

April 28, 2021 - Minutes: Economic Development-Waterfront Committee Meeting

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=72AOzzoKHmk>

Conversation led by:

- Julie Stein from EDC, Senior VP of Asset Management Division, former Executive Director for Sunset Park
- Ben Margolis, outgoing director of SBIDC
- These are the co-conveners of the Sunset Park Task Force

Ms. Stein (focus of the presentation) (10:00)

- Origins of the Task Force
- Evolution of the Task Force
- Next steps
- The Task Force started in 2015; agreement between Councilman Menchaca and EDC and related to SBMT, it came out of that issue. Ms. Stein then reviewed the original purposes of the Task Force (maximize potential of the waterfront, regional priorities for goods movement, advocate for industrial manufacturing businesses, etc.)
- Review of membership (14:50); a few groups were originally part of the Task Force but then dropped out
- Topics covered over the year included: SBMT and the RFP for that site; Workforce development, EDC projects, infrastructure projects, DOT presentations on greenways, freight study, UPROSE presentations, and response to Covid; SBMT special projects fund subcommittee
- January, 2020, started a five year reflection; the mission was in need of a refresh; a subcommittee met twice on the topic to draft recommendations, and the full Task Force gave further feedback in March, which is what was shown at this meeting; changes will be implemented in spring and summer, with additional changes happening in an iterative way going forward.

Ben Margolis (19:35) - discussed scope, mission, membership of the Task Force

- Add to mission: SMIA (significant maritime industrial area), green industries, workforce development, support waterfront businesses to move goods by water; will advise on long range planning; and more stakeholder engagement
- The roles: advisory role (not decision making body), advocacy and promotional role of area businesses and the area, and being an information sharing and collaboration organization; no money flows through the Task Force itself
- Membership: 30-40 members; more small businesses in the IBZ, member responsibilities clarified, wider sharing of agenda setting, and ground rules about communication

Councilman Menchaca (25:30) - From the 2014 confrontation over SBMT, we see incredible engagement; we had the opportunity to bring together needs that have not been met in a long time; changed structure of EDC, Julie led the portfolio which needed accountability; now SBMT

and the RFP process is sprouting from this; more transparency and membership needed to happen, and it was time to do that with the Task Force, if the Task Force needs to change again, please make that happen

Julie Stein (30)

- Meeting procedures: had been invitation only, but they will be opened to the public, with agenda topic suggestions from the public; meeting practices will be evaluated during hybrid meetings; meeting times will be rotated during the day, based on a recommendation from Renae Widdison; minutes will be taken; information from meetings can be shared publicly by members; a new website will be created, an email list will be created for the public; and a list of membership will be posted online;
- Operating procedures: principles of collaboration to accommodate diverse points of view and relationships in the room; the goal is to build trust and work together; if votes happen, we will take a vote based on majority; for the Equinor fund, representatives from the Task Force will represent local interests; subcommittees will be created when needed; will draft a conflict of interest policy; and a regular review will happen regarding the Task Force's operations and procedures

David Estrada, Sunset Park BID (37:45)

- The Task Force was a first step toward changing Sunset Park's relationship with government and non-governmental entities; it's worth working on, criticizing, re-examining, but also worth participating in
- Provided examples of how relationships have provided practical coordination within the community, as well as providing guidance on more complex issues like the give-back fund for SBMT
- I believe this has been good for the EDC as a change agent for its practices, and good for the Sunset Park waterfront and community, but not necessarily in a way people can see and understand; that's where we are

Dan Wiley, Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez's Office

- Started working for Rep. Velazquez in 2000; one of the first things was a press conference on the waterfront; Sunset Park Development Principles were discussed; when EDC wanted to do the master lease, he put a blockade on that for better terms, and he got that via Julie Stein and having the community heard through representation (CBOs, businesses, workforce development organizations) - they impacted the SBMT RFP; but we always wanted more transparency, and this five year process is finding a way to grow the membership and make it more transparent
- The Gowanus Community Advisory Group is a model; have people who have different perspectives, look at the same problem, and try to come up with points of agreement;
- After SBMT, the Task Force took on other large development issues like traffic, jobs, environmental justice, etc.; so it's great to have more community engagement on these matters; and this is a great model for how EDC can work in the neighborhood, increasing transparency and engagement

Dan Murphy (53:15) - Thanks to Councilman Menchaca for starting this process, we are not natural enemies of EDC, but you control a lot of land, so there is going to be tension sometimes

- Question: The subcommittee participants on the evolution committee; there was just one small business; it's very important that small businesses are included going forward, they should be near the top of discussions about the waterfront

Nick Azadian (53:50) - We appreciate all efforts; but I see a lack of regular residents of Sunset Park; in the future, what percentage of the group would be residents of Sunset Park who are representing themselves and residents?

