



The City of New York
BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD #1

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Serving and Representing: Port Morris, Mott Haven and Melrose



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Economic Development, Land Use, Housing & Zoning Committee Minutes

March 5th, 2024

Paola Martinez – Committee Chairperson

Outline

Supporting local businesses and organizations.

- Chairperson Paola Martinez introduces new vice chair Susan Camerata and invites Maria Prado to present on her topic.

Homelessness and supportive housing for women and youth.

- Maria Prado, founder of Transition Forward, shares her personal journey from homelessness to advocacy for women in New York City.
- Ms. Prado outlines mission to support homeless women and youth, addressing underlying issues such as substance abuse and domestic violence.
- Organization faces challenges in funding, resources, and community support.

Supportive Housing and Services for Mott Haven Community.

- Ms. Prado seeks financial support for a community space, promising to finish the project once given a space.
- Ms. Prado highlights the need for supportive housing services beyond just material needs, such as mental health support and regular inspections.
- Ms. Prado outlines their plan to provide direct observation therapy (DOT) services to clients, including navigators to help them take their medication on time and document their progress.
- Susan Camerata shares her experience as a little person in the disability community and her desire to help others through her organization.
- Anthony Jordan asks Maria about partnering with existing organizations.

Community organizing and land trust in the South Bronx.

- Devan, Director of Project, discusses South Bronx Unite Inc. organization with CB 1 members.
- South Bronx Unite is a nonprofit focused on justice, health, equity, arts, and culture, with a campaign to monitor air quality and push policy through community-based development.
- The organization is working on acquiring the Hearts Community Center through a community land trust, the Mott Haven Port Morris Community Land Stewards, to ensure community use of the land.

Revitalizing a historic building in the Bronx.

- In the 1930s, the building was a health clinic and annex for Lincoln Hospital HCC, offering alternative treatments like acupuncture and acupressure for addiction.
- After being abandoned in 2013, the community has been working to repurpose the building into a community hub for health, education, and arts and culture services, with a fully baked feasibility plan released in 2018.
- Devan Cronshaw discusses the community's advocacy and organizing efforts to redevelop the Lincoln Recovery Center, including a successful response to a request for proposals (RFP) and \$12 million in city capital funding.
- The project is now focused on securing additional funding and approvals to move forward with a \$44 million project.

Revitalizing a community center in the South Bronx.

- Devan Cronshaw provides updates on the project, including working with a historic tax credit consultant and creating a more inclusive and open space.
- Devan Cronshaw aims to reengage the community over the next 6-7 months to ensure the vision of the project is maintained.
- Devan Cronshaw discusses the importance of community input in shaping the development of a new community center in the South Bronx, highlighting the need for programs and services that align with community needs and priorities.
- Devan Cronshaw also mentions the local action committee and open forum meetings held at their office, where community members can discuss issues related to justice, health equity, architecture, and development without displacement.

Community development and health services.

- Chairperson Paola Martinez invites Devan Cronshaw to present to the community board on the 8 principles for affordable housing development, with a deadline of March 29 for applications.

- Chairperson Paola Martinez asks if Devan has investigated congressional community funds for potential funding for the building project.
- Devan Cronshaw mentions working on a project with EDC, CDC, and New York City Health and Hospitals, focusing on health, education, arts, and culture services.
- Devan Cronshaw discusses reaching out to tenant leaders in different housing sites and schools in the community, with a goal of connecting with all schools and NYCHA developments.

New loan product for small businesses in the South Bronx.

- Ruvi Lopez introduces Community Advantage Loan, a new product providing access to capital for small to medium-sized businesses in the South Bronx.
- The loan aims to consolidate predatory debt and reduce interest costs for businesses that have been affected by merchant cash transfers.

Business loans for expansion with SBA lending practices.

- Business owners in the South Bronx face financial struggles due to personal debt and limited access to lending.
- Ruvi Lopez explains that their company provides loans to businesses looking to expand, with a focus on catching businesses that are in the red and want to grow.
- Chairperson Paola Martinez expresses concern about qualifying someone who owes money to the IRS or has outstanding debts, as their company doesn't want to give out loans for the sake of loans.

Business loans and education in the Bronx.

- Entrepreneurs must have at least 2 years of business history to qualify for funding initiatives.
- Members emphasize education and financial literacy for business owners in the Bronx to build sustainable enterprises.

Economic development in the Bronx, NYC.

