

Minutes of the Chinatown Working Group (CWG) Full Group Meeting
5:30pm to 7pm, Monday, December 3, 2012
American Legion L.T. Kimlau Post 1291

Voting members present: American Legion Post 1291 (Gabe Mui); Asian American Arts Centre (Robert Lee); Asian Americans for Equality (Douglas Le); Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (Bethany Li); Bowery Alliance of Neighbors (Mitchell Grubler); Chinese Progressive Association (Mae Lee); Chinese Staff and Workers Association (Wendy Cheng, Josephine Lee); Committee Against Anti Asian Violence (Helena Wong, Billie Zhu); Community Board 1 (Evan Lacher); Community Board 2 (Antony Wong); Community Board 3 (MyPhuong Chung); Community Emergency Response Team #2 (Jerry Chan); Immigrant Social Services (George Leung); International Chinese Transportation Professionals Association (Jerry Cheng); Lower Manhattan GOP (Jim Chue); Two Bridges Neighborhood Council (Victor Papa, Wilson Soo).

Elected Officials: Office of State Senator Squadron (Mary Cooley).

Press: Rachel Liu (World Journal); Bonnie Li (Sing Tao Daily News).

Also present: Rob Hollander (Lower East Side Residents for Responsible Development); Zella Jones (NoHo-Bowery Stakeholders Inc.); Irving Lee (Property Tax Payers); Edward Primis; Susan Yung.

Meeting called to order, 5:50pm, Wilson Soo and Antony Wong facilitating.

1. Approval of the agenda. No objections.

>>Agenda approved.

2. Approval of the November minutes.

Rob Hollander: The minutes should say "October" not November.

>> minutes approved as corrected.

3. Vote on including past administrative fees (Jim Solomon's reimbursement) in the consultant RFP.

Antony Wong: Senator Squadron assures us that LMDC is open to writing a letter to add additional funds to the consultant contract so even if we designate \$15,000 from the LMDC grant to reimburse Jim Solomon, the money will be restored into the consultant payment.

Mary Cooley: The Senator wanted to fix this legislatively but couldn't. This solution was LMDC's suggestion to provide both for the consultant's fee and the back payments. LMDC recognizes that \$150,000 is too little for our needs and expects that they will increase the consultant fee later on anyway. The Senator is in the minority in the State Senate, so a legislative reallocation is no longer feasible. The Senator will hold LMDC to its promises.

Victor Papa: Wasn't this a member item unrelated to LMDC?

Cooley: The item was included in a legislative package which identified LMDC as the fiscal conduit. To change that would require designating a different conduit. That would require amending a budget

bill from two years ago.

Victor Papa: Why change conduit?

Mary Cooley: Because LMDC can't process the grant.

Victor Papa: Lowering the consultant fee would be harmful to our process. It would diminish the product.

MC: But LMDC will allocate more money.

Papa: That's a fact?

Mary Cooley: That's what LMDC told us. This is what LMDC told us would work and we intend to hold them to it.

Victor Papa: Can we get it in writing?

Mary Cooley: Because the scope is not yet determined and is not written in a memorandum, they wouldn't want to set in writing. But I will ask. I doubt they will.

Victor Papa: Could we meet with LMDC to discuss both the administrative fees and the importance of funding that will result in a high quality outcome?

Zella Jones: CWG has a debt and it has to be paid. The honor of this organization has to be held. Can we add to the consultant with smaller grants from the City Council or from other funding organizations? Can those land in the planner's fund?

Mitchell Grubler: Am I hearing that by the time we are ready to issue an RFP for a planner, we would get a commitment from LMDC for the additional funds?

Mary Cooley: We didn't set out a timetable.

Mitchell Grubler: We will be ready to post the RFP in the spring.

Mary Cooley: I was not aware of your timetable so we did not have that conversation.

Antony Wong: We'll have a conversation with the Senator's office about the additional funds and when they might be available. Right now our conduit wants to know whether we want to add the \$15,000 provision for back payments or not.

Rob Hollander: This is not an obligation of CWG but Squadron's obligation. Do we have a commitment from LMDC? Michael Levine says LMDC indicated to him that additional funds are not likely to be allocated. None of the solutions seems possible: Levine also says grants can't be added once it's been bid. And you can't get grants for work already done. It also seems an insult to CWG: the funds are no longer available so just take the sum out of the CWG consultant fee and it will be okay. What leverage does Squadron have over the LMDC funds and the LMDC Board?

Mary Cooley: I will give you an example of the money LMDC can come up with. This is not really a

lot of money. LMDC has well over \$15,000 available. We were able to work with LMDC on Pier 42. LMDC is in the process of winding down, but there may be a lot of money that they haven't spent. This was not our proposal -- this was LMDC's proposal. We pressured LMDC and they came up with this solution. They say \$150,000 is not a set amount for LMDC. When you finalize the amount, you can allocate money for these administrative costs. By the time you issue an RFP you'll have a real number between CWG, LMDC, USNY. Our suggestion was never to take away the money from the consultant. We thought this would be a solution because LMDC says this would not be a net loss. I'm telling you that if we could have found another way, we could.

