

Minutes of the Economic Development Committee for Bronx Community Board 8 Thursday, May 11th 2023; In-person meeting held at Santa Fe Grill, 6025 Broadway, Bronx, NY 10471.

Committee Members in attendance: Nick Fazio (chair); Moses Esema (vice chair); Julia Gomez;

Guests: Michael Nixon (BOEDC); Angel Pagan (SBS); Michael Fong (SBS); Manari Moreno (Santa Fe); Michael Anton; Efrain Farciert (Santa Fe);

Community Board 8 Members: None

I. Chair Nick Fazio called the meeting to order @ 7:45

- A. N. Fazio asked for a motion made to amend the agenda and begin the meeting with the BCA Award
- B. M. Esema made the motion, and J. Gomez seconded.

II. Betty Campbell-Adams Most Valuable Merchant Award (BCA MVM)

- A. N. Fazio described the award and noted that the Board seeks to identify merchants within our community that have worked to enhance economic growth, improve community relations, and increase civic participation. He stated that Betty Campbell Adams was an iconic entrepreneur devoted to our community's betterment. Recognizing outstanding local merchants inspires other businesses to follow her example.
- B. N. Fazio asked the Committee if it should consider nonprofit businesses for the award. The committee members in attendance concluded that the BCA MVM Award intends to recognize “for-profit” companies that compete successfully in the free market and go above and beyond their stated mission by making significant contributions to the community.
 - 1. J. Gomez noted that every committee has alignment with a city agency and various stakeholders within the community. For example, CB 8's Economic Development Committee traditionally aligns with SBS, EDC, and BOEDC, all of which tend to provide services to for-profit businesses.
 - 2. M. Esema indicated that since nonprofits are "mission-driven" and not "profit-driven," CB 8's community service award ad hoc committee might consider nonprofits depending on their services and impacts.
- C. Committee members in attendance reached a consensus on their respective recommendations for this year’s recipient. They discussed the possibility of bringing the submission to the Board from the floor at the next full board meeting. Given that there was still time on the calendar, the members in attendance decided to postpone a final decision until the June meeting.

III. NYC Business Express Service Team (BEST): Angel Pagan, Michael Fong, Michael Anton;

- A. Angel Pagan discussed the BEST program and how it can support small businesses. Mr. Pagan noted that compliance officers collaborate with businesses and connect them with city agencies and services. BEST advocates conduct outreach events and neighborhood walk-throughs and meet individually with business owners. Businesses can set up a meeting with an SBS BEST. To learn more about how the NYC Business Express Service Team can help, please visit nyc.gov/NYCBEST, or call (888) SBS-4NYC/(888) 727-4692.” (<https://nyc-business.nyc.gov/nycbusiness/article/get-help-with-lic>).

Angel highlighted how the team supports businesses by helping them learn and navigate regulations *before* an inspection to implement best practices that improve outcomes proactively. As a result, they have helped businesses save over \$150MM since 2016.

- B. M. Fong and M. Anton explained their respective roles at SBS. Mr. Fong stated that the Committee's walkthrough event benefited BEST's mission and noted that ongoing collaboration would be highly advantageous.
- C. SBS representatives and attendees discussed some ideas and possible walkthrough events. M. Fong invited committee members and CB 8 board members to a scheduled walkthrough on Monday, May 22, between 11 AM and 1 PM. SBS BEST's objective is to visit 40 businesses. For more information regarding the walkthrough and to sign up for the BEST newsletter, email business@sbs.nyc.gov.
- D. Q&A:
 - a. N. Fazio asked how many compliance officers BEST has working in the Bronx.
 - i. M. Fong stated they only have six Compliance Officers for the city and need more.
 - ii. N. Fazio suggested the Committee consider adding support to hire additional agents as a Budget Item Request next year.

