

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS TANIA FERNANDES ANDERSON, RICARDO ARROYO,
AND BRIAN WORRELL, BREADON, FLAHERTY, LOUIJEUNE, MEJIA, MURPHY,
FLYNN AND COLETTA



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO EXPLORE A DIGITAL MARKETPLACE PILOT PROGRAM

- WHEREAS,** Small businesses create a flourishing, diverse economy, and the pandemic highlighted that investments in small businesses are key to reducing poverty and closing the racial wealth gap in the City of Boston; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Small businesses generate half of all jobs and nearly half of the gross domestic product in the United States, furthermore, small businesses are the largest employers of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC); *and*
- WHEREAS,** Technology companies dominate the online market which has exacerbated the closures of local small businesses due to the COVID-19 pandemic response; *and*
- WHEREAS,** During the past three years, large, multinational corporations such as Amazon, Walmart, and Instacart saw record breaking profits while taking advantage of the majority of the federal COVID-19 business stimulus package; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Small businesses that were unable to build an online presence closed during the pandemic, which has widened racial wealth gap and health disparities, increased crime, and increased the racial educational attainment gap; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Small businesses are unable to bear the cost of their exclusion on the popular internet, or “new main street”, and BIPOC small business owners pay two to four times more in commercial rent and are less likely to have leases or insurance, leaving them vulnerable to evictions and loss; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Exclusionary zoning practices have excluded BIPOC small business owners from accessing popular spaces in large retailers, galleries, arts & entertainment centers, and large restaurants which has led to limited economic opportunities for BIPOC communities; *and*

WHEREAS, A collaboration with City Economic Development Departments, Community Development Corporations (CDC's), Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), Small Business Administrations (SBA's), Main Streets, and local universities, has exposed the City's inadequacy in helping marginalized businesses located in neighborhoods with 30-50 percent poverty rates; *and*

WHEREAS, The City of Boston must build for the future centered on small businesses to preserve local culture, reduce poverty, save the environment through local production, and mitigate sales leakage; *and*

WHEREAS, A marketplace owned by the people of Boston would insulate communities from the widespread systemic policies that harm them; *and*

WHEREAS, A coordinated economic development strategy to reduce poverty and revitalize neighborhoods must happen across multiple sectors, including business and nonprofit; *and*

WHEREAS, In order for small businesses to thrive, they need to capture more disposable income and align with future demographics and consumption patterns by appealing to the largest demographic in their immediate neighborhood, young Black people; ***NOW, THEREFORE BE IT***

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss the possibility of a Pilot Digital Marketplace with technical assistance for minority-owned small businesses that would address operations, lack of capital, build a "public option" for a local online marketplace owned by the people, partnership with local community service providers, transition brick & mortar business operations online as well as their inventory to be offered as an alternative to online conglomerates by implementing data collection, coalition building, built environment plan for financial sustainability level, policy centering small businesses, tech adoption, and the development of the future small business infrastructure; and that representatives from City Departments to include Economic Opportunity & Inclusion, Department of Innovation and Technology, and Office of Equity and Inclusion, and other interested parties be invited.

Filed on: January 25, 2023