

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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June 20, 2024
Start: 11:44 a.m.
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HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Justin L. Brannan, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Diana Ayala
Gale A. Brewer
Selvena N. Brooks-Powers
David M. Carr
Amanda Farías
Kamillah Hanks
Crystal Hudson
Farrah N. Louis
Francisco P. Moya
Chi A. Ossé
Keith Powers
Yusef Salaam
Pierina Ana Sanchez
Althea V. Stevens
Nantasha M. Williams

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Calvin T. Brown, Deputy Commissioner for
Neighborhood Development at New York City
Department of Small Business Services

Juan Diaz, Co-Chair on the Cypress Hills Fulton
BID

Michelle Neugebauer, Executive Director of the
Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation

William Ruiz, Cypress Hills Fulton BID

Chief Samsair, Co-Chair of the Cypress Hill
Fulton Street BID

Laura Rothrock, President of the Long Island City
Partnership and Executive Director of the LIC BID

Alvarez Symonette, Chief-of-Staff at Lady M
Confections

Albert Scott, self

Stephen Kim, Director of Design and Development
at Innovo Property Group

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning. This is a
3 microphone check for the Committee on Finance.
4 Today's date is June 20, 2024, located in the
5 Chambers, recording done by Pedro Lugo.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning and
7 welcome to the New York City Council vote of the
8 Committee on Finance.

9 At this time, can everybody please
10 silence your cell phones?

11 At this time and going forward, no one is
12 to approach the dais. I repeat, no one is to approach
13 the dais.

14 Thank you for your cooperation.

15 Chair, we are ready to begin.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Sarge.

17 [GAVEL] Okay, good morning. Welcome to today's
18 Finance Committee meeting. I'm Council Member
19 Brannan. I Chair the Committee on Finance. We've been
20 joined this morning by Council Member Sanchez,
21 Farías, Brewer, Williams, Hudson, Nurse, Salaam,
22 Powers, Ayala, and Carr and, on Zoom, Ossé, Moya,
23 Hanks. Oh, in the front row here, we have Council
24 Member Stevens and Farrah Louis joining us.

25

2 Today, the Committee will be voting on
3 four property tax Pre-Considered Resolutions. We'll
4 also be hearing two bills, Intro. 898 and Intro. 906.

5 The first resolution is an amendment of a
6 previously adopted full 30-year Article XI for two
7 buildings in Council Member Hudson's, Avilés', and
8 Hanif's Districts. HPD requested amending the
9 exemption from a 30-year term to a 40-year term after
10 finding a gap in coverage would occur between when
11 the 30-year Article XI would expire and the
12 maturation of the loan for rehabilitation work on the
13 buildings.

14 The second resolution is a new partial
15 40-year Article XI exemption for four buildings in
16 Council Member Ung's District. Under the application,
17 the building will enter into an HPD regulatory
18 agreement, restricting rent, setting aside 51 units
19 for formerly homeless people, make improvements under
20 the HPD's Aging in Place Initiative, and it would
21 complete identified construction needs.

22 Third resolution is a new partial 40-year
23 Article XI exemption for four buildings in Council
24 Member Steven's District. Under the application, the
25 building will enter into an HPD regulatory agreement,

2 restricting rent, setting aside 30 units for formerly
3 homeless people, make improvements under the HPD
4 Aging in Place Initiative, and complete identified
5 construction needs.

6 Final resolution is an amendment of a
7 previously adopted 40-year Article XI for 20
8 buildings and three vacant lots in Council Member
9 Feliz's and Steven's District. HPD requested amending
10 the exemption to change the effective date from July
11 1, 2023 to July 1, 2022 in order to address
12 operational needs caused by the phasing out of
13 existing J51 benefits, and to include an additional
14 vacant lot, Block 2930, Lot 58, into the existing
15 project area.

16 Next, we have our two Introductions.
17 Intro. 898, sponsored by Council Member Sandy Nurse,
18 would establish the Cypress Hills Fulton Business
19 Improvement District. The bill would set the
20 authorized annual expenditure for the new BID at
21 400,000 dollars.

