

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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October 7, 2008  
Start: 11:00am  
Recess: N/A

HELD AT: Council Chambers  
City Hall

B E F O R E:  
DAVID I. WEPRIN  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
Maria Baez  
Joel Rivera  
Helen Sears  
G. Oliver Koppell  
Vincent J. Gentile  
Lewis A. Fidler  
Vincent Ignizio  
Diana Reyna  
Leroy G. Comrie, Jr.  
James F. Gennaro  
Alan J. Gerson  
Michael E. McMahon  
Bill de Blasio  
James S. Oddo  
Gale A. Brewer  
Robert Jackson  
Eric N. Gioia  
David Yassky

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

Jeremy Waldrup  
Assistant Commissioner  
Department of Small Business Services

Myron Polinar  
Property owner  
668 and 650 East Fordham Road

Joseph Rose  
Managing member of property owners  
619, 580, 582 East Fordham Road

David Rose  
President and Chief Operating Officer  
Automotive Realty Corporation

Shlomo Bashan  
Property owner  
555, 557, 600 East Fordham Road

Shawn Danishvar  
Owner  
Medalliance Medical Health Services

Sharar Danishvar  
Chief Operating Officer and Co-owner  
666 East Fordham Road

Joe Murriana  
Associate Vice President of Government Relations and  
Urban Affairs  
Fordham University

Rosemarie Deluca  
Assistant Director for City and State Affairs  
Wildlife Conservation Society

Frank Franz  
President  
Belmont Small Business Association

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

Jerome Raguso  
Owner  
Gino's Pastry

June Galarza  
District Manager  
Community Planning Board 6

Richard Leginni  
Owner of Print shop

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2 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Sergeant at  
3 Arms ready? Good morning. Made it under the  
4 wire. And, welcome to today's Finance Committee  
5 hearing. My name is David Weprin. I chair the  
6 Committee. We're joined by a number of colleagues  
7 and we'll have more colleagues later. And, by the  
8 time we get to any vote, we will have a quorum.  
9 We're joined by Council Member Maria Baez from the  
10 Bronx. We're joined by our Majority Leader,  
11 Council Member Joel Rivera, also of the Bronx, who  
12 will make a statement on the BID after I finish my  
13 opening statement. We have Council Member Helen  
14 Sears from Queens.

15 This morning, we have two items on  
16 our agenda; a local law to establish a business  
17 improvement district in the Bronx and a Land Use  
18 item to provide a property tax exemption for low  
19 and moderate-income families, also in the Bronx.

20 We, first, start with the BID item,  
21 Intro 808 establishes the Belmont BID located in  
22 Council Member Joel Rivera's district in an area  
23 known as Little Italy. Resolution 1549A, adopted  
24 by this Committee on September 24th set, today as  
25 the first hearing date so that we may hear all

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2 those who may be affected by the establishment of  
3 the BIDs who wish to speak. After we hear from  
4 all the witnesses, we will adjourn the hearing for  
5 at least 30 days, which is the statutorily  
6 mandated time during which property owners  
7 objecting to the establishment of a BID may file  
8 objections. In the absence of significant  
9 objections, if the Committee and the Council can  
10 answer the following four questions affirmatively,  
11 it may adopt a local law establishing the BID.

12 The four questions we must be  
13 prepared to answer are: one, were all notices of  
14 hearings, for all hearings required to be held  
15 published and mailed as required by law and  
16 otherwise sufficient; two, does all the real  
17 property within the district boundaries benefit  
18 from the establishment of the district, except as  
19 otherwise provided by the law; three, is all real  
20 property benefited by the district included within  
21 the district; and four, is the establishment of  
22 the district in the best interest of the public.  
23 If the Committee finds in the affirmative on these  
24 four questions, and the number of objections  
25 required to prevent the creation of the BID are

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not filed, then this legislation can be adopted.

I also have a letter of support from New York City Comptroller Bill Thompson for the establishment of this BID. The letter of support will be made part of the record. I'll read it. The letter states, addressed to me, "Dear Council Member Weprin, The Comptroller of the City of New York serves as ex officio member of the Board of Directors in all business improvement districts. During my term as Comptroller, I've found these public/private partnerships to be effective in developing new and innovative programs to support local business.

BIDs have a proven track record of success in a broad range of communities across our City. Efforts to include additional business improvement districts deserve the support of all New Yorkers interested in improving the business climate along our neighborhood commercial streets that are such a crucial part of community life.

I'm especially pleased to support the creation of this new Belmont Avenue BID. This area's also known as the Little Italy of the Bronx because of its high concentration of Italian

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2 restaurants and specialty stores. The area runs  
3 generally from East Fordham Road to the north,  
4 Lorillard Place to the west, East 183<sup>rd</sup> Street to  
5 the south and Southern Boulevard to the east. I  
6 am certain the area's property owners, business  
7 people and residents, alike, will benefit greatly  
8 from the supplementary sanitation, security and  
9 marketing services this new BID will provide for  
10 the neighborhood.

11 I urge the Council to pass Intro  
12 808. Very truly yours, William C. Thompson, Jr.,  
13 Comptroller."

14 Next, we have a Land Use item.  
15 This item is a pre-considered Resolution providing  
16 a property tax exemption for the rehabilitation of  
17 low and moderate-income families in the Bronx.  
18 The Diego Beekman Mutual Housing Association is a  
19 38 multiple dwelling project with 1,219 units.  
20 This project is so vast that it overlaps two City  
21 Council districts, Council Member Maria del Carmen  
22 Arroyo and Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito.  
23 Both Council Members support this exemption.

24 Representatives from Council  
25 Finance are also available to answer any questions

1  
2 you may have regarding the Land Use item. We will  
3 now hear--well, before we hear from Assistant  
4 Commissioner Jeremy Waldrup for the Department of  
5 Small Business Services. I'll hear a statement  
6 from Joel Rivera. But, before that, I just want  
7 to acknowledge the presence of two more  
8 colleagues, Council Member Oliver Koppell from the  
9 Bronx and Council Member Vincent Gentile from  
10 Brooklyn.

11 Majority Leader Rivera, do you have  
12 a statement?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Yes. Thank  
14 you very much, Chairman Weprin. First, I want to  
15 thank everybody for coming down here to City Hall  
16 today. We all know the Belmont area of the Bronx.  
17 We are all very fond of the Little Italy, which we  
18 call home. We know that we have a very rich  
19 culture, a very rich heritage, something that we  
20 could all be proud of.

21 BIDs have worked within the City of  
22 New York for a very long time. We know that the  
23 added security will make sure that not only the  
24 store owners, the residents and people who come up  
25 and down our neighborhood will feel more secure



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2 knowing that there is an organization there  
3 protecting them and day-in and day-out to ensure  
4 their protection. We also know that in order to  
5 keep our community safe and clean, we need people  
6 whose eyes and ears to be on the ground and with  
7 the BID, we'll be able to pay for, you know, anti-  
8 graffiti programs and for added sanitation to keep  
9 the neighborhood clean.

