

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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October 12, 2022  
Start: 10:12 a.m.  
Recess: 10:39 a.m.

HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM - CITY HALL

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

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Diana Ayala  
Charles Barron  
Gale A. Brewer  
Selvena N. Brooks-Powers  
David M. Carr  
Amanda Farías  
Kamilla Hanks  
Crystal Hudson  
Ari Kagan  
Farah N. Louis  
Francisco P. Moya  
Chi A. Ossé  
Keith Powers  
Pierina Ana Sanchez  
Marjorie Velázquez  
Julie Won

## A P P E A R A N C E S

Calvin Brown, Deputy Commissioner for  
Neighborhood Development at Small Business  
Services

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This a sound check for  
3 the Committee on Finance. Today's date is October 12,  
4 2022, and the location is the Committee Room. We are  
5 being recorded by Danny Huang (phonetic).

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HUANG: Good morning and  
7 welcome to today's Committee on Finance.

8 If you have testimony and would like to  
9 send it online, please send via email to  
10 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). Once again, that is  
11 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov).

12 Thank you for your cooperation. Chair  
13 Brannan, we are ready to begin.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: [GAVEL] Okay. Good  
15 morning. Welcome to today's Finance Committee  
16 meeting. I'm Council Member Justin Brannan. I have  
17 the privilege of Chairing the Committee on Finance. I  
18 first want to welcome Michael Twomey to the Finance  
19 Division. He will be our new Committee Counsel.  
20 Welcome aboard, Mike. Congratulations or my  
21 condolences. I'm not sure which is in order. Welcome  
22 aboard, seriously, and Kathleen, of course, you're  
23 old news now.

24 I first want to introduce our Colleagues  
25 who have joined us today. On Zoom, I know we have

2 Council Members Moya and Velazquez. We've been joined  
3 by Council Members Won, Powers, Brooks-Powers, Hanks,  
4 Louis, Kagan, Hudson, and Osse. That's everybody for  
5 now, and Ayala.

6 Today, we have Intro 655-A which would  
7 authorize three BIDs to increase the amounts that  
8 they expend annually. Council previously approved the  
9 Resolution 306-A on September 29th setting today as  
10 the date for a public hearing on this legislation.  
11 The budget increases have been requested by the  
12 property owners within the boundaries of each BID and  
13 would be used to enhance the services provided. The  
14 details about which BIDs would see increases and the  
15 amounts sought are set forth in the briefing  
16 documents prepared by the Finance staff. To adopt  
17 this, we must make sure that proper notice was given  
18 and that the increase in annual amounts to be  
19 expended are in public interest and that the tax and  
20 debt limits prescribed in the law will not be  
21 exceeded.

22 All right, we're going to just pause for  
23 a second for station identification.

24 Okay, we're back.

2           We understand that two of the BIDs  
3 contained in the original Introduction had issues  
4 meeting the notice requirements so the legislation we  
5 are considering today is limited to the three BIDs,  
6 Columbus/Amsterdam, Fifth Avenue, Court-Livingston-  
7 Schermerhorn, all that according to the Department of  
8 Small Business Services got their notices published.  
9 Deputy Commissioner Calvin Brown from the Department  
10 of Small Business Services is here today to testify  
11 regarding the requested assessment increases and  
12 representatives from the three BIDs are here to  
13 answer any questions that my Colleagues might have.

14           First, we'll hear from Deputy  
15 Commissioner Brown after he is sworn in by Counsel.

16           COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning. I'm  
17 going to swear you in. Mr. Brown, do you affirm that  
18 your testimony will be truthful to the best of your  
19 knowledge, information, and belief?

20           DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROWN: Yes.

21           COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may  
22 proceed when you're ready.

23           DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROWN: Good morning,  
24 Chair Brannan and the Members of the Finance  
25 Committee. My name is Calvin Brown, and I'm the

2 Deputy Commissioner for Neighborhood Development  
3 at the Department for Small Business Services. I  
4 am joined by Emily Edwards, Senior Program  
5 Manager, and Leslie Velazquez, Program Manager at  
6 the Neighborhood Development Department of Small  
7 Business Services and BID program.

8 I wish to express our support for the  
9 law providing an increase in the amount to be  
10 expended in three Business Improvement Districts  
11 or BIDs.