22 Intro. 906, sponsored by Council Member
23 Julie Won, would expand the service area of the
24 existing Queens Plaza Court Square Business
25 Improvement District, and it would rename the

2 enlarged BID as the Long Island City Business
3 Improvement District. The bill would set the
4 authorized annual expenditure for the enlarged BID at
5 2.058 million dollars.

6 Today's hearing for both Introductions
7 was noticed by Resolution 412 and 421, respectively,
8 which the Committee adopted back on May 23rd. We will
9 hear shortly from any witnesses who wish to testify.
10 Once we've heard any testimony, we will then lay over
11 the bills for at least 30 days, which allows time for
12 any property owner within their respective proposed
13 BID areas to file an objection with the City Clerk.
14 In the absence of any objections filed, either by a
15 majority of all the impacted property owners in their
16 respective proposed BID, or by any property owners
17 owning a majority of the assessed value of the
18 property within their respective proposed BID, the
19 Committee and then the full Council may adopt the new
20 BID legislation. In order to do so, the Committee and
21 the full Council must be prepared to answer the
22 following four questions in the affirmative for each
23 BID. Number one, were all notice of hearing for all
24 hearings required to be held published and mailed as
25 so required? Number two, does all the real property

2 within the District's boundaries benefit from the
3 extension of the District except as otherwise
4 provided by law? Number three, is all real property
5 benefited by the District included within the
6 District? And finally, is the extension of the
7 District in the best interest of the public? If the
8 Committee and the full Council find in the
9 affirmative on these four questions, and the number
10 of objections required to prevent the establishment
11 or extension of the BID respectively are not filed,
12 then the legislation can be adopted.

13 Additionally, the Committee and the full
14 Council must determine that it is in the public
15 interest to authorize an increase in the maximum
16 annual expenditure amount, that the relevant tax and
17 debt limits will not be exceeded, and that the notice
18 of the increased proposed expenditure amount was
19 properly published. Additional information regarding
20 these bid items can be found in the Committee report,
21 the City Planning Commission reports, and each BID's
22 proposed District plan.

23 I want to give the sponsors of these
24 bills an opportunity to give any remarks. Council
25 Member Nurse.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you, Chair
3 Brannan, and thank you to the merchants and community
4 stakeholders from the Fulton Street community for
5 bringing this vision one step closer to being a
6 reality. I want to express my full support for the
7 Fulton Street merchants in their efforts to formally
8 establish the Fulton Street Business Improvement
9 District. The Fulton Street BID's mission is to
10 create a cleaner, brighter, safer, greener, and more
11 pedestrian-friendly commercial corridor that allows
12 local businesses to thrive. Many of the business
13 owners are, in fact, local residents, which will
14 undoubtedly help the BID accomplish its goals for the
15 good of all community members, and I am excited to
16 work together with the BID to continue to help
17 address some of our community's issues, but more so
18 to celebrate the vibrancy and joy our community has
19 to offer. I just wanted to thank the two Co-Chairs,
20 Juan Diaz, Chief Samsair, for all of their hard work.
21 I see Michelle is here, Cady (phonetic), Lowell's not
22 here, but I see a lot of folks who have been working
23 on this for years to bring it to a reality so
24 congratulations on making this far and looking
25 forward to our future vote. Thank you, Chair.

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Council
3 Member.

4 Before we proceed with testimony from
5 Small Business Services, we're going to hold a vote
6 on the Article XI Resolutions and those items only.
7 Are there any other comments from any of my
8 Colleagues on these items?

9 Okay, seeing none, we're going to call
10 Billy Martin, our Committee Clerk, to call the roll.
11 We're just voting on the Land Use applications now.

12 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
13 you. Good morning. William Martin, Committee Clerk.
14 Roll call vote Committee on Finance on the land use
15 applications, all items are coupled. Again, with the
16 land use applications. Chair Brannan.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I vote aye.