10 We know that the community is an  
11 aging community. We know that we need more  
12 infrastructure. We know we need more services.  
13 We know we need capital improvements. These are  
14 things that a BID, you know, can take part in.  
15 And, I know that we are all going to be part of  
16 the table making sure that the Arthur Avenue/  
17 Belmont area is going to be an area that we are  
18 not only proud of today, but we're going to be  
19 proud of for many years to come.

20 There has, you know, over the past  
21 couple of weeks, couple months, there has been  
22 some issues that have come before us, you know, in  
23 the local community when it comes to the select  
24 bus service. And, I know a lot of us, you know,  
25 have been out there, you know, staunchly against,

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2 you know, what this has done to our local  
3 community in terms of removing parking spaces and  
4 hurting some of the businesses. And, I have, you  
5 know, been there with the Community Board, with  
6 the business leaders and the residents saying that  
7 we need a resolution towards that.

8           Unfortunately, that is not  
9 something that we can actually take part in in the  
10 BID meeting, since they're two issues that are  
11 unrelated. So, what I am saying is that, you  
12 know, as the representative from the 15<sup>th</sup> Council  
13 District, I will continue to work with all the  
14 businesses within the Belmont area to ensure that  
15 the Department of Transportation will come back to  
16 the table and hopefully we can get a resolution  
17 that satisfies the businesses in the area.

18           But, we cannot allow for one  
19 situation to deter an opportunity where we can  
20 have the Belmont business improvement district,  
21 which will greatly benefit all the businesses  
22 within our community and provide so many great  
23 services. It's our home. It's our community.  
24 It's the place that we love to go to, day-in and  
25 day-out. And, I know, you know, some of you go

1  
2 into [pause] stores at five o'clock in the  
3 morning, six o'clock in the morning and may be the  
4 last ones to close up shop. And, that's exactly  
5 why we need this to be implemented as soon as  
6 possible.

7 We know that the Fordham Road BID  
8 has been a tremendous success. And, I know that  
9 David Rose, who's the new Chair, is with us here  
10 today and he can attest to how good, you know, the  
11 BID has been on Fordham Road. And, we just want  
12 to make sure that Arthur Avenue [pause] Belmont  
13 area can have the same level of services that they  
14 rightfully deserve, you know.

15 We celebrate so many different  
16 occasions. And, I think, you know, as the  
17 representative for the area, I will be proud, you  
18 know, to see, you know, that we have a uniformed  
19 patrol there. I will be proud to see that we have  
20 added services that will complement and enhance  
21 the Belmont community. We should market this so  
22 heavily, so that way the businesses will succeed,  
23 you know, day-in and day-out, where people will  
24 come not only from all over the Bronx, all over  
25 the City of New York. They should know where the

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2 real Little Italy is and it's not down on Mulberry  
3 Street. It's right here in the Borough of the  
4 Bronx and Arthur Avenue in the Belmont area.

5 So, I'm in support of the Belmont  
6 business improvement district because I know what  
7 will transpire from that; great enhancements,  
8 great opportunities, businesses will succeed,  
9 people will come into our neighborhoods, people  
10 will feel safer within our neighborhoods and  
11 people will be proud to not only call it home  
12 today, but call it home, you know, years to come.  
13 Thank you very much.

14 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you,  
15 Council Member. We've been joined by Council  
16 Member Lew Fidler, from Brooklyn and Council  
17 Member Koppell had a statement to make.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: I just,  
19 briefly, want to echo the remarks of my colleague,  
20 Councilman Rivera. First of all, the Belmont  
21 area's immediately adjacent to part of my  
22 district. Just, my district comes to just north  
23 of Belmont. Secondly, I have, for decades, been a  
24 frequent visitor to Belmont. It's one of the  
25 reasons that my weight is higher than it ought to

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2 be. I must say at least twice a month, my wife  
3 and I visit there. We were only there a few days  
4 ago.

5 About two weeks ago, they had a  
6 wonderful street fair, which was very different,  
7 Mr. Chairman, from the street fairs that are sort  
8 of cookie cutter street fairs in Manhattan. This  
9 was a real Italian street fair, with all the  
10 restaurants putting their tables and chairs out on  
11 the street and Italian music and all kinds of  
12 Italian products for sale. And, not, you know,  
13 not just sausage and peppers. This was a real  
14 genuine Italian street fair. And, people who have  
15 not--pardon me?

16 [off mic]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Yeah.  
18 Well, all kinds of things. In any event, and if  
19 anybody in this room hasn't visited the Belmont  
20 area at Arthur Avenue, right next to the Zoo,  
21 you're missing something really wonderful. And,  
22 some of the very best restaurants in New York are  
23 there. And, the ambiance is something very  
24 special.

25 And, I have several business

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improvement districts in my area; one on Jerome Avenue, one in Kingsbridge. Both of them have been major contributors to the attractiveness and success of those areas. And, I'm sure Belmont will benefit from a business improvement district only to make it better. Just to mention one thing that, Mr. Chairman, there's still a depression era public market, the Arthur Avenue market, which is a real landmark. And, again, adds to the flavor of the Belmont area.

So, I heartily support this. And, it can only make that part of the Bronx an even more attractive place to visit. Not to say that it isn't that way today. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you, Council Member. We've been joined by Council Member Vincent Ignizio from Staten Island. And, we'll now hear from Assistant Commissioner, Jeremy Waldrup.

JEREMY WALDRUP: Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Finance Committee. I am Jeremy Waldrup, an Assistant Commissioner at the Department of Small Business Services.

SBS supports the establishment of

1  
2 the Belmont business improvement district in the  
3 Borough of the Bronx. Geographically, the  
4 proposed BID includes properties along Arthur  
5 Avenue, from Fordham Road to East 183<sup>rd</sup> Street;  
6 East 187<sup>th</sup> Street from Lorillard Place to Southern  
7 Boulevard; Crescent Avenue from East 187<sup>th</sup> Street  
8 to Arthur Avenue; East 187<sup>th</sup> Street from Crescent  
9 Avenue; East 188<sup>th</sup> Street from Arthur Avenue to  
10 Hughes Avenue; Fordham Road, from Lorillard Place  
11 to Southern Boulevard; East 189<sup>th</sup> Street from  
12 Arthur Avenue to Beaumont Ave; East 183<sup>rd</sup> Street,  
13 from Arthur to Adams Place; and Crotona Avenue  
14 from East 189<sup>th</sup> Street to Fordham Road.

15 Services to be provided in the  
16 Belmont BID include sanitation, security and  
17 public safety, marketing, promotion and  
18 advertising, administration and additional  
19 services required for the enjoyment and protection  
20 of the public and the promotion and enhancement of  
21 the district. The Belmont District Management  
22 Association will manage the district. And, the  
23 budget for the first year of operation will be  
24 \$340,000.

