

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

----- X

October 13, 2016  
Start: 11:10 a.m.  
Recess: 11:27 a.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E: JULISSA FERRERAS-COPELAND  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
Ydanis A. Rodriguez  
James G. Van Bramer  
Vanessa L. Gibson  
Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.  
Laurie A. Cumbo  
Corey D. Johnson  
Mark Levine  
I. Daneek Miller  
Helen K. Rosenthal  
Steven Matteo  
Paul A. Vallone

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

Michael Blaise Backer  
Deputy Commissioner  
NYC Department of Small Business Services

Robert Small  
Property Owner

[sound check]

[pause]

[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Good

morning and welcome to today's Finance Committee

hearing. I am Council Member Julissa Ferreras-

Copeland; I am the Chair of the Committee. We've

been joined by Council Members Miller, Cornegy,

Rodriguez, Johnson, Majority Leader Van Bramer,

Minority Leader Matteo, and Council Member Vallone.

Today we have one item on the agenda; we

will hold a public hearing and vote today on Int.

1282, which would authorize assessment increases for

eight business improvement districts and two special

assessment districts for Fiscal 2017. The budget

increases have been requested by the property owners

within the boundaries of each bid and would be used

to enhance the services provided. The eight BIDs and

two special assessment districts that are seeking

budget increases are the 165th Street Special

Assessment District in Council Member Miller and

Lancman's district; the Atlantic Avenue BID in

Council Member Levin and Council Member Lander's

district; the Bayside Village BID in Council Member

1  
2 Vallone's district; the Court-Livingston-Schermerhorn  
3 BID in Council Member Levin's district; the Fashion  
4 Center BID in Council Member Johnson and Council  
5 Member Garodnick's district; the Fifth Avenue BID in  
6 Council Member Garodnick's district; the Jamaica  
7 Center Special Assessment District in Council Member  
8 Miller and Council Member Lancman's district; and the  
9 Madison Avenue BID in Council Member Garodnick's  
10 district; the Metrotech BID in Council Member Levin  
11 and Council Member Cumbo's district; and the  
12 Woodhaven BID in Council Member Crowley and Council  
13 Member Ulrich's district.

14           Each of these Council Members have  
15 submitted a letter in support of the requested budget  
16 increases; more information regarding the specific  
17 amounts of the assessment increases and the reasons  
18 for this request can be found on the Committee Report  
19 prepared by the Finance Division.

20           Representatives from the Department of  
21 Small Business Services are here to testify on this  
22 BID item and to answer any questions you may have. I  
23 believe Council Member Vallone -- did you wanna speak  
24 on your BID? [background comments] Yes, of course.  
25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Thank you Madam  
3 Chair. I just have a letter in support that we gave  
4 to each of the Council Members for the Bayside BID  
5 and Lyle Sclair, the Executive Director, is here.

6 Just couldn't be any more proud of the  
7 progress and the work that they've done; they have  
8 over 150 businesses on Bell Boulevard, the BID's  
9 aggressively expanded its programs over the past few  
10 years to include weekend walk events, family  
11 Halloween festival, the maintenance of Bayside-Long  
12 Island Railroad and the hosting of the holiday  
13 parade, that's their annual [sic], is coming up  
14 December 4th, on Sunday, where the programs and  
15 services have made Bayside and my district a much  
16 better place, an example for the other areas -- like  
17 Whitestone, College Point, Little Neck, Douglaston --  
18 they're all trying to become BIDs now.

19 So on the June 22nd meeting they  
20 unanimously approved the BID assessment from \$155-  
21 230,000 to be phased in over the next three years in  
22 \$25,000 increments, so I ask my Council Members'  
23 support. Thank you Madam Chair.

