

Alida Camp
Chair

Will Brightbill
District Manager



505 Park Avenue, Suite 620
New York, N.Y. 10022-1106
(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, April 6, 2020 – 6:30PM
Via Zoom**

MINUTES:

We began the meeting discussing what small business owners need in the face of this pandemic.

- a. Grants. The PPP (Payment Protection Program) loans, which include stipulations to allow forgiveness, have been approved as part of the CARES act on March 31st. As of Friday the 3rd of April at 12 p.m these loans were still unavailable for business owners to apply. Business owners face many uncertainties with these loans. Many issues surround the possibility of these loans being forgiven.
- b. Rents are a concern for local business owners. Although there is a 90-day non eviction clause in place, many businesses are not operating right now or are at least operating at barely any significant level in order to remain relevant. Owners are looking for hopeful signs that the government is working to help them with landlords and leases. Can rent for small business owners be renegotiated in the short-term foreseeable future?
- c. Many business owners we spoke to tell us acquiring information surrounding the pandemic with regards to response and support for businesses is key but it is proving near impossible to sift through all the pertinent information that they are receiving.
- d. Are there plans for tax abatement or a payroll tax freeze? This would be helpful.
- e. Business owners are concerned also about the health, safety and financial welfare of their staff members. Some expressing concern for undocumented workers.
- f. Insurance. Local businesses need to be able to claim from their insurance providers. Property has been damaged since the virus can live on property and be passed on to other guests and customers. Local businesses, especially bars, restaurants and service industry were mandated to be closed by the government therefore insurance companies need to pay.

Alida Camp shared that legislators in Albany are working to help small businesses deal with their insurance companies. Albany is also working on measures to help with commercial landlords. There has been a pause on evictions for non-payment of rent for both residential and commercial leases for 90 days since the stay-at-home orders were put into place.

Samantha from "Let's dress up" on East 85th Street had to close on March 15th which led to 21 cancellations for events. The landlord has been nice but non-committal concerning rent. Simply applying for PPP & EIDL (Economic Injury Disaster Loans) loans as a small business owner proved to be a massive challenge. They have already lost half of their business from March 2020 as well as April and the busy Easter period. Lori Bores

suggested that virtual parties and events could work for the let's dress up business model. Samantha mentioned that there are private funded support and grants with female or minority business owners in mind. One example is Sara Blakely CEO of Spanx Offering \$5,000 grants for locally-owned female lead businesses.

John from Mansion Diner mentioned that banks offering PPP loans are only directly working with existing customers. He asked if there was some type Grant assistance for small business owners. After remaining open since the stay-at-home order has begun the Mansion Diner unfortunately has been forced to close business for the foreseeable future beginning Thursday April 9th due to staffing issues. Staffing is becoming a major problem as many have to travel from other neighborhoods and boroughs using public transport making social distancing measures difficult. Barbara Rudder suggested that specialists well versed in Grant applications such as her neighbor who works with an NGO could offer help to local businesses applying for PPP and EIDL loans.

Matt Bauer from Madison Avenue BID mentioned, along the corridor from 57th Street to 86th Street there are only approximately 40 businesses open including multi-generational pharmacies & grocery stores. The Madison Avenue BID has e-newsletters being distributed to its 1200 members. Manhattan Chamber of Commerce are also providing free webinars for local business owners. Madison Avenue bid is encouraging the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce "shop local campaign". He recommended that small business owners apply for EIDL loans as well as PPP grants. EIDL loans are directly through the SBA. PPP are through partnering banks. Rob Byrne of Madison Avenue BID mentioned they are gearing their efforts to get more local businesses online. He also mentioned online applications for PPP and EIDL loans don't appear to be very user-friendly.