25 As required by law, the Belmont BID

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2 Steering Committee mailed the summary of the City  
3 Council Resolution to each owner of real property  
4 within the district at the address shown on the  
5 latest City assessment role, to such other persons  
6 as are registered within the City to receive tax  
7 bills concerning real property within the district  
8 and to tenants of each building within the  
9 proposed district. In addition, SBS arranged for  
10 the publication of a copy of the summary of the  
11 Resolution at least once in the City Record.

12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you.

14 We've been joined by Council Member Diana Reyna  
15 from Brooklyn and Queens and Council Member Peter  
16 Vallone, Jr. from Queens. Any questions for  
17 Commissioner Waldrup? Seeing none, we'll hear  
18 testimony from the public.

19 We're going to have three panels.  
20 Which one do you want first? The first panel is  
21 in opposition to the proposed BID. If we could  
22 ask them to come up and forgive me if I  
23 mispronounce the name 'cause it's not always easy  
24 to—when the handwriting and the pronunciation—  
25 Shawn Danishvar [phonetic], 625 East Fordham Road;



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2 David Rose, for the Automotive Realty Corp.,  
3 Shlomo Bashan [phonetic] and Sharar Danishvar  
4 [phonetic].

5 FEMALE VOICE: [pause] two as well.  
6 They're part of the same. But, you just need one  
7 of them.

8 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Also, two  
9 others, who are opposed.

10 FEMALE VOICE: Joseph--

11 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Joseph Rose--

12 FEMALE VOICE: They're brothers.

13 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: --and Myron  
14 Poliner [phonetic]. If you could all come up.  
15 [pause] three minutes. Okay. We're going to  
16 limit the testimony to three minutes each. I'll  
17 use my discretion if someone goes over. And, feel  
18 free to go under. [pause] extra points. We got  
19 to set the clock. I'll note, for the record, that  
20 Assistant Commissioner Jeremy Waldrup only spoke  
21 for about three minutes, less I think.

22 MYRON POLINER: Who's first? Who  
23 goes first?

24 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Well, why  
25 don't we start from right to left? Choose among

1  
2 yourselves. Just go down the order. Make sure  
3 you introduce yourself and who you represent.  
4 Okay. Go ahead.

5 MYRON POLINER: Good morning. My  
6 name is Myron Poliner. And, I am a beneficial  
7 owner of 668 East Fordham Road and 650 East  
8 Fordham Road. And, I welcome the opportunity to  
9 speak to you this morning in opposition of the  
10 creation of the Belmont BID.

11 Very often, when an idea is  
12 conceived of, it is conceived of by very well-  
13 intentioned people and at that time, is truly an  
14 excellent idea. And, by the time you get to  
15 execute that idea, the idea may no longer have the  
16 relevance or the importance or the justification  
17 that it once had. When the Belmont BID was  
18 conceived, this was a different time.

19 There was a different economy in  
20 our country. There was a different economy on  
21 Fordham Road. What we are currently facing, on  
22 Fordham Road is any number of vacancies.  
23 Properties are difficult to market. The buses  
24 that have come along have taken the traffic and  
25 reduced it even farther so that the tenants that

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2 we do have, who are not turning in their keys, are  
3 seriously suffering.

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5 And, the question is is this the  
6 proper time to increase taxes? Taxes have been  
7 increased on a steadily basis for many, many  
8 years. Mayor Bloomberg indicates they will be  
9 increased again. Is this the time to inject  
10 another element into property owner and the  
11 tenants' responsibilities that will increase their  
12 cost of business? We feel not. We feel strongly  
13 not.

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15 And, because of the economic  
16 conditions that currently exist, we feel that we  
17 should not have the creation of this BID. This  
18 BID would, in fact, be increased taxation, which  
19 cannot be afforded. Thank you.

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21 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you. A  
22 minute and five seconds under the wire. Go ahead.  
23 Reset it - - .

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25 JOSEPH ROSE: Good morning,  
26 Councilman Weprin. Good morning, Councilman  
27 Rivera, other Councilmen and Councilwomen. Thank  
28 you for the opportunity to testify. I'm Joe Rose,  
29 managing member of the owners of 619, 580, 582

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2 East Fordham Road. I wish to say it as clearly as  
3 possibly, as the principal owner of these  
4 properties [pause] that I am resolutely opposed to  
5 the district plan and urge that this BID not be  
6 established.

7 I think I owe the Committee an  
8 explanation, since I was for the plan before I was  
9 against the plan. The landscape has changed so  
10 dramatically since the summer of '07 when the  
11 Fordham Road merchants were approached. We had  
12 virtually no vacancies and no select bus service.  
13 We had merchants, property owners and healthcare  
14 providers working to improve the economic life of  
15 East Fordham Road.

16 One short year later, the situation  
17 is just the opposite. The select bus service has  
18 ravaged our merchants and healthcare providers.  
19 There are vacancies on virtually every block.  
20 And, frankly, we pay enough real estate taxes. To  
21 increase our tax burden at this time is  
22 unconscionable. We, the merchants and property  
23 owners on Fordham Road do not wish to pay for the  
24 services proposed by the Belmont BID Steering  
25 Committee. Let them steer themselves into the

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2 neighborhood known as Belmont and leave Fordham  
3 Road out of it.

4 I have urged the Steering Committee  
5 to reconsider the boundaries, without success. I  
6 have explained my views in public to Community  
7 Board 6. The Belmont BID, as proposed, makes no  
8 sense and should fail to be approved. Thank you  
9 for the opportunity to voice my opposition.

10 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you.

11 DAVID ROSE: Hello. Good morning  
12 and thank you for the opportunity to testify. I  
13 am David Rose. I'm not here as the Chairperson of  
14 the Fordham Road BID. I am here as President and  
15 Chief Operating Officer of Automotive Realty  
16 Corporation, a company which recently celebrated  
17 it's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary and which has been on East  
18 Fordham Road for most of those 60 years.

19 Automotive Realty Corp. owns and  
20 manages over a dozen properties on East Fordham  
21 Road. I'm here today to vote no for the two  
22 properties that are within the boundaries stated  
23 in the certified mailing announcing this public  
24 hearing, received in my office on September 29<sup>th</sup>,  
25 2008, which states the following: "The district

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2 plan provides that the proposed district shall  
3 include properties...Fordham Road, from Lorillard  
4 Place to Southern Boulevard." This description  
5 includes two properties known as 553 East Fordham  
6 Road, Block 3273, Lot 300 and 573 East Fordham  
7 Road, Block 3273, Lot 269.

