

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

-----X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

-----X

October 17, 2011

Start: 10:14am

Recess: 11:35am

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E: DOMENIC M. RECCHIA, JR.
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Gale A. Brewer
Leroy G. Comrie, Jr.
Lewis A. Fidler
Helen D. Foster
Robert Jackson
G. Oliver Koppell
Darlene Mealy
Diana Reyna
Joel Rivera
Albert Vann
Fernando Cabrera
Julissa Ferreras
Karen Koslowitz

A P P E A R A N C E S

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

James G. Van Bramer

Vincent M. Ignizio

James S. Oddo

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

Andrew Schwartz
First Deputy Commissioner
NYC Department of Small Business Services

Eddy Eng
Director of the BID Program
NYC Department of Small Business Services

Sandi Lusk
Director
The Westchester Square and Zerega Improvement
Organization

John Benizio
Chairman
The Westchester Square BID Steering Committee

Joe Regina
Program Manager
Association of the Merchants

Thomas Lucaner
Representative
Office of the Bronx Borough President

John Marano
Chairman
NYC Community Board 10

Joe Kelleher
Chairman
The Bronx Chamber of Commerce

1
2 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Good morning
3 and welcome to the Finance Committee hearing. I'm
4 sorry that I'm late. I was stuck in a meeting.
5 My name is Domenic M. Recchia, Jr. I'm the
6 chairman of this wonderful Committee. I'd like to
7 introduce all my colleagues who have joined us
8 here. To my far right in the first row is Jimmy
9 Vacca from the Bronx, Jimmy Van Bramer from
10 Queens, Helen Diane Foster from Bronx. To my
11 right on the second row, Gale Brewer from
12 Manhattan, Karen Koslowitz from Queens, Julissa
13 Ferreras from Queens. I'm Domenic M. Recchia, Jr.
14 from Brooklyn; this is Oliver Koppell to my left,
15 Fernando Cabrera from the Bronx, Lewis Fidler from
16 Brooklyn.

17 We have two items on our agenda.
18 First we have transparency resolution set forth
19 designation and changes of certain organizations
20 receiving local aging and youth discretionary
21 funding. Organizations appearing in the
22 resolution that have not completed the
23 prequalification process conducted by the Mayor's
24 Office of Contracts or by the Council or any other
25 entity are identified with an asterisk.

1
2 Additionally as with all transparency resos,
3 Council Members will have to sign a disclosure
4 form indicating whether or not a conflict exists.
5 If any Council Member has a potential conflict of
6 interest with any organization listed, he or she
7 might want to disclose it before they vote. As a
8 reminder, Council Members are now required to
9 disclose any conflicts that they may have.

10 Members of the Council Finance Committee
11 department are available to answer any questions
12 regarding transparency resolutions.

13 Our last piece of legislation is
14 Intro 644, which would establish the Westchester
15 Square BID in Council Member Jimmy Vacca's
16 district. If approved, this would be the city's
17 68th BID. The first year budget for the BID is
18 \$320,000 with about 2/3 of its budget going
19 towards - - and sanitation. Council Member Vacca
20 supports the establishment of the BID. This is
21 the first hearing on the Westchester BID. By law
22 whenever a new BID is created, a public hearing
23 must be held on the legislation and the Committee
24 must wait at least 30 days before it can again
25 consider vote to approve the BID. The 30 day

1
2 period immediately begins after this public
3 hearing and serves for anyone to start and write
4 an objection. This is when the objection period
5 begins. We have the forms here if you want to
6 object. Okay.

7 In order to have a BID, we must
8 answer the following four questions: were all
9 notices for the hearings required to be held
10 published and mailed as required; does other real
11 property within the district boundaries benefit
12 from the establishment of the district except as
13 otherwise provided by the law; three, is all real
14 property benefited by the district included within
15 the district; and four, is the establishment of
16 the district in the best interest of the public?
17 If the Committee finds in affirmative on these
18 four questions and the number of objections
19 required to prevent the creation of such a
20 district are not filed, then the legislation can
21 be adopted. Okay?

