

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

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SEPTEMBER 29, 2022  
Start: 11:21 A.M.  
Recess: 11:28 A.M.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: JULIE MENIN, CHAIRPERSON

COUNCIL MEMBERS: SELVENA N. BROOKS-POWERS  
TIFFANY CABÁN  
SHEKAR KRISHNAN  
DARLENE MEALY  
SANDRA UNG  
MARJORIE VELÁZQUEZ

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

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: This is a microphone  
3 check. Today's date is September 29th, 2022. On the  
4 Committee on Small Business recorded by Steven  
5 Sadowsky.

6 CHAIRPERSON JULIE MENIN: (gavel  
7 pounding). Good morning. I am City Council Member  
8 Julie Menin, Chair of the Committee on Small Business  
9 and I want to welcome everyone to today's Committee  
10 on Small Business. We are going to be voting on two  
11 bills. The first bill which I am the sponsor of is  
12 Intro 116 which is co-sponsored by Super Majority of  
13 40 Council Members. It will create a one-stop shop  
14 NYC Business Portal that will be accessible in 11  
15 different languages. This bill will consolidate all  
16 City Permits for Small Business into one website, one  
17 app. Additionally a business can review and pay  
18 outstanding balances on any existing violations.  
19 This portal will be easily accessible and easy to  
20 navigate and SBS will be required to review this  
21 portal every three years and survey small business  
22 owners to obtain feedback for how effective and  
23 efficient it is for users. Small businesses  
24 frequently cite and alphabet soup of city agencies as  
25 a barrier to running their business. For example,

2 according to the Institute of Justice just running a  
3 restaurant requires an owner to submit 20 separate  
4 forms, engage with eight different City Agencies and  
5 pay thousands of dollars for licenses, permits and  
6 registrations. Opening a barber shop takes an  
7 average of 56 steps, 12 of which must be completed in  
8 person. As a former small business owner, these  
9 processes can be overly complicated and burdensome  
10 and there is no reason for small business owners to  
11 have to take off multiple days from work simply to  
12 get a license or permit. Due to the pandemic  
13 according to the 2020 Partnership for New York City  
14 report, at least one-third of the 240,000 small  
15 businesses in the City may shut down. We need to do  
16 all we can to help our small businesses and that  
17 starts with a simple process that takes away the  
18 bureaucratic burdens put on small business owners.  
19 This legislation will streamline New York's  
20 regulatory process. The second bill Intro number 383  
21 by Council Member Gale Brewer would amend the  
22 commercial property vacancy register law which  
23 changes to registration requirements and require the  
24 Department of Finance to release related supplemental  
25 registration data 60 days after the reporting

2 deadline. I am very proud of the legislation before  
3 our Committee today as it will transform New York  
4 City with a critical platform that makes it easy for  
5 small businesses to manage everything needed for  
6 their business. I want to thank my Chief of Staff,  
7 Jonathan Sheck [phonetic]. Legislative and Budget  
8 Director Brandon Jordan, Jess Baker, Andrea Vasquez,  
9 Rachel Cordero and David Sitzer for their work on  
10 Intro 116 and thank you and now I'm delighted to call  
11 on my colleague, Council Member Brewer to deliver  
12 opening remarks.

13 GALE BREWER: Thank you very much Council  
14 Woman Menin and I want to say also thank you to staff  
15 because there was a lot of negotiation on Intro 383  
16 particularly to change as the Chair mentioned from 90  
17 days to 60 days. I think one of the topics that New  
18 Yorkers want to know is why is this vacancy store,  
19 store vacant for so many days, years, decades and  
20 although there is no easy answer. There is no write  
21 off City, State or Federal. There is a question of  
22 keeping the data and some of you know that I'm very  
23 focused on open data and data in general. And as  
24 Borough President I was proud to pass Local Law 157  
25 of 2019 which established the City's first database

2 to track vacant ground and second floor store fronts  
3 and we did with then Council Member Helen Rosenthal.  
4 This database is unique as it includes individual  
5 building information as well as an aggregate  
6 information and I want to say we had as Borough  
7 President a large group task force on the issue of  
8 stores and vacancy in general and they do support  
9 even as owners this kind of database because it's not  
10 extra work. This is information that owners already  
11 include as part of their submissions to the City. So  
12 that database went live in 2021. The work needs to  
13 be done to increase its usefulness as a tool to  
14 address the commercial vacancies. And I know that  
15 during the pandemic there even more, there are a few  
16 right now but before the pandemic tons of vacancies  
17 particularly now in larger store fronts.  
18 Neighborhood City Groups use the database to map  
19 vacancies in their areas as well as people looking  
20 for storefronts and owners to use the database to  
21 fill with new businesses. Data however is not shared  
22 in a timely manner. Hence the information is  
23 provided currently with a long lag and can be  
24 updated. This bill would require more timely  
25 updating of information which would render this

2 dataset significantly more helpful to business  
3 owners, to policy makers, and to the community that  
4 wants to know what is going on. This Bill will  
5 require reporting on vital information to assess the  
6 proliferation of commercial vacancies including  
7 whether ground floor commercial properties are  
8 currently vacant. If the owner or commercial tenant  
9 occupies them and the expiration date of the last  
10 lease. I hope this information will provide more  
11 data to make better decisions. I do want to thank  
12 the staff of the Department of Finance because they  
13 have been working to improve the storefront vacancy  
14 database bill and I think this will be even better.  
15 We need more timely data. We need better compliance  
16 and I really do want thank my staff, Shirley Schuler,  
17 Puter, Leo Balluaro and the amazing staff in  
18 the Speakers office. Thank you very much.

19 CHAIRPERSON JULIE MENIN: Thank you  
20 Council Member Brewer and now I'm going to ask the  
21 Clerk to please do the roll call vote.

22 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: Good  
23 morning. William Martin the Committee Clerk. Roll  
24 call vote, Committee on Small Business. On Proposed

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2 Introduction 116A and 383A. Items are coupled.

3 Chair Menin?

4 CHAIRPERSON JULIE MENIN: Aye.

5 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: Brooks-

6 Powers? Okay. Krishnan?

7 SHEKAR KRISHNAN: Aye.

8 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank

9 you. Ung?

10 SANDRA UNG: Aye.

11 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK:

12 Velázquez?

13 MARJORIE VELÁZQUEZ: Aye.

14 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: Brooks-

15 Powers?

16 SELVENA BROOKS-POWERS: Aye.

17 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: Council

18 Member Cabán?

19 TIFFANY CABÁN: Aye.

20 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: By a

21 vote of six in the affirmative and zero in the

22 negative and no abstentions both items have been

23 adopted by the Committee.

24 CHAIRPERSON JULIE MENIN: Thank you.

25 Close? Do you want to keep it open? And this now



1 COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

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2 closes the hearing. Thank you everyone. (gavel  
3 pounding)

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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 October 10, 2022