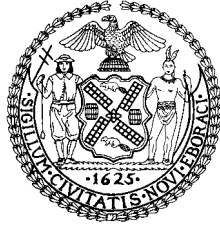


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**The City of New York**  
**Community Board 8 Manhattan**  
**Small Business Committee**  
Monday, September 17, 6:30 PM  
Lenox Hill Hospital  
130 East 77<sup>th</sup> Street, Carmel Conference Room

Attendance: Alexandra Barker, Gayle Baron, Alida Camp, Cece King, Dori Newman, Matt Orama  
Excused: Michael Mellamphy

### MINUTES

#### **1. Share discussion points from Public Advocate's Restaurant Roundtable**

- A lot of information offered by all the agencies. The difficulty was that there was almost too much information. For example, Small Business First is a very solid program, but in the long list of SBS' programs, its importance may have gotten lost.
- Business owners don't have time to make follow up calls to agencies – they need to make many decisions every day and want to keep it simple and get the answer they need to move forward.
  - We need to cut down as many steps as possible for these business owners.
  - Business owners frustrated by "I'll get back to you" responses.
  - They are working 18 hour days and don't have the time to do the research.
- There are so many regulations and they change so frequently. Government loses its credibility when rules are not printed, agency staff can't answer questions, or agency staff don't know what changes have taken place.
- There is a lot of turnover and lack of continuity with DOHMH inspectors. Since the same inspectors don't return to a business there is a lack of understanding about the restaurant's challenges and accomplishments.
- A suggestion was made to create a program guide for each city agency and a two sentence description of each department's work.
- Mature businesses are not in need of start up support, but rather, need ongoing business solutions as well as updates on the changing regulatory landscape. They are often told to go to city agencies for help, but most business owners have difficulty getting specific answers to specific questions in a timely manner.
- New businesses ask more questions, but are often in need of a wider range of front end support that established businesses don't need.
- Changes in regulations are usually passed down to businesses through professional associations.
- Many of the businesses that come to CB8 meetings are mature businesses whose needs are different from the new, emerging businesses.

## 2. Initial discussion about challenges from small businesses in the retail industry

- Suggestion to check in with the following associations that have worked closely with retailers and restaurants for feedback:
  - 86<sup>th</sup> Street Association
  - Carnegie Hill Neighbors
  - E. 72<sup>nd</sup> Street Neighborhood Association
  - East Sixties Neighborhood Association
- The group discussed the following issues the participants believed affect small businesses:
  - Small retailers are hit hard by internet business – ask business owners if they are facing challenges and who advocates for them.
  - Co-Op – 80/20 cap was eliminated. How does this impact commercial rent in these residential buildings? Anecdotally, Blacker & Kooby’s rent was raised 500% after the law was changed, which is why they reopened in a smaller space.
  - Vacancy Tax – what is happening with the vacancy tax policy development and would it help small retailers?
  - Marymount Administrators and other private schools were interested in pop up spaces for performances, art, and increased connectedness to the community. Set designers could build interiors that can go up and down quickly. Cece King raised several ideas about how pop up spaces can be utilized to connect schools with the community/small businesses. Cece will share some ideas at the next Small Business meeting.
  - Day to day challenges of retail owners is significant.
- For future meetings, the Small Business Committee came up a number of ideas listed below. For each, it would like feedback on the following:
  - best time of year to launch
  - Which Community Boards and state or local elected officials that would be interested and have jurisdiction on this work.
  - Important issues to keep in mind
  - stakeholders to engage
- Ideas generated for follow up at future meetings:
  - **Idea #1: Small Business Support Fair.** Alexandra Barker came up with this excellent idea (with Dave Liston) to host a fair where agencies regulating or supporting small business could host a table or booth and small business owners could come in to get questions answered or ask for help. This could even be an annual event to help update small businesses on the changes that have occurred by law or regulation in the last year or any additional programs that might support both mature businesses and emerging entrepreneurs. Alexandra and Dave could work with Holy Trinity to sponsor the fair.
  - **Idea #2: Vacancy Tax Panel.** Originators of the vacancy tax ideas have not issued details about the policy. Alida Camp and Gayle Baron suggested revisiting the issue given the strong interest and complexity of city v. state regulations. (We might also consider a future panel on the impact of overturning 80/20 co-op board rules on small businesses and small business zoning)
  - **Idea #3: UES Retailer Forum.** Just as we brought in restaurant owners representing different parts of the UES in to discuss the challenges they face in running their businesses, we would like to do a forum with UES retailers. Ideally,

we could hold the forum in January after the holiday season. Alida suggested that Peter Elliot would be interested in participating in such an event.

- **Idea #4: Vacancy + Shop UES website contest.** A suggestion was raised to create a contest to create an interactive web tool that could both illuminate vacant storefronts and draw attention to CD8 small businesses. Instead of the Small Business committee creating a report or web-based expression of UES storefront vacancies, Dori Newman and Cece King both suggested that we can create a contest for high school students to come up with a website that would visualize vacant storefronts and create a tool that would help encourage people to patronize UES small businesses. Participants would be given access to Manhattan Sideways and Live.xyz data. The winning website would be linked to the CB8 website. Additionally, we could work with our city councilmembers to sponsor this contest.

### **3. Old Business**

### **4. New Business**

- Feedback from CB8 member who spoke to restaurant owners that a 4-6p start time for meetings would be better than evening meetings. Early mornings tend to be better times for retailers to attend meetings.
- Small Business committee to consider how to be more inclusive of the range of small business owners without losing access to the public since they have different availability.

**Sarah Chu and Michael Mellamphy, Co-Chairs**