8           One of these properties is vacant  
9 and the other one has seen a tenant, occupying  
10 100% of the ground space in the building, falling  
11 further and further behind in his rent and will be  
12 lucky if he survives. We've seen vacancies  
13 created by the continued loss of parking over the  
14 last ten years. And, most recently, the complete  
15 elimination of parking along East Fordham Road  
16 between Webster Avenue and Southern Boulevard,  
17 between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. because of  
18 the new select bus service that was recently  
19 implemented the end of June 2008.

20           The stores in our neck of the woods  
21 along East Fordham Road are losing their customers  
22 because their customers can't park. Now, they're  
23 losing the customers because of the economic  
24 crisis that our City is experiencing. When the  
25 Belmont BID was first introduced, it was a

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2 different time, with parking and financial  
3 stability. Now, the economic conditions have  
4 changed. We've seen our properties - - increase  
5 dramatically, as much as threefold in some of our  
6 properties over the last ten years. Our tenants  
7 cannot afford to pay a penny more in tax.

8           The combination of vacancies and  
9 increased property taxes will not permit us to  
10 operate our properties properly. That is, they  
11 won't have the cash flows to stand on their own.  
12 I, David Rose, representing Automotive Realty  
13 Corp., therefore vote no to the proposed Belmont  
14 BID to the extent that it extends on to Fordham  
15 Road for the two properties stated above.

16           We also ask that the narrative be  
17 corrected to remove 189<sup>th</sup> Street between Webster  
18 Avenue and Park Avenue because we own a property  
19 on that block that already belongs to the Fordham  
20 Road BID.

21           Lastly, as a huge proponent of the  
22 business improvement districts and a property  
23 owner/manager seeing the direct benefits of  
24 business improvement districts in some of our  
25 properties, I would hope that one day in the

1  
2 future the economic conditions will improve and  
3 permit a business improvement district to serve  
4 those properties which are positioned to gain from  
5 a business improvement district. Thank you very  
6 much for the opportunity to have testified here  
7 before you today.

8 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Okay. Before  
9 we hear from the next speaker, we're only going to  
10 be voting on one item today. We're not going to  
11 be voting on the BID. So, be assured that we will  
12 take into consideration everyone's testimony  
13 before considering a vote at a later date, after  
14 30 days has expired. But, we do have a pre-  
15 considered Land Use item and we have a quorum now.  
16 So, what I'm going to do is I'm going to call for  
17 a vote on the pre-considered Land Use item.  
18 Members can vote. The roll, obviously, will stay  
19 open while the Finance Committee hearing is still  
20 going on. And, people can come back and vote if  
21 they choose. But, if they'd like to vote now and  
22 sign the Committee report, they can feel free to  
23 leave.

24 So, I'm going to call the roll on  
25 the pre-considered Land Use item which is property



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2 tax exemption for the rehabilitation of low and  
3 moderate-income families in the Bronx. The Diego  
4 Beekman Mutual Housing Association, which I  
5 referred to before, which overlaps two Council  
6 districts, Council Member Maria del Carmen Arroyo  
7 and Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito, who both  
8 support the exemption. Call the role.

9 BILL SHARKEY: Council Member  
10 Weprin.

11 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Aye.

12 BILL SHARKEY: Rivera.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: I vote aye.

14 BILL SHARKEY: Reyna.

15 [No response.]

16 BILL SHARKEY: Baez.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BAEZ: Aye.

18 BILL SHARKEY: Brewer.

19 [No response.]

20 BILL SHARKEY: Comrie.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: Aye.

22 BILL SHARKEY: De Blasio.

23 [No response.]

24 BILL SHARKEY: Fidler.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Aye.

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2 BILL SHARKEY: Gennaro.  
3 COUNCIL MEMBER GENNARO: Yes.  
4 BILL SHARKEY: Gerson.  
5 COUNCIL MEMBER GERSON: Aye.  
6 BILL SHARKEY: Gioia.  
7 [No response.]  
8 BILL SHARKEY: Jackson.  
9 [No response.]  
10 BILL SHARKEY: Koppell.  
11 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Aye.  
12 MALE VOICE: I'm at the end.  
13 BILL SHARKEY: McMahon.  
14 COUNCIL MEMBER McMAHON: Aye.  
15 BILL SHARKEY: Sears.  
16 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Aye.  
17 BILL SHARKEY: Vallone.  
18 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Aye.  
19 BILL SHARKEY: Vann.  
20 [No response.]  
21 BILL SHARKEY: Yassky.  
22 [No response.]  
23 BILL SHARKEY: Gentile.  
24 COUNCIL MEMBER GENTILE: Aye.  
25 BILL SHARKEY: Ignizio.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: Aye.

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BILL SHARKEY: Oddo.

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[No response.]

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BILL SHARKEY: By a vote of 13 in  
the affirmative, zero in the negative and no  
7 abstentions, item has been adopted. Members  
8 please sign the Committee report.

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CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Okay. We'll  
proceed with testimony on the BID.

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SHLOMO BASHAN: Good morning. I'm  
Shlomo Bashan. We own 555, 557 and 600 East  
Fordham Road. We're against this proposal,  
strongly against it. And, we all face very hard  
times, have a lot of vacancies. The City just  
took our parking spaces beside the properties,  
made it impossible to customers to shop, to make  
an impulse shopping by the stores. It brings all  
our situation to an unbearable.

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If this situation goes on, we will  
be defaulting on our liabilities, such as  
mortgages, such as insurance, taxes. We are  
behind already on our bills. And, this situation  
just goes deep and deep into a crisis. We all  
hear what's going on. I mean, all this situation

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now seems to me like we are sitting on the deck of the Titanic and trying to play the violin, where we're almost hitting the iceberg. And, we have to wake up. This is not the right time to increase taxes by no means.

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And, you know what, I will be surprised if anybody with conscience and with logic would vote to raise taxes now. I mean, we all have to wake up and look at us. This is not the right time to do anything that raise taxes. The City is getting, from our building, hundreds of thousands of dollars a year in taxes.

Please, do the services you supposed to give to these properties. Do the security that you have to give. Collect the garbage or clean the street. Give the minimum security that Precinct 48 supposed to provide. I urge every one of you, by the way, to go to Precinct 48 and look how this precinct look like. It looks like a pig house. It's neglected. The service there is terrible. And, they supposed to give us the right amount of security because we are paying taxes, legally, on time.

Now, the boundaries of this BID, no

1  
2 matter what, needs to be redefined. The  
3 boundaries, the way it is now, makes no sense  
4 whatsoever. You're including in it vacant  
5 buildings, vacant lots that do not produce any  
6 income. And, you want them to pay more taxes now  
7 for the BID? Come on. We are talking about a  
8 very short strip of restaurant on Arthur Avenue.  
9 Make the BID there. They want to improve the  
10 restaurant. Fine. I have nothing against it.  
11 But, why somebody on Fordham Road, on a vacant  
12 lot, 555, 553, needs to pay the BID. What  
13 possible business this lot is going to benefit  
14 from? What? I mean, are we just sitting here  
15 like--

16 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Okay. Could  
17 you sum up, please?