- IV. BOEDC: Michael Nixon provided a presentation on behalf of Marshall Strawbridge. He outlined four phases of BOEDC's transformation.
 - A. First, Mr. Nixon explained Bronx Empowerment Zone as an aspect of the Empire State Developments Empowerment Zone Initiative (<https://esd.ny.gov/new-york-empowerment-zone-program>). According to Mr. Nixon, the program includes the Bronx's Hunts Point, Port Morris, and Yankee Stadium areas. The Empowerment Zone EZ Loan Fund (<https://boedc.org/the-empowerment-zone-ez-loan-fund/>) is one of the program's funding sources. Second, M. Nixon discussed BOEDC's participation in SBA's Community Advantage Program (<https://www.sba.gov/document/support-community-advantage-participant-guide>). Third, M. Nixon stated that BOEDC is endeavoring to certify as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). The designation will allow BOEDC to participate in more federal and state loan and grant programs. Given BOEDC's many relationships with local businesses, it will increase access to capital significantly throughout the borough. Fourth, M. Nixon explained New Mark Tax Credits (NMTC). The NMTC program

incentivizes business and real estate investments in low-income communities via a federal tax credit. The US Treasury Department's Community Development Financial Institutions Fund administers the program, and local Community Development Entities allocate funding. BOEDC is endeavoring to participate in the NMTC program.

B. M. Nixon noted that the Bronx Tourism Council is attempting to make the Bronx a destination for tourists and locals interested in family-friendly entertainment, arts, nature, and the like. Next, Mr. Nixon noted that Bronx Week will run from May 8 through May 21 (<https://www.ilovethebronx.com/>). In closing, M. Nixon pointed out that the Bronx Day of Food and Arts Festival is on Sunday, May 21, from noon to 6 PM. Finally, he offered a table for SBS's BEST advisors to set up and meet and share information about their program with merchants and attendees.

C. Q&A:

a. M Esema asked about minimums and typical loan amounts beyond the Community Advantage program.

i. M. Nixon stated that there are two other types of loans:

1. Primary Loan vehicle – \$10K-\$100K – is mainly for working capital needs.

2. Bronx Initiative for Energy Efficiency – 0% interest loans up to \$100K for seven years – is for projects that improve energy efficiency.

b. Mr. Pagan asked about the criteria for loan eligibility.

ii. M. Nixon stated that there is no established minimum credit score. However, BOEDC typically wants to see at least three years of cash flow. The ability to pay back the loan through operating cash flow is a primary factor for loan eligibility.

V. Business Owner's Report: Manari Merino and Efrain Farceirt, Santa Fe Bar and Grill (<https://santafegrillandbar.com/>);

A. The owners discussed their business's history and how they started over 20 years ago. They noted the many issues they faced in getting started but stated that they operated successfully for 23 years. Although the pandemic was challenging, their business has

recovered. However, they noted that they are concerned about their current lease agreement, which expires within the year.

- B. The Committee and attendees discussed the various options available to Santa Fe. M.Fong from SBS suggested that they connect with SBS’s Commercial Lease Assistance Program:

(<https://nyc-business.nyc.gov/nycbusiness/article/commercial-lease-assistance-program>). SBS and BOEDC representatives offered several other ideas and resources to support the business owners. M. Nixon suggested that the business owners look into the SBA 504 loan programs as a possible option for them. He offered to connect Ms. Moreno and Mr. Farceit with Rafael Roger at BIC of NY, which runs the program through BOEDC.

VI. Chair’s Report:

- A. N. Fazio stated that the Committee submitted the budget item recommendations for FY 2025 to the office on April 22. The Committee recommended “Capital” investments in the Bronx Bucks App concept and Argus cameras in commercial corridors such as Baily Avenue and 238th Street. In addition, the Committee's "Expense" items included additional funding for SBS's Emergency Response Unit and the Commercial Lease Assistance Program.

VII. Discussion on Commercial Corridor Walkthrough on April 21, 2023

- A. The attendees discussed the commercial corridor walkthrough on April 21, 2023. They shared thoughts, opinions, and ideas for future events. M. Fong reiterated that it is very productive for SBS to build on the collaboration with CB8. He thanked the Committee for taking the initiative and encouraged future collaborations between BEST and the Committee.

VIII. Outstanding Business/ New Business

- A. None

IX. Approval of Minutes

A. N. Fazio noted that the Committee would vote on the Minutes for Tuesday, March 7, 2023, at its next meeting.

X. Adjournment 9:15 PM

Nick Fazio, Chair Economic Development Committee, submitted the minutes on May 23, 2023.

