

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

-----X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

-----X

February 29, 2012
Start: 10:40 a.m.
Recess: 10:52 a.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

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

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

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

A P P E A R A N C E S

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

James G. Van Bramer

Vincent M. Ignizio

James S Oddo

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

Andrew Schwartz
First Deputy Commissioner
New York City Department of Small Business Services

1
2 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: --Westchester
3 Square BID on this morning. I'll just make a few
4 brief announcements. My name is Domenic M.
5 Recchia, Jr. I'm the chair of this wonderful
6 Committee, but let me just give all my colleagues
7 some updates. Tomorrow ten o'clock sharp we have
8 Finance with Education on Medicaid and special
9 education. Okay? It's an in depth hearing and it
10 deals with services children are getting in the
11 schools on how they're billing for it. As you
12 know the administration is billing Medicaid now to
13 get reimbursed. There's lots of issues that are
14 happening. If anyone has any issues dealing with
15 services of children and how they come about and
16 billing on it, tomorrow is the day to come to the
17 hearing and ask questions about it - - complaints
18 with special needs children not getting the
19 services in the school or the billing and
20 especially with OTs/PTs and speech therapists--lots
21 of problems with that going on throughout the New
22 York City Department of Education. On Friday, we
23 have the scree [phonetic] bill. There's a scree
24 hearing on Friday with the Aging Committee. I
25 know it's a lot of work beyond Finance, but this

1
2 is the month and it's going to get a little hairy.
3 Okay? So we have that on Friday. This deals with
4 what we should do with scree. Should we move it
5 back to the Department of—DFTA [phonetic]? Should
6 we keep it in the Department of Finance? If we do
7 keep it in the Department of Finance, what do we
8 want? How do we want it to be set up? There's a
9 big issue about who answers the telephone calls
10 because they go to 311, and that's unacceptable to
11 many of my colleagues I've heard from, so please—
12 it's a hearing. It's going to be very
13 interesting. We're going to have two
14 commissioners testify on Friday. We're going to
15 have Department of Finance and the DFTA
16 Commissioner—the Department of Aging. Okay? So
17 that's going to be on Friday. Monday morning ten
18 o'clock is the first Finance hearing. Mark Page
19 [phonetic] is going first. During the preliminary
20 budget, we have Mr. Page go first. During the
21 executive, we have him go last. Okay? That works
22 both ways. So if you have any questions for Mr.
23 Page on anything to do with the budget overall
24 please have your questions ready. You'll be given
25 an opportunity to ask some questions. We're going

1
2 to start Monday morning ten o'clock sharp in the
3 chamber. Okay? Are the hearings in the next two
4 days in the chamber too? Here? Monday's Finance
5 hearing is in the chamber. Tomorrow's hearing is
6 here at 16 [phonetic]. Friday's hearing I believe
7 is also, but you should check anyway. Alright.
8 So that is what is going on for the next three
9 days and after Monday begins all the other
10 hearings dealing with the preliminary budget.
11 Everyone is welcome to go to as many hearings as
12 they want - - one they want to attend and ask
13 questions. Alright. Thank you for joining us,
14 Darlene Mealy. Okay. What? They're not joint.
15 Every Committee has their own hearing; they're not
16 joint. The executive budget hearings are joint
17 with the Committee and with Finance. Does anybody
18 have any questions? Okay.

19 What we're going to do now is—hold
20 on for one second...

21 [long pause]

22 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay. I'm
23 going to make my formal opening statement, and
24 then we're going to hear from SBS to testify.
25 Okay. Good morning and welcome to today's Finance

1
2 Committee hearing. My name is Domenic M. Recchia,
3 Jr. Today we have only one item on our agenda,
4 which is legislation in the - - Westchester Square
5 BID in Council Member Jimmy Vacca's district, and
6 he's just arrived. He held us up.

7 [background conversation]

8 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you.

9 Even though he is not on this Committee, we're
10 going to permit him to say a few words, but let me
11 finish my statement. If you remember the
12 Committee on Finance held a public hearing on
13 October 17th. The legislation was laid over 'cause
14 30 day notice objection. On the 29th of November,
15 2011, the Committee found that the notice of
16 public hearing was not sufficient. The bill was
17 laid over again without a vote. The public
18 hearing was held on January 3rd, 2012. The
19 legislation was laid over to allow a thirty day
20 period. The objection period ended February 2nd.
21 We heard from SBS. We will hear from SBS today to
22 determine whether notice for the January 3rd
23 hearing was sufficient. The first year budget for
24 this BID is \$320,000 with about two-thirds of this
25 budget going towards marketing and sanitation.

1
2 Council Member Jimmy Vacca supports this BID. We
3 will now hear from the Department of Small
4 Business Services regarding the Westchester Square
5 BID, but before we hear from SBS, I want to remind
6 my colleagues about the two more hearings that I
7 just spoke about. We have a hearing on Thursday
8 with Medicaid and education. We have Friday's on
9 scree, Gale Brewer, who is an advocate for scree.
10 She's the one who has been screaming loudly about
11 us not running properly and she supports it going
12 back to DFTA. Only joking. It's a joke.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [off mic]

14 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay, so
15 please. We're going to start ten o'clock,
16 especially tomorrow. The Speaker will be at the
17 hearing tomorrow. Now, Jimmy Vacca, before we
18 have SBS testify, Jimmy, do you want to say a few
19 words? Do you want to speak after SBS? Okay, SBS
20 will testify. Let's pull up a chair. Just pull
21 up a chair, Andy Schwartz.