18 SHLOMO BASHAN: Huh?

19 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Could you sum  
20 up?

21 SHLOMO BASHAN: Oh, sum up. Okay.

22 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: The time's up.

23 SHLOMO BASHAN: Okay. All right.

24 Since, I said most of what I wanted to say, I just  
25 want to say thank you.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Okay. Before  
3 we hear from the next speaker, we have three more  
4 members that would like to vote on the Land Use  
5 item. Council Member de Blasio.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER de BLASIO: Aye on  
7 all, thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Council Member  
9 Oddo.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ODDO: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: And, Council  
12 Member Brewer.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Can't read my  
15 own handwriting? Proceed.

16 SHAWN DANISHVAR: Good morning. My  
17 name is Shawn Danishvar. I'm the owner--

18 [off mic]

19 SHAWN DANISHVAR: My name is Shawn  
20 Danishvar. I'm the owner of Medalliance Medical  
21 Health Services on 625 East Fordham Road. I am  
22 the owner of three tax lots, 625 East Fordham  
23 Road, 662 East Fordham Road and 2445 Arthur  
24 Avenue.

25 I have been doing business on

1  
2 Arthur Avenue for the last 20 years. At the  
3 present time, I employ over 155 employees. With  
4 the economic problems that we have at the present  
5 time, I have no choice except to start laying off  
6 some of the employees. And, paying more taxes on  
7 my properties is absolutely, at this time, to me  
8 is nonsense.

9                   And, I tell you why. I read the  
10 proposed budget. I cannot believe how you can  
11 look at this proposed budget of \$340,000, that  
12 more than 32% of that money has been allocated to  
13 the executive salary. Look what's happening in  
14 Wall Street. And, this is what's happening here.  
15 And, everybody has a deaf ear about it. Everybody  
16 sits down and starts voting. They don't know  
17 what's going on in the main street. We are from  
18 the main street. We are suffering there. And,  
19 every time these people, they keep coming up with  
20 the BID and they put this name and that name and  
21 that name.

22                   Come to my office. I have 155  
23 employees. I had to give a pink slip to 25 last  
24 week. Okay. I have put 25 families out of jobs.  
25 Now, I got to pay more taxes? With this economic

1  
2 situation that we have, I invested in those  
3 properties. I am from main street. Please come  
4 and take a look at what's going on in the main  
5 street. You're sitting here and voting for it and  
6 writing all these nice letters and everything.  
7 You don't know what is going on over there. Right  
8 now, we are suffering and we cannot go on anymore.

9 My business is licensed by  
10 Department of Health. I have for my sanitation, I  
11 have a different regulations. I am paying over  
12 \$35,000 a year just for the sanitation because I  
13 am licensed by the State of New York. For  
14 security, I have my security people. For other  
15 public safety, I don't need this stuff. I don't  
16 know what you guys are thinking about coming up  
17 with this type of a BID and all these type of  
18 committees. I have been on Arthur Avenue. I have  
19 a medical center on Arthur Avenue. We are  
20 suffering there.

21 So, I really beg you please vote  
22 against it. We don't need anymore increases.  
23 It's going to put more burden on myself, as the  
24 business owner and I have to lay off more people.  
25 I just can't pay the bills. So, I need your help



1  
2 and maybe five years from now, maybe six years  
3 from now when the economy's changed and things are  
4 better, maybe. But, at this time, it's the worst  
5 time to come up with this bill. It's going to put  
6 more pressure on me as a business owner. I  
7 request that to oppose this bill. And, I thank  
8 you for listening.

9 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you.

10 SHARAR DANISHVAR: Good morning.

11 My name is Sharar Danishvar. I'm the Chief  
12 Operating Officer and the co-owner of 666 East  
13 Fordham Road, the property on the East Fordham  
14 Road. We purchased this property about six months  
15 ago with the intention to improve this property.  
16 It was an abandoned lot. The property was in dire  
17 situation. And, it was almost coming down. We  
18 did some improvement on the property with the  
19 intention of reconstructing the entire property.

20 As it is, we have difficulty to  
21 finance the project. We have difficulties with  
22 all the financial institution to prove to them  
23 that we are going to have a successful business in  
24 that area because they see no parking in front of  
25 the property anymore. It has been taken away by

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the bus lane.

And, the area is simply outside the Belmont Avenue and Arthur Avenue area. East Fordham Road and Fordham Road area should not be used as a financial powerhouse for doing something on the Arthur Avenue. There is no restaurant in that area where I'm operating. There is no--

MALE VOICE: Can't even park down there.

SHARA DANISHVAR: Nobody can park over there to come to a restaurant. No marketing and no promotions will be positively help me and people like me who are operating businesses on the Fordham Road area. Why we have been included in this BID still is a - - for me. Unless, we have to pay for something from which we are not going to benefit.

I strongly oppose the BID. And, I think even if it goes through, the Fordham Road area has to be excluded from the boundaries of the BID. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you.  
There're two more members that would like to vote on the Land Use item. If you'd call the roll,

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2 Bill.

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BILL SHARKEY: Council Member

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Reyna.

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COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: I vote aye.

6

BILL SHARKEY: Council Member

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Jackson.

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COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: I vote

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aye.

10

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Okay. Thank

11

you. We'll hear from the next panel. We're going

12

to combine into one panel who are all in support.

13

And, come up when I call out your name. Joe—thank

14

you very much, gentlemen.

15

SHARAR DANISHVAR: Thank you.

16

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: We will take

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into consideration your views. And, we will not

18

be voting today.

19

CLERK: Thank you.

20

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Joe Murriana

21

[phonetic], Richard Leginni [phonetic].

22

CLERK: Please come up to the desk.

23

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Father Eric

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Rapaglia, Jerome Raguso [phonetic], June Galarza

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[phonetic], Frank Franz [phonetic] and Rosemarie

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Deluca [phonetic]. Oh, Rosemarie Deluca, I know you. Why don't you do it in the--well, we'll do it from this side to that side this time.

JOE MURRIANA: Frank, I have to go. So, I'm just going to leave my testimony unless I can speak.

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Well, Rosemarie's looking for a seat. Oh, does that mean Rosemarie goes first?

ROSEMARIE DELUCA: I go first.

FRANK FRANZ: If I could just point out, Joe Murriana from Fordham University has to run out for another meeting. Is it at all possible if he could--

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Okay. So, let Joe go first.

FRANK FRANZ: --go first? Thank you.

JOE MURRIANA: Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: All right. Not a problem.

JOE MURRIANA: I'm Joe Murriana. And, this morning I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to testify in the matter of the

1  
2 approval of the Belmont business improvement  
3 district. I'm here to represent Fordham  
4 University, where I serve as Associate Vice  
5 President for Government Relations and Urban  
6 Affairs. Fordham's President, Father Joe McShane  
7 sends his greetings, best wishes and support, as  
8 well.