18 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Ayala.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Aye.

20 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
21 you. Moya.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Aye.

23 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
24 you. Powers.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Aye.

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2 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Louis.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: I vote aye.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Brooks-

5 Powers. Brewer.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Aye.

7 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Farías.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: I vote aye.

9 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Hanks.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: I vote aye.

11 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank

12 you. Hudson.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Aye.

14 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Ossé.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: Aye.

16 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank

17 you. Sanchez.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Aye.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Stevens.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Aye.

21 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Williams.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Aye.

23 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Won.

24 Salaam.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: I vote aye.

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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2 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Carr.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Aye.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: With a
5 vote of 15 in the affirmative, zero with negative,
6 and no abstentions, Land Use applications have been
7 adopted by the Committee.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Billy.
9 We'll leave the vote open for any Members who are
10 still arriving, and I'm going to turn it over to the
11 Committee Counsel to swear in our witnesses from SBS.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Morning. Raise
13 your right hand, please.

14 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
15 whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and to
16 respond honestly to Council Member questions? Calvin
17 T. Brown.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROWN: I do.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL TWOMEY: Thank you. You
20 may begin.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROWN: Good morning,
22 Chair Brannan and the members of the Finance
23 Committee. My name is Calvin T. Brown, and I'm the
24 Deputy Commissioner for Neighborhood Development at
25 the Department of Small Business Services. I'm joined

2 here by colleagues from our BID Development and
3 Support Team to testify in support of the two BID
4 items before the City Council. We are here to testify
5 in support for the formation of Cypress Hills Fulton
6 Business Improvement District and the expansion for
7 the Long Island City BID in Queens. At SBS, we are
8 working hard to open up the doors for New Yorkers
9 across the five boroughs, focusing on creating
10 stronger businesses, connecting New Yorkers to good
11 jobs, and fostering thriving neighborhoods. We
12 believe that the vitality of the city's commercial
13 corridors is a key part of achieving this goal, and
14 BIDs have been valuable and proven partners in small
15 business support, neighborhood revitalization, and
16 economic development across the five boroughs. City
17 services, which by law cannot be reduced because of
18 the existence of a BID, are only supplemented through
19 the BID's delivery of services and improvements in
20 their respective districts. In addition to our role
21 of overseeing and supporting the city's existing
22 network of 75 BIDs, SBS also supervises the BID
23 formation and expansion process, serving as an
24 advisor and resource for communities interested in
25 developing or expanding BIDs. We are careful in

2 ensuring that each Steering Committee we work with
3 adheres to our planning process, policies, and
4 solicit robust community input, and performs
5 extensive outreach to collect and demonstrate broad-
6 based support across stakeholders' groups.

7 Moreover, we are cognizant of the unique
8 nature of each community we assist and aim to empower
9 local stakeholders to make determinations on proposed
10 services, boundaries, budget size that best suits
11 community needs, appetite, and ability to pay
12 assessments. While we always impart strong planning
13 principles and share our data and best practices
14 across the BID network, when working with any BID
15 formation or expansion effort, we recognize that the
16 power and effectiveness of BIDs rests in their
17 unmatched understanding of the local needs and
18 issues.

19 The Cypress Hills Fulton BID Formation
20 effort began in 2020 and involved numerous meetings
21 and consultations with local stakeholders throughout
22 the planning and outreach phases. After an extensive
23 outreach effort and close coordination with all key
24 parties, SBS determined that the documented support
25 among all stakeholders, including 50 percent of the

2 area's total assessed value, was sufficient to submit
3 an application to the City Council. Even with major
4 challenges of COVID-19 pandemic, the Cypress Hills
5 Steering Committee was able to sustain their outreach
6 effort in their district. In addition to district-
7 wide mail-in, Steering Committee meetings was also
8 able to directly connect with stakeholders through
9 direct phone calls and undertaking one-on-one
10 meetings, developing an even more personal connection
11 with their constituents in moving this effort
12 forward.

