

Community Board 12, Manhattan: Business Development Committee Meeting
February 2nd, 2021

Present: Domingo Estevez (Chair), Francisco Lopez, Christina Richiez, Nobles Crawford, Paradise Phoenix, Rafael Fernandez, Mariela Graham, Ashley Fernandez

Board Members Present: Elizabeth Ritter, Curtis Young

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

A. Opening Remarks & Chair Report

Committee Chair, Domingo Estevez opened up the meeting welcoming the new committee members given the recent shuffle with the new year. He shared his initiative in getting members to co-moderate meetings of their interests that are linked to Business Development and the impact of the community. Francisco Lopez was someone who shared an interest in co-moderating a meeting on cannabis, what it looks like for our community, its implications on business, and a general overview of the bill and laws. Francisco introduced Jason Starr, a human rights lawyer and educator.

B. Approval of Agenda

C. Elected Official Reports

D. The Business of Marijuana | Jason Starr

Jason opened the forum with his background within civil rights and education. His early work was rooted in analyzing and highlighting the disparities of Stop & Frisk and its links to marijuana arrests. That took him through many different paths of working with state officials and organizers to roll out policy framework and community outreach but his goal for this meeting was really to give a 101 on Cannabis.

Jason emphasized how new this industry is. For the first time in generations, our economy is creating a market where they have to figure out regulations, opportunities, and policies around something that has been prohibited for 90 years. We have to think about consumption, regulation, gaining capital, and moving the deregulated market to the new regulated one. New York isn't doing this alone though. Their market is different but there are 15 other states who are pioneering the way for what this framework could look like. Massachusetts was the first state to have a social equity program which Jason suggested would be very beneficial for New York to look at.

Recently, Chuck Schumer has pushed the cannabis bill to be a top priority for other elected officials which indicates there is some movement in this bill. Additionally, as equally important to push on business, it is also important to push advocacy. Many have been disenfranchised by the policies around marijuana and it is important that as these policies roll out communities and businesses are thinking about how they can contribute to community justice. Jason then discussed front end vs back-end equity along with recriminalization of the community. What organizers want to avoid is the divide between legal marijuana and unregulated marijuana because what has been seen in other states is that the same communities who were victims of hyper

criminalization are still the same community experiencing over criminalization despite marijuana being legal.

We then heard from advocates of marijuana and their perspectives: Emily Ramos, Melissa Moore, and Cristina Buccola. They are all part of the Start Smart coalition to legalize marijuana in New York with centering community reinvestment, reparative justice, and equity. Melissa, who is also with Drug Policy Advocates noted that there were 800,000 marijuana arrests during the time where marijuana had just been legalized in New York so it is important that as we think about the framework of policy it is inextricably linked to equity and justice for communities and populations who have been disproportionately affected. Cristina explained the important differences between the CRTA (Cuomo's bill) and the bill introduced by Senator Kreuger and Stokes, the MRTA, are the licenses available. The two main licenses that are different are delivery and social consumption. She suggested looking at who is controlling the different types of legislations, and the dissemination of power. Emily Ramos is a founder of Hay Mi Madre, a marijuana worker cooperative and NY native. She shared her experience in founding a cooperative, the benefits, and the challenges associated with it. She then walked through the different types of cooperatives available to fund and incubate a co-op of interest. Senator Jackson shared his thoughts and emphasized his belief that the communities that have been criminalized should participate in the economic opportunities and gain from it.

Liz Ritter shared that in California, people who have been disenfranchised by the system begin a business, end up failing, and then get taken over by bigger funders and people who were not disenfranchised. Cristina shared that under the MRTA, there is more latitude that is given when it comes to money and resources to prevent these issues from happening. Representatives from elected officials shared their perspectives between MRTA and CRTA. Senator Krueger's representative, Brad mentioned that MRTA should be moved prior to the budget so that last minute people are not scrambling and then ultimately pushing it a couple more months. New Jersey's legalization of cannabis has, in his opinion, pushed New York to consider this because accessibility is easy. Assembly Member Carmen de la Rosa shared her thoughts on the bill and the emphasis on justice for communities. Though we need to push bills such as the MRTA in the middle of a budget process, we also can't pass things in vain that can potentially harm the community just because we want to get it done.

The community Q+A was open for attendees to engage and clarify on what was discussed during the meeting.

This meeting was adjourned at 9:15pm.