9 Fordham University has been located  
10 on the site of the now-ancient 19<sup>th</sup> century Village  
11 of Fordham immediately to the north of Belmont  
12 since 1841 or for just over 167 years. Sixty-five  
13 hundred or so of our approximately 14,700 students  
14 are registered and attend class at one or more of  
15 our five schools located at the Rose Hill campus.

16 Fordham University endorses the  
17 initiative to establish a business improvement  
18 district here in the Belmont/Arthur community. We  
19 recognize the great entrepreneurial spirit, pride,  
20 nimbleness, competence and creativity that  
21 energizes and drives almost all of our  
22 neighborhood retail merchants, restaurateurs,  
23 business people and property owners in the Belmont  
24 area to such a degree that they have created a  
25 vibrant and increasingly world famous retail

1  
2 district that is a gem for the Bronx, New York  
3 City and the Metropolitan region.

4           But, while that competitive spirit  
5 and drive has been the product of these highly  
6 successful entrepreneurs and businesses, we also  
7 recognize and acknowledge that there is still a  
8 critical need to have a stronger glue that will  
9 bind this neighborhood together more closely and  
10 effectively in a way that will enable the local  
11 business community to effectively address several  
12 common problems that cannot be solved by  
13 entrepreneurial and driven individuals alone.  
14 These include issues of neighborhood safety and  
15 security, increased supplemental sanitation  
16 services and street maintenance, especially  
17 graffiti removal along with traffic,  
18 transportation, critical parking needs and an  
19 interrelated marketing and focused promotion plan  
20 that will draw in new shoppers and consumers.  
21 Addressing those issues and needs cannot be  
22 resolved without collective initiative and action,  
23 requiring a new level of organization. And, this  
24 BID District Management Association could provide  
25 the necessary vehicle for that.

1  
2 Fordham University is an integral  
3 part and parcel of this neighborhood, with many of  
4 our students, at least 600, living within the  
5 confines of Belmont, along with many faculty,  
6 students, parents and staff, who visit, shop, eat  
7 and do business in this neighborhood.

8 Consequently, we support the basic priorities  
9 articulated in the BID plan, which call for a  
10 focus on improved security coordination,  
11 sanitation cleanliness and renewed marketing.

12 These priorities, in our view, represent a prudent  
13 allocation of the limited resources that will be  
14 available to this somewhat expansive, but for the  
15 most part, tight-knit district under the proposed  
16 assessment formula.

17 There are some individuals who  
18 take—I'll try to wrap up—issue with certain  
19 aspects of the plan, including the proposed  
20 district boundaries. We understand some of those  
21 sensibilities and concerns. On our part, Fordham  
22 is still willing to be part of the overall effort.

23 And, I'll just conclude that I  
24 serve on the Fordham Road business improvement  
25 district along with David Rose. We understand the

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2 parking issues along Fordham Road. We went to be  
3 part of the solution. We think that has to be  
4 addressed. And, we support the BID nevertheless.  
5 Thank you.

6

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Yeah, before  
7 we hear from the rest of the panelists, I  
8 apologize to one of my colleagues, Council Member  
9 Oliver Koppell who wanted to ask a question of the  
10 previous panel. And, in the voting, it slipped  
11 through. So, Councilman Koppell has a question  
12 and if one of the panelists from the previous  
13 panel can answer it, have them come up, please.

14

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: It doesn't  
15 need to be answered right now.

16

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Council Member  
17 Koppell.

18

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: I think  
19 that I would like to know from the gentlemen who  
20 testified what we're talking about in terms of  
21 dollars. I understand the burdens of increased  
22 taxes at this particular time. And, I understand  
23 the problems on Fordham Road. I'm extremely  
24 familiar with the area. But, I'd like to know, I  
25 mean, what are we talking about. What I'd like to



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hear from you, and it doesn't need to be right now, Mr. Chairman, but I think the staff maybe could find out for us. I mean, what percentage of their real estate tax is going to increase to pay the \$350,000 that the BID is anticipated to cost? Maybe it's in the papers. I haven't had a chance to review them. But, you know, nobody likes to see increases in taxes. But, if we're talking about 1% or 0.5%, it's different than if we're talking about 5% or 10%. So, I'd like to know precisely what the burden on these gentlemen's business will be. I will only say this that, in my view—well, I'll talk about it later. Let the panel testify.

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: That's what I'd like to know.

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you, Council Member. And, staff will be directed to get Council Member Koppell that information. Thank you. Proceed.

ROSEMARIE DELUCA: Good afternoon. Is this on? Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, members of the City Council and the Committee. My name is

1  
2 Rosemarie Deluca. I am the Assistant Director for  
3 City and State Affairs for the Wildlife  
4 Conservation Society, headquartered at the Bronx  
5 Zoo. We are very much in support of the BID.  
6 And, we hope to see that it gets passed.

7           The Bronx Zoo has supported the  
8 creation of the Belmont business improvement  
9 district since its inception. And, the Zoo  
10 realized early on that the economic health and  
11 success of the area known as Little Italy is vital  
12 to the community in which it sits. The Bronx Zoo  
13 has been a partner with the Belmont Small Business  
14 Association for 11 years. The partnership has  
15 been a symbolic one and has brought tourism to  
16 both institutions. The economic health of this  
17 area and the stability of the neighborhoods that  
18 surround it are fundamentally intertwined. The  
19 Belmont Small Business Association has taken a  
20 leadership role in safety issues, beautification  
21 of the area, the promotion of area events, such  
22 has those at the Bronx Zoo, and the commitment to  
23 make the Belmont business district a strong  
24 economic anchor for tourism.

25           The commitment to the growth of

1

2 small businesses is evident with the legislation  
3 to create a business improvement district that  
4 sits before the New York City Council's Committee  
5 on Finance. Business improvement districts are  
6 important to this City because they help retain  
7 and attract businesses to the district and promote  
8 healthy economic development for the City. The  
9 Belmont Small Business Association is dedicated to  
10 promoting business development, improving the  
11 area's quality of life.

12 If approved, the Belmont BID will  
13 deliver supplemental services, such as sanitation  
14 and maintenance, public safety and visitor  
15 services, marketing and promotional programs,  
16 capital improvements and beautification for the  
17 area. The Bronx is the home to many small  
18 businesses that have weathered the ups and downs  
19 of changing economy. The small businesses of  
20 Belmont area are diverse and some have been in the  
21 community for generations and others are new, but  
22 all will benefit with the approval of the Belmont  
23 BID.

24 The Wildlife Conservation Society,  
25 the Bronx Zoo supports the creation of the Belmont

1  
2 BID. And, we urge the New York City Council to  
3 pass the legislation to create it.

