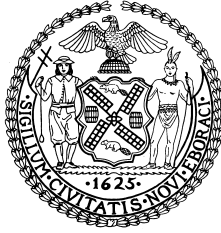


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**The City of New York  
Community Board 8 Manhattan  
Small Business Committee  
Monday, May 4, 2020 at 6:30 PM  
Conducted virtually online through zoom.**

**MINUTES:**

**Community Board Members (Present):** Michael Mellamphy, Gayle Baron, Michele Birnbaum, Alida Camp, Sarah Chu, Billy Freeland, Paul Higgins, Dori Newman, Barbara Rudder, Barry Schneider, Tricia Shimamura, Cos Spagnoletti, Marco Tamayo

**Community Board Public Members (Present):** Jennifer Gao

*This meeting was conducted primarily to gauge the experience of local business owners that are ongoing and their thoughts on re-opening business on the Upper East Side.*

Meeting began 6:33pm

John from Mansion Diner, has been operating on and off throughout the recent crisis. His business has been severely affected by COVID-19. He was closed for two weeks. But has re-opened from 9 AM to 9 PM seven days a week. They have been adhering to the mandates including full face coverings and sanitizing work surface areas. He has found that the numbers are really not there to make business as normal work. In the interest of the safety and health of his staff he has gone so far as to shuttle staff members to and from work every day at an additional cost to his business of approximately \$750 a week. Prior to COVID-19 business had already been changing. His main focus of business has now become takeout and delivery service. It has become apparent that COVID-19 is a massive wake up call for businesses across the city. Rents are too high and unsustainable. He feels very strongly that employees returning to work need testing and tracing. There is a responsibility on the part of business owners to make sure that this virus is not passed along. When John applied for the PPP grant in the first round it was a "no go". It was quite frustrating to see how many large corporations were successful in their applications in the first round of grants. He was successful in applying for PPP in the second round of applications. He personally didn't find it too complicated in applying. But again he has a lot of frustration seeing so many large multinational corporation's taking a piece of the pie that was supposed to be meant for small business owners. Customers and neighbors have been very supportive. They have expressed to him genuine concern about his and his fellow local business owner's futures. He is concerned that the PPP grants will run out quickly as his business has already been spending just to keep open before the grant was issued. He's well aware that these loans are for taking care of staff but don't go far enough to address his mounting expenditure. He has had to be innovative by working with limited menus etc. Businesses are adopting right now. Businesses are bringing innovative ideas that may contribute to reopening local businesses soon.

Ryan O'Neal of Iggy's Bar took it upon himself to close down a number of days before being required to by the city. Colleagues at San Mateo restaurant with family in Italy had spoken to Ryan about COVID-19 three weeks

before he closed. Ryan feels very strongly that it's going to take quite a bit of time to get back to any type of normal operation. COVID-19 needs to be respected. There is no timeframe with this disease in terms of re-opening. Although he is hopeful, he acknowledges it will take time. His first questions are about rent, utilities and how to pay staff moving forward. He feels very strongly it's going to take both business owners and the community working together to tackle the issues of getting back to "business as normal".

Jim of Ryan's Daughter ceased operations on March 15 and it wasn't an easy decision. His main concern in taking this decision was for the health and safety of his staff and customers in light of COVID-19. The guideline of lowering your capacity was not helpful in operating his business. The bar and restaurant business has evolved so much over the last 20 years but the basic economics have not changed to help local businesses. He took great pains to point out that it was local business owners who first and foremost responded responsibly in the face of this pandemic. The current guidelines from the healthcare professionals at both the CDC and the WHO makes it impossible, in his opinion, to reopen. Margins in his business are already tiny and operating a 25% capacity just doesn't make business sense. He feels that the focus still needs to be on the human health need and cost. Talk about going back to work as normal is premature especially as there is little or no guidance from the top (White House) down on this issue. People need to realize that business employees are expected to be in the front line when reopening occurs. He felt the PPP grants bill was pushed through too quickly. He felt a rush of applications broke the system and was unavailable to the people who are most in need of help. He was successful at his second time of applying. Some of the conditions of the grant are extremely prohibitive. For instance 75% of the grant being spent on payroll is proving to be a headache as it is difficult to rehire staff who may now be getting unemployment. The stipulation of rehiring staff by June 30 is also proving to be a headache. He cautions small business owners to be well aware of the terms that these loans have been issued. He is skeptical that these loans will be used in eight weeks. As far as the insurance companies go he feels it's prudent to put in a claim for loss of business anyway. At least when the claim as in if the law changes you may have a chance of getting something. Don't listen to all that insurance brokers are telling you concerning payouts from insurance companies as that in their interest not yours. Put in the claim and let them deny you. Another point to remember is that insurance premiums are based on last year's revenue so make sure your insurance brokers are watching these numbers. He is also interested to know when reopening does occur, what type of support would be provided by the local police precincts for local business owners with issues surrounding social distancing, congregating on the street and mass gatherings?

