

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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April 24, 2025
Start: 10:38 a.m.
Recess: 11:09 a.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

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

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Diana I. Ayala
Gale A. Brewer
Selvena N. Brooks-Powers
David M. Carr
Amanda Farías
Kamillah Hanks
Crystal Hudson
Farah N. Louis
Francisco P. Moya
Chi A. Ossé
Keith Powers
Yusef Salaam
Pierina Ana Sanchez
Althea V. Stevens
Nantasha N. Williams
Julie Won

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

Calvin Brown
Small Business Services Deputy Commissioner for
Neighborhood Development

Emily Edward
Small Business Services Executive Director for
BID Program

Leslie Velazquez
Small Business Services Director of BID
Development and Legislation

Carey King
East Harlem 125th Street Steering Committee

Jordan Barowitz
East Harlem 125th Street Steering Committee

Kat Peeler
East Harlem 125th Street Steering Committee

Logan Clark
IBO Assistant Director for Budget and Review

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and welcome to today's New York City Council hearing for the Committee on Finance. Please silence all cell and electronic devices, and a reminder to not approach the dais. Chair, we're ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Sergeant. [gavel] Okay, good morning. Welcome to today's Finance Committee meeting. I'm Council Member Brannan. I chair the Committee on Finance. We've been joined this morning by Council Members Ayala, Moya, Powers, Louis, Brooks-Powers, Brewer, Farías, Hudson, Sanchez, Stevens, Williams, and Salaam. Today, the Committee will be voting on five pieces of legislation: Introduction 889 sponsored by Council Member Hudson which would require notification to Council Members of the recording of certain real estate instruments, Introduction 1086 sponsored by Council Member Williams which would require the notification of interested parties of the recording of certain real estate instruments, Introduction 1234 sponsored by me would amend the dates fixed in the New York City Charter in relation to the Executive Budget process, Resolution 327 sponsored by Council Member Nurse which would request

1 authority from the state to grant retroactive tax
2 exemptions, and lastly a transparency resolution
3 sponsored by me to approve the designations and
4 changes in the designation of certain organizations
5 set to receive funding in the expense budgets for
6 FY24 and 25. In addition, we'll be hearing a public
7 hearing on Intro 1219 sponsored by Deputy Speaker
8 Ayala which would authorize the establishment of the
9 East Harlem 125th Street Business Improvement
10 Districts. I want to offer Deputy Speaker Ayala—do
11 you want to make any remarks?

12
13 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: I was going to say
14 woo-hoo. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Please let the—

16 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: [interposing] I
17 mean, I'm just so excited I can do cartwheels here
18 today. This is a long time coming and I really want
19 to just thank all of the people that were involved in
20 this. you know, specifically I want to congratulate
21 and thank Carey King who's been such an instrumental
22 part of the evolution of the conversation regarding
23 the BID. It's been a difficult road on 125th Street.
24 We've had a lot of challenges. We continue to, you
25 know, grapple with some as we speak, but we've made

so much head-way, and I think that this BID is the cherry on the top, you know, and I'm just really so excited for the future of 125th Street, and I want to thank all of you, SBS, Durst, all of the partners. I mean, it was just so many people that really came together to make this happen, and I couldn't be happier. So, thank you all and congratulations.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. With respect to Intro 1219 we'll hear from any witnesses who wish to testify. Once we've heard testimony, we will then adjourn the hearing for at least 30 days to allow any property owner within the proposed area of the BID to file an objection to the BID's establishment with the City Clerk. We're now going to hear testimony from SBS on East Harlem 125th Street BID, and we're joined by SBS representatives, Deputy Commissioner Brown. Before SBS begins, I'm going to turn it over to my Committee Counsel to swear you in.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning, Commissioner Brown. Do you affirm that your testimony will be truthful to the best of your knowledge, information and belief?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROWN: I do.