4 I just also, it's not in my  
5 testimony, but I also want to point out that the  
6 Bronx Zoo has reached two million visitors  
7 annually. These two million visitors do go to  
8 Arthur Avenue to eat dinner, to eat lunch, to  
9 shop. And, also, the Bronx Zoo, alone, has over a  
10 thousand employees that I know have been walking  
11 the streets of Belmont. So, it would be to  
12 everyone's benefit that we have a safe, secure  
13 area for all concerned.

14 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you.

15 FRANK FRANZ: My name is Frank  
16 Franz. I'm the President of the Belmont Small  
17 Business Association, which is sponsoring the  
18 proposed Belmont BID. I'm the Chairman of the  
19 Steering Committee, a member of Community Planning  
20 Board 6 and a lifelong resident living right  
21 around the corner from Fordham Road. I'd like to  
22 thank everyone for giving me the opportunity to  
23 talk.

24 And, I cannot tell you how happy I  
25 am to be here because, for the last three years,

1  
2 it's been a long process of myself and many  
3 volunteers from the community who have been out  
4 throughout the community to, one, develop this  
5 plan, to raise interest, to educate our commercial  
6 landlords and merchants and the residents who live  
7 in the area just exactly what this is and how it's  
8 going to impact them. We've sent out quite a few  
9 mailings; have had several public hearings in the  
10 community, as well as a hearing with the City  
11 Planning Commission and the Community Planning  
12 Board. I'm surrounded here by people, as you can  
13 see, from the major institutions, some commercial  
14 landlords, some commercial tenants, the District  
15 Manager of our Planning Board, as well as the  
16 Pastor of our Parish, Our Lady of Mount Carmel,  
17 who are all in favor of this.

18 I think you could see, you know,  
19 with all respect to our many merchants from  
20 Fordham Road that came here, quite frankly, I  
21 think they helped made the case for us. We have a  
22 lot of, as well as the community is doing, not all  
23 of the community is doing well. Everyone knows  
24 Arthur Avenue and business is great at Arthur  
25 Avenue. But, there's 187<sup>th</sup> Street, there's

1  
2 Crescent Avenue, there's Fordham Road, who are the  
3 boundaries of our community, who are the borders  
4 between our community and Fordham University and  
5 the Bronx Zoo, who are the main entrances to the  
6 community, and there are problems with parking.  
7 There are problems with a high vacancy rate.  
8 There are problems with crime. There are problems  
9 with sanitation. And, as much as some things have  
10 improved, not everything has. And, I think the  
11 business improvement district is clearly our best  
12 chance at answering and solving some of those  
13 problems.

14 That's why, obviously, I started  
15 this. All the people involved are all volunteers.  
16 They believe that this is the--

17 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: So, we can  
18 blame you?

19 FRANK FRANZ: I'm getting blamed  
20 anyway, Councilman, so, for good or for bad, you  
21 can blame me. I also have a statistic or two that  
22 might answer Councilman Koppell's question, if  
23 you'd like me to.

24 The average price increase of an  
25 assessment, and remember it's not technically a

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tax. This is an assessment we're voting on ourselves. It cannot be raised except, by the City or anyone else, except by us voting on it again to raise it. And, the money collected is coming back to benefit our specific community. It's not disappearing in the City's coffers some place else. But, the average fee is approximately \$1,200 per year, per commercial building; 61.8% of the assessments are less than \$1,500 a year. And, we have placed a cap of \$3,000 on any single building of which there's only two or three that fit that category. And, those are, you know, some very large buildings that are literally half a square block.

And, of course, this is per building, many of these buildings with several businesses on them. I'm sure many of our businessmen have had the business acumen that some of this will probably be offset to some of their tenants. Not that all of our commercial tenants are exactly rolling in dough either. But, this is our best chance at trying to make that happen.

So, I don't want to take up anymore time. Go on to the next person. Thank you,

1

2 again.

3

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you.

4

Before we go to the next speaker, there are two

5

members that would like to vote on the Land Use

6

item previously discussed. Council Member Gioia,

7

how do you vote?

8

COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: Thank you,

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Mr. Chair. I vote yes and I apologize for not

10

being able to stay for the hearing. There's a

11

conference on hunger at the Marriott that I've

12

been attending today. So, thank you.

13

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: I understand.

14

COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: And, thank

15

you for coming down.

16

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: And, Council

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Member Yassky?

18

COUNCIL MEMBER YASSKY: I vote aye.

19

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you.

20

Proceed.

21

JEROME REGUSO: Good morning. My

22

name is Jerome Raguso. And, I am the owner of

23

Gino's Pastry on 187<sup>th</sup> Street. And, I'm speaking

24

on behalf of a merchant and also a resident.

25

Being one of the last persons to



1  
2 leave the neighborhood at night, I'm strongly for  
3 this BID for the simple reason that when I drive  
4 up Arthur Avenue at night, I notice security's  
5 needed. Street lighting is needing. We  
6 definitely need parking. Being there at midnight,  
7 one in the morning, it's tough for anyone. And,  
8 being also as a resident, to walk up Arthur Avenue  
9 and seeing what is needed, lighting definitely is  
10 needed there and escorting, personally escorting  
11 merchant owners to their vehicles at night. I  
12 mean, we definitely need security then.

13 So, I am definitely for this. I'm  
14 making it really brief. These are my personal  
15 issues. As far as, you know, taxes overall  
16 suffering, including myself, but this could only  
17 benefit the Belmont section and also, I think, the  
18 Fordham Road section. So, I'm all for this.  
19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you.

21 Father?

22 FATHER ERIC RAPAGLIA: Good  
23 afternoon. I'm Father Eric Rapaglia. I'm the  
24 pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church on 187<sup>th</sup>  
25 Street. And, I thank you for allowing me to talk

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on behalf of this BID.

I would like to minimize the risk of being redundant. I think most people understand that BIDs are very successful, generally speaking, in the vast majority of the cases in which they're implemented. But, I would like to simply speak on behalf of my parishioners. I certainly support the merchant owners in the community. I support Fordham University. I am an alumnus. I love the Zoo.

But, I also primarily would like to say that this BID is not about only the restaurant owners on Arthur Avenue. It's about the people who cannot even afford to go to these restaurants on Arthur Avenue. And, many of you on the Council perhaps don't understand this. When you think of the Belmont BID, you think Arthur Avenue, you think of some very successful huge entities like the Botanical Gardens, like the Zoo, like Fordham. I'm here simply to remind you that there's an awful lot of people who are, for lack of a better term, poor. They're people I serve in my church. They are mostly Latinos, but also plenty of African, Italian and Albanian Americans. And,

1  
2 they would stand to benefit profoundly by this  
3 BID. And, I urge the members of this esteemed  
4 City Council to vote in favor of the Belmont  
5 improvement district. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you.

7 JUNE GALARZA: Good morning,  
8 Mr. Chairman and a special good morning. Good  
9 afternoon to Council Member Koppell and my own  
10 Council Member Rivera and the rest of the  
11 Committee. Thank you. I'm here in my capacity  
12 today as District Manager of Community Planning  
13 Board Number 6.