22 Before we move forward, we're going
23 to vote on the transparency reso 'cause I know
24 other colleagues have other hearings to go to.
25 Then we will take the testimony on the Westchester

1
2 Square BID and then we will adjourn. So let's
3 call the vote on the transparency reso.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK: William Martin,
5 Committee Clerk, roll call vote in Committee on
6 Finance. Council Member Recchia?

7 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I encourage
8 all my members to vote aye.

9 COMMITTEE CLERK: Brewer?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Aye.

11 COMMITTEE CLERK: Fidler?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Yes.

13 COMMITTEE CLERK: Foster?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: Yes.

15 COMMITTEE CLERK: Koppell?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Aye.

17 COMMITTEE CLERK: Ferreras?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Aye.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK: Cabrera?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Aye.

21 COMMITTEE CLERK: Koslowitz?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KOSLOWITZ: Aye.

23 COMMITTEE CLERK: Van Bramer?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Aye.

25 COMMITTEE CLERK: By vote of nine

1
2 in the affirmative, zero in the negative and no
3 abstentions, item is adopted. Members, please
4 sign the Committee Report. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay. Would
6 all the members please sign the Committee Report?

7 Okay. SBS, could you please come up here?

8 Alright. Before we hear the testimony from Small
9 Business Services, we are going to hear from the
10 Council Member whose district this BID is being
11 proposed in, and that's Council Member Jimmy Vacca
12 from the Bronx. Jimmy, make a statement. You can
13 share my mic, the other mic, whatever you need.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: Thank you,
15 Mr. Chair and I'm glad the Council is taking this
16 up today. It's the culmination of a long effort
17 that members of my community have waged going back
18 to 2006, when the concept of a BID was first
19 conceived by a merchant association that had been
20 reorganized, restructured and really started
21 getting the ball rolling on what is a major
22 commercial community, a major commercial
23 thoroughfare in the east Bronx, Westchester
24 Square. We all know Westchester Square
25 historically has seen better days. The BID will

1
2 allow us to revitalize this community and to get
3 resources that to date we've not secured beyond
4 the commitment that myself, the borough president
5 and Congressman Crowley and the mayor have made to
6 this wonderful community. This is hub for
7 transportation. Its potential is an unbelievable
8 one. This BID will help to fulfill the mission
9 it's had all these years. There's been some
10 stumbling blocks. There have been some
11 impediments, but this is a major step forward and
12 I think this hearing will indicate the unanimity
13 of support it has and I look forward to working
14 toward its complete approval as we continue during
15 the months ahead. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

16 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you,
17 Council Member Vacca. Alright. We're going to
18 let SBS testify. I believe there's some other
19 people who would like to testify also—five people.
20 Okay. And Council Members are able to ask
21 questions. SBS, go ahead.

22 ANDREW SCHWARTZ: Thank you, Mr.
23 Chairman. Good morning, Chairman Recchia and
24 members of the Finance Committee. I'm Andrew
25 Schwartz, first deputy commissioner of the

1
2 Department of Small Business Services. I'm here
3 today with Eddy Eng, director of the BID program.
4 SBS supports the establishment of the Westchester
5 Square business improvement district in the
6 borough of the Bronx. Geographically, the
7 proposed BID generally includes properties along
8 both sides of Williamsbridge Road and East Tremont
9 Avenue from Eastchester Road and Silver Street to
10 Westchester Avenue and the properties in the
11 triangular blocks in the middle of the district
12 along East Tremont Avenue and Williamsbridge Road.
13 Services to be provided in the BID include
14 supplemental sanitation and security, marketing
15 and promotion of local businesses, holiday
16 lighting, economic development and new
17 initiatives, administration services and other
18 services that may be required for the promotion
19 and enhancement of the district. Proposed capital
20 improvements include street and sidewalk amenities
21 to beautify the district and improve pedestrian
22 circulation and safety. The Westchester Square
23 District Management Association will manage the
24 district and the budget for the first year of
25 operation is \$320,000. As required by law, the