13 In addition to Cypress Hills Fulton BID
14 Formation, the Long Island City BID is seeking
15 approval to extend its existing boundaries. The
16 extension of the Long Island City BID will provide
17 services to a new eastern sub-district. This sub-
18 district will encompass the industrial business zone,
19 the IBZ, east of Sunnyside Yards, and two additional
20 commercial corridors, which has seen a substantial
21 increase in pedestrian traffic as this area has
22 become the fourth central business district in New
23 York City. The boundaries of the existing north and
24 south sub-districts would also be extended as part of
25 this expansion. Expanding the existing BID will

2 ensure supplemental services, streetscape
3 improvements, and marketing advocacy are reaching
4 greater parts of the neighborhood as well as the area
5 surrounding the original BID district.

6 As required by law, Cypress Hills Fulton
7 and Long Island City Steering Committees mail summary
8 to the City Council Resolution no less than 10 days
9 and no more than 30 days before today's hearing to
10 property owners and tenants of the proposed
11 districts. Furthermore, SBS arranged for the
12 publication of a copy of the summary of the
13 resolution at least once in City Records.
14 Additionally, I would like to acknowledge and thank
15 Council Member Nurse for her support for the Cypress
16 Hills BID formation as well as the support of Council
17 Member Won for the Long Island City BID expansion
18 effort.

19 Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the
20 representation of the BID formation and expansion
21 efforts are present here today to testify and address
22 any specific questions that I'm unable to answer.
23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Okay,
25 thank you very much for your testimony.

2 Okay, now we're going to open up for
3 public testimony. Thanks to SBS.

4 I want to remind members of the public
5 this is a government proceeding and decorum must be
6 observed at all times. As such, members of the public
7 shall remain silent at all times unless you are at
8 the dais testifying.

9 The witness table is reserved only for
10 those who testify. No video recording or photography
11 is allowed from the witness table. Furthermore,
12 members of the public may not present audio or video
13 recordings as testimony, but they may submit
14 transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant-at-
15 Arms for inclusion in the official record.

16 If you wish to speak at today's hearing,
17 just make sure you filled out one of those appearance
18 slips with the Sergeant-at-Arms and you wait to be
19 recognized. Once recognized, you'll have two minutes
20 to speak on today's hearing topic, Introduction 898
21 and Introduction 906.

22 If you have a written statement or
23 additional written testimony you wish to submit for
24 the record, just provide a copy of that testimony to
25 the Sergeant-at-Arms. You also may email written

2 testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov, and you can
3 do that within 72 hours of this hearing. Audio and
4 video recordings are not accepted, only written
5 testimony.

6 I'm now going to call our panel, Juan
7 Diaz, Michelle Neugebauer, Chief Samsair, and William
8 Ruiz.

9 Good morning, everybody. You want to
10 start on the left. Just say your name and then you
11 can start your testimony. Make sure your mic's on.

12 JUAN DIAZ: My name is Juan Diaz.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Go ahead, you can
14 begin.

15 JUAN DIAZ: Okay. My name is Juan Diaz. I
16 am a Co-Chair on the Cypress Hills Fulton BID along
17 with Mr. Chief Samsair. I am a business and property
18 owner. My business is ABI Multiservices, located at
19 2836 Fulton Street. The purpose of my participation
20 this morning on this forum is to inform you of the
21 importance of the Cypress Hills Fulton BID, which, in
22 my opinion, will be of great importance to the
23 community. For the last four years, a group of
24 individuals, including myself, has worked tirelessly
25 in order to communicate the community and the

2 corridor the importance of the Cypress Hills Fulton
3 BID. As an outreach, here are some of the things that
4 we have done over the last four years. We have sent a
5 total of 3,484 letters to different people in the
6 community in English and Spanish. We also have made
7 available 254 links through website. We have made 870
8 in-person visits. In those activities, we have used
9 even a person bilingual English and Mandarin. We
10 offer over 40 personal events, even in the middle of
11 the COVID-19 pandemic.