Samantha from Lets Dress Up took it upon herself to close business on 15 March also. They waited on the announcement about school closures in order to make their decision. Her main source of information concerning COVID-19 has been from the governor's office. As is the case with many of our business owners, Let's Dress Up is a small space which makes the margins particularly tight. She is not confident that her business will reopen as normal anytime soon. It is especially hard for young children which is the main focus of her business. She feels that although she's looking for guidance she feels lost in the shuffle. The lack of answers and guidance is a cause for anxiety and is really impacting her ability to plan how to re-open. She normally operates birthday parties at her business for groups of 20. 25% capacity just won't work for her. She hasn't heard whether she's been approved for the PPP grant as of May 4 but has been approved for an EIDL loan. She has learned that more local business owners have had better success applying with smaller community banks as opposed to the larger commercial banks. It has taken local community banks getting involved in the PPP Grant system to help more local business owners get the funds they need. Another issue is business insurance. She has been informed by her broker that she cannot claim for loss of business. She received a protective letter from her insurance company stating they are not covering her for loss of business. One webinar she attended suggested sending the claim to the insurance corporation anyway. She's finding it helpful to know what other owners are thinking about this. One other question that relates to insurance was if people knew of or could recommend professional cleaning services to make sure her business was cleaned and sanitized properly with Covid-19 in mind.

Matt Bauer from Madison BID. The jewelry and clothing stores on Madison Avenue are considering options such as allowing one customer at a time into a store in order to fulfill orders. Appointment for scheduling is a way stores are approaching re-opening. Delivery services are also another option that store owners are examining. Although returns for customers could prove to be a headache. Store owners are looking to other countries for guidance such as Germany which has begun the process of opening smaller local stores. There is a feeling that the foot traffic will not be returning however for quite some time. Apple is training people to use the camera options on their phones for video conferencing for shopping. He also pointed out the four out of the five hotels along Madison Avenue are closed right now due to COVID-19. Cultural institutions are also shut right now. This will also have a massive effect on local businesses when they reopen as tourism is key to the health of local businesses in our neighborhood and across the city. NYC&Co has a program promoting local business on their website for free. They are actively promoting local independent businesses. This can be accessed on the website NYCGO.com under the “shopNYC” and “dineNYC” programs.

Cos pointed out that the EIDL loans had a cap of \$10,000 and that it is a loan that can be paid back over 30 years. He expressed frustration that the first round of PPP grants went to massive corporations. He applied with Chase bank for his business three times with no luck. His number one concern is it will be very difficult to spend 75% of these grants on payroll. As far as he’s concerned restaurants must consider delivery and take out as their only real means of survival at this point. As far as the PPP grants are concerned it is prohibitive that companies who employ contractors on 1099s are prevented from using these grants for those workers. He feels some of the terms of these grants need to change.

Billy Freeland pointed out that there seems to be conflicting advice for business owners and how these loans should be spent. He asked if there’s any advice for owners on how to spend these funds. As far as the question of insurance covering issues arising from COVID-19 Billy informed us that Assemblyman Robert Carroll is sponsoring Assembly bill A10226B. This would require insurance companies to cover the perils arising from COVID-19. You can contact your elected officials by phone or email to voice your support. Or alternatively, you can go to <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2019/a10226> and support the bill directly online. It may be prudent to contact elected officials through email at the moment as phone lines are possibly backed up very heavily.

Tricia feels it’s extremely important to work towards helping small businesses through information sharing. She also sees the community board as a resource that can help business owners directly. The idea of a social media page on the Facebook platform has been floated a number of times and she asks whether the community board could facilitate such a page. It is a platform that we may be able to connect with local businesses.

Alida pointed out that there may be opportunities for mediation between business owners and insurance companies. Legislation is currently going through Albany regarding Insurance companies and their responsibility to their business owners (see above link on A10226b) Community board 8, Carnegie Hill neighborhood association and a number of BIDs are planning a question and answer session to address the concerns of local business owners and how they reopen. Once these webinars have been finalized the information will be posted on CB8M.com.

Michele expressed support for a group network on the CB8 website or on Facebook. She thinks many local businesses are going to reopen providing mainly delivery and pick up services. One area of concern is returning items, clothing etc, to stores may prove a hurdle for smaller businesses. She has noted some small businesses are doing their best to provide services virtually such as hosting children’s birthday parties on platforms such as zoom.

Staffing our local businesses has become a serious concern for many local owners. In the age of COVID-19 many workers have had to choose between continuing to work for the economic health of their families and

staying home in order to protect the physical health of themselves and loved ones. Both options lead to a serious emotional toll. Staff at our local businesses have suffered serious life changing repercussions due to this crisis. Some have even paid the ultimate price of passing away due to COVID-19. One particular concern I want to raise about reopening amid this virus is one which is perhaps more unique to a city and community such as ours. The vast majority of workers and staff at our local businesses such as grocery stores, clothing boutiques, hotels, bars, restaurants, pharmacies, galleries, bodegas, shops, salons etc do not reside locally. So many of our local conveniences and necessities are staffed by workers who must use public transportation in order to come to work. This presents us with an even greater challenge when we do eventually get around to reopening our businesses. One of our business owners this evening told us he is paying to shuttle workers from their homes to work for their safety as well as for the solvency of his business. I'm not sure if this is a sustainable model for him with no end to this crisis in sight. I do believe the question of staffing and protecting the employees of our local businesses will in turn protect the community from COVID-19 and is the single biggest hurdle to ensuring that our businesses can have some chance of reopening and surviving.

This is my final committee meeting as chair of the Small Business committee and also as a CB8 member. I would like to take the opportunity to sincerely Thank You all for your friendship, support and above all guidance that you have given me over the course of my time on CB8. I have learned many lessons from each and every one of you as well as those who served and have moved on. Most of all, you have taught me that discourse is the key to understanding. To the new appointees, I wish you all the very best in your roles on CB8. Thank you for sharing your experience and energy in fostering the health and wellbeing of our community. I will always be available for a chat if needs be at [michaelmellamphy@gmail.com](mailto:michaelmellamphy@gmail.com)

Is mise le meas (Yours faithfully)  
Michael Mellamphy.