Rob Hollander: So in answer, no there is no leverage over LMDC.

Mary Cooley: I disagree. We leveraged LMDC in other ways and got them to fund community projects that mattered to us.

Victor Papa: I would like to bring this to the Coordinating Committee and discuss more. We have an obligation to pay, and we understand the money is not being taken from us by Senator Squadron since the money was never his, it's LMDC's.

Mary Cooley: The money is in an account, we just can't process it – we can't spend it.

Antony Wong: We will discuss further at the Coordinating Committee. This is just an option to pay the funds if the receipts are accepted. It does not automatically pay anyone.

Josephine Lee: Let's approve it since Mary Cooley has said that she will maintain communication with LMDC and possibly set up a meeting between us and them.

Mary Cooley: We've been in constant and personal communication with LMDC.

Rob Hollander: But it takes funds out of the RFP offer for the consultant.

Antony Wong: No. If you don't use the \$15,000 then the funds can go back to the consultant. You're not locked into paying the administrative fee.

Mary Cooley: The amount is going to change so it will add an amount in addition to that \$15,000 so there won't be that net loss.

Wilson Soo: Roll call: [see vote record].

>>All approved. The provision for past administrative fees will be added to the RFP.

4. Choosing consultant review panel members.

Antony Wong: At the last Coordinating Committee it was suggested that the panel be increased to six members from five to allow representatives from each of the three community board members and three community organizations. Since the co-Chairs will be members, Wilson Soo will be one community organization representative. Josephine Lee, Bethany Li and Helena Wong have volunteered so we need to vote over the community organization slots. Bethany suggests [reading a note from Bethany Li] "Allow all the volunteers to serve. Six is an arbitrary number." Seven would make scheduling even more difficult since the bids have to be opened and read together on one day.

Rob Hollander: Why not schedule around the required CB members and at least three of the community organizations.

Antony Wong: We should lock in the panel members – we shouldn't just lop off a member.

Victor Papa: I nominate Mae Lee. The panel should have a variety of opinions.

Mae Lee: I don't have an eight hour slot available.

Antony Wong: The volunteers are Josephine Lee from Chinese Staff and Workers Association, Helena Wong from Committee against Anti Asian Violence, Bethany Li from Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund.

Victor Papa: [Calls the question.]

Wilson Soo: Roll call [Bethany by proxy]

>>All volunteers approved.

5. Writing a letter to CB3 for CWG representation to the SPURA Task Force.

Antony: First a letter from CB3.

MyPhuong Chung: [Reading aloud from a phone message from Gigi Li] "CB3 will vote to abstain from the SPURA letter vote because the timing is unrealistic. The SPURA Task Force has already met twice and is scheduled to meet twice again in December. The Task Force will then have a several month hiatus and then reconvene to look at the RFP responses. Given the Community Board and the CWG's procedure, adding a Task Force member from CWG will take several months between CB3 full board modifications and CWG voting on a representative to participate. This would place the CWG representative in a position where he or she has not participated in the over-three-year consensus-building process but enters at the very end to resubmissions. EDC and HPD are committed to sending every monthly land use meetings to provide updates to the CB3 Land Use Committee members and the public. There are opportunities to provide ideas to both the government agencies and Task Force members at Land Use meetings. CWG has considered several times in the past to take on SPURA and SPURA-related issues, but has ultimately deferred to CB3. It is our hope that the Task Force and its appointed members can continue as is. [CB3 letter is transcribed verbatim in full from the voice recording of the December 3, 2012 meeting.]

Antony Wong: That is the response from CB3 Chair Gigi Li. So in reaction CB1 and 2 need to abstain if this proceeds to a vote. Discussion?

Josephine Lee: Gigi was well aware that we had expressed an interest in the Task Force way back in September well before the task force was formed but she didn't take it back to the CB. So describing the timing as unrealistic is untrue. It is important to have fair community representation and there are so many community organizations represented in CWG. Selection of the developer impacts our community including jobs as well. In September she said she'd bring it back to CB3 but did not.

Victor Papa: I do agree with Josephine. Let's accept the disadvantage cited in that letter. A representative from CWG is nevertheless essential to the work CWG does. Otherwise CWG's work

has no recognition from CB3. It's our obligation to be represented on an issue of pivotal importance to this community. It is significant that they recognize in the affirmative that there be one representative from this body of over 50 members. So for all the reasons that Josephine stated and because the issues of SPURA implicate some of the issues that we've been discussing here for three or four years, we would still recommend representation despite all the setbacks mentioned in the CB1 letter. It's essential to be represented.

Rob Hollander: I would like to see CWG reaffirm its CAPZ position that public land should be used for not less than 100% affordable housing.

Victor Papa: I have put a request on the table. We refrained from the SPURA deliberations because the committee wanted to work without us. But now that's been accomplished and the implementation will impact this community, now we should have representation.

Mae Lee: I don't see how one representative from CWG can represent all the many diverse organizations here. The representative shouldn't be just a representative of the CAPZ team. I don't see who would be able to do it. It would put that person in a really difficult position. I think those organizations that want to get involved should do