1
2 Westchester Square BID Steering Committee mailed
3 the summary of the City Council resolution to each
4 owner of real property within the proposed
5 district at the address shown on the latest city
6 assessment roll to such other persons as are
7 registered within the city to receive tax bills
8 concerning real property within the district and
9 hand delivered the summary to tenants of each
10 building within the proposed district. In
11 addition, SBS arranged for publication of a copy
12 of the summary of the resolution at least once in
13 the city record. SBS plans to provide the
14 Council's Committee with all relevant information
15 about the mailing of the summary in order to
16 assist the Committee in making a determination
17 about this efficiency of the summary notice
18 pursuant to law. Thank you for your time and I'm
19 happy to answer any questions.

20 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay, before
21 we take any questions, I would just want to
22 recognize two council members that joined us—
23 Council Member Leroy Comrie from Queens and
24 Council Member Robert Jackson from Manhattan, and
25 I would like to give them the opportunity to vote.

1

2 We already voted on the transparency resolution.

3 So Council Member Leroy Comrie, would you like to

4 vote on transparency resolution?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: Yes, I'd

6 like to vote [off mic].

7 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Please speak

8 into the mic, please.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: I would

10 like to vote aye on the transparency resolution.

11 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay, and

12 we'll come back to Robert Jackson. Okay. Next,

13 we'll have Council Member Vacca, would you like to

14 start with the questions or would you like me to

15 go first? Okay. I read your testimony and tell

16 me if I'm not mistaken, but the bills that you

17 said they were hand delivered to the tenants,

18 okay, under the law, weren't they supposed to be

19 mailed?

20 ANDREW SCHWARTZ: Yeah, normally

21 when you're putting together a BID, there would be

22 a mailing to the tenants as well as the property

23 owners. We understand that the Steering Committee

24 hand delivered these to merchants.

25 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: So that is

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

not in compliance with the law. Is that correct?

ANDREW SCHWARTZ: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I understand they were delivered, but it's—so therefore, that might cause a problem. Is that correct?

ANDREW SCHWARTZ: Yeah, we believe as you said hand delivery is actual notice and probably better notice in some ways—

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: [Interposing]
But unfortunately the law is not written like that, and so someone could argue that they didn't comply with the law.

ANDREW SCHWARTZ: And I understand the Committee is going to look at that issue in making its determination.

[background conversation]

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: We're going to meet again in late November to discuss about the whole issue with the hand delivery 'cause that could be problematic and the last thing I want to do is wind up in court. Somebody, you know, who might be against this could file a lawsuit saying that it wasn't complied with even though that is something that we might want to talk about

1
2 changing this law in the future because like you
3 said, hand delivery is better and much more
4 effective than by regular mail. That's the only
5 question that I have, but do you see a need for
6 this BID in this area, would you agree?

7 ANDREW SCHWARTZ: Yes, SBS supports
8 this establishment of the BID. We've worked with
9 the Council Member's office and with this
10 organization for several years. They are truly
11 trying to improve the community, and we think the
12 BID will help accomplish that.

13 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Mr. Eng, I
14 know you've been involved with all these BIDs and
15 do you see that all the other procedures were
16 followed up correctly?

17 EDDY ENG: Yes. Based on
18 information all the other procedures were followed
19 correctly.

20 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: And when you
21 were out there to overlook this, did you also see
22 a need to move this forward in that it could
23 really benefit this community?

24 EDDY ENG: Yes, I think the
25 organization of the BID and the services it

1
2 provides I think will help this community
3 tremendously.

4 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay, now
5 I'll turn it over to the Council Member whose
6 district this is in. I recognize Council Member
7 from the Bronx, Council Member Jimmy Vacca.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: Thank you.
9 I do want to make clear for the record that the
10 issue of service is not something which will in
11 any way impede the formulation of the BID. Am I
12 correct?