24 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank you  
25 Council Member. Council Member Miller.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Thank you Madam  
3 Chair. I just wanna say that I also support the  
4 increase in my two BIDs, they've done tremendous work  
5 and with the growth of Downtown Jamaica area, they've  
6 become very vital to that growth and certainly they  
7 can use the additional dollars to make sure that  
8 services that they're delivering for their members  
9 are the services that they community needs, so I look  
10 forward to passing this legislation and moving  
11 forward with the 165 in Jamaica Bay, so I'm excited.  
12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank you  
14 Council Member Miller. Any questions for the agency?  
15 Oh; can you please come on up? I have to read your  
16 statement -- speed read. [background comments]. And  
17 my counsel will swear you in and you may begin.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you affirm that  
19 your testimony will be truthful to the best of your  
20 knowledge, information and belief?

21 MICHAEL BLAISE BACKER: I do. Good  
22 morning Chair Ferreras-Copeland and members of the  
23 Finance Committee. I am Michael Blaise Backer,  
24 Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Small  
25 Business Services. I wish to express our support for

1  
2 the law providing an increase in the amounts to be  
3 expended in eight Business Improvement Districts and  
4 two Special Assessment Districts. For all intents  
5 and purposes, SBS considers Special Assessment  
6 Districts to be part of the BID program.

7           As required by law, the 10 districts  
8 published a notice of the public hearing at least  
9 once in a local newspaper having general circulation  
10 in the districts specifying the time when, and the  
11 place where, the hearing will be held and stating the  
12 increase proposed in the maximum amount to be  
13 expended annually. In addition, each district has  
14 certified that they have mailed a letter to property  
15 owners informing them about the proposed assessment  
16 increase, and the time and place of this public  
17 hearing. Finally, the council member or council  
18 members for each district has submitted a letter of  
19 support for each district assessment increase.

20           The 10 districts requesting increases of  
21 annual expenditures are doing so to address vital  
22 needs and changing conditions. These increased will  
23 further expand, reinforce and strengthen existing  
24 core services currently provided in the business  
25 districts. Additionally, portions of these increases

1  
2 will be used to sustain current levels of important  
3 programs and services impacted by rising contract  
4 costs related to the increase in minimum wage.

5           The districts that wish to increase the  
6 maximum amount to be expended annually beginning on  
7 July 1, 2016, are as follows: 165th Street BID, from  
8 \$200,000 to \$250,000; Atlantic Avenue, from \$240,000  
9 to \$390,000; Bayside Village from \$155,000 to  
10 \$230,000; Court-Livingston-Schermerhorn from \$700,000  
11 to \$907,000; Fashion Center from \$7,800,000 to  
12 \$8,800,000; Fifth Avenue from \$2,905,000 to  
13 \$3,207,000; Jamaica Center from \$737,500 to  
14 \$1,017,500; Madison Avenue from \$1,757,000 to  
15 \$2,100,000; Metrotech from \$3,624,492 to \$4,274,492;  
16 and Woodhaven from \$218,000 to \$275,000.

17           The City's 72 BIDs invest over \$127  
18 million into local economies in the form of  
19 supplemental services and programs that serve over  
20 \$85,000 businesses across the city. BIDs have been  
21 valuable and proven partners in ongoing initiatives  
22 of neighborhood revitalization and economic  
23 development across the five boroughs, making New York  
24 City's neighborhoods cleaner, safer and more vibrant.  
25 In partnership with city government, BIDs help create



1 jobs, improve the quality of life for New Yorkers and  
2 visitors, enhance the city's tax base, and strengthen  
3 local economies.  
4

5 Representatives from each BID requesting  
6 an assessment increase are present to answer any  
7 specific questions pertaining to this request.

8 However, I'm happy to take any general questions you  
9 may have. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Seeing  
11 none. Thank you very much for coming to testify  
12 today. And now we will hear from Mr. Robert Small, a  
13 property owner on Jamaica Avenue.

