

**Minutes of the regular meeting of the
SMALL BUSINESS AND AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COUNCIL**

10:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., Tuesday, April 14, 2015

Federal Reserve Bank of New York

33 Liberty St., New York, NY

Present:

Michael Arnoff, President, Arnoff Moving & Storage
Alejandro Ballester, President, Ballester Hermanos, Inc.
Adenah Bayoh, Co-Founder, Kapwood, LLC
Stewart Brunhouse, President, A&A Company, Inc.
William Byrne, Chairman of the Board, Byrne Dairy, Inc
Charles Feit, President and Founder, OnForce Solar
Deborah Leo, President, Retail Solutions, Inc.
Patrick Marotta, President and CEO, Marotta Controls
Ranjini Poddar, Founder and CEO, Artech Information Systems, LLC

Federal Reserve Bank of New York attendees:

Christine Cumming
William Dudley
Jack Gutt
Kausar Hamdani
Matthew Higgins
Claire Kramer
Anand Marri
James Andrew Orr
David Parkinson
Richard Peach
Luis Urganga

Ms. Cummings called the meeting to order at approximately 10:30 a.m.

1. The National Economy

Mr. Peach gave a high-level overview of the current state of the U.S. economy.

2. Regional Update

Mr. Orr discussed recent economic trends in the Second Federal Reserve District.

3. International Update

Mr. Higgins spoke about international economic developments in Europe and Japan, as well as about changes in global oil production.

4. Luncheon Discussion

Mr. Dudley joined the group for the luncheon discussion. Members were asked to comment on changes in sales volume during the first quarter of 2015, projected hiring and investment in plant and equipment for the second quarter, pricing expectations, and access to credit over the preceding two quarters.

A majority of members reported sales growth in 2014 continuing in the first quarter of 2015, though others reported slowdowns due to issues like harsh winter weather and dock strikes. Most members expected strong levels of growth to continue during the remainder of the year.

Some members reported plans for increases in employment, while others plan to keep employment levels stable. Across sectors, members have experienced varying degrees of labor marketing tightening with some firms reporting plans to increase wages to attract new employees. Several firms cited particular difficulty finding enough applicants for information technology, skilled laborer, and truck driving positions.

Several members reported making new investments in plant and equipment, while other member firms reported plans for investments in the coming year. Research and development, advertising, and efforts to increase productivity were cited as areas of continued investment. Some firms also noted new pricing pressures due to factors such as increasing competition and a strong dollar.

In general, members noted that credit conditions remain largely unchanged with relatively easy access to financing.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:00 p.m.