13 ANDREW SCHWARTZ: We don't expect
14 it to. We'll work with this Committee to ensure
15 that it doesn't.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: My question
17 is posed to reassure people from my community who
18 are here who have worked so long to make this a
19 reality—the issue of service is an issue which
20 could delay for a month or two or a little more
21 this Council voting on the BID, but there is not
22 an issue as to whether or not the viability of the
23 BID or the need for the BID is at all impacted.
24 Am I correct?

25 ANDREW SCHWARTZ: I would agree

1
2 with you just in terms of whether there is a legal
3 opposition filed that would meet the law's
4 requirements to oppose a BID, but otherwise, I
5 don't see that being a problem.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: How many
7 BIDs do we have in New York City right now?

8 ANDREW SCHWARTZ: 66.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: 66 BIDs. Is
10 there a BID in every borough? Are they city-wide
11 in nature?

12 ANDREW SCHWARTZ: Yes, they are.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: Okay and
14 what is your relationship with the BIDs once
15 they're formed? Do they work with SBS or what is
16 the relationship with SBS and the BID?

17 ANDREW SCHWARTZ: The SBS has
18 oversight authority of the BIDs and the whole BID
19 program and they enter into a contract of services
20 between SBS and what's called the district
21 management association, which is a non-profit
22 incorporated entity set up to manage the BID.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: Do you
24 evaluate every year? Do you audit? Tell me what
25 your relationship is in that regard.

1
2 ANDREW SCHWARTZ: There is an
3 evaluation of services provided. The BIDs are
4 required to provide a certified financial
5 statement, audited statement. BIDs are subject to
6 audits by the agency and by the city comptroller
7 as well.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: Okay. I
9 have no further questions.

10 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Does any other
11 Council Member have any questions for SBS?
12 Without seeing any further questions, I want to
13 thank you. If you could just sit here 'cause we
14 have a few people who would like to testify just
15 so you could hear their comments, I would really
16 appreciate it.

17 ANDREW SCHWARTZ: Yeah, we have
18 several folks here from SBS.

19 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Good.

20 ANDREW SCHWARTZ: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Good. I
22 appreciate it. I just want to thank you. I also
23 want to thank the Finance staff who have been
24 working on this. They've been doing a great job—
25 the entire Finance staff. I want to thank Tanisha

1 [phonetic]. I want to thank Latonya [phonetic] -
2 - . I want to thank Pam. I want to thank Shadawn
3 [phonetic]. - - my staff. Okay. Alright, RJ is
4 ready to vote, but before we do that, I'd just
5 like to do this; I have a new member of my staff,
6 Hailey Meyer [phonetic]. Hailey stand up. She's
7 now on my staff, if you have any questions, so you
8 know you'll be dealing with her.

9 [background conversation]

10 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: No, she's not
11 underage. Okay. We're going to recognize the
12 Council Member from Manhattan, Robert Jackson,
13 then we're going to call up the next panel to
14 testify. Go ahead, Council Member Jackson.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: I vote aye
16 on the transparency reso.

17 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you.

18 FEMALE VOICE: John Benizio
19 [phonetic], Sandi Lusk, Joseph Regina [phonetic].

20 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Welcome to
21 the City Council. Ladies, go first.

22 SANDI LUSK: Okay. Thank you. My
23 name is Sandi Lusk. I am the director of the
24 Westchester Square and Zerega Improvement
25

1
2 Organization, which is an all volunteer
3 organization that works in Westchester Square,
4 supporting its institutions such as library, parks
5 and doing events and stuff for children. We've
6 been involved with the community for 21 years.
7 Recently, thank you in large part to all of you
8 and our community board and especially Jimmy, our
9 community has been having a renaissance. We have
10 had a park renovation. We're having the center of
11 the square is being renovated. It's an entire
12 renaissance coming back to Westchester Square,
13 which used to be a very thriving, vibrant
14 community, both commercial and residential. Now,
15 the BID is a major part of this renaissance and
16 rebirth. It's critical in fact. The population
17 of the square has changed over the last ten years
18 as the school, Arcadia 8 school, has been built.
19 There are more people. There are more families
20 with kids, homeowners coming in and we're going to
21 be working on a cultural commercial community
22 center and literally encasing that is the
23 commercial area, and all of it together is a nice,
24 big, beautiful Easter egg. We love it and it's
25 an integral part of the plan for the survival of

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

this community and we are 100% for it. What more can I say?

