

March 7, 2015 LBAT Public Forum Summary

Jennifer Potts – She stated that improving communication between the city, property owners, and prospective business owners would be helpful. Property owners are not always aware of code violations. Prospective business owners are not always aware of different opportunities and grants that are available to them.

Michael Maistelman – The city is drafting legislation to address tow truck regulations, but the topic has not been discussed at length through a public forum. Individuals involved in the industry should have an opportunity to give input. The industry is in favor of licensing, but would like to be involved in the process.

Patricia Ruiz – Forums such as the LBAT public forums are important to give the public an opportunity to address representatives. Businesses want to follow rules and regulations, but need more direction.

Michael Tarantino – He owns a towing business and feels he did not get a proper voice in the process of new towing regulations being drafted. The Recycling Task force didn't address towing issues enough to warrant the drafting of legislation. Regulations created on paper might not work with real life situations so he would like the opportunity to give more input.

Mary Glass – She would like more open access to representatives. Rules and regulations are necessary, but shouldn't act as barriers. She would like to see more summits to get people involved regularly.

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Mayor Barrett – He stated met with the Department of City Development to review economic data for 2014. He would like the city to be proactive to encourage businesses to develop and stay in Milwaukee. All departments need to work together to address issues. He states the city is responding to changes in business models and regulations can be modified at the local level.

Joaquin Altoro – Vice President of Town Bank – He has spoken to hundreds of prospective business owners. Many people want to start nonprofits, but are not aware of opportunities to start for-profit businesses. There is a problem with small businesses not having equity in their businesses.

Atty. Michael Maistelman – He is working with the towing and recycling industry. There is some legislation pending at both the city and state level. One concern is that the City of Milwaukee competes with the small towing industry. The city is trying to encourage business, but is also competing with private businesses now. New possible regulations require the industry to provide information to the city, despite the competition.

Mike Tarantino – Owner of Always Towing - New city regulations may involve regulations that are outside of state statutes. There have been recent news stories about one poorly run company which seems to have started conversations about licensing. Suppressing work through licensing can be problematic. He is concerned that the competition between the city and the private industry is causing changes to be made.

Nathaniel Martinez – He does local business outreach and states materials in Spanish should be added to encourage engagement.

Mary Hoehne – Granville Business Improvement District - She hears comments about how getting inspections for permits is tedious and takes too long. She also wants the city to have stricter signage requirements, particularly in commercial districts. Better communication is needed.

Ruth Weill – Riverwest Business Association - She has a lot of business owners come to her with questions because they are confused about processes. The city could have case managers who walk businesses through processes from beginning to end. Sometimes new business owners are so preoccupied with individual business plans, that the licensing becomes daunting. License hearings can also be intimidating. Business plan mentoring could be helpful.

Renee Lindner – Burleigh Street DCD - Many business owners are so busy working inside the business that they don't have time to work on the business. Good business owners should be encouraged. Signage grants are appreciated. City workers have been helpful both on the phone and in person. She suggests a navigator/mentor/case manager to take potential business owners through processes.

March 16, 2015 LBAT Public Forum Summary

Nelson Soler – Multicultural Entrepreneurial Institute – His organization offers training to food dealers in the city. He states he has seen improvements on the city website. His clients are sometimes confused about dealing with different departments for licensing and inspections. He suggests having applications available to fill out electronically and having language on forms simplified. The BOZA process can also be confusing for potential business owners.

Deb Seibel – She asked if the body will review license application requirements to encourage small business growth. She cited an example of a longtime business owner who was recently denied an alcohol license after investing funds in the property.

Abdel Hafeth Hamad - Ordinances should be examined to determine if information is outdated. He had an experience with an inspector where he was misinformed about regulations. He had owned a business for many years and then sold the business. When he leased the building again, the new lessee was denied an alcohol license because of single cigarette sales. He later applied for a food license and was denied because of neighborhood objections. He states he believes he was treated unfairly because of personal issues.

Gloria Melendez-Lopez – She moved here from Florida and would like the city to be more proactive instead of reactive. It would be helpful to be able to review the status of permits on a website or mobile app.

Owner of Sirrah Construction – He has encountered issues in receiving timely payments for construction contracts with the city.