



The City of New York

# **Manhattan Community Board 1**

Anthony Notaro, Jr. CHAIRPERSON | Noah Pfefferblit DISTRICT MANAGER

## **Mayor's Office of Citywide Event Coordination and Management**

### **Street Activity Permit Office**

### **Public Hearing on Proposed Rules**

**100 Church Street, 12th Floor**

**10:00A.M., October 13, 2016**

Thank you for holding this important public hearing today regarding the proposed changes in rules for street fairs. My name is Noah Pfefferblit, and I am the District Manager of Community Board 1 in Lower Manhattan. Community District 1 includes most of Manhattan below Canal Street and south of the Brooklyn Bridge.

At our Community Board 1 (CB1) board meeting on September 27, 2016, CB1 unanimously adopted a resolution strongly urging the Citywide Event Coordination and Management (CECM) to postpone today's public hearing by at least one month to enable Community Boards to provide meaningful input on the proposed rules changes, a request also made by Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer. We noted in our resolution that the extremely and unusually compressed timeframe precluded meaningful input as community boards require at least 45 days advance notice.

The proposed changes would make very significant changes to the rules for street festivals, setting a maximum of 10 multi-block events in any community district per year and a maximum of 20 one-block events, far fewer than the current number in many Manhattan districts, and a maximum of one festival per organization. This sharp reduction in the number of events would require a lottery to determine which organizations would have the ability to sponsor fairs, making it impossible for CB1 and other organizations that currently sponsor fairs and raise essential funds from them to continue doing so. CECM has not offered any explanation of why it believes that these drastic changes are needed or the reason for the compressed timeframe.

CECM has moved forward with this hearing despite requests to postpone it, and while we therefore cannot address the proposed changes, we have comments regarding how the new rules will affect our internal operations and fundraising.

CB1 has sponsored street fairs in our district for many years. While we review all applications for street fairs and events regardless of the sponsor, we sponsor our own events in order to supplement our budget and conduct work on behalf of our community. In past years CB1 has sponsored as many as six fairs annually, including in the aftermath of 9/11 and post-9/11 reconstruction, when additional funds were needed to provide the services that our members and constituents needed during extraordinarily challenging times. It is inconceivable that we would have been able to meet the challenges of 9/11 and the post-9/11 reconstruction without such funds and other community boards have come to rely on additional funds raised in this way as well to meet unique challenges.

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The drastic reduction in the number of street fairs would severely limit our ability to raise essential funds. We are also concerned about the tension that would be created when local organizations would be competing for a limited number of permits and some would be able to continue to sponsor events and others would not.

We understand the need to reassess existing rules but we believe that this process should occur in consultation with community boards and not in a way that circumvents us. This would also enable the organizations that sponsor fairs to work with CECM and the Street Activity Permit Office (SAPO) to ensure that any new rules for street fairs are practical. For example, while the requirement to have 50% local merchants is commendable, it is not clear that it will be possible to achieve in a district such as ours that is rapidly growing but still a central business district with large corporations and both regional and national chain stores.

Given the many serious problems that these proposed rules would cause, we urge you to reconsider the proposed changes and to engage community boards and other stakeholders in an inclusive process that would result in equitable and viable solutions.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.