

PENDING COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Bronx Community Board 8 Economic Development Committee Minutes September 23, 2021

I. Introduction of Committee Members and Guests- attendance

*Committee Members: **Moses Esema, Julia Gomez, Nick Fazio, Camelia Tepelus, Joy Campbell Priveterre***

CB8 Members: Tania Ochoteco, David Gellman

Guest: Yuli Franklin (NY State Department of Financial Services), Marie (member of the community), Seth Kaplan (The Bronx Public), Kelli Buford, Juton Horstman (DCP), Miss Liz, Prof. Aileen Farrelly, Prof. Amira Annabi, Marlyn Jimenez, Kristie Miranda (Miranda Writes)

II. Call to order: 7:34pm

- A. Motion to amend the agenda to move Small Business Report (Seth Kaplan-Bronx Public) to follow Chairperson's Report. Motion was seconded and moved.

III. Approval of Minutes from 6/27/2021

- A. Proposed Amendment to adjust attendee list to identify committee members separately from Guests
- B. Amendment Accepted
 - 1. Unanimous Approval of minutes (with Amendment)

IV. Chairperson's Report

- A. Congratulations to the committee for working to keep Ridgewood Savings Bank at 3899 Sedgewick Avenue open. Chair Fazio met with Ridgewood Bank executives to discuss how they can reach more small businesses and types of financial services that our local businesses need.
- B. Ridgewood's flagship branch at 328 East 204th Street in Norwood had its grand opening on Tuesday, September 14. Chair Fazio and CM Dinowitz attended the ceremony. Ridgewood representatives expressed their strong commitment to the northwest Bronx and expressed an interest in working closely with the economic development committee of CB8.
- C. The Chair thanked Yuli Franklin from NYS DFS for attending today's meeting and discussing the Banking Development District program.
- D. The Chair thanked Orlando Kross of Flowers by Zenda- and previous awardee of the Betty Campbell Adams Award- for participating the NYPD community interview process for the selecting the Captain Melendez's successor at the 50th Pct.
- E. Congratulations to the merchants from the Riverdale Mainstreet Alliance for doing a fine job of refurbishing the tree pits throughout some of our merchant

corridors. Please check out the long list of tree pit sponsors on RMA's website. We encourage other business owners to adopt tree pits adjacent to their storefronts as well. This is another example our business owners working hard to improve our community and thank you to the businesses of the RMA: <https://rmsabx.org/>

- F. The SBA has activated the Disaster Relief Program in our district. Any businesses impacted by Hurricane Ida should go on the SBA website for details. They can also reach out to us and we can put businesses in direct contact with Sylvia Rivera, SBA Bronx Regional Director.
 - G. The EDC Graffiti Free NYC program has been partially re-instated. The board office is working with EDC and local property owners to get some of our more problematic corridors into the program:
<https://edc.nyc/program/graffiti-free-nyc>
 - H. **Questions/Comments:**
 - 1. ***Camelia – Graffiti Free NYC is online so it would be great to share link/website in the notes or from the Board. It is in English, Mandarin, Bangla, and Spanish.***
- V. Presentation: Small Business Report: Seth Kaplan, Proprietor of the Bronx Public located at 170 W. 231st St.
- A. President and Co-Founder of Bronx Public
 - B. Grateful for all of the things the city did for bar and restaurant owners over the past 18 months during some of the most challenging time for our industry
 - 1. Cap on delivery fees
 - 2. Outdoor dining
 - 3. Allowing “Drinks-to-Go”
 - C. Allowed them to increase employment and meet customer demands (especially the reduction of red tape)
 - D. Challenges:
 - 1. Lack of single point of contact for communication and agency enforcement of Covid related changes
 - 2. Short notices of changes impose unnecessary costs (e.g., investment in infrastructure and equipment)
 - 3. Examples: “Drinks-To-Go” was only giving 24-hour notice that the program was ending; and ending indoor dining the week before Christmas (more notice should have been provided)
 - 4. Outdoor seating – no allowance for more trash storage tied with increased rodent problem
 - 5. Would love to see more Open Streets- Albany Crescent
 - 6. Vaccine Mandate for Indoor Dining has been very difficult to implement
 - a. We are not set up to enforce public health mandate that is not required for all city residents
 - b. The city is putting businesses in an untenable situation
 - E. Questions:

1. Camelia: Many business owners would agree with your statements and wanted to thank you for coming to share your perspective
2. Nick: local merchants have expressed that they are experiencing similar challenges when it comes to vaccination screening
3. Marie: Request for Seth, consider clearing the trash from the drains near the outdoor seating area
4. Response: We are continuing to work on this and have revamped the drainage recently
5. Miss Liz: Agree with Seth on the rodent issue. We have business cleaning but don't see Street Cleaning Trucks
6. Nick: Please do share this feedback with the board so we can share with Environment and Sanitation Committee. We can also ask the office to contact DSNY
7. Julia Gomez: Also, please do share 311 complaints with the board as well so that we can expedite resolutions as well

VI. Presentation: Manhattan College's Financial Literacy Initiative Update: Professor Farrelly and Professor Annabi

- A. Sad to have to postpone the event but Covid regulations at the college make it near impossible to have the event with outside members in-person
- B. Hoping for a future time to be able to do so
- C. We will still plan to have the website up
- D. Questions/Comments:
 1. Nick: We will gladly welcome you back to discuss the website and potential updates on when the event can take place again

VII. New York State Department of Financial Services: Yuli Franklin

- A. Banking Development District (BDD) program:
https://www.dfs.ny.gov/apps_and_licensing/banks_and_trusts/bdd_about
- B. Deputy Director for Community Development within DFS
- C. We provide incentives for Banking institutions and credit unions to establish brick and mortar institutions in underserved areas
- D. Currently have 52 Banking Development Districts across the State (8 of which are in the Bronx)
 1. Process of designation is a result of partnership between the community and the financial institution
 2. Borough President's office is a great resource for partnership in moving the process forward
 3. Access to deposits is for four years, with check-in and then process is up for renewal with recommendation from DFS/BDD
 4. Financial institutions must continue to provide a valuable and impactful service to maintain the state subsidy

5. The importance of partnership within the community is clear and we have seen that those tend to be the most successful applicants/program recipients
6. Questions/Comments:
 - a. Moses: Is renewal every year or four years after initial period
 - b. Response: Every year and there have been incidences when we would have to recommend against an institution's renewal
 - c. Nick: Is the Ridgewood Bank partnership with Manhattan College's Financial Literacy Initiative something that would be considered for the BDD designation renewal?
 - d. Repones: Absolutely. In fact, DSF would want need a valid justification if the financial institution did not join the initiative
 - e. Camelia: When will we know of the final decision on the application?
 - f. Response: Decisions are published in a weekly bulletin. That starts 60-day clock to provide formal response to applicants.
 - g. Camelia: Who is more willing to engage in the process, large vs smaller banks?
 - h. Response: We have worked with institutions both large and small. It is more a matter of whether it is in a business's strategic plan and regulatory interest rather than size
 - i. Nick: What are other examples of bank-community partnerships that have worked well?
 - j. Response: Activities such as small business days, some have canvassed local community to inquire of local needs, have helped small businesses in writing business plans, etc.

VIII. Best Buy: Riverdale GM, Katherine Brito

- A. Not able to attend this meeting
- B. Questions/Comments:
 1. Nick: They are a new neighbor, hopefully we can try again to engage in October

IX. Outstanding Business-

- A. Open Restaurant Program:
 1. Rejection of the DCP proposed text amendment was voted for by the Land Use Committee on 9/2 and the Full Board Meeting on 9/14
 2. The proposed amendment change will eliminate the current zoning regulations for sidewalk cafes which is the first step in the process for establishing a permanent program
 3. ***Juton Hortzman (DCP): Worked on proposal***
 - a. As per Executive Order 228, Executive Order 125, LL 114 (2020), and NYS legislation S.6353-A/A.7733
 - b. Open Restaurant is two-fold – Sidewalk and Streets