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may proceed.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BROWN: Good morning, Chair Brannan and members of the Finance Committee. I am Calvin Brown, the Deputy Commissioner for Neighborhood Development and I'm joined by my colleagues, Emily Edward who is the Executive Director for our BID program, and Leslie Velazquez who is the Director of BID Development and Legislation. We're here to testify in support of the East Harlem 125th Street Business Improvement District. At SBS we are committed to unlocking economic potential and creating economic security for all New Yorkers through businesses services, workforce opportunities and neighborhood development. We partner with community-based organizations such as Business Improvement Districts to build thriving neighborhoods across the five boroughs. During the Adams Administration, we have awarded over \$1.8 million in grant funds to incentivize the creation of new BIDs and nearly \$11 million to support small BIDs. For more than 40 years, BIDs have been a valuable and proven partner in commercial revitalization and economic development across the

City. SBS supervises all active BID formation and expansion efforts serving as advisors and resources for the community interested in developing or expanding an existing BID. We're careful to ensure that each steering committee we work with adheres to our planning, process and policies, solicit robust community input, and performs extensive outreach to collect and demonstrate broad-based support across all stakeholder groups. Moreover, we are cognizant of the unique nature of each community we assist and aim to empower local stakeholders to make determinations on proposed services, boundaries, budget size that best suits their community needs, and appetite and ability to pay the assessments. While we are always impart some strong planning principles and shared data and best practices when we're working with any BID formation effort, we recognize that the power and the effectiveness of BIDs rest in their unmatched understanding of the local needs and issues. SBS has invested in the East Harlem neighborhood since 2017. For nearly a decade now we have funded local CBDOs, including the new Harlem East Merchant Association now known as Uptown Grand Central. We are cognizant of the changes and challenges in this neighborhood

which is why we are especially excited to work for this exciting BID to come to fruition. Like any other BID formation that SBS has overseen, the East Harlem 125th Street formation effort involved numerous meetings in consultation with local stakeholders throughout the planning and outreach phases. After an extensive outreach effort in close coordination with all key parties, SBS determined that the documented support among all stakeholder groups, 74 percent of the area's total assessed value, 50 percent of the total properties, and 34 percent of commercial tenants was sufficient to start the legislative process. The level of outreach achieved by the East 125th Street BID effort meets the broad-based support SBS requires before any effort advances to the legislative phase. As required by law, the East 125th Street Steering Committee mailed the summary of the City Council resolution no less than 10 days and no more than 30 days before today's hearing to the following parties: each owner of real property within the proposed district at the address shown on the latest city assessment role, such other persons as are registered with the City to receive tax bills concerning real

property within the district, and tenants of each building within the proposed district. The steering committee also published notice of this hearing in a newspaper in general circulation in the city per the legal requirement. I would like to acknowledge and thank Deputy Speaker Ayala as well as Council Member Salaam for their ongoing support of East 125th Street BID formation effort. SBS believes that this BID will provide the much needed services and support to the businesses within the proposed district. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge that representatives of the BID formation effort are present here today to testify and address any specific questions that I am unable to answer. And thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Do we have any questions from my colleagues? No. Thank you, Deputy Commissioner. Okay. We'll now hear from members of the East Harlem 125th Street Steering Committee, Carey King, Kat Peeler and Jordan Barowitz.

CAREY KING: Good morning everyone. I'm so happy to be here and wanted to offer my thanks to Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala and Council Member Salaam for their support in this process. My name is Carey

King. I'm a resident of East 126th Street which is just a block away from the proposed BID corridor. I'm also the Director of Uptown Grand Central, a nonprofit that got its start about 10 years ago in large part because there was no BID to serve the area. To this very day, East Harlem remains the only community district in Manhattan that has no Business Improvement District. In 2013, a group of local small businesses, mostly women and people of color, got together and held a series of volunteer street cleanups. Later they formalized into a Merchant's Association called the New Harlem East Merchants Association, or NHEMA. A few years later we formed Uptown Grand Central, a 501 C3 nonprofit focused on cleaning and greening public space and public art, small business support, community development and neighborhood advocacy. Thank you. Over the years we have thankfully been supported by grants from New York City Small Business Services, our Council Member and Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala, as well as other city agencies and donors. Three years ago it was Uptown Grand Central that brought together the individuals who became the steering committee and began work on forming what we are now calling the East Harlem 125th

Street BID. What Uptown has found over the years is that the work of cleaning East 125th Street and the surrounding blocks is much too large for a small nonprofit. The area is a transit hub, meaning that we have tens of thousands of people per day commuting through on the Lexington Avenue 4, 5, 6 subway line, as well as the Harlem 125th Street Metro North Station, as well as the M60 bus to La Guardia which is a lot of people to clean up after. As many of you know, over the past 50 years, the area has also become home to an overconcentration of drug treatment programs and shelters, and one of our main intersections of 125th Street and Lexington Avenue is the drop point for some 2,000 people per day from the programs and shelters and Randall's Island. The resulting sidewalk conditions and garbage needs require a much more robust response than our small nonprofit can maintain. The East 125th Street area is home to a number of great businesses with great products including some of our founding members, Sisters Caribbean Cuisine, the Brownstone, and [inaudible] Skin Care, as well as newer businesses such as Jin Jang [sic] Café. However, they consistently face depressed sales due to depressed