Billy Freeland suggested CB8 share Manhattan Chamber of Commerce webinars on our website. Also how we can help local business owners apply for Grants and loans. Billy also floated the idea of putting high rise apartment buildings in contact with local businesses as a means for residents to support local eateries still providing deliveries to doormen. There has been an outpouring of charitable efforts on behalf of residents of our community supporting Frontline healthcare workers in our local hospitals. A number of local businesses are also doing their bit, notably Maz mezcil and Butterfield market to name but a few. Hospitals obviously need to be careful about what they accept as far as food donations go. Alida Camp suggested CB8 link with local hospitals to determine how local businesses proceed with donating and working with them. Barbara Rudder pointed out that most hospitals would have a liaison person that can coordinate the accepting of donations.

Michelle Birnbaum expressed concern that delivery services such as Amazon are giving consumers delivery dates that are a number of weeks away due to demand. She also asked if there were services that provide deliveries from grocery stores to residents of the community who may be unable to shop. Michelle also suggested a spreadsheet of local smaller grocery stores & bodegas that are still operating throughout the crisis. Gayle Barron mentioned that instacart is one such service that provides delivery of groceries. They can be accessed online and come with a monthly or annual fee.

Monica McKane expressed concern that a local health store had decided to close as they could not find staff. Staff shortages again proving to be a growing concern amongst business owners. Madison Avenue BID among other organizations have Job listings on their websites. John from Mansion diner mentioned that hiring staff in normal circumstances is difficult enough. With the current situation it may prove extra difficult to get the right workers for a business. Mansion diner has also been providing a market service for locals. He suggested that local restaurants could be a means for people to get cleaning supplies as well as food deliveries.

One more suggestion in the spirit of charity to our essential workers is that people donate "snack care packages" with non-perishable items such as chips, cookies etc. They last longer and are easier to accept than cooked meals. Also remember that essential workers include healthcare workers, local police, fire departments as well as grocery store workers, hardware store workers, doormen, postal workers, delivery personnel, transport workers to name but a few.

A number of local organizations and elected officials are providing daily updates on their websites with resources for local business owners.

www.Madisonavenuebid.org Madison Avenue BID
www.eastmidtown.org East Midtown Partnership

www.cb8m.com Community Board 8
www.manhattanbp.nyc.gov Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer office
www.manhattancc.org Manhattan Chamber of Commerce
www.sba.gov New York office of Small Business Administration
www.Carnegiehillneighbors.org Carnegie Hill Neighbors

Regarding the rollout and execution of the PPP loans to small businesses. At time of finalizing these notes, 4/21/2020, I do not know any local business owner in CB8 or anywhere else who has had their application approved. It is reported that the funds included in the CARES act have been exhausted. Congress is working on an additional package which will hopefully provide some relief. New York City has other options for local business owners. In New York City, Mayor Bill De Blasio announced that the city would provide relief for businesses seeing a reduction in revenue due to COVID-19. Via www.nyc.gov.

“Businesses with fewer than 100 employees who have seen sales decreases of 25% or more will be eligible for zero interest loans of up to \$75,000 to help mitigate losses in profit. The City is also offering small businesses with fewer than five employees a grant to cover 40% of payroll costs for two months (an average of \$6,000) to help retain employees.” You can apply for the NYC Employee Retention Grant Program by going to this website www1.nyc.gov/nycbusiness/article/nyc-employee-retention-grant-program You can also fill out a pre-application for the NYC Small Business Continuity Loan Fund here www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZL5N8XL

Eligible business owners who want to know more about these programs should call 311 in New York City or review the resources here www1.nyc.gov/site/sbs/businesses/covid19-business-outreach.page for assistance. You can also fill out NYC’s COVID-19 Business Assistance Survey www.surveymonkey.com/r/N336ZYB in order to receive information regarding new loan and grant programs for impacted small businesses.

Thank you Will, Alida and all at the office who are working tirelessly to keep CB8 offices open and active through these virtual sessions. Sending all of my fellow Board members, your families and friends Love and Health throughout these extraordinary times.

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Michael Mellamphy, Chair