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**The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Small Business Committee
May 2, 2022 – 6:30pm
This meeting was conducted via Zoom**

MINUTES

The Small Business Committee invited Council Member Julie Menin to speak about the proposed SBS Portal to assist small businesses in navigating the rules of the City agencies that apply to small businesses.

Before Discussing legislation, CM Menin commented on the time she spent in Brooklyn with the SBS (Small Business Services), including Mayor Adams and Commissioner Kim focusing on a buy local/Shop local program. The program was initiated to focus on the more significant national effort of highlighting small businesses.

National Small Business Week: It aims for small businesses to strengthen their core. SB's have been disproportionately affected by Covid-19, inflationary economy, and remote shopping. Amazon was explicitly named. The program is designed to elicit action on the part of the consumer, such as walking down the street and going into one of our wonderful local small businesses, so this is a way to do that.

Councilmember Menin introduced a bill that would create a "one-stop-shop" portal for all agencies permits and licenses. As a former business owner, she (Menin) experienced much difficulty and confusion concerning what was required and what agency specifically citing Sanitation, Consumer Affairs, and the Department of Buildings, like many other small business owners.

The Bill is designed to create one portal, which would be an application-based technology. CM Menin stated, "I'm excited about it; we have a supermajority of my colleagues co-signed on to it, so that is great. I look forward to the next step."

Councilmember Menin later referred to a public hearing whose date was not mentioned and implored all interested parties to join and testify.

Both Councilmembers Menin and Rivera (Carolina) are sponsoring above mentioned legislation in addition to an additional bill, referred to as the "legacy Small Business Bill" which would, among other things, create a designation via a registry for businesses that have been in operation for ten years or more.

San Francisco was cited as a major city where a Legacy registry has been successful, although details specific to New York were not discussed as "different mechanisms would still have to be worked out."

Council Member Menin also brought up the necessity of fine reduction for SB and the problem of retail vacancy.

In response to a question about the San Francisco legacy program, CM Menin stated that San Francisco recognizes the value of businesses that provided character and had been in the neighborhood for many years by providing a special designation for businesses. One such special designation is to specify which businesses can then say they are legacy small businesses, others to extend additional protections. The legislation considered by CM Menin would create a registry for some of these legacy small businesses, although details need to be developed. CM Rivera will be the prime sponsor, with CM Menin an additional sponsor, working collaboratively with CM Rivera.

In response to a question about whether the Portal would include permits and licenses for City, State and Federal Agencies, specifically citing the USDA and FDA, CM Menin responded that the City does not have jurisdiction over federal and state agencies. She would like the portal to include the ability to pay fines and submit applications, including renewals.

Business owners attending the meeting were asked to provide testimony to support the portal as CM Menin requested.

CM Menin further explained that the app for the SBS Portal would be easy to use, consolidating agencies and providing information to small business owners about cures and of hearing dates, with the goal of streamlining the process. As CM Menin pointed out, the complexity of the rules is well-known. CM Menin firmly believes that the Portal must provide information and cannot simply link to other agencies. Fine reduction and enforcement should be part of the Portal, according to CM Menin.

CM Menin referred to the rent control bill, recently introduced by Deputy Speaker Ayala, that would provide rent guidelines for retail. Data from the finance department is being looked at. There are specific issues that CM Menin will look into.

CM Menin was asked about the business tax on small businesses in Manhattan. She noted that one of the City Council Members introduced legislation, that she supports, to eliminate the commercial rent tax that applies to businesses south of 96 Street. While CM Menin did not have an answer for whether there will be personal rep to answer questions or questions will be directed to the relevant agency, she said that more information will be forthcoming. The Portal will have 26 languages.

The next item on the Agenda was a presentation by Bill Angelos and other staff at the Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A of a summary of their work to help small businesses, particularly with reviewing leases and negotiating with landlords. They answered questions from the public and Board members. The Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation provides pro bono services to support small businesses throughout the city, recognizing that small businesses are often at a disadvantage in lease negotiations and landlord-tenant disputes. For a summary of their specific areas of assistance, please see the attached. The information is posted on the Small Business Committee page of the CB8 website.

Alida Camp, John Phillips, and Valerie Mason, Co-Chairs

BROOKLYN A BRINGS FREE HIGH-QUALITY ATTORNEYS TO REPRESENT SMALL BUSINESSES IN NEW YORK CITY

Serving nonprofits and small enterprises for decades, Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A's (Brooklyn A) Community and Economic Development unit is empowering small businesses that have commercial lease issues—in all five boroughs.

Brooklyn A's COMMERCIAL LEASE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (CLA), funded by NYC SBS, provides free, high-quality legal services to beloved neighborhood shops and restaurants during tough times.

Multilingual high-quality attorneys to represent small business owners and assist with:

- Understanding applicable laws and statutes
- Understanding lease terms
- Lease review, amendment, assignment, extension, termination and/or surrender
- Negotiation for new and renewal leases
- Covid-19 related rent abatement, arrears, and personal guarantee issues
- Drafting oral and unwritten agreements
- Support with landlord harassment/breach of contract
- Completing loan and grant applications
- Other transactional legal services

Eligibility requirements:

- Must be a small business
- Located in New York City five boroughs
- Not be a franchise establishment

“CLA is the only program dedicated exclusively to providing high-quality pro bono attorneys to level the field for small businesses,” said Alham Usman, Esq. Director of CLA/Community and Economic Development. “NYC is lost without the diversity of the small businesses that shape each neighborhood and we are their legal team.”

Small businesses should apply at: www.nyc.gov/commlease

For inspiring success stories and upcoming events: www.bka.org/learn-more/

BKA website: www.bka.org/ced

Email: CLAhelp@bka.org

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Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A (Brooklyn A) advances social and economic justice and community empowerment through innovative, collaborative, and neighborhood-based legal representation and advocacy. Through the SBS-funded COMMERCIAL LEASE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, Community and Economic Development (CED) attorneys offer issue-specific counseling and represent small business owners in non-litigation legal matters. Brooklyn A's CED team may be reached at CLAhelp@bka.org or 718.487.2300.