foot traffic, simply because potential customers find the East 125th Street area too unsightly, too chaotic to linger and to continue to spend. Our goal in creating the BID is to bring together greater resources to keep our sidewalks clean and feeling more safe and walkable. Our goal is to help stabilize the East 125th Street corridor so that our small businesses, cultural institutions, and public spaces can thrive. We look forward to working together with the BID to provide more resources and to advocate to the City to help us solve the challenges of the East 125th Street corridor. It is our goal that by so doing we will help to foster culturally-responsible and responsive development for northeast Harlem. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

KAT PEELER: Good morning everyone. My name is Kat Peeler. I'm a resident of northeast Harlem and the owner of a local small business. I am also a member of the Board of Uptown Grand Central and part of the Steering Committee for the formation of the East 125th Street BID. Having lived close to the East 125th Street corridor for 19 years now I can testify to how deeply the area is in need of

community and economic development. Our neighborhood is oversaturated with an overconcentration of drug treatment centers and shelters that on a daily basis attract thousands of people to our streets and sidewalks. As many of you who have studied the history of red-lining know, these facilities were placed by design in our low-income community of color. What this means for our small businesses, a large number of which are owned by women and people of color, is depressed foot traffic since most potential customers do not want to shop or stop to eat along the East 125th Street corridor. I am part of the East Harlem 125th Street BID formation because also by design I want to see our neighborhood thrive. Increased street cleaning and coordination of public safety strategies are the top two requests of our local stakeholders as determined by our needs assessment survey. By creating a BID we will have the resources to begin to address many of the challenges that our neighborhood has faced for so long. The group of people that has come together as part of the BID formation process includes residents and small business owners like me, plus representatives from schools and cultural

1 institutions, plus property owners who have been both
2 in the neighborhood for years, or have more recently
3 joined in advance of the construction of the Second
4 Avenue subway. We all represent different interests
5 from across the neighborhood, and yet, have worked
6 really well together over the past three years, in
7 large part because we share the same goals of wanting
8 our neighborhood to be a place where our sidewalks
9 are safe and clean and where mental health is
10 supported. Our goal is for East 125th Street to be a
11 place where our businesses and cultural institutions
12 grow and prosper and show East Harlem at its best.
13 Thank you so much.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Jordan?

15 JORDAN BAROWITZ: Thank you for the
16 opportunity to testify in favor of Intro 1219, the
17 formation of the East 125th Street Business
18 Improvement District. My name is Jordan Barowitz and
19 I'm the Co-Chair of the Steering Committee and I
20 represent the Durst organization who owns 1800 Park
21 Avenue. We greatly appreciate the work of our
22 colleagues at SBS who have been invaluable guides
23 through this process, and thank you to the Council
24 staff for their work on this issue. You may have
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noticed that our budget is relatively large for the size and nature of our catchment area. As my colleagues have mentioned, we are more than just a busy commercial and transit corridor. We have the highest concentration of substance abuse and mental health facilities in New York, and the wear and tear on our streets is immense. From the inception of this process we understood that for the BID to be successful, we needed a street cleaning budget twice what is normal. It's required a significant investment from some of our property owners, and I thank them for their trust in the process and commitment to the community. I also want to highlight our process in forming the BID. We worked diligently to include the diversity of voices, viewpoints and experiences on our steering committee. We were community-led, and we cultivated a culture of shared responsibility and sacrifice. The consensus we formed at the steering committee was essential to our success when we entered the public outreach phase of the process. We have worked hard on this because we believe this BID will improve the lives of everyone who lives, works, shops, and visits East 125th Street. Finally, thank you to Council Member Salaam

and especially to Deputy Majority Leader Ayala. We would not be here without your support. You've been with us from the beginning. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Any questions from my colleagues? Gale?

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: First of all, congratulations particularly to Carey, but to everybody. My question is, knowing the area well, how will specifically--because you've worked really hard already on sanitation, already on public safety, already with the five methadone treatment that don't necessarily support what you're doing. So how will this funding be able to improve all the amazing work that you've done so far?