12 Finally, I would like to inform all of
13 you that in the '80s, I was a tenant, 2980 Fulton
14 Street. Today, I'm the owner of that misused
15 property. Met my wife on that property. I'm telling
16 you, the difference between back in the '80s and '90s
17 and 2000, the difference is used today. It's a much
18 better corridor. It's a much better location.

19 However, with the Cypress Hills Fulton BID, we will
20 understand that this is going to be much better, and
21 that's why I urge all of you to continue to support
22 the Cypress Hills Fulton BID because it's a chance
23 that we just get what we want to get. I really want
24 to thank all of you for your time and effort. Just
25 have a wonderful day.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Yeah,
3 just say your name and you can begin.

4 MICHELLE NEUGEBAUER: Sure. Good
5 afternoon, esteemed Members of the City Council and
6 our own Honorable Sandy Nurse. My name is Michelle
7 Neugebauer. I'm the Executive Director of the Cypress
8 Hills Local Development Corporation. I'm here to
9 testify wholeheartedly and enthusiastically for the
10 establishment of the BID on Fulton Street in Cypress
11 Hills, East New York, Brooklyn. Our not-for-profit
12 community development corporation was founded by a
13 group of visionary residents and merchants, most of
14 whom who had their businesses on Fulton Street, and
15 they were really angry in the early 1980s and
16 frustrated by a slew of store closing, poor City
17 services, redlining, abandonment, and arson, and they
18 came together to demand an end to that bank redlining
19 and to call on the City for more investments. So fast
20 forward 40 years later, these small immigrant-owned
21 mom-and-pop businesses have survived and thrived
22 through the abandonment era, the crack era, and most
23 recently COVID-19. They have organized like I've
24 never seen organizing before in our community through
25 their business partners, Merchants Association and

2 the BID Steering Committee to put forward their
3 vision for Fulton Street, which is a vision that
4 includes increased safety, not necessarily more
5 policing, but increased safety, cleaner streets, more
6 promotions, and more entrepreneurship. The merchants
7 themselves came up with the Affordable Assessment
8 Formula. They have mobilized with incredible
9 commitment and energy. They've knocked on doors, made
10 thousands of calls and, with Council Member Nurse,
11 organized countless cleanups, graffiti removals, tree
12 care events, and the list goes on and on. They're
13 really tireless, and so everybody in the neighborhood
14 knows about the BID. I would say this is very much a
15 grassroots effort from hundreds of merchants and
16 residents who are advocating to stay in their
17 neighborhood. This is an anti-gentrification BID and
18 it will immeasurably improve our community. Please
19 vote yes. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

21 WILLIAM RUIZ: Good morning, Chairman,
22 members of the Council. My name is William Ruiz. I
23 don't have an extensive testimony, but what I am
24 going to you comes from straight from my heart. I am
25 not only a property owner, I've also lived in other

2 properties in the East New York Cypress Hills section
3 of Brooklyn. I have to say that our wonderful City
4 Councilwoman Sandy Nurse has done an amazing job
5 within the short time that she's been with us as a
6 City Council, and hopefully she could go into bigger
7 and better things in her political career. I have to
8 say that what my counterparts here are saying are
9 absolutely true, and I go a little further back. I go
10 back as far as the late '70s when I lived in Bushwick
11 and I used to travel to East New York and get chased
12 by the Italians because I was a little darker than
13 everybody else, and it was okay. It was a wonderful,
14 wonderful neighborhood. It was beautiful, and I moved
15 back into East New York about, I'm going to go back
16 about maybe 25 years ago, give or take, and I've seen
17 the transformation. I've seen it go up and down, up
18 and down, and I have to say that with the City
19 Council, Sandy Nurse and her predecessors also did a
20 wonderful job in trying to maintain East New York, so
21 I am saying to you it is important, very important,
22 please, to please vote yes for the bid because I
23 didn't think there was going to be a change until
24 they brought it to my attention, and I was very
25 pleased to hear that they were trying to do a change