12 At SBS, we are working hard to open  
13 doors across New York's five boroughs, focusing on  
14 creating stronger businesses, connecting New  
15 Yorkers to jobs, and fostering thriving  
16 neighborhoods. We oversee and support the City's  
17 network of BIDs and groups who wish to form new  
18 BIDs in their communities. Over the past two and a  
19 half years, we have provided the BIDs with vital  
20 information about SBS programs and resources, City  
21 regulations, and changing conditions that affect  
22 the businesses in their corridors. My team has  
23 coordinated hundreds of hours of interagency  
24 responses through regular calls and partnerships  
25 with other agencies on Open Restaurants, Open

2 Streets, quality of life issues, and other  
3 recovery programs. We believe BIDs are central to  
4 these efforts and valuable and proven partners in  
5 fostering the vitality of the City's neighborhoods  
6 and commercial districts. Throughout the pandemic  
7 and recovery, BIDs have been called upon to  
8 deliver an increased level of services and support  
9 to the small businesses. The Mayor's Economic  
10 Blueprint also places BIDs front and center in  
11 several initiatives and rebuild and reinvent our  
12 commercial corridors and central business  
13 districts. In order to respond to these new  
14 challenges and opportunities, every single BID has  
15 been evaluating their budgets for savings and  
16 efficiencies. Part of our role in overseeing and  
17 supporting the City's existing network of 76 BIDs  
18 includes guiding them through the legislative  
19 processes, including increases to their assessment  
20 cap. To propose an assessment increase, BIDs must  
21 complete a multi-step review process overseen by  
22 SBS. The BID Board of Directors, which includes  
23 local property owners, merchants, and residents as  
24 well as representatives from the City Comptroller,  
25 Borough President, City Council, and SBS, must

2 review and approve the proposed assessment  
3 increase. Additionally, SBS requires all BIDs to  
4 submit a five-part justification outlining how the  
5 increase will be allocated, minutes from the Board  
6 meeting when the increase was approved, and  
7 letters of support from all the Council Members  
8 represented in the BID boundaries. SBS then  
9 reviews these justifications and determines  
10 whether they are sufficient to bring to City  
11 Council.

12           As required by law, each of the three  
13 BIDs published a notice of this public hearing at  
14 least once in a local newspaper having general  
15 circulation in the districts specifying the time  
16 and place of today's hearing and stating the  
17 proposed amount to be expended annually. Each BID  
18 has also certified that they have mailed a letter  
19 to property owners informing them about the  
20 proposed assessment increase and the time and  
21 place of this public hearing. Due to this  
22 requirement, two other BIDs, 125th Street and  
23 DUMBO, were removed from this legislation due to  
24 insufficient notice of today's hearing. We plan to

2 re-introduce these two additional BID assessment  
3 increases at a later time.

4           It is a priority of SBS that assessment  
5 increase proposals focus on enhancing programs and  
6 services provided to the district. The three BIDs  
7 proposing assessment increases are doing so to  
8 address vital needs and changing conditions on the  
9 ground. The increases will further expand,  
10 reinforce, and strengthen the existing core  
11 services currently provided in the districts and  
12 include funds for streetscape improvements, Open  
13 Streets programming, new public events, and added  
14 staff capacity. Additionally, portions of these  
15 increases will be used to sustain or increase  
16 current levels of sanitation and public safety  
17 programs and services impacted by the rising costs  
18 related to inflation.

19           The proposed increases vary according to  
20 budget size, district size, and proposed changes  
21 in programs and services. The proposed increases  
22 are:

23           Fifth Avenue Association, from 6,414,000  
24 dollars to 8,054,663 dollars.

2 Columbus/Amsterdam, 350,000 dollars to  
3 650,000 dollars.

4 Court-Livingston-Schermerhorn, from  
5 1,400,000 dollars to 1,800,000 dollars.

6 The City's 76 BIDs invest over 160  
7 million into neighborhood economies in the form of  
8 supplemental services and programs that serve  
9 nearly 25,000 ground-floor businesses across the  
10 city. BIDs have been a valuable and proven partner  
11 in ongoing initiatives of neighborhood  
12 revitalization and economic development across the  
13 five boroughs, making New York City neighborhoods  
14 cleaner, safer, and more vibrant. BIDs are also  
15 advocating for small businesses in their  
16 districts, helping them to navigate government,  
17 facilitating networking among fellow business  
18 owners, providing business retention support, and  
19 attracting shoppers to the areas. BIDs were  
20 critical partners in executing the City's pandemic  
21 response and continue to be vital partners in New  
22 York City's economic recovery. They are advocates  
23 for small businesses and stewards of public space,  
24 thought partners in our policy decisions, and the  
25 City's eyes and ears on the ground in commercial

2 corridors. In partnership with city government,  
3 BIDs help spur job creation, improve the quality  
4 of life for New Yorkers and visitors, enhance the  
5 city's tax base, and strengthen local economies.

