

Minutes of the Bronx Community Board 8 Economic Development Committee meeting
Thursday, October 22, 2022; in-person meeting held at Ezili Luxury Hall; 5540 Broadway, Bronx,
NY, 10463

Members in Attendance: Rashida Hilliard, Constance Barnes, Moses Esema (Vice Chair), Nick Fazio (Chair)

Community Members and Guests: Laura Levine-Pinedo (Dine-Out Riverdale, Bronx Burger House), Michael Gabert (Dine-Out Riverdale, Flexis Media, LLC), Darry Saldana (Bronx Chamber of Commerce), Miguel Matos (Bronx Chamber of Commerce), Ernesto Castillo (Ezili Luxury Hall), Yibel Torres (Ezili Luxury Hall), Elbia Cabral (Department of Consumer Affairs and Worker Protection (DCWP)), "The Sheriff" (Community Member)

- I. Chair Nick Fazio called the meeting to order at 7:34 pm.
- II. Fazio welcomed attendees and thanked the proprietors of Ezili Luxury Hall for hosting the CB 8's Economic Development Committee (the committee) meeting.
- III. Darry Saldana and Miquel Matos from the Bronx Chamber of Commerce (BXCC) introduced themselves to the committee and attendees. Mr. Saldana expressed the desire of BXCC to partner with the committee to reach more small businesses. Mr. Saldana and Mr. Matos stated that they are members of the "Adams Commission" (aka DOB 90-Day Commission), which the Mayor has tasked with revamping Department of Buildings (DOB) processes.
- IV. The BXCC representatives discussed their work in the Bronx and the many resources available to small businesses.
 - a. BXCC has assisted 1500 businesses with financial assistance, marketing assistance, business planning, and mentorship programs.
 - b. BXCC is also helping to support grant applications for various small business grant programs, including:
 - i. NYC Citizen's Committee Neighborhood Business Grant (<https://www.citizensnyc.org/grantmaking>)
 - ii. New York State Seed Funding Grant Program (<https://nyseedgrant.com/>)
 - c. *Mr. Saldana and Mr. Matos offered to assist Community District 8's (CD 8) small businesses with DOB issues relating to storefront permitting and renovations.*
 - i. *Miquel Matos:* miquelcucbronxchamber@gmail.com
 - ii. *Darry Saldana:* Outreach@bronxchamber.org
 - d. Questions/ Comments:
 - i. Laura Levine-Pinedo attested to the effectiveness of BXCC's support services. In particular, BXCC is effective at helping establishments prepare for inspections from multiple agencies, including the NYC Department of Health (DOH), the Department of Sanitation (DSNY), and the Department of Transportation (DOT).
 - ii. R. Hilliard inquired about the timeline for re-inspections when businesses receive violations.

- iii. E. Castillo indicated that the Kingsbridge BID is very supportive in helping businesses comply with the copious laws and regulations.
 - iv. N. Fazio explained the unfortunate aftermath of the fire on November 1, 2021, at 3648 Bailey Avenue and discussed the harmful implications of the commercial storefront vacancies at that location. Committee members and attendees discussed the unfortunate circumstances resulting from the block's deterioration (e.g., trash, vermin, poor lighting, illegal vending). BXCC's representatives agreed to look into the situation and see if more supports are available to adjacent establishments such as Khalle Grill (3638 Bailey Ave) and Best Laundry Inc (3642 Bailey Ave).
- V. Elbia Cabral (DCWP) discussed DCWP's mission to protect and enhance the economic life of New York City residences and businesses. DCWP licenses over 51,000 businesses in NYC. In addition to enforcement, Ms. Cabral indicated the DCWP helps businesses comply with NYC's regulations pertaining to businesses. They also offer free tax preparation for small businesses and self-employed freelancers. Finally, Ms. Cabral offered some general tips and recommendations for businesses, such as avoiding scams, navigating employee relations, and preventing onerous fines.
- VI. The committee, attendees, and Ms. Cabral discussed the various rules and regulations that DCWP enforces.
 - a. Questions/Comments:
 - i. Rashida Hilliard queried about rules that apply to providing physical or digital receipts. Ms. Cabral stated that all businesses must provide a printed receipt if a customer asks for one.
 - ii. M. Esema inquired how often businesses approach DCWP for help to prevent violations. Ms. Cabral indicated that only a few companies reach out for assistance. However, Ms. Cabral indicated that she would follow up with businesses with concerns at the committee's request.
 - iii. Miguel Matos asked if illegal vending in front of storefront establishments falls under DCWP enforcement. Ms. Cabral indicated that DCWP does have an enforcement team that will investigate unlawful vending. In addition, DCWP will come out every time to resolve issues and enforce violations.
 - iv. Darry Saldana cited recurring problems throughout the Bronx. He asked how businesses should handle circumstances when violators repeatedly return after DCWP has already taken enforcement measures.
 - v. Ms. Cabral responded that DCWP is not allowed to ask for identification. This policy can prevent fines from deterring violators. However, repeat offenders have discontinued their illegal vending activities with persistent reporting and enforcement. Ms. Cabral, therefore, stated that businesses and communities must keep reporting repeat violators to DCWP through 311.
 - vi. N. Fazio inquired about potentially volatile situations when vendors and storefront owners cannot resolve illegal vending through DCWP. Ms. Cabral stated that DCWP is working with NYPD in those situations. In addition, NYPD

and DCWP are planning joint sweeps through commercial corridors with frequent complaints.

