- Awaiting for Board approval

### **New Business**

### **Community Fellowship Overview & Introduction by Kahdija Jabbi**

- Notes:
  - Starting out the project now

- Looking at the statistics, there is an income inequality and is something that will be considered
- Working with the SBDC, they have data that is difficult to find elsewhere, and Kimberly can provide this information
- Final date: April
- Questions
  - How are you identifying vacancies?
    - Figure out the biggest concerns of the vacancies
    - Use the concerns as a blueprint for the other neighborhoods
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### **EDC annual items**

#### *Most Valuable Merchant Award overview and outreach*

- Notes:
  - Named after the previous owner of Lloyd's Carrot Cake
  - Criteria:
    - Enhance economic growth
    - Improve community relations
    - Increase Civic Participation
  - Applications:
    - Plans for distribution
      - Social Media
    - Translation
      - Caesar to have Spanish translation
  - Marketing Ploy:
    - Constance to draft out a plan for the market

#### *Budget Priorities FY 28*

- The budget Priorities reflects the needs of the community
- How do we connect with other community boards to future discuss shared concerns and visions across the Bronx
  - Caesar to get the Priorities from CB07
  - Constance + Caesar to ask Farrah around the district managers' meeting and how to discuss collaborative efforts across the community boards for the betterment of the Bronx
- We do need to figure out when we to turn out the budget priorities

### **Next Monthly EDC meeting USMV Internship Program Presentation**

Meeting adjourned at 8:58

**Minutes submitted by Chair, Dr. Constance Barnes-Watson**