Julie Stein - One of the most critical recommendations is to open the Task Force to residents;

Radhy Miranda - We will open the Task Force up publicly, people can participate more even if they are not on the Task Force

John Santore (1:01:23) - Data collected on the waterfront workforce should be collected by the Task Force

Radhy, Julie - Minutes had not been taken before 6-9 months ago (Dan notes it was sometimes an informal affair before then)

- John Santore repeated that all workforce-related job data should be available to the public, so it should be available sometimes, whether it's the Task Force or somewhere else
- Julie Stein - the data could be an agenda item at Task Force meetings

Dan Murphy (1:08:35) - Raised the issue of co-conveners; Ms. Stein said it will be taken on in the future; Dan said that the co-conveners for the Task Force could be adjusted as the body is populated

John Fontillas (1:10:15) - This is the first time I've attended a meeting about the Task Force; I put my trust in David and the two Dans; this is the first time I've heard how this started, and I'm overjoyed that something is out there watching this; suggests a bi-annual report to CB7; and is there a reason it's the Task Force instead of the Waterfront Task Force? (Julie Stein discussed the name and confirmed that the Sunset Park waterfront is the right focus for the group, rather than Sunset Park and Red Hook)

David Estrada (1:16:20) - The broader context of the neighborhood is crucial, it's all connected, so broad language is helpful there;

Cindy VandenBosch (1:17:45) - Can we convene meetings at accessible locations; meeting notices that include information regarding accessibility; language access and ensuring that residents of Sunset Park can participate; and finally, including infrastructure in the mission of the Task Force; also mentions making job placement services available to adults with other disabilities

Julie Stein - we are committed to translation and interpretation; accessibility is something we have not previously discussed but we can; we often meet in the industrial area which is less accessible but perhaps we could meet at CB7; and infrastructure, we have spent time talking about roads and cobble; and we can spend more time thinking about sewers as well (Ben Margolis says they should connect regarding connecting adults with disabilities to job placement services)

Dan Wiley - bring the people working on NYU's GIS survey regarding subterranean infrastructure to the Task force meetings (1:24)

John Santore (1:24:30) - Is EDC open to putting a draft agenda in the public domain before it's finalized; will the Task Force review changes as they are brought up; put previous presentations and attendee lists online; and the meeting times - if they're during the day, you won't get many members of the public;

Julie Stein - In consideration of those with night jobs, meeting during the day will allow them to participate; everyone doesn't work a 9-5; these recommendations are forward looking, they don't apply to past materials, and future materials will be on the website; we would limit major restructuring to a set cycle, but there won't be too much rigidity; anyone can reach out regarding agenda items, but it's not practical to distribute the agenda beforehand (but there will be a feedback form)

Dan Murphy suggests old and new business as well to be part of Task Force meetings

John Santore (1:30:30) - Old Business question re: Steiner Studio job information previously presented to the Board; asks EDC to obtain a relevant study from Steiner Studios; Julie Stein says EDC doesn't have the study but she can reach out to Steiner Studios and ask them for it;

David Estrada (1:34:40) - Reviews street closing schedule going forward to help local businesses

Nick (1:35:15) - CCIA could raise natural gas bills for local businesses by 33 percent; I would encourage speaking to local elected officials to put in provisions to offset that, so it doesn't adversely impact businesses on the waterfront; Nick says he can draft a letter

Dan Wiley (1:37:25) - The Restaurant Revitalization Fund will go live on Monday, May 3; apply now for the money because it will be gone later

Cindy VandenBosch: May 1 - BioBat exhibit, Mexican artists, shares information about the presentation

John Santore - proposes a resolution calling for CB7 and the Council Member for district 38 to be co-conveners of the Task Force

Radhy Miranda - I invite you to be part of the evolution process rather than forcing something without thinking it through first; it's a lot to be the co-convenor; we're all part of this together, so maybe being a co-convenor won't produce as much of a change as you think it will, plus it's a lot of responsibility

Councilman Menchaca - We've been having this conversation for a while; it's a good idea for the Council Office to remain focused on transparency, information and oversight; I would like to be in communication about that; I will always have the power of oversight; that's our responsibility, maybe we need to articulate that; for example, the data you're looking for, I can write a letter to EDC about that

John Santore withdrew his resolution proposal.

Dan Wiley said that Councilman Menchaca's staff has always had a lot of influence on the Task Force's meetings.

=== End of Meeting ===