- Chairperson Paola Martinez highlights areas where the Bronx could benefit from more businesses, such as grooming services for pets and restaurants.
- Ruvi Lopez shares data from the South Bronx Economic Snapshot, which shows hospitality and restaurant jobs growing, indicating a market change in the industry.
- Ruvi Lopez plans to conduct a business crawl in Assemblywoman central Jackson to assess local businesses and address concerns, including lack of leases or lease history.
- Susan Camerata raises the importance of financial education for small businesses, citing the potential for predatory lending practices and the need for business owners to understand financial issues.

SBA loans and empowerment zones in NYC.

- Ruvi Lopez discusses the interest rate for loans offered by their company, stating that it's currently at 10.5% and may go down by second quarter.
- Ruvi Lopez highlights the areas covered by their company's loan program, including the South Bronx, and aims to reach at least 60% of the population in those areas.
- Chairperson Paola Martinez discusses the Empowerment Zone program, highlighting its eligibility requirements and tax incentives for businesses in designated areas.
- Chairperson Paola Martinez emphasizes the importance of working with local leaders to inform businesses of available tax abatements and support their growth.

Empowerment Zones and Insurance Policies.

- Ruvi: "We should invite businesses to come to the community to renew their licenses, and we can keep a database of them for future outreach."
- Anthony Jordan: "We should work with our partners to do food programs and other committees, and open resources for businesses."
- Chairperson Paola Martinez discusses Empowerment Zones, explaining they are federally designated areas with potential for economic revitalization, but lack access to capital and have dilapidated infrastructure.

Cannabis licensing and funding in New York.

- Chairperson Paola Martinez suggests contacting a government affairs representative from OCM to help resolve the issue.
- Chairperson Paola Martinez is unsure if they will be able to provide the requested letter of support due to communication issues with the office of cannabis.
- Emma Buttner discussed the office of cannabis Management Advisory Board meeting and the community banks grant funding available to medicinal dispensaries.
- Chairperson Paola Martinez suggested working with the Bronx Foundation for community grants and recommended applying for the grant to get a license easier.
- Anthony Jordan discusses the administrative hearing process for liquor licenses, while Chairperson Paola Martinez brings up old business regarding licenses issued in a previous board meeting.
- Businesses apply for cannabis licenses, but none appear at the meeting, with some committee members expressing interest in details such as menu items.

Evaluating business applications in the South Bronx.

- Chairperson Paola Martinez emphasizes the importance of clear parameters for evaluating business applications, avoiding unconscious bias, and ensuring the police department provides detailed information to support their recommendations.

- Committee member Anthony Jordan agrees, highlighting the need to validate the police department's reasoning and ensure there are no potential issues or recourse for affected businesses.
- Anthony and Susan discuss criteria for evaluating restaurant applications, including menu completeness.
- Business owners in NYC face challenges, including lack of resources and barriers to success, but initiatives like "Clean Your Streets" aim to connect them with valuable services and support.

Improving public spaces in a commercial district.

- Executive Director Purdue emphasizes need for more staff and funding to maintain commercial district.
- Pedro highlights the importance of community engagement and outreach in addressing the opioid crisis.

Cannabis licensing and enforcement in New York City.

- Anthony Jordan explains that the city of New York is giving more authority to enforce tobacco laws and shut down illegal smoke shops, but the agency doesn't evaluate smoke shop applications.
- Chairperson Paola Martinez clarifies that the agency only evaluates cannabis licenses and doesn't have a say in smoke shop applications.
- Anthony Jordan mentions that the community board has oversight over cannabis applicants for licensing, and they can review complaints and evidence of illegal sales.
- Argelia Ortiz expresses concern about the lack of healthier options at restaurants in the district, particularly in light of the high rates of obesity and related health issues.

Cannabis Regulations and Guidelines.

- Chairperson Paola Martinez expresses concern about cannabis shops opening in low-income neighborhoods, emphasizing equity and fairness in distribution of economic benefits.
- Chairperson Paola Martinez emphasizes the importance of fairness and guidelines for cannabis business presentations to ensure everyone is on the same page.
- Speaker 3 suggests educating oneself on industry regulations and protocols to avoid assumptions and make informed decisions.
- Anthony Jordan clarifies that the committee's recommendation is not an additional recommendation, but rather the work that happens in the committee to recommend to the full Board.

Action Items

Send email to OCM contact to look into Ms. Bordner's licensing issue

Share congressional community project funding info with Mr. Cronshaw

Meet to review liquor license application parameters

Develop guidelines for evaluating cannabis license applications

Educate committee on cannabis licensing regulations

Invite Mr. Suarez to present to full board on BX EDC small business loans

Coordinate with BID on outreach to local businesses

Connect BID with rat abatement programs

Connect BID with local community groups for outreach walkthroughs