

Alida Camp
Chair

Will Brightbill
District Manager



505 Park Avenue
Suite 620
New York, N.Y. 10022
(212) 758-4340
(212) 758-4616 (Fax)
www.cb8m.com Website
info@cb8m.com - E-Mail

The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Small Business Committee
Monday, December 10, 2018 - 6:30PM
James Lenox House
49 East 73rd Street

MINUTES

Attendees: Alexandra Barker, Cece King, Gayle Barron, Dori Newman, and Michael Mellamphy.

Meeting called to order at 6.30pm

Agenda:

Community Initiatives

-POP UP ART EXHIBITION- Cece King and Dori Newman have been working hard to source a space for an “Art exhibition Pop up” event. Initially the idea was to reach out to landlords whose spaces are vacant but this doesn’t appear to be a fruitful avenue, as landlords are not appearing too receptive to such an initiative. The idea has evolved to hosting such an event at a local business. Cece has reached out to Shakespeare and Co. on Lexington and 69th Street as well as DTUT café on 2nd Avenue and 91st Street as possible venues for such a project.

-SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT FAIR- Alexandra Barker has been working with the committee to come up with ideas about hosting a Small/Local business Support Fair. The goal of such a fair would be to bring together local business owners, prospective business owners and city agencies such as The DOH, The Dept. of Consumer Affairs etc. as a way to provide information. The Community Board would be represented as well as small business advocacy groups, local BIDs and neighborhood associations. The goal would be assessing how the community could support our local business better as well as providing a platform for our local business owners to get the latest information they need to continue operating and growing. The idea of inviting legal firms as well as Small Business Services to provide help to current business owners and potential startups was also proposed.

-VACANCY TAX PANEL- As of now the idea of a Vacancy Tax as a punitive measure for landlords who are keeping their commercial spaces vacant is just that. An idea. It appears to be an idea Mayor De Blasio has been in favor of. It is being discussed as a possible solution to the citywide issue of Vacancies. Michael Mellamphy is working with The Manhattan Borough Presidents office “Small Business Task Force” and this issue is top of their agenda. We have looked at how other cities are tackling similar issues. One suggestion is compiling a “Vacancy Registry” which has been implemented in many other cities around the country including Yonkers and Albany. As of now the data needs to be compiled. The Borough president’s office is looking into how best to go about gathering such data. We

are working with our appointed fellow Andrea Marie Partenio from Colombia University and the folks at LIVE XYZ on compiling our own database of vacancies across our district in an effort to understand the reasons why this problem is occurring and how we can combat it. Gayle Baron reached out to a contact at SBS and found that a vacancy rate over 10% is problematic for retail corridors. Landlords are taking tax losses while waiting for higher paying tenants such as chain stores who move more slowly when negotiating leases, thus leaving storefronts vacant for longer time frames. These chain stores reinvest about 14% of revenues back into the local economy while local mom and pop stores reinvest close to 50%. On the other hand, chain stores are less likely to go belly up. The increase in online shopping is also a factor as are older businesses closing when unable to adjust to neighborhood gentrification and changing demographics. The City's land use policies where it revitalizes certain commercial corridors can negatively impact shopping in other adjacent shopping districts.

Apparently, the City Council is still looking at the Small Business Jobs Survival Act that would require mediation for landlords and tenants when they cannot agree on commercial rents. There are some legal issues, which have to be addressed if this bill is to pass.

-UES RETAILER FORUM- After last year's Restaurant and Service industry forum where business operators from that sector come before the committee to highlight the difficulties of running small business in our community we are putting together a similar forum for local business retailers. We have been speaking with both the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce and Joanna Cawley and Irma Torres at Carnegie Hill Neighborhood association to plan a "Breakfast Meeting". It is clear from the amount of vacancies that there is an issue affecting small businesses in our community so we want to hear from our local retailers. The date and location of the meeting has yet to be decided but it will be with the business owners schedule in mind. Right now, it is thought that this will take place in late February or early March. If each member of the community board could bring 3 business cards or the contact information of their local shopkeeper, boutique owner, bookstore or any local business, other than restaurants or bars, and give to Mick or Sarah at the January Full Board meeting that would be of great help in planning this event. Jessica Walker of The Chamber of Commerce has expressed a great interest in this forum and hopes that it may become a regular event.

-UES HIGH SCHOOL CONTEST- We will discuss the idea of having a high school contest for students to contribute to our Vacancy storefront project at our January meeting as Andrea our fellow who is helping to coordinate much of the planning of this project was unable to make the meeting.

Old Business

New Business

Paul Higgins from E60s neighborhood association attended tonight's meeting with concern about the excessive vacancies he has noticed in the community.

Burce, a young lady who is starting her own business also attended in order to get information relating to city agencies and Small Business Services. Highlighting a need for initiatives such as the Small business support fair.

Mick Mellamphy and Sarah Chu, Co-Chairs