

(Pending Committee Approval)
Minutes of the Economic Development Committee for Bronx Community Board 8
Wednesday, November 5, 2025 @ 7:00 PM

The meeting was held at the University of Mount Saint Vincent (UMSV), 6301 Riverdale Avenue.

Committee Members in attendance (7): Constance Barnes-Watson (Chair), Caesar Tobar-Acosta (Vice Chair), Nick Fazio, Angel Ortega, Laura Levine-Pinedo, Daniel Nunez, Ashley Medina (Community Member)

Absent Committee Members (2): Richard A. Perez, Karen Walker

Quorum is Present

Board Members/Staff in attendance: Julie Reyes (Chair, Bronx Community Board 8)

Guest / Attendees: Lawrence Fauntleroy (UMSV), Luis Alfredo Garcia, Shire Silverman, Noah Aris, Darry Saldana (Bx Chamber of Commerce), Stephen Ditmore

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM.

The chair opened the meeting by introducing all parties in the room and allowed Lawrence Fountleroy to take the floor to introduce UMSV as the host.

Chairperson's report: Constance began by discussing the October 31, 2025, Commercial Corridor walkthrough on Broadway from West 225th Street to West 231st Street.

Additionally, Constance discussed the new fellow who will research the types of businesses and vacancies in the district.

The next item on the agenda was the Cravings and Crafts Farmers Market, where they discussed how they were founded this year and how they are supporting the neighborhoods.

Next item: roll call, Absent members were Karen Walker and Richard A. Perez.

Next presentation: The New Bronx Chamber of Commerce

The Chamber's motto is "Advocate, Connect and Educate": Advocacy for bills in support of small businesses, Connect small businesses, and Educate business owners. It is a membership-based organization with incremental fees associated with different tiers (\$350-\$2500). The Chamber hosts many events throughout the year, including the upcoming Veterans' luncheon. All events are included in their newsletters.

Currently, there are 49 available loans, six available public grants, and four private grants. Private Grants include: Small Hero Program for MWBEs (max \$50K), Hustlers' Microgrant for emerging entrepreneurs (\$1K), Hey Helen (\$5K), 2025 Send Business (\$5k). There's also pre-seed and seed funding as competitive grants of 50k-250k, available locally and nationwide, and require a solid business plan.

Next item, Approval of the Committee Meeting of September 2, 2025:

Unanimous approval

C. Barnes-Watson., C.Tobar-Acosta, N. Fazio, A. Ortega, L. Levine-Pinedo, D. Nunez, A. Medina

Next item, Resolutions - there were none at this meeting.

Old Business:

- *We returned to the discussion about Knolls Crescent retail vacancies and mentioned the KRVC survey and asked Laura to talk more about the effort: 700 residents completed it, and Laura will share the questions and data in aggregate. Currently, there are five vacant storefronts, and one issue is a lack of parking, as well as a lack of banks in the area.*
- Nick discussed prior efforts to save Chase Bank, in which residents joined forces with the Comptroller and other stakeholders. They developed a relationship with the state and obtained a banking designation for Ridgewood Bank.

Next item, New Business:

- Constance gave a high-level overview of the Most Valuable Merchant Award. She reminded members to review the criteria and consider businesses in the southern and eastern parts of the district. Caesar noted that the application process dates need to be updated.
- Constance reminded members about the upcoming fiscal year budget, explained capital and non-capital expenses, and asked them to start thinking about what we will submit for FY28.
- Constance opened the floor to the Committee to talk about their interests, Daniel Nunez shared thoughts he has been discussing with the Chair including: Quarterly business listening session as a pop-up, use of WhatsApp for a newsletter for businesses, partnering with local Chambers to host mixers (like BxCOC), creating a digital map of businesses in the district and engaging student volunteers and local interns. Julie and Constance noted that they will schedule time with Daniel to discuss these ideas further.

Next Monthly Economic Development Meeting: December 2, 2025 @ Artizen NYC
Small Business Internship Opportunity presentation from Lehman SBSC

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 8:33

Minutes submitted by Chair, Dr. Constance Barnes-Watson