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you very much. Before we hear from the next speaker, I want to recognize Council Member Vincent Ignizio—give him an opportunity to vote on the transparency resolution and Council Member Jimmy Oddo, but before that I want to recognize Ralph. I want to thank you for helping out on this today. Go ahead. I recognize Council Member Vincent Ignizio from Staten Island.

COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: thank you. I vote aye.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: We recognize Jimmy Oddo, the minority leader from the borough of Staten Island. Can you speak into the microphone, please, Council Member?

COUNCIL MEMBER ODDO: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay. Next—
- like to speak.

JOHN BENIZIO: Good morning. My name is John Benizio. I have the honor of serving as the chairman of the Westchester Square BID Steering Committee. It's also an honor to speak

1 here today before this esteemed panel. I recently
2 submitted just a few minutes ago a five-page
3 testimony, which I'm not going to read because I
4 have a lot of respect for you all, but there are a
5 couple of things that I do want to speak about. I
6 feel like I did probably on the last day of
7 college because this has been a five-year--and it
8 didn't take five years to get through college, but
9 this has been a five-year journey that Westchester
10 Square has gone on to reach this point today, and
11 being in front of the City Council is almost the
12 final step in this process. I was born in
13 Westchester Square Hospital, two blocks away from
14 my office, where they'll probably find me slumped
15 over my desk one day and my whole life will have
16 gone on between two blocks, but this district is
17 right in the middle of those two blocks. I just
18 wanted to point out that having lived in the
19 neighborhood most of my life and seeing it spiral
20 down and how it's come back has been the driving
21 force that has made me push forward for this BID
22 initiative. Along the way, we've had the support
23 of people like Councilman Jimmy Vacca, my friend
24 Sandi Lusk from the neighborhood association
25

1
2 that's worked with us and it's an important step.
3 I just want to point out to you all—I could go
4 through an amazing amount of effort that has taken
5 place, but I'm going to leave that to the other
6 two speakers, who are going to speak on behalf of
7 the Committee, but I just want to say that I
8 encourage this Committee to understand that the
9 formation of the Westchester Square business
10 improvement district does not just work for
11 Westchester Square; it works for the entire
12 northeast Bronx. Westchester Square is the
13 gateway to the northeast Bronx, and the challenges
14 that that community has undergone over the last
15 couple of decades is something that we intend to
16 stop and reverse and go forward with the help of
17 the anchors in our community—the Hutchinson Metro
18 Center [phonetic], the three major hospitals in
19 the area and the five schools. With the help of
20 those anchors and in support of the initiatives
21 going forward that this Committee plans to bring
22 and the district management association will put
23 together, we believe that we can transform the
24 Bronx and particularly that area in a vibrant way
25 that in the future can be used as a model to go

1
2 out to other surrounding neighborhoods in the
3 Bronx. Thank you very much.

4 If you have any questions—I'd like
5 to point out one thing, if I may. There was a
6 question before about the way service of the
7 notices were sent out recently for this hearing.
8 I do want to point out that the property owners
9 who would be the majority of the people in the
10 district management association were all served by
11 certified mail, return receipt. It was only the
12 merchants and the residents—there are only five of
13 them in the entire district—those were the only
14 ones that were handed out by hand with a
15 conversation that went on. The law was followed
16 in so far as all property owners—the people who
17 are actually putting up the money for this—were
18 actually served by certified mail, return receipt.
19 I don't know if that plays into your decision, but
20 I just thought that that should be mentioned.

21 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I understand
22 that, but the law requires that everyone has to be
23 mailed. So this is why—believe me; we've been
24 down this many times. This is not the first time.
25 - - issues, but it happens. Like I said, we don't

1
2 need lawsuits; we have enough of them. - - 99.