2 in East New York. If anybody in this Chamber has ever
3 been to East New York, and if you haven't, please do
4 so. It's all open. It's a place where there's a lot
5 of beauty in it. There's a lot of fantastic people
6 that want to maintain the credibility to this
7 neighborhood, so thank you so much, and I guess I
8 went over my two minutes. Sorry.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

10 CHIEF SAMSAIR: Good day, ladies and
11 gentlemen, Members of the Council, and our very own
12 Sandy Nurse. My name is Chief Samsair. I'm the owner
13 of the Caribbean restaurant on the corner of Fulton
14 and Norwood, Roti on the Run, and I'm also property
15 owners. I own multiple properties on the Fulton
16 Street Corridor. I'm the Co-Chair of the Cypress Hill
17 Fulton Street BID along with Juan Diaz. I'm
18 testifying in favor for the Cypress Hill Fulton
19 Street BID, which runs from Van Sicklen to Elders
20 Lane, consisting of approximately 325 properties.
21 This BID, like many others in the NYC area, will
22 bring a positive for traffic to the Fulton Corridor.
23 In return, small businesses will see an increase in
24 revenue, will trickle down to providing a better
25 livelihood for our family. This BID will clean up the

2 Fulton Corridor and make it safe and brighter. Just
3 imagine, just for the cost of a cup of coffee a day,
4 that's what us as property owners will be responsible
5 for. The average size of a storefront property on
6 Fulton will cost approximately around 600 dollars
7 annually, which will be, I'm sure, like myself, will
8 be passed on to the merchant on the ground floor or
9 an aisle cover part of it as well. I live on Fulton
10 Street since 1982. My parents been there since 1976.
11 I grew up there. I went to PS-108, IS-302. I got
12 married in the neighborhood. I still live there. My
13 kids grew up there so this is a place where I live,
14 and I have no intentions of leaving. I just want to
15 wake up in the morning and see a safer, brighter
16 neighborhood, like you drive through Freshman Road or
17 any other neighborhood that has a BID in the NYC
18 area, and it's something I would love to see on
19 Fulton Street. Thank you and hope you guys vote yes
20 for us. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very
22 much. Thank you all very much for coming.

23 Okay, now we have testimony from Laura
24 Rothrock and Alvarez Symonette.

2 LAURA ROTHROCK: Hi. Good afternoon. My
3 name is Laura Rothrock. I'm the President of the Long
4 Island City Partnership and Executive Director of the
5 LIC BID, and thank you for your consideration on the
6 LIC BID expansion proposal and the opportunity to
7 speak today.

8 The Long Island City BID was created in
9 2005 and expanded in 2017, and we created two sub-
10 districts with separate assessment budgets, which act
11 as one BID. The current BID service area is along
12 Jackson Avenue, Queens Plaza, 44th Drive and Vernon
13 Boulevard. The BID provides supplemental services
14 such as sanitation, horticulture and beautification,
15 and it also leverages the work of the partnership
16 which keeps the BID's administrative costs low and
17 allows us to tap into our business assistance and
18 marketing efforts of the partnership. Long Island
19 City is the fastest growing neighborhood in New York
20 City, both by population and by jobs. With an
21 increase in foot traffic in the neighborhood, even
22 during the pandemic, we've heard from stakeholders
23 outside of the current BID boundaries about the need
24 for services on additional blocks in the
25 neighborhood. The plan that we're presenting today is

2 the culmination of three years of feasibility
3 studies, needs assessments, a massive outreach
4 campaign and dozens of Steering Committee, Community
5 Board, and public meetings. Our proposed BID
6 expansion would add additional lots to existing North
7 and South sub-districts and add an East sub-district
8 to the area East of Sunnyside Yards. We're proposing
9 that the North and South sub district expansion area
10 have the same level of service and assessment formula
11 as the current BID, but would include a reduced rate
12 on some of the side streets while still maintaining
13 the same level of quality. With this expansion, the
14 BID's budget would increase to just over 2 million
15 while maintaining a low assessment rate while still
16 addressing the needs of the rapidly growing
17 neighborhood. After our mailings, public meetings,
18 presentations, email outreach, phone calls, Zooms and
19 going door to door and social media posts and signage
20 in the neighborhood, we've received broad-based
21 support from business and property owners of
22 different sizes as well as residents and nonprofit
23 institutions so we thank you for your consideration
24 and are happy to answer any questions. Thanks.