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

1
2 Small Business Services. I'm here today with Eddy
3 Ng and Laura Rothrock [phonetic] from the BID
4 program. As required by the law, the Westchester
5 Square BID steering committee mailed the summary
6 of the City Council resolution to each owner of
7 real property within the proposed district at the
8 address shown on the latest city assessment roll
9 or to such other persons as registered with the
10 city to receive tax bills concerning real property
11 within the district and to tenants of each
12 building within the proposed district. In
13 addition, SBS arranged for the required
14 publication of a copy of the summary of the
15 resolution in the city record. We are pleased to
16 report on the result of the objections filed with
17 the city clerk against the establishment of the
18 Westchester Square Business Improvement District
19 at the conclusion of the objection period 5pm
20 February 3rd, 2012, and taking into considerations
21 any objections postmarked by that date. There
22 were no valid objections filed with the city
23 clerk. One invalid objection was filed as there
24 was no proof of property ownership. The total
25 assessed valuation of property within the district

1
2 is \$32,289,212 and the total number of properties
3 is 87, which are held by approximately 77 property
4 owners. Our review concludes that the level of
5 objection files in terms of either the number of
6 property owners or percentage of assessed
7 valuation is within the accepted threshold needed
8 to advance the bill for favorable consideration by
9 the full City Council. Accordingly SBS requests
10 the Council to approve the establishment of the
11 Westchester Square BID in the Bronx. The
12 Department of Small Business Services supports the
13 establishment of the BID. In our judgment it will
14 improve business conditions and the quality of
15 life in the Westchester Square area, making it a
16 better place to live, work and visit and laying
17 the groundwork for further neighborhood
18 development activities in the Bronx. Thank you
19 and we're happy to answer any questions you may
20 have.

21 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay.

22 Anybody have any questions? No questions. Great.
23 We will let Jimmy say a few words, but before we
24 do that, I just want to recognize everybody who
25 has joined us here today: Leroy Comrie, Gale

1
2 Brewer, Jimmy Van Bramer, Joel Rivera, James Oddo,
3 Jimmy Vacca, Darlene Mealy, Diana Reyna, Helen
4 Foster, Vincent Ignizio, Julissa Ferreras, and
5 Karen Koslowitz. Do we have everybody? Alright.
6 I want to thank the staff. I want to thank
7 Tanisha Edwards, who worked very hard on this. I
8 want to thank Preston Niblack. I want to thank
9 Jeffrey Rodus [off mic] and Ralph. Okay. Okay.
10 Jimmy, it's your show, Jim, and Al Vann has joined
11 us. Jimmy?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: Thank you,
13 Mr. Chair and I would urge the Finance Committee
14 to vote in favor as well as the full Council.
15 It's my privilege to represent Westchester Square
16 and to represent merchants that have now banded
17 together to form this BID. The Westchester Square
18 commercial area was once a very, very thriving
19 part of the East Bronx. We experienced bad times.
20 We lost many of our key stores, many of our anchor
21 stores left. We think that a BID will bring us
22 back. We are a hub for transportation. We're in
23 a perfect position in the East Bronx. The
24 merchants, the community very much worked now for
25 four years. This is a dream come true for us, and

1
2 I think that we are on our way back with this
3 approval today. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Okay. Thank
5 you very much, Jimmy Vacca and I guess you're
6 supporting it and you want everyone to vote aye.
7 Is that correct? Okay. Darlene Mealy has a quick
8 question I understand.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: I just
10 wanted to ask if you find out the owner is not the
11 owner what do you do in regards to that? Do you
12 still put them in the BID?

13 ANDREW SCHWARTZ: If they are on
14 the city rolls they are going to be notified. If
15 at after the point of being assessed or billed for
16 it, they're not the owner, they could go to the
17 Department of Finance and correct that.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you
20 very much. We've been joined by Fernando Cabrera
21 from the Bronx. Okay. Any other questions? Not
22 seeing any further questions, please call the
23 roll.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK: William Martin,
25 Committee Clerk, roll call vote in the Committee

1
2 on Finance Introduction 644. Council Member
3 Recchia?

4 CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: I vote aye
5 and encourage all my members to vote aye. Thank
6 you.

7 COMMITTEE CLERK: Reyna?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNA: Aye.

9 COMMITTEE CLERK: Brewer?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Aye.

11 COMMITTEE CLERK: Comrie?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER COMRIE: Aye.

13 COMMITTEE CLERK: Foster?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: Aye.

15 COMMITTEE CLERK: Vann?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER VANN: [off mic]

17 COMMITTEE CLERK: Mealy?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Aye.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK: Ferreras?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Aye.

21 COMMITTEE CLERK: Cabrera?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Aye.

23 COMMITTEE CLERK: Koslowitz?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KOSLOWITZ: Aye.

25 COMMITTEE CLERK: Van Bramer?

1

2

COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Aye.

3

COMMITTEE CLERK: Ignizio?

4

COUNCIL MEMBER IGNIZIO: Aye.

5

COMMITTEE CLERK: Oddo?

6

COUNCIL MEMBER ODDO: Yes.

7

COMMITTEE CLERK: By vote of 14 in

8

the affirmative, zero in the negative—

9

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: [Interposing]

10

Hold on. Jackson is here. Robert?

11

COMMITTEE CLERK: Council Member

12

Jackson?

13

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Aye.

14

COMMITTEE CLERK: Correction. By

15

vote of 15 in the affirmative, zero in the

16

negative and no abstentions, item is adopted.

17

Members, please sign the Committee report. Thank

18

you.

19

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Thank you

20

very much. We'll keep the roll open.

21

COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Also, Rules

22

Committee is going to be right after in the same

23

room.

24

CHAIRPERSON RECCHIA: Alright.

25

11:15.

C E R T I F I C A T E

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

Signature Kimberley Uhlig

Date 3/18/12