3 Next?

4 JOE REGINA: Thank you, Mr.
5 Chairman and the Committee. My name is Joe
6 Regina, and for the past five years, I've been the
7 program manager for the Association of the
8 Merchants. Again, this all started with our
9 Councilman, Jimmy Vacca, who was dismayed about
10 the area of Westchester Square and the lack of
11 leadership from the merchants—an association that
12 had gone by the wayside because merchants got
13 burned out trying to attempt to revitalize the
14 area. Thanks to Mr. Vacca, he was able to bring
15 in the Bronx Business Alliance and get the
16 merchant leaders together to reinvigorate the
17 merchants association. From that point, the Bronx
18 Business Alliance went block by block and door to
19 door engaging with every merchant in the target
20 area, explaining the need to revitalize and
21 getting them excited about reactivating the
22 merchants association. Along those lines
23 information was gathered; a database was started
24 with merchant information and whatever landlord
25 information we can get from those merchants. Once

1
2 that was put into place, we went to finance tax
3 rolls to get the property owners' information,
4 which was put into a database as well. For the
5 next few months, the merchants were revisited and
6 kept excited and got to the point where they
7 needed to meet and discuss their concerns, and
8 that happened in December of 2007. We had a
9 three-hour merchants meeting with over 50
10 businesses attending and from that point on, there
11 were monthly merchant meetings held and finally in
12 January of 2008, a board was elected and sworn in
13 to lead the group. In June of 2008, all the
14 landlord property owners in the area were invited
15 to attend a luncheon/informational session, which
16 was paneled by Councilman Vacca, SBS, a couple of
17 the—we had the Third Avenue hub and the White
18 Plains BID were also attending that as well. From
19 that point the landlords were given information
20 about what a BID was, what it can do for the area
21 and it was a very invigorating meeting—very well
22 attended by the property owners. At that meeting,
23 the Steering Committee for the BID was formed and
24 for the next 12 months, Steering Committee
25 meetings took place. During this time as we were

1
2 going along, newsletters, updates, any other
3 things, any articles in newspapers, anything that
4 was happening while we were trying to get done in
5 the area to the merchants' wishes was being done
6 and being relayed to all the landlords and the
7 merchants as well. During that time, we went
8 through the seven steps of Phase 1 of the BID
9 formation process and we completed that. From
10 there, we kept up our relationship with the
11 property owners; we extend the merchant services
12 to the landlords to help them to fill vacancies.
13 We also had assistance from Senator Jeff Klein and
14 his staff who formed a promotional marketing
15 package that was produced and distributed in New
16 York State Retailers Council. Our Committee, the
17 BID Steering Committee, also produced a
18 Westchester Square BID brochure, which became an
19 extensive and comprehensive informational package
20 that was mailed to all the landlords. Staff
21 members, Steering Committee members made countless
22 calls, e-mail communications and personal visits
23 to all the landlords for receipt of their ballots.
24 Public notices for the two required public
25 meetings were published in papers, sent out - - e-

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

mail - - and mailed by postcard to every property owner. As of today, 56% of the eligible properties voted on the need to have a BID with a resounding 87% in favor of the BID formation. And that's where we're at today.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you very much. Does any Council Member have any questions? Without seeing any questions, I want to thank you all for coming to testify. Call the next panel, please.

FEMALE VOICE: Thomas Lucaner [phonetic], John Marano and Joseph Kelleher.

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay, representative from the borough president's office, go first.

THOMAS LUCANER: Thank you. Good morning, Chairman Recchia, members of the City Council Committee on Finance. My name is Tom Lucaner and I'm here today to provide testimony on behalf of Borough President Diaz in support of Intro 644, the establishment of the Westchester Square BID. Borough President Diaz strongly supports the creation of a BID for Westchester Square. In addition, Community Boards 10 and 11