14 [pause]

15 ROBERT SMALL: I'm speaking specifically  
16 against an increase for Greater Woodhaven -- uh no,  
17 for the BID in Woodhaven. I only found out about it  
18 in the course of the annual meeting of the BID and  
19 the expenses could be... easily go to millions of  
20 dollars; the people running it have no concept of how  
21 much money they wanna spend; it's not a busy area; I  
22 don't actively do business so my... basically my taxes  
23 are half, from what I understand, of what the regular  
24 business people pay. But the expenditures are wasted  
25 of money. I'll give you... I have a few examples, but

1  
2 they run a bus, a free bus along the avenue; they  
3 paid \$900 for it and the woman thinks it's the  
4 greatest thing since sliced cheese, the uh bus cost  
5 \$900; she thinks it attracts 30 people, which means  
6 every person is getting a ride for \$30; it's much  
7 easier to have a van to move people around; that's...  
8 she wants to run it twice a year instead of once a  
9 year. The security that they provide is a joke. We  
10 have a very good police department in New York City;  
11 the security walk in twos along the avenue; I don't  
12 think they have arms [sic]; I have to walk on the  
13 avenue by myself; I feel very insecure because I'm by  
14 myself; here there are two people walking.

15 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Mr.  
16 Small; are you a business owner on the corridor?

17 ROBERT SMALL: I have a... I own the  
18 building, I have... [crosstalk]

19 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: You're a  
20 property owner?

21 ROBERT SMALL: Because I own a building,  
22 I'm subject to the BID.

23 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Yes,  
24 you're a property owner.

25

1  
2 ROBERT SMALL: Property owner, yes...

3 [crosstalk]

4 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Okay.

5 ROBERT SMALL: I wrote that on the card.

6 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Okay.

7 ROBERT SMALL: What the BID does, which  
8 is very necessary, is provide cleaning on the avenue  
9 and the Christmas lights; other than that, the  
10 expenditures are throwing money down the drain. Now  
11 I found out at the BID meeting, annual BID meeting,  
12 which was attended by maybe 40 people in the hall  
13 that maybe rents were... the housing was \$2,000; they  
14 gave us a very beautiful buffet and the food couldn't  
15 be... possibly be consumed. I found out that the BID  
16 didn't pay for the food; the Greater Woodhaven  
17 Development Corporation paid for the food, which  
18 means the City of New York, I think. The civil...  
19 [sic] is funded by the taxpayers, by the property  
20 owners, but the taxpayers fund the Greater Woodhaven.  
21 To me this doesn't make sense; it's stealing money  
22 from the City; it wasn't necessary to have that kind  
23 of a hall, and I think it's wrong and the last time  
24 they raised the BID I think there was a transit  
25 strike or something; I couldn't get into the city.

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

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

And this is not a major metropolitan area that needs increases that go to millions, there's no shopping or [sic].

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: Thank you very much for coming to testify, Mr. Small. And just for the clarity of our members, the Woodhaven BID is proposing to go from \$218,000 to \$275,000 at a \$57,000 increase.

Okay, does anyone have any additional questions? Seeing none, I'll ask Billy Martin to call the roll.

COMMITTEE CLERK: William Martin, Committee Clerk, roll call vote Committee on Finance, Introduction 1282. Chair Ferreras Copeland.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: I vote aye.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Rodriguez.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Aye.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Van Bramer.

COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Aye.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Gibson.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Aye.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Cornegy.

COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Aye.

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

13

COMMITTEE CLERK: Johnson.

COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Aye.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Levine.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Aye.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Miller.

COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Aye.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Matteo.

COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Aye.

COMMITTEE CLERK: By a vote of 9 in the affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions, the item has been adopted by the Committee.

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS-COPELAND: So we will keep the roll open for an additional 10 minutes. Members of staff, if you can please make sure that your members make it here in the next 10 minutes so they can be counted for the vote.

Thank you very much for coming to testify today.

[pause]

COMMITTEE CLERK: Continuation roll call, [background comments] the Committee on Finance... quiet please... [background comments] Council Member Rosenthal.

[background comments]

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

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

14

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Aye.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Vote now stands at 10  
in the affirmative.

[pause]

COMMITTEE CLERK: Continuation roll call,  
Committee on Finance. Council Member Cumbo.

[background comments]

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I vote aye.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Final vote now,  
Committee on Finance, Introduction 1282 has been  
adopted by a vote of 11 in the affirmative, 0 in the  
negative and no abstentions.

[pause]

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: This meeting is  
now adjourned.

[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 24, 2016