- VII. Founders of Riverdale Restaurant Week (Dine-Out Riverdale) – Michael Gabert (Flexis Media) & Laura Levine-Pinedo (Bronx Burger House) – discussed the initiative's inspiration. Riverdale's first restaurant week took place from October 1 – October 8. Ms. Levine Pinedo and Mr. Gabert leveraged their business relationships with restaurants and their marketing skills to launch the initiative. As a result, most of the 29 participating restaurants reported significant weekly sales and foot traffic increases. Organizers also donated funds to the "Friendly Fridge" in conjunction with the event. The founders plan on building on Dine-Out Riverdale's success by planning future collaborations with CD 8's hospitality sector. In addition, the founders are planning a Veteran's Day event on November 11 (<http://dineoutriverdale.com/>).
- VIII. Organizers, attendees, and committee members discussed the future of Dine-Out Riverdale and how the organizers can collaborate with small businesses and service providers to enhance the program.
 - a. Darry Saldana (BXCC) offered the assistance of BXCC and suggested several resources. He also extended an offer to Dine-Out Riverdale to join the BXCC as a guest member.
- XI. Small Business Owner Report – Ezili Luxury Hall. Yibel Torres and Ernest Castillo of Eliza Luxury Hall, located at 5540 Broadway, discussed the challenges of starting their business during the pandemic. Their marketing research indicated a need for event space to host kid's parties, family gatherings, and the like. They have maintained a community focus and want to continue to spread the word about their small business. November will mark the end of their first year, and business is starting to improve. Mr.Castillo and Ms. Torres thanked the community for their support. They offered to host future meetings should the committee need a venue. They also indicated their desire to collaborate with Dine-Out Riverdale to host an event or to work on a joint marketing initiative.
 - a. Darry Saldana (BXCC) extended an invitation for Ezili Luxury Hall to join the BXCC as a guest member.
 - b. Mr. Saldana expressed his interest in hosting a BXCC event at the location.
- IX. Small Business Owner's Report –Michael Gabert (Flexis Media, LLC). Mr. Gabert discussed how he left a full-time job in marketing to start his own business. Flexis Media, LLC provides a range of marketing services for small businesses. Mr. Gabert indicated that he prices his services specifically for small, family-owned, and local businesses. Market projects include social media marketing, graphic design, email marketing, and the like. Mr. Gabert stated that in addition to co-creating Dine-Out Riverdale, he is also a personal trainer and volunteers in Van Cortlandt Park.
 - a. Committee members and attendees discussed how Flexis Media, LLC could attract more clients.
 - b. Elbia Cabral suggested that Mr. Gabert join the Freelancers Union, which supports self-employed entrepreneurs with insurance plans, financial services,

and a variety of helpful small business programs
(<https://www.freelancersunion.org/>).

- X. Small Business Owner's Report – Laura Levine-Pinedo (Bronx Burger House). Ms. Levine-Pinedo expressed her gratitude and appreciation for the Bronx Burger House's receipt of the Betty Campbell Adams Most Valuable Merchant Award at the full board meeting in September. Ms. Levine-Pinedo stated that it is crucial for the hospitality sector to continue supporting less fortunate community members. Although Bronx Burger House has been very supportive of her philanthropic initiatives, Ms. Levine-Pinedo founded the "4 Bronx Project" to expand her reach and scope. 4 Bronx Project is a nonprofit entity partnered with the Kingsbridge Riverdale Van Cortlandt Economic Development Corporation (KRVC). The collaboration has several events planned, including "Boo on Mosholu," a clothing drive to support children currently in the shelter system, a Christmas event at a local family shelter, and the North Riverdale Holiday Trolley Event. Committee members and attendees discussed how the Economic Development Committee could support future initiatives.
- XI. Chairs Report – N. Fazio thanked the Kiwanis Club of Riverdale for sponsoring the annual "Halloween Painting Contest." Students throughout the district decorated the windows of local businesses with Halloween paintings. The initiative enhances the festive spirit of the season in our commercial corridors, and the proceeds also go to support disadvantaged children in CD 8. Fazio also announced the release of the report on the economic impact of the Open Streets Initiative during the COVID lockdown. The full report can be accessed here (<https://www1.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/streets-for-recovery.pdf>). He thanked KRVC, members of CB 8, and local residents (Robert Heisler) for supporting the initiative on Johnson Avenue in the summer of 2020. In closing, Fazio announced the next meeting of the Economic Development Committee would be on Tuesday, December 6.
- XII. New Business – None
- XIII. Outstanding Business – Committee members discussed conducting walk-throughs in one or more of CD 8's Commercial Corridors. The committee agreed to coordinate some dates with BXCC.
- XIV. Approval of Minutes –
 - a. The committee unanimously approved the minutes from May 22, 2022.
 - b. The committee unanimously approved the minutes from September 22, 2022.
- XV. 9:23 pm: Meeting Adjourned