



Keeping The Promise To New York City's Small Businesses

In an address today on the future of New York City small business, Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn announced that an agreement has been reached with the Bloomberg administration on three small business proposals.

PENALTY FORGIVENESS PROGRAM

The Speaker announced an agreement with the Bloomberg administration to establish a penalty forgiveness period for businesses and individuals with outstanding violations returnable to the Environmental Control Board - which make up the vast majority of non-parking fines on businesses. Right now the City is owed approximately \$200 million in such unpaid fines. Those fines can drag a business down, while the City only sees pennies on the dollar.

"You hear plenty of talk about getting toxic assets off the books of struggling banks," said Speaker Quinn. "Well let's get these toxic assets off of small businesses' books so they can start fresh."

For three months starting this fall, if a business or individual comes forward and demonstrates that they've corrected the underlying

problem, the City will waive their late fees.

ELIMINATING UNNECESSARY REGULATION

The many laws and rules the city imposes on small businesses can be another major obstacle to business growth. The Council introduced a bill crafted with the administration to create a Regulatory Review Panel, made up of Council Members, representatives of the Mayor's office, and the Commissioners of City Agencies like Consumer Affairs and Small Business Services.

The panel will be charged with examining agency rules and regulations that affect the business community, and looking for those that may be outdated, or unnecessarily inter-



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fere with business operations. They will also evaluate the rulemaking process at city agencies.

By the end of the year, the panel will have developed a report on its initial findings and recommendations, to be presented to the Mayor and Speaker.

COORDINATED INSPECTIONS

After all paperwork has been filed, and permits have been received, businesses must still be inspected by a number of city agencies. And since each agency visits separately, a business might remain shuttered for weeks or months, just waiting for one final inspection. That's time when businesses are losing critical revenue, and New Yorkers are missing out on new jobs.

"Back in February, I did an event with the owner of a restaurant in my district who had hoped to open his doors after six months,"

Quinn said. "But by the time all the different inspections were complete, over a year had gone

That kind of wait can bankrupt a new business before it even starts."

Speaker Quinn has worked with the Administration on a pilot program that will begin in the fall, coordinating inspections done by the Department of Health, the Department of Buildings, and the Fire Department. The pilot will also involve streamlined information sharing between agencies. It will start with restaurants waiting to open, as they require the most agency inspections. If the pilot is successful, the Council will work to expand it to other types of businesses around the city.

The Speaker first outlined a series of small business proposals called "Open for Business" in her State of the City address in February of this year. The package includes initiatives intended to make it easier for new small businesses to open, help existing businesses to get more business, and avoid burdensome government regulation.

Christine Quinn is the Speaker of the New York City Council.

Regulatory Review Panel To Help Small Businesses

By Leroy Comrie

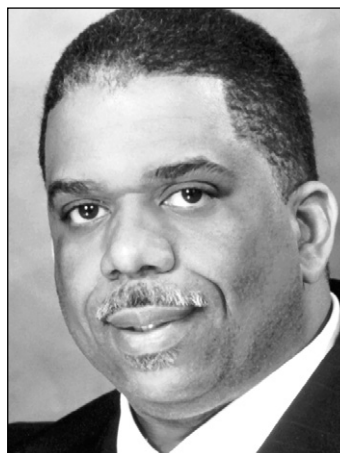
As chairperson of the New York City Council's Committee on Consumer Affairs and as chair of the Council's Queens Delegation, I am uniquely aware of the challenges that small business owners face. Not a week passes where a local entrepreneur doesn't call my office looking for assistance with respect to a situation they are facing. More times than not, this problem usually results from that business owner being confused or unaware of the city rules governing their industry. Our role in government is to insure that the small business owner can navigate the bureaucracy and find a quick solution.

The City Council realizes that many local laws and rules imposed on small businesses can be major obstacles to their successful development. As a result, recently the City Council successfully passed legislation that will result in the creation of the Regulatory Review Panel. The Panel shall be comprised of the Director of the Mayor's Office of Operations; the Director of the Mayor's Office of Management and Budget; the Corporation Counsel; the Director of the Mayor's Office of Special Enforcement; the Commissioner of the

Department of Consumer Affairs; the Commissioner of the Department of Small Business Services; and three Council Members designated by the Speaker of the City Council. The Mayor shall appoint one additional member to serve as chair of the panel.

The Regulatory Review Panel will represent a collaborative effort on the part of New York City government to enrich and develop our small business community, while meeting the needs of consumers and the public at large. In the months ahead, the panel will conduct an overview of the rules and rulemaking procedures of city agencies, with an eye towards eliminating redundancies and inefficiencies. These initial findings, along with a set of recommendations, will be collected in a report, which will be published at the end of this calendar year.

I will be one of three Council Members who will sit on this panel- the others being Council Member James Oddo of Staten Island and



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Council Member David Yassky of Brooklyn. I am proud to join my colleagues in this endeavor and we are determined to insure that it result in creating an environment conducive to small business growth in our city.

As panel members, we also will seek input from local trade associations and community organizations to minimize the costs and burdens borne by city agencies. One major goal will be to implement technology to help business owners in the outer boroughs take care of errands that can currently only be handled in person in Manhattan, a time-consuming task that often forces them to leave their establishments for an entire day. It is imperative, we think, that we continue to find new and innovative solutions to help small businesses through this difficult economic climate. The ability to enhance and support small business and entrepreneurship will be critical in the future growth of our city.

I look forward meeting with and hearing

about the ideas and issues that negatively impact the small business community of Queens. In this tough economic recession, government needs to step back and review what role we play in assisting our business community to thrive. Normally when the government puts working groups together, it usually results in more government. I am positive that this panel will stay focused on what needs to be done to limit bureaucracy and help small business owners in our city realize their potential.

I want to thank the board and staff of the Queens Chamber of Commerce for providing me this opportunity to address this important subject. Additionally, I want to invite Commerce members to feel free to reach out to my office with suggestions about other issues that I can bring before the Regulatory Review Panel. You can reach me at my district office at 718-776-3700 or at my City Hall office at 212-788-7084. I look forward to speaking with you all in the very near future. And I will consult the Chamber during the entire process about the panel's focus deliberations and give you a detailed report on our recommendations. Have a wonderful and prosperous summer.

Leroy Comrie represents the 27th City Council District in Queens.