CAREY KING: It's a great question. I think first of all it will be a lot more funding and then it's also more reliable, because currently we're just-- we're grant writing. We're asking our Council Members for support, but this BID funding comes in regularly, and it comes in before you need to send it which is different than Council spending. And our goal is really to hit the ground running, doubling the size of our street cleaning team, and we have more blocks we can cover which also means currently

we're just cleaning 125th, but now we're going to do 124th, 126th, 127th, 128th which will help a lot of the puts that are creating the mess on 125th.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: [inaudible]

COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: No, I forgot to thank Blaze [sic] for all of the work. I know it was not easy, and again, I think that this is going to be-- you know, I think people misunderstand what our intentions are and all of the work that we've put into 125th Street, all of the love, sweat labor, funding is really to build to the infrastructure that we need for future generations that will live there, that will call that, you know, community home. I live not too far from there, and I'm there a lot. I know how much work it took to get here. So I really want you to celebrate today, because this is a really, really big deal for all of us and for East Harlem and I want to thank you all because, you know, the easy part is for me to be able to put in some funding, but the hard work is really done by the community stakeholders, and that's all of you, and so I want to thank you. And I want to thank, you know, obviously SBS for their commitment to helping us make this happen. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much. Thank you. We will also hear testimony today regarding Intro 1234 which is my bill to amend the date of the IBO report on the Executive Budget and the date of Council hearings on the Executive Budget. First, we'll hear from the IBO Assistant Director for Budget and Review at IBO, Logan Clark. Before IBO begins, I'm going to turn it over to the Committee Counsel to swear Logan in.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning, Mr. Clark. Do you affirm that your testimony will be truthful to the best of your knowledge, information and belief?

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR CLARK: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may proceed.
Thank you.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR CLARK: There we go.
Good morning Chair Brannan. Good morning esteemed members of the Council Finance Committee. This is a pretty short testimony. You guys have copies of it in your emails. Our Executive Director Louisa Chafee asked that I put my pension for word play to good use for once, and I requested that this be delivered in rhyming couplets. So, without further ado: Twas the

1 week before Exec when all through the house, IBO was
2 all a tizzy like a cat hunted mouse. We had lost
3 five days to a Charter revision, threatening our
4 forecast, accuracy and precision. A handful of days
5 may not seem like much, but let me tell you, cousin,
6 those five days are quite clutch. We were under the
7 gun and in a tight bind when on the Council calendar
8 what did we find? A legislative fix for our
9 [inaudible] rang, giving us space and time to do our
10 thing. We thank Council for rescue from angst, woe
11 and more, and support passage of Intro 1234. Thanks
12 for the opportunity to testify. I hope you have no
13 regrets, a merry-- a very merry Exec to all, and to
14 all a "Let's go Mets."

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Love it. Thank
17 you. Any questions from my colleagues? Very
18 impressive. Okay.

19 ASSISTANT DIRECTOR CLARK: Thank you so
20 much.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Those
22 are all of today's items. Any further questions from
23 my colleagues? Seeing none, I'll now ask Billy
24 Martin the Committee Clerk to call the roll. I need
25

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE 21

2 like two minutes for Billy. Just hang out. We need

3 to clone you.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK: Good morning, William

5 Martin, Committee Clerk, roll call vote Committee on

6 Finance. All items are coupled. Chair Brannan?

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: I vote aye.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK: Ayala?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Aye.

10 COMMITTEE CLERK: Moya?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: I vote aye.

12 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you. Powers?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Aye.

14 COMMITTEE CLERK: Louis?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Aye.

16 COMMITTEE CLERK: Brooks-Powers?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: I vote

18 aye.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK: Brewer?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Aye.

21 COMMITTEE CLERK: Farías? Hanks?

22 Hudson?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Aye.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK: Ossé? Sanchez?

25 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Aye.

1 COMMITTEE ON FINANCE 22

2 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you. Stevens?

3 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Aye.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK: Williams?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I vote aye.

6 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you. Won?

7 Salaam?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: I vote aye.

9 COMMITTEE CLERK: Carr? With a vote of
10 12 in the affirmative, 0 in the negative, and no
11 abstentions, all items have been adopted as described
12 by the Chair.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we're going
14 to leave the vote open, but you guys can go. Thank
15 you.

16 COMMITTEE CLERK: Continuation roll call,
17 Committee on Finance. Council Member Farías?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: I vote aye on
19 all.

20 COMMITTEE CLERK: With a vote of 13 in
21 the affirmative, 0 in the negative and no
22 abstentions, all items have been adopted by the
23 Committee. And just to note, Introduction 1219 is
24 laid over by the Committee. Thank you. Council
25 Member Farías to close.

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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date May 31, 2025