

May 11, 2021 - Minutes: Economic Development-Waterfront Committee Meeting

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N82M3Euc6is>

Presentation by Deshaun Mars, Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce

Roll call started at 19:30

Mr. Mars started at 21:45

- Senior Director of Business Recovery at Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce
- Presented on the New York City Small Business Resource Network
- Program is a response to covid to help businesses get through the pandemic and be stronger after
- City-wide initiative that the Brooklyn Chamber is a part of, working with EDC and the Peterson Foundation, which is providing the funding
- We have six recovery specialists - no-cost assistance for businesses; financing, marketing, technology, legal counsel, and mentoring resources
- Helping businesses with the Paycheck Protection Program
- Helping with the Restaurant Revitalization Fund which is a federal policy to offset losses during Covid
- The program can help businesses market services differently (develop a website, partships with Squarespace and other businesses); helping with online sales (technology specialist on staff to help with that); pro-bono legal counsel (help with issues with landlord); also providing business coaching and mentoring resources
- Support at: smallbiz.nyc or email us at BCC-covid@brooklynchamber.com
- If you reach out, a specialist will get back to you to provide one-on-one assistance

Dan Murphy question at 20:15 - what happens after you fill out your information online?

Mars:

- You input your business needs, and then we receive the information and assign your case to a case member who will follow up immediately to figure out how we can support

Dan Murphy: Are you going door to door with BID or SBIDC?

Mars:

- We know it's hard to step away from your business
- We have been going out door-to-door to hand out information directly and sign businesses up on the spot, consultations on the spot too
- We would love to do joint outreach with the BID and in the IBZ

Cindy VandenBosch - Is it any kind of business that can impact these resources? And what kind of web services are offered? And what about legal costs and insurance costs?

Mars:

- Any type of business can access our resources; the only limitation is that you need to be in operation in NYC
- Regarding online services, we have a tech specialist on staff; if a business has a website, she offers support for things they can do with their digital strategy and website;
- Insurance or legal costs (36:26), we have organizations providing pro-bono legal support (contracts, leases, other legal issues) - we can offer one-on-one support through other organizations

Question from Jimmy Li (37:30) - what kind of support to non-English speaking owners, and do you have to be a Chamber member?

Mars:

- No, do not have to be a Chamber member - free services for all
- We have language resources on staff - Italian, Haitian Creole, Spanish, Chinese; we assign members to neighborhoods based on language needs

Question from John Santore (39:15) - Will the Restaurant Revitalization Fund run out, how much money can people get, and do you have data on the overall impact of the pandemic on Brooklyn businesses?

Mars:

- We do monthly services of businesses
- Restaurant Revitalization Fund will pay the difference in revenue between 2019 and 2020.
- We encourage all businesses to apply as quickly as possible. For the first 21 days, priority will be given to veteran-owned businesses, business of color, and businesses run by people from disadvantaged backgrounds

Dan Murphy (43:30) - How many businesses have you signed up for that?

Mars: I don't have direct numbers, but we have been going out in the field and talking to businesses about the program. I think the maximum amount you can receive is up to \$5 million

Dan Murphy: The companies that get \$5 million will be the ones first in line and who have the resources to apply; the guy who needs \$50,000 has more trouble doing that.

Mars: The fund is from the federal government; you apply directly with the SBA; but we offer support to make sure you have the information you need.

Dan Murphy: Are wholesale providers eligible?

Mars: I'm not sure about that, the SBS website breaks down the categories.

Pat Ruiz (46:25) - Is there a maximum amount of businesses per district that would be rewarded, or a minimum length or maximum length of time that businesses have been in operation that determines whether they can apply?

Mars: No maximum amount of time but many programs require you to have been in operation on or before Feb. 15, 2020; the federal programs require you to have been in operation before the pandemic; no limit to maximum number of awards per district; the Restaurant Revitalization Fund started last Monday; I don't have information on how many have applied to that yet and where they applied from.

Nick Azadian (49:15) - How many staffers at the Chamber work on this?

Mars: We have six staffers on the recovery team; each has a geographic area they are covering; Francini is the person working in the Sunset Park area; Jeremy has her information; She speaks Spanish; If someone speaks a language we don't speak, we can tap into other offices across NYC to help;

Nick: Do you explain specific details in native languages?

Mars: We partner closely with community development financial institutions (CFIs) to help in these situations and provide detailed, specific information.

Pat Ruiz (54:15) - Do you need an appointment to get assistance, and how long does the process take for a consultation?

Mars: We call and text businesses, send them social media notices; we do consultations in the field when we go door-to-door; We get back in touch with businesses within a day of them signing up for services, two days at the most.

Cindy VandenBosch (58:30) - Thank you for pounding the pavement since the pandemic started; Does Francini also cover Windsor Terrace? Do your services overlap with SBS services? Based on your data, what kind of needs are you seeing on the horizon?

Mars: Francini does not cover Windsor Terrace but we have another staffer covering that area; I came from SBS; SBS isn't necessarily offering technical assistance directly to businesses. They direct businesses to resources, do workshops. We have a team offering direct one-on-one support. In terms of policy, many business owners are trying to figure out what resources they need to have, they want direct support around outdoor structures, permits, help with changing regulations so they can start to plan operations.

Maria Roca (1:03:20) - Are hours flexible for consultation visits? For them, getting on a Zoom, it's difficult because they are small businesses, it's hard to make time for that.

Mars: We set up appointments within a week; the bulk of the work we do is remote; we also do phone calls, we are very flexible in terms of how we communicate with businesses.

Dan Murphy: Suggests reaching out to the BID and the non-profits in the IBZ.

John Santore: New Business question - the next meeting, what will it be?

Dan Murphy: We have reached out to EDC about the plans for the north end of the Made in NY Campus. We would like an update before summer. Look out for a date in June on that. We don't know when in June, they are internally speaking right now about that.

Cindy VandenBosch - I want to coordinate on following up regarding the workforce development programming for employment for people with disabilities as a future agenda item.

Dan Murphy: We should set that up soon, just let me know the details.

=== Meeting adjourned. ===