- c. Right now, DOT is administering and regulating the program, but there is no designated unit
- d. Both Sidewalk Cafés and Curb-Side Dining are under the DOT umbrella of Open Restaurants
- e. As per Local Law 114, idea is to create a more permanent option. Permanent Open Restaurants (POR)
- f. Sidewalk cafés had existed in zoning resolution
- g. Department of Consumer Affairs and Worker Protection is not currently involved in regulating or administering Open Restaurants and their oversight of outdoor café's was eliminated as a result of Executive Order 126 and Executive Order 228
- h. Executive Orders allowed for any restaurant to have sidewalk café and street café through DOT
- i. Proposed Zoning text amendment, ZR Article 1 Chapter 4: Instead of sidewalk cafes living in zoning resolution, it would instead transfer to DOT and combine with the Open Restaurants Program
- j. Executive Order overrides and zoning resolution
- k. Street portion of the initiative is a bit more controversial. Would call for quasi-permanent structure (must be taken down in winter months)
- l. Questions/Comments:
- m. Moses: Will Open Streets move to DOT handle sidewalk and streets separately or together?
- n. Response: At this stage they are thinking that both sides of the Open Restaurants would be governed by the same "to be created" division under one umbrella
- o. Nick/Juton: Executive Order stays in effect until such updated plan is approved/created and overrides zoning resolution
- p. Camelia: All restaurants in her BID area are supportive of ease of regulations for sidewalk café. Some challenges are with DOT and flexibility with enforcement.
 - i. Why is DCP coming up with this now when there are 3 more months of existing Mayor and new administration is forthcoming?
- q. Response: This is actually supported by the City Council vote in October 2020 (LL 114) for a permanent solution to open streets. Timing is response to when the issue arose (Covid) that accelerated the discussions that have been ongoing for some time. The idea is that the next mayor would be able to step in and have a discussion on this as well. Also, there will still be a process, regulations and fees under the new system as well
- r. Being out of Zoning Resolution may make it less rigid given the process for Zoning Resolutions (e.g., public review, commentary, etc.)

- s. Nick: How long is public comment period
- t. Response: 90 days, ends on the 27th/28th of September
 - i. Public Hearing after that in mid-October
 - ii. Then City Council and ultimately to Mayor's Office
 - iii. DOT coming back to community in the spring
- u. Seth Kaplan: Concern over quasi-permanent when thousands of dollars of are being invested in setting up enjoyable and safe seating
 - i. Have you thought through, storage what can be done to allow for systems not being torn down every year?
- v. Response: Will convey these concerns to those working on this to capture this perspective
- w. Nick: Who is raising the concern about snow removal?
- x. Response: There have been issues outside of our district
- y. Legislation and Executive Orders pertaining to Open Restaurants:
 - i. <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/s6353/amendment/>
 - ii. <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/View.ashx?M=F&ID=9058968&GUID=3C8F3DDB-0E28-4CAB-A731-222F36DC3A4B>
 - iii. <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/home/downloads/pdf/executive-orders/2020/eo-126.pdf>
 - iv. <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/home/downloads/pdf/executive-orders/2021/eo-228.pdf>
- z. DCP Proposed Text Amendment Presentation and CPC Public Comment Link:
 - i. <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/plans-studies/open-retaurants/cpc-presentation-062121.pdf>
 - ii. <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/about/commission-meetings.page>

X. New Business

- A. Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act (MRTA). Does this committee want to take on this issue?
 - 1. Camelia: We should keep on our radar and see it comes
 - 2. Moses: Stay informed but concerned that being proactive here may suggest that we may *want* to bring this to our community board district
 - 3. Julia: Stay informed but may not be immediate action
 - 4. Joy: Currently feel that this may not be the appropriate time to take this on
 - 5. Nick: There will be a Cannabis Control Board (modeled after SLA). We should keep an eye on it but note that there is nothing in the legislation that would indicate whether the community would have any input into who gets to set up when and where:
https://www.nysac.org/files/MRTA_Summary.pdf

- B. Camelia: New businesses opened in Riverdale
 - 1. Restaurants on Riverdale Avenue and Kingsbridge over the summer
Wanted to give formal welcome and potentially do something to establish a connection to the community
 - 2. Camelia to draft template and share with the Committee

XI. Meeting Adjourned at 9:31pm