

**Community Board 12, Manhattan: Business Development Committee Meeting  
October 6th, 2020 (held virtually via Zoom)**

**Committee Members Present:** Chair Domingo Estevez, Tanya Bonner, Nobles Crawford, Cindy Matos, Ashley Fernandez, Mariela Graham, Paradise Phoenix, Christinia Richiez, Francisco Lopez **Absent:** Rafael Fernandez, J Guzman, Miriam James, Other CB12 Members: Eleazar Bueno **Staff:** Paola Garcia **Members of the Public:** 9

The meeting was called to order at about 7:05pm by the Chair Domingo Estevez.

**Welcome/Opening Remarks - Chair Domingo Estevez (7:05pm)**

Opened with the challenges of our time, in regards to business operations during the time of COVID.

Gave a recap of the committee's work to-date. After a small break for technical difficulties, mentioned the "Committee Business" modification to the agenda. Opening our first order of business, wanting to hear from the businesses on the front line, with their testimonies.

**Agenda Approval:** Motion - Nobles Crawford; Second - Christinia Richiez (passed unanimously)

**Small Business Owners Testimonies (7:13):**

**1. Janifer Wilson, Sisters Uptown Bookstore**

Tanya Bonner gave the summary of why she asked Janifer to come speak. Sister Uptown Bookstore opened in June 2000, and has been in lower Washington Heights ever since. In that time, Janifer told us about how they've pivoted to online book sales, have not received PPE funds because they don't have employees (Only her, her daughter and volunteers). She is worried because they only received a grant and are maintaining on their online book sales alone. Currently, this non-essential business can only open up-to 25% capacity, for which Janifer is not understanding what that 25% entails. Currently, the bookstore is offering curbside pick-up until they receive clarity on the occupancy size. She is seeking info on anything that would be able to help their clarity on the re-opening rules. Janifer was a part of CB12 for some time, in the past and understands the community benefit we may be able to offer her.

Questions:

- Francisco: Asked if they qualified for any small business loans from the SBA. Janifer mentioned they hadn't because they don't have any employees. However, Francisco noted that he's a sole proprietor as well, and was able to receive an SBA loan
- Domingo: Asked if they had applied for an Uptown Fund, from Columbia. They did, but haven't heard back. He also asked if they are partnering with any schools, but they've had challenges in the past with the regulations of being a qualified vendor for schools. Domingo mentioned he could help her get their DOE vendor number.
- Christina: Asked she was able to apply for the EIDL loan, which Janifer didn't know about. Christina also wanted to see how commercial rent been for her, and if she's received any support from their landlord. Fortunately, rent is not a problem for them due to online sales. Christina wanted to mention the MWBE and the EIDL loans for Janifer's consideration, and asked Tanya to connect them both for support.
- Tanya: Wanted to know what would make a difference for their business right now. Janifer mentioned that getting the vendor license for the BOE would be huge. Outside of that, she would love to have more support in regards to community upkeep, which she's tried to get before from local officials, the police and other community leaders. At this point, Lauren Lynch came in to speak about the coalition's formation in September. And a theme in this group has been about anxious patience from the restaurateurs for

clear guidance from the city.

## 2. **Tara Wholley, Hilltop Park Alehouse (7:34)**

Have also had challenges in this time, and mostly with communication. There's been direction coming from all different ways, which can make it confusing for a business without the right legal resources. The outdoor dining opportunity saved them, but the information of its continuation has been spotty and confusing. Hence another frustration, with the speed of clear and concise guidelines from the city. That said, the Uptown Restaurant Coalition, an organically formed group, has been pivotal in support.

Questions

- Nobles: Has there been a main leader in regards to being responsible for the dissemination of direction, and are you aware of any community boards that have built resolutions around this need? There's a Nightlife Czar, but only for bars, and has been fairly insufficient in direction.
- Tanya: What is the name of your group (there isn't really a name) and how can people join?
- Francisco: How do the new indoor guidelines help/hurt your business (25%). What would be the cause for them to keep outdoors open if they mandated heaters in the winter months (would it add stress to your financial situation). It varies depending on the place because each space is unique, which is why clear and equal guidance needs to be given.

## 3. **Peter Walsh, Coogans (7:53)**

Although Coogans is closed, he's still advocating on the behalf of our local businesses. And from what he sees of the void of leadership in the government, he sees hope in the Community Board to provide leadership and championship for the local businesses. We need ceilings on the commercial rental hikes - that's the #1 issue. Additionally, when landlords have vacancies, they need to be forced to open their prices to local businesses, so that empty storefronts aren't as lucrative. He also touched on the police/community divide and potential healing, and what it will take; while also commenting on the humane treatment of the mentally ill and homeless in regards to outdoor eating opportunities.

Questions

- Nobles: Are there any lobbying groups that are working on behalf of the small business owners/restaurants within state and city government? Yes, but they're also losing people because their dues are tanking due to business closings. Thus, the voice once had, is now diminished.
- Tanya: What are you up to now, Peter? They're managing a grant for local small businesses.

### **Committee Business:**

#### 1. **NYC DOH, John Padmore (Rescheduled for next meeting)**

#### 2. **Impact of Covid on Small Businesses Townhall (8:20)**

A conversation to have an open dialogue on our business' COVID situations. In this conversation, we aligned on timing for the Townhall and setup. It was suggested to do the Town Hall in different sections, so that it may be better managed and more people will be able to speak. Tanya recommended using a form to get to the top topics on people's minds.

Nobles asked about a clear objective and what our target audience is. Domingo was clear that we're definitely catering to the business owners, and this will be ran in a fashion to become a stronger voice (a la lobbyist) to our City leadership. Perhaps we create resolution pillars (i.e Loans, Renters Rights, Gov't Communication, etc), and fill-in the details as we have the separate sessions - so the ultimate goal of the Townhall sessions are to create a very

strong resolution that will demand action. There was broad alignment on timing for the sessions - December. A potential structure is to brainstorm things to include in the resolution in the Townhalls, create the resolution from those meetings, and present at the next Committee meeting to fine-tune/refine, for final presentation. **Possibly - use our meetings as the coordination time periods, and roll-out with something in January/February.**

**November (2nd Tue.) Meeting** - Retail (all businesses sans groceries & Groceries); Invite dept. of Consumer Affairs

**December Meeting** - Barbershops & Salons

**January Meeting** - Breakout sessions on pillar ideas

**Every meeting has a "Resources" 15 min. to advance Committee Business support**

### **3. Community Partner Updates (8:45)**

**Lorial Crowder (CLOTH)** - replaced Jackie Tesman in continuing on the Avenue NYC grant.

What they've provided are the virtual book clubs (Word-Up and Sisters Uptown) for local bookstores to help generate business. They've also partnered w. Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance. They'll be revamping their offering in the face of COVID's challenges; and have lost some business partnerships, but have gained a few as well. Gala's 68th Anniversary Gala is coming-up in November.

### **4. Committee Priorities (9:05)**

**After a quick conversation on logistics of the conversation, we began. Expense rank - Unanimous; Capital Rank - Unanimous**

### **Old Business / New Business / Announcements / Adjournment**

- **no business**

There being no other business and a guarantee from Chair Domingo Estevez to look into creating a task force to address this particular issue, **the hearing was adjourned at 9:48pm**

Respectfully submitted: Nobles Crawford