

**Community Board 12, Manhattan: Business Development Committee Meeting
January 5th, 2021**

Present: Domingo Estevez (Chair) Tanya Bonner (Vice-Chair), Francisco Lopez, Christina Richiez, Nobles Crawford, Paradise Phoenix, Rafael Fernandez, Ashley Fernandez

Excused: Juan Guzman

Board Members Present: Isidro Medina

This meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm.

A. Welcome & Opening Remarks

Committee Chair, Domingo Estevez opened up the meeting welcoming attendees and the new year. In the spirit of the New Year, he suggested the committee start the year off with a glimpse of running meetings based on the interests of the committee members. His goal is to see more members engaged and giving folks the avenue to moderate meetings, for example, Francisco Lopez speaking about marijuana and the impact it has on businesses. Francisco emphasized the importance of knowledge, the decriminalization of marijuana as well as the importance of working with political officials to understand the laws. He has contacted elected officials and hopes to bring it forward in February. Nobles shared his support for this idea but also encouraged that we do not rush a meeting on the issue of marijuana to capture as many facets as we can on the decriminalization, legalization, and prioritization.

B. Approval of Agenda

Nobles motioned to approve this agenda and Francisco Lopez seconded.

C. Partnership meeting roundtable

Domingo reached out to several organizations for today's meeting, WIDC, CLOTH, the Washington Heights BID, the WH Chamber of Commerce, Inwood Merchants Association, and Washington Heights SBS. This was designed to have a greater conversation on the work they do within the community and the offering they have to the community.

A. Washington Heights BID, Isidro Medina

- a. The WaHi BID's mission is to have a clean, safe, and prosperous commercial corridor. They create and sponsor several events to bring awareness on how to support small businesses. Isidro mentioned that small businesses are preoccupied with keeping doors open so he will often go door to door to know and understand the business and familiarize himself with the owners so that they have the information and resources available. The city has designated the BID as a pickup point for masks, face shields, and posters all free of charge. The BID is the smallest (as it relates to budget, 517k/yr.) but the second oldest BID. They have a board of directors that oversee the BID and it is a mix of merchants, residents, community board members, and the precinct. They oversee how the funds are managed every year. Isidro hopes to expand the BID. He would like to bring more programs and advocacy for merchants but needs a larger budget. Most properties that are associated with the BID have an increase in value but creates a challenge because

with higher values in property comes a rent increase. Tanya asked if the BID was looking to expand to lower WaHi which Isidro shared that it likely will not reach lower WaHi but he mentioned CLOTH is doing a lot of work with those businesses and trying to achieve a BID in the area.

B. CLOTH, Lorial Crowder

- a. CLOTH is focused on servicing on 155th street to 178th street Broadway to St Nicholas. They only jump-started the focus on these particular corridors with the previous head of CLOTH. They look to do virtual events with businesses for example they hosted 11 virtual book clubs with Word Up and Sisters Uptown and highlighted a local artist. They have been partnering with the Neighborhoods Now Initiative which is a team of urban planners that partner with organizations and BIDs to provide resources to the community. They have partnered with Salento on 165th street and Amsterdam. A discussion between Lorial and Isidro was had on the challenges with the distribution of budget in the neighborhood and the city at large. Tanya mentioned that SBS is promoting a million-dollar grant, the Neighborhood 360 program that could be a resource for businesses here.

C. Washington Heights and Inwood Development Corporation, Savannah

- a. WIDC serves people and businesses north of 96th street up to 235th st/Marble Hill area. They are economic development and entrepreneurial assistance center. They mostly do technical assistance for small businesses such as MWBE certifications, legal services, loan counseling, etc. They also have a daycare business development assistance program that mostly targets women and the Spanish speaking population. They also manage the vendors at the space right next to the United Palace and run the Fort Tryon park festival which attracts over 75,000 people in the area. At this time they are focused on getting the word out to businesses and residents so their programs can be taken advantage of. Isidro stressed the importance of using the small businesses and allowing them to be visible at the Fort Tryon Medieval Festival because admittedly people from this community do not attend the festival. After all, the outreach is not there. Savannah shared that WIDC is working on a multi-pronged approach that the community can take advantage of and giving them the avenue to be promoted and visible. Nobles asked with the pandemic if there has been an increased interest in creating more daycares which our community needs. Women have historically been pushed out of the workforce so they must be at the forefront of WIDC's efforts. They have hired a Childcare BD Director and are looking to promote classes for more women and the greater community to take advantage of. They have the personnel but they are struggling with the pipeline. The program is not free but it is heavily subsidized. The class is \$425 with the original fee being \$2,500 and have designed the program very thoroughly so people come out having the certification.

D. Roundtable

- a. Domingo is proposing to the executive committee for there to be a tab on CB12's website that have information accessible to people. Tanya echoed these sentiments and asked how the organizations can work together to have a unified vision. How can we come together to create a shared vision to achieve collective goals? Savannah shared that she is in support of a central hub of info and programs available. She wants to better utilize the plaza by United Palace more to highlight merchants as

well as using that as a way to promote educational resources. Isidro shared Tanya's sentiments – that due to the fragmentation of community business organizations, the impact they can make is minimal. It takes resources to showcase what these organizations have done and resources to pull it together. Christina shared her support of updating the website but taking one step further and utilizing social media with 15-second clips in English and Spanish. Nobles suggested that we send out mailers to the community with a basic overview of what CB12 offers. Francisco shared his perspective on utilizing community influencers so that business owners who are a lot less trusting of others can buy into what we are offering.

D. Old Business/New Business/ Announcements/ Adjournments

Lorial Crowder from CLOTH approached the board requesting support for a grant CLOTH is trying to secure. They are in the process of applying for the NY Main Street Program grant under the Housing Trust Fund Corporation. It will focus on a section at 157th to 159th street. A grant like this would provide support to help with the infrastructure, park clean up, and around the 1 train station. They are asking for a letter of support needed by January 15th. Domingo shared that he would share it with CB12 Board, Eli Bueno and Nobles will share it with the head of parks and cultural affairs, Liz Ritter.

This meeting was adjourned at 8:46 pm.