

Community Board 12
Washington Heights & Inwood
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Business Development Committee (BDC)
Minutes for April 3rd 2018

Present: Dr. Jason E. Compton, Chair; Eleazer Bueno, Asst. Chair; Sara Fisher, Bruce Robertson, Public Member
Absent: Glennis Aquino, Rud Morales

1. Welcome / Opening Remarks

Meeting called to order at 7:00PM by Dr. Jason E. Compton.

Dr. Jason E. Compton presided as Chair and Eleazer Bueno, Asst. Chair was taking minutes.

Public and Committee members were welcomed. There was a slight change to the order of the agenda items.

2. New Business

Vacancy Tax

The Vacancy tax was discussed as an issue gaining traction within the de Blasio administration. De Blasio seems in favor of penalizing landlords who leave the storefronts sitting empty. As he stated a few days prior, "I am very interested in fighting for a vacancy fee or a vacancy tax that would penalize landlords who leave their storefronts vacant for long periods of time in neighborhoods because they are looking for some top-dollar rent but they blight neighborhoods by doing it," he said on WNYC. "That is something we could get done through Albany."

There was a reminder that Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer has already been pushing for such a tax since last year, when her office studied the entirety of Broadway and found 188 empty storefronts — with the most in Morningside Heights. She also supports a plan being considered by the City Council to require property owners with empty commercial spaces to register in an official database so the city can keep track of vacancies.

There were various issues that our board discussed including:

- The need to speak landlords within our community to obtain their perspective
- The possibility of a resolution in support of this issue

Communication of this Committee

The chair stressed the importance of establishing various lines of communication within our community. The idea was that we are currently working on various issues that are simultaneously being discussed in other forums. Four different organizations were identified and the chair, as well as co-chair, have decided to develop open lines of communication with these groups.

- Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer (connecting us with other Community Boards)
- Chamber of Commerce (assessing their history and connections)
- CB12 Licensing Committee (giving assistance to local merchants)
- Inwood Merchant Association (assist in organizing local merchants)

3. Old Business

Small Business Jobs Survival Act

At the Last CB12 meeting, our resolution in support of the Small Business Jobs Survival Act, passed. This resolution was sent to

Hon. Andrew Cuomo, Governor
Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
Hon. Letitia James, Public Advocate
Hon. Scott M. Stringer, Comptroller
Hon. Gale Brewer, Borough President
Hon. Adriano Espaillat, Congressman
Hon. Brian Benjamin, State Senator

Hon. Marisol Alcantara, State Senator
Hon. Alfred Taylor, Assembly Member
Hon. Carmen De La Rosa, Assembly Member
Hon. Ydanis Rodriguez, Council Member
Hon. Mark Levine, Council Member
Hon. Jaqueline Mallon, 1st Deputy Commissione
NYC SBS

As an update on the issue, the public was reminded that on March 22, 2018, Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez re-introduced the Small Business Jobs Survival Act of which Rodriguez was a co-prime sponsor in the previous session. This bill would establish conditions and requirements for commercial lease renewal negotiations, including requirements for lease renewal terms, arbitration-triggering conditions, limits on security deposits, and prohibitions on landlord retaliation.

Our committee will keep an eye on the act as we feel it could have a major impact on our community.

WAHI Chamber of Commerce Presentation

Last month the representative from the Chamber Heidi Hernandez visited our committee. Heidi has an open line of communication with this committee. We have to continue to find ways to work together.

The following are upcoming events being hosted by the Chamber of Commerce

Date: 4/27 WAHI Policy Breakfast

Date: TBD Business Management 101 Series for Small Businesses – How to establish business records, how to create, balance and maintain your business budget

Date: May 8th NYC Board of Health – Restaurant Grading Phase II
For restaurant owners, deli, coffee shop, bakeries, etc. An overview of food and restaurant inspection, how to conduct self-inspections and to main you good Grading of your restaurant or food establishment

Updates – Neighborhood 360

Last month, SBS representatives Madeline Britt and Warren Gardiner, visited our committee. We have an open line of communication with these representatives and SBS. We want to continue to find ways to work together. There are several community organizations being developed, one of those is the Merchant Association the Washington Heights BID. A representative came to speak on this group and other initiatives within Neighborhood 360.

A heated, but productive conversation took place reviewing the various responsibilities of the Washington Heights BID, landlords and small business owners. While attempts to connect these three groups have been difficult in the past, this committee would like to find ways to build better relationships in the future. We will continue to explore new options with future meetings.

Dyckman Corridor Bike-Lane

Nothing new to report, but this issue will remain on this committee's radar as new developments are taking place.

4. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Eli Bueno, Asst. Chair. The motion was seconded by Sarah Fisher.