1
2 and the Bronx Borough Board have both voted
3 unanimously to support the creation of the BID.
4 Westchester Square is one of the most important
5 commercial strips in the Bronx and each day brings
6 thousands of residents, students and visitors to
7 its confines to shop, eat and converse with their
8 neighbors. A BID in this area would bring new
9 services to the community, such as street
10 cleaning, new marketing efforts, community events
11 and holiday lighting that are greatly needed to
12 ensure the future vibrancy and economic vitality
13 of this commercial district. The merchants of
14 Westchester Square have come together over the
15 last few years to make this dream a reality. In
16 addition to organizing the BID, sponsoring
17 merchant sales days, luring the Bronx Council on
18 the Arts to a new home on the square and
19 sponsoring events for community youths, they have
20 worked closely with local elected officials to
21 rehabilitate Owen Dolen Park, which is in the
22 heart of the BID area. Borough President Diaz and
23 Council Member Vacca have both provided capital
24 funds for this project, which will be a focal
25 point for the new and exciting programs for

1
2 seniors and youth of the community. The addition
3 of the Westchester Square BID to the other
4 existing BIDs in the Bronx will make the
5 commercial districts in the Bronx even stronger.
6 BOEDC, the Bronx Overall Economic Development
7 Corporation and Marlene Cintron, its president,
8 have also expressed their full support for the BID
9 and look forward to continuing the work with the
10 BID management. Borough President Diaz is
11 thankful to John Benizio, the chair of the BID
12 Steering Committee, the property owners, and all
13 the merchants for their commitment to the Bronx
14 and establishing this BID. We look forward to
15 continuing to work with the BID to make
16 Westchester Square a premiere shopping district.
17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
19 very much. Next?

20 JOHN MARANO: Good morning,
21 Chairman Recchia and the Councilman for allowing
22 me speak today. My name is John Marano. I'm the
23 Chairman at the Community Board 10 up in the area
24 that Westchester Square BID will be located.
25 Westchester Square is in an older, but vital

1 commercial hub for the northeast Bronx. The idea
2 for a business improvement district is an
3 outgrowth of efforts on the part of the
4 association of merchants and business
5 professionals of Westchester Square to revitalize
6 the area. Westchester Square is characterized by
7 a collection of independent businesses, some chain
8 franchise operations, banks and social service,
9 governmental - - , such as a regional office of
10 the New York City Department of Transportation and
11 Military Recruiters. It is dominated by Owen
12 Dolen Park and is a transportation hub for the
13 subway and several bus lines. It also has a rich
14 history as evidenced by the presence of St.
15 Peters Episcopal Church, which had received its
16 charter from King George III, the Huntington Free
17 Library and the Ferris [phonetic] Family Cemetery,
18 commemorating the Ferris family, a prominent group
19 local merchants and a sea captain. Through the
20 efforts of merchants and the anchor stores has
21 been secured for the area. The merchants and
22 property owners have been organized into a
23 cohesive unit. The Bronx Council of Arts has been
24 induced to take up residence in the square also.
25

1
2 Most importantly, a commitment has been obtained
3 from the City to renovate Owen Dolen Park. We at
4 Bronx Community Board 10 recognize the importance
5 of Westchester Square and we're proud to support
6 the idea of a BID, unanimously passing resolution
7 to support it. Thank you for your attention and
8 consideration.

9 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
10 very much. Next?

11 JOSEPH KELLEHER: Thank you. My
12 name is Joe Kelleher. I am the chairman of the
13 Bronx Chamber of Commerce and today I am here as
14 part of the Committee for the Westchester Square
15 BID and I represent Simone [phonetic] Development,
16 who is one of the property owners and developers
17 in the area. I just wanted to touch base on the
18 importance of the Square as it pertains to the
19 efforts that are made on the development and the
20 economic development that's happening in this
21 geographic area. The Hutchinson Metro Center,
22 which is our complex, is the home of Mercy
23 College, Visiting Nurse Services of New York, New
24 York city Housing Authority, Administration of
25 Children's Services, ATF and a whole host of