25 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

2 ALVAREZ SYMONETTE: Good morning. My name
3 is Alvarez Symonette. I am the Chief-of-Staff at Lady
4 M Confections, a retail bakery and light manufacturer
5 best known for 20-layer milk crepe cake. Our
6 corporate headquarters is located at 4310 Ninth
7 Street in the Northern expansion area. As a tenant in
8 the neighborhood, I'm here today to express our full
9 support for the BID expansion.

10 Lady M began back in 2001 with a simple
11 eight-person kitchen which has now grown to over 300
12 employees nationally and more than 1,000 team members
13 across five countries. We have weathered crisis from
14 9/11 to the financial crisis to COVID and, through
15 our resolve and great public and private
16 partnerships, we have thrived. Since the pandemic, we
17 have seen inflationary pressures tied to food and
18 wages return and that has made it more difficult to
19 manage our business. This includes ensuring safety
20 and care for our employees, particularly during a
21 walk through our industrial business zone. As our
22 name suggests, Lady M employs a workforce that is 75
23 percent female and 93 percent people of color. Our
24 employees are hardworking and remind me of my own
25 mother who brought me to this country with little in

2 our pockets and worked day and night to provide me
3 with a solid education. Our daytime staff take the
4 early, early trains. Our nighttime staff take the
5 after-midnight trains. They walk through a dark and
6 desolate IBZ which consists of dirty sidewalks,
7 limited trash receptacles, poor lighting, and little
8 to no maintenance. The result is a perception that
9 safety is not important and far from a priority from
10 the city. In an evolving neighborhood, once known
11 only for the Citibank building, Long Island City has
12 emerged as the fastest growing neighborhood in the
13 city. It has attracted event spaces, businesses,
14 hotels and other things. However, if you sit within
15 the IBZ, which sits outside the BID, you do not
16 benefit from this evolving beautification and you do
17 not benefit from this natural growth. Expanding the
18 BID services will benefit our businesses and improve
19 the character of the neighborhood. It will promote
20 the walkability of the area and allow our company to
21 better attract and retain employees who will feel a
22 better sense of safety. While no business seeks
23 higher costs, we have conducted a thorough
24 cost/benefit analysis in collaboration with our
25 landlord to examine the proposed assessment values.

2 The net result is a view wholeheartedly shared by
3 both that the proposed expenditures are fair and
4 equitable and, lastly, in a new City of Yes,
5 extending the boundaries of this district is a key
6 imperative as it fosters inclusivity, equitable
7 economic development and a more cohesive and
8 prosperous community fabric. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Tell me more about
10 this cake.

11 ALVAREZ SYMONETTE: Yes, it is a 20-layer
12 crepe cake.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: 20 layers.

14 ALVAREZ SYMONETTE: 20-layer crepe cake.

15 It has a light pastry cream in between and if you
16 have our original, our signature one, it's bruleed on
17 top. Our second most famous one is one that has a
18 fresh imported matcha powder from Japan.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Is there any of that
20 cake in the Chambers today?

21 ALVAREZ SYMONETTE: We have a location in
22 the World Trade Center and continue to sell it day
23 and night.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much.

2 ALVAREZ SYMONETTE: Thank you. Have a good
3 one.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, now we have
5 some folks testifying on Zoom.