14 In total support of the  
15 Belmont/Arthur Avenue BID, the Board has taken a  
16 position previously. During the last three years,  
17 we have been working with the Belmont Merchant's  
18 Association, with Frank Franz at the helm.

19 I'd like to say that I find myself,  
20 and you've heard the term, between a rock and a  
21 hard place today. We deal with numerous issues  
22 that sets us apart, but brings us together at the  
23 same time. I'd like to think that today, we're  
24 all here for the same goal. And, that is to unite  
25 a community and to make it better. So, I'm here

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2 in support of the Belmont/Arthur Avenue BID.

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4 Coming down on the bus with these  
5 people that you see here today, the conversations  
6 that were taking place were: How are we going to  
7 get monies for the lights this Christmas along  
8 Arthur Avenue? There will be no lights on Arthur  
9 Avenue because it's too expensive. And, the  
10 businesses cannot afford to—they haven't come  
11 together and there is no monies for lights. More  
12 so, speaking to Rosemarie, as well, we're not  
13 going to have nightlights at the Bronx Zoo this  
14 year. That's something that our community will  
15 miss because, for the last number of years, it's  
16 been the highlight of the Christmas season for  
17 everyone in our community.

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Not to mention, Frank Franz is a  
Board member and at the helm of the Belmont  
merchants. He has brought a lot to this  
community. If it weren't for the Belmont  
merchants, we would have never been able to  
progress in our parks, namely Ciccarone Park,  
where a lot of our residents enjoy a safe park and  
a beautification project that took place recently  
last year.

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Unfortunately, we are also now undergoing economic crisis, not only in this City, but, of course, in the Fordham area of the Bronx because the businesses that you have heard prior against the BID are doing so because they're losing services to their store and, of course, it's not related to the Belmont BID. However, this has set them apart. I'd like to let them know that we're also in support. They do know that the Community Planning Board is also in support of their issue. And, we are working diligently with the City to make certain that these services are restored to them.

However, again, in my capacity as District Manager and for the issue taking place here today, the Community Planning Board votes yes for the Arthur Avenue BID. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you.

RICHARD LEGINNI: My name is Rich Leginni. I own a print shop in the Belmont area. And, being the final speaker, I'll try to make it as short as I can, not to reiterate what's been said ten times before me.

I'd like to say this. I am not

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only a building owner and a commercial printer, I am also a resident of that area for 44—how old am I—44 years. Listening to these men speak, I feel for them. I'm not saying that anything they're saying is wrong as far as what's happened to that aspect of Fordham Road. Unfortunately, they're not part of the west end of Fordham Road, which is like a huge shopping center. What I'd like to see happen is include them in our aspect of this part of the Bronx.

And, I think, listening to them, they need us now more than ever. Considering what I see there, at least at night, it's like a desolate area. It's a very dangerous place to be. The graffiti has got to be removed. And, if they can't afford to even rent the places, it's going to be very difficult for them to provide the very services that they're going to need from a very basic level. And, I promise that if they need it, I will help them.

But, at the end of the day, I want them to want to be part of it. I don't want to force them into it. I want them to understand that the amount of money allocated from their

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2 aspect of the BID will be miniscule compared to  
3 what they're going to get out of this BID. And, I  
4 want them to understand that. You always help the  
5 worst part of the area that needs the help. And,  
6 believe me, if I'm on the Board and I'm part of  
7 it, I will make sure that this aspect of Fordham  
8 Road gets the most treatment.

9 And, I hate to end it in a stupid  
10 little symbolism. But, you can throw a raft in  
11 the water, but the end of the day, they're going  
12 to have to want to take it. And, I want them to  
13 grab it because we'll help them as much as  
14 possible. I promise. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you.  
16 Any questions for this panel? Council Member  
17 Sears.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Actually,  
19 you mentioned about not having lights because it's  
20 very expensive. I don't know if you've had them  
21 before. But, one of the things that BIDs do is  
22 that they equalize the responsibility of all the  
23 merchants. That probably is one of the biggest  
24 things. And, certainly, for anyone that's even a  
25 block or two away, what happens in a commercial

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area, and I tell you my district is Jackson Heights, and it's Elmhurst. It's got Queens Boulevard. It's got Corona. And, we have a BID in our district.

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And, one of the pressures that I have is to expand that BID, because what happens to an area that needs help and it's a commercial area, it eventually erodes the neighboring blocks. And, that is something that I think needs to be looked at--

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FEMALE VOICE: Absolutely.

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COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: --'cause we did that. And, although it may seem like it's a financial issue and looking at what's here, I see that there is some vacant land there, where you are, and that's something to be considered, 'cause you would like to have that developed. And, it really needs the responsibility of everybody.

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So, it's one way of getting lights, which everyone likes to do at holiday time and they're very good for the merchants is that it doesn't fall to two or three people to do that and then they can't afford it. It just equalizes that responsibility and also, the formulas are equated



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2 as to the square footage that is part of the  
3 business. So, I just wanted to make that comment.  
4 Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you,  
6 Council Member. Any other questions? Thank you  
7 all. We will not be voting for at least 30 days.  
8 It's anticipated that the next scheduled hearing,  
9 where a vote may take place, will be November 21<sup>st</sup>.  
10 But, check back with the City Council prior to  
11 that date. But, it will not be less than 30 days.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL:

13 Mr. Chairman, I just reiterate, if property owners  
14 would tell us because I understand, I did look at  
15 some material that there are caps. The gentleman  
16 from the Belmont Merchant's Association mentioned  
17 a cap of \$3,000. I mean, I think we're not  
18 talking about here about an enormous burden on  
19 these merchants. And, they may not think that the  
20 health of Belmont to the south of Fordham Road is  
21 important to their businesses. But, that is a,  
22 Mr. Chairman, I believe that's a myopic view.

23 If this neighborhood, which has had  
24 its problem, deteriorates further, nobody's going  
25 to want to come to East Fordham Road. You think

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2 it's bad now? It's going to be worse. The people  
3 coming to Belmont and to Little Italy for food,  
4 for groceries and to live, keep that area vital.  
5 If you let that area really decline, it's only  
6 going to be worse on East Fordham Road, as far as  
7 I'm concerned.

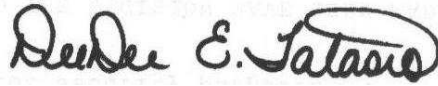
8 CHAIRPERSON WEPRIN: Thank you,  
9 Council Member. Would anybody else like to  
10 testify before we close this hearing? Seeing  
11 none, I'm going to keep the roll open for those  
12 members that have not voted for a half hour until  
13 ten after one or the stated meeting, whichever  
14 starts first. Other than that, we're adjourned.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, DeeDee E. Tataseo 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

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "DeeDee E. Tataseo". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Date October 16, 2008