1
2 medical practitioners that are affiliated with the
3 various hospitals. Currently, at our complex, we
4 have 4,000 employees that are working there, which
5 5 years ago—6 years ago, there were none. We have
6 3,000 visitors a day coming to and from—mainly,
7 people coming to work at the various agencies and
8 patients who are coming to see medical
9 practitioners. We estimate in the next 4 years
10 when we complete the development of the project,
11 we will have 8,000 employees and 6,000 visitors a
12 day coming to the site. The Westchester Square,
13 which is about a mile and a half from the
14 Hutchinson Metro Center is the only means of
15 transportation for people who need to get to and
16 from the complex. We run our own shuttle bus
17 service to and from our complex to the square
18 where all the buses arrive as well as the number 6
19 train, which is in badly need of renovations; the
20 number 6 train station actually is not even
21 equipped for handicap access, which it should be
22 because our buses certainly have to accommodate
23 people who are disabled. The square is important.
24 The retail—there's not much retail in the area.
25 There is not a lot—there is retail, but it could

1
2 be better, and I think if the square gets the
3 improvement that it needs, it's going to attract
4 other retailers, which will attract other people
5 that maybe want to live in the area, as well.
6 Housing is important. We need more places for
7 people to live. When you have commercial office
8 tenants, who are looking to relocate to the Bronx
9 because it's the new frontier and the rents are
10 good, one of the big issues is where's the labor
11 pool? It would be nice to have more qualified
12 people—even though the Bronx is the highest level
13 of unemployment of the five boroughs, certainly an
14 improvement in housing and availability of labor
15 pool would be great for these businesses to
16 consider coming to the Hutchinson Metro Center.
17 As an aside, the 911 call center is being built on
18 our site as well in about four years. Hopefully,
19 it will be 1200 people working there per day.

20 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: We hope it
21 gets built.

22 JOSEPH KELLEHER: Thank you.

23 [crosstalk]

24 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: - - Jimmy
25 Vacca.

1
2 JOSEPH KELLEHER: Yeah, he's doing
3 a great job. The Office of Mental Health is
4 building new hospitals along - - place, and will
5 probably be selling a lot of that land. When you
6 look at just those three projects alone, that's \$2
7 billion worth of dollars that have been invested
8 in that area. That will really put the northeast
9 Bronx on the map. There is also other retail
10 development that's happening in the area and in
11 our complex we are now entertaining putting in a
12 class A hotel. The bottom line to all of this is
13 that the square is the gateway. Without the
14 square, we don't have a place for people to enter
15 in to this beautiful complex; when they want to
16 get there, they have to take public
17 transportation, so it's very important not only to
18 the Hutchinson Metro Center and all of the
19 hospitals and all the developers, but I think that
20 if we can get the square back to the glory days
21 where it used to be when Woolworth's [phonetic]
22 was there, which I never saw, but I heard it was
23 great back then. I think it will help the
24 economic development in that area of the Bronx.
25 Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
3 very much. Good luck in getting the hotel there.
4 Alright. I want to recognize the Council Member
5 from the Bronx, who is doing a great job, Council
6 Member Jimmy Vacca.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: Thank you,
8 Mr. Chair. I just want to thank all the
9 stakeholders who have come here today. All of you
10 have done a great job. We owe you a debt of
11 gratitude for your persistence and your dedication
12 to this project. I think we are seeing good
13 results. We have more to do, but we started off
14 really with such major issues, and I do think the
15 square has that potential, but only because of
16 your involvement and all of you from my district,
17 so I thank you so much.

18 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
19 very much, Council Member Jimmy Vacca. Does any
20 other Council Member have any questions they would
21 like to ask? Without seeing that, I want to thank
22 you all for coming here to testify today. Does
23 anyone else want to talk about the Westchester
24 Square BID? Without seeing anyone else to
25 testify, we will end this meeting. We will leave

1

2

the vote open for 15 minutes. We will consider

3

the legislation November 29th. Okay. Thank you

4

very much.

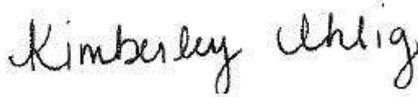
5

[gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Kimberley Uhlig certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Signature

Handwritten signature of Kimberley Uhlig in cursive script, written over a horizontal line.Date _____ October 26, 2011 _____