6 We're going to start with Albert Scott.

7 You may begin, Albert.

8 ALBERT SCOTT: Good afternoon. Today is
9 just a great day to see the dynamic team of the BID
10 formation actually coming together, but let me just
11 start off by saying good afternoon to the esteemed
12 Council Members and the Committee Members. I just
13 have to take time off work on my lunch break right
14 now to say I am wholeheartedly in support of this
15 BID. As a community resident and stakeholder in East
16 New York born and raised and see the different
17 transformation, I personally witnessed this BID
18 contribute to the economic vitality of East New York.
19 I'm urging that this dynamic Committee vote in favor
20 of this dynamic BID formation to continue their
21 dynamic work in this community. Outside of the
22 dynamic beautification projects, engaging local
23 community members, one key thing that resonate the
24 most was during the height of the pandemic. Small
25 business stores were closed. There was confusion in

2 the community. Did not have access just to the simple
3 mask and sanitation. It was this dynamic BID Steering
4 Committee that actually braved those elements,
5 walking the entire block from Fulton Street,
6 initially from Pennsylvania, all the way down through
7 the corridor, handing out the necessary equipment and
8 also educating not only small businesses, but the
9 residents and especially encouraging the small
10 business owners not to give up hope. I witnessed them
11 actually able to assist and help grow some of these
12 entities in the sense where not only through the
13 cleanup, but actually through those efforts, actually
14 increased the necessary foot traffic were translated
15 to necessary economic benefits on a whole. So again,
16 I'm just urging this dynamic Committee to please vote
17 for this formation...

18 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

19 Thank you.

20 ALBERT SCOTT: And the necessary support
21 for this dynamic organization. Onwards and upwards in
22 community. Thank you for your time.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Albert.

24 Now we have testimony from Stephen Kim.

25 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

2 STEPHEN KIM: Okay, sorry, I was muted.

3 Good afternoon. My name is Stephen Kim, and I'm the

4 Director of Design and Development at Innovo Property

5 Group. We've been property owners in the Long Island

6 City neighborhood for over eight years and currently

7 own three buildings within the East expansion area.

8 As a property owner in the neighborhood, I'm

9 testifying to express my full support for the LIC BID

10 expansion. Our tenants include NYCHA and YCAP that

11 hosts hundreds of employees, and our new mixed-use

12 development on Borden Avenue will be opening this

13 summer, which will add additional high-volume foot

14 traffic to the neighborhood. Currently, NYCHA has

15 approximately 750 employees with some 24/7

16 operations, and the YCAP with the construction

17 material distributor has about 25 employees. Over the

18 last eight years, we have witnessed that the

19 businesses in the area have shifted from strictly

20 heavy industrial to light industrial office and the

21 mixed-use commercial with the pedestrian confronting

22 businesses resulting in a steep increase in foot

23 traffic. The quality-of-life issues have become even

24 more pronounced as well. Currently, there are no

25 trash cans, graffiti chronically occurs, sidewalk

2 gets icy in the winter, and weeds are overgrown
3 throughout the district. As a property owner, we take
4 care of the area surrounding our buildings. However,
5 the major transportation hubs nearby lack sufficient
6 services. Existing services are not meeting the needs
7 of the neighborhood, and the BID is needed to resolve
8 a host of quality-of-life issues. This area is a
9 transportation hub located between the highways, two
10 stops on the subway from the Midtown Manhattan and
11 the LIRR stop. We see a great opportunity for
12 businesses to grow and thrive, but the services are
13 needed to make that happen, which BID expansion will
14 provide. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much
16 for your testimony.

17 Okay, we're going to leave the vote open
18 for Council Member Brooks-Powers. Thank you.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN:
20 Continuation Committee on Finance on the four Pre-
21 Considered Land Use applications. Council Member
22 Brooks-Powers.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: I vote aye.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Final
25 vote is now 16 in the affirmative, zero in the

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

34

2 negative, and no abstentions, and Council Member
3 Brooks-Powers to close.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,
5 and with that, this committee hearing is now
6 adjourned. [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date July 18, 2024