6           Representatives from each BID  
7 requesting an assessment increase are present to  
8 answer any questions pertaining to their specific  
9 requests. However, I am happy to answer any  
10 questions you may have. Thank you.

11           CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you,  
12 Commissioner. Do we have any questions from any of  
13 my Colleagues?

14           Okay, we've also been joined by Council  
15 Members Carr, Barron, Sanchez, and Farias. I think  
16 that's everybody.

17           If there's no questions, I'm going to  
18 ask the immortal Billy Martin, Committee Clerk, to  
19 call the roll.

20           WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: Good  
21 morning. William Martin, Committee Clerk. Roll  
22 call vote Committee on Finance Proposed  
23 Introduction 655-A. Chair Brannan.

24           CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I vote aye.

25           WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: Ayala.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: I vote aye.

3 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank  
4 you. Moya.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: I vote aye.

6 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank  
7 you. Powers.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Just a quick  
9 second to explain.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: All right.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: I'll take that  
12 as a yes. I just want to welcome the folks from  
13 the Fifth Avenue Association, my District, who are  
14 here. This assessment is actually about a larger  
15 vision for Fifth Avenue which is something I hope  
16 we will be able to accomplish here to make it a  
17 very illustrious, although it already is but even  
18 more illustrious, part of my District where we can  
19 really lean into a big vision for it. I'm voting  
20 aye, but I also wanted to add that because I think  
21 it's an important part of the picture when we talk  
22 about that assessment. Thanks.

23 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: Louis.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: I vote aye.

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2 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK:

3 Brooks-Powers.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Aye.

5 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK:

6 Barron.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Aye.

8 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK:

9 Brewer. Farias.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: I vote aye.

11 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: Hanks.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Aye.

13 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK:

14 Hudson.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Aye.

16 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: Kagan.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: Aye.

18 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: Osse.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Aye.

20 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK:

21 Sanchez.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Aye.

23 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK:

24 Velazquez.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER VELAZQUEZ: Aye.

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2 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank  
3 you. Won.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Aye.

5 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: Carr.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Aye.

7 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: By a  
8 vote of 16 in the affirmative, zero in the  
9 negative, and no abstentions, item has been  
10 adopted by the Committee.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Billy, I want to  
12 hold it open because Council Member Restler wants  
13 to give some remarks, but can everyone else go?  
14 We're good, right?

15 All right, we're going to hold the vote  
16 open, but you guys can go. You're welcome to hang  
17 out with me if you want.

18 I see how it is.

19 Council Member Brewer.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I vote aye.

21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We have one more.

23 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: Final  
24 vote on proposed Introduction 655-A is now 17 in

25

2 the affirmative, zero in the negative, and no  
3 abstentions.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Sergeant, we're  
5 going to hold it open a little bit more.

6 Council Member Restler.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I've almost  
8 caught my breath. Thank you as always, Chair  
9 Brannan, for being such an accommodating and  
10 helpful Colleague.

11 After the Downtown Brooklyn rezoning,  
12 the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership was formed  
13 merging together three distinct Building  
14 Improvement Districts, and I will admit at the  
15 time I was a skeptic, and I've been proven wrong.  
16 The Downtown Brooklyn Partnership has been a  
17 tremendous success and a great asset to the  
18 Downtown Brooklyn community, but the budgets of  
19 the respective BIDs I don't think have caught up  
20 with the needs of Downtown Brooklyn so I am  
21 strongly supportive of enhancing the assessment  
22 and the Court-Livingston-Schermerhorn BID. I  
23 really want to thank the leadership of the  
24 Downtown Brooklyn Partnership and the Court-  
25 Livingston-Schermerhorn staff, especially the

2 folks who are out there cleaning our streets every  
3 day. The CLS BID cuts across kind of different  
4 communities from Court in the Brooklyn Heights  
5 Cobble Hill area into Downtown Brooklyn, and they  
6 do a terrific job. I hope in the future that we  
7 can include some of the luxury or market-rate  
8 residential retail properties in the BID  
9 assessment here at Court-Livingston-Schermerhorn  
10 and that many of the other BIDs in our District,  
11 but I strongly, strongly support this enhanced  
12 assessment that's going to do much to improve the  
13 street cleanliness and the quality of life and  
14 most of all create more capacity to advocate for  
15 the businesses in our community that need all the  
16 support they can get.

17 Thank you so much for the opportunity  
18 to say a few words, and I really want to thank the  
19 staff and the team at the Downtown Brooklyn  
20 Partnership and the CLS BID for their hard work.  
21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: With that, this  
23 hearing is adjourned. Thank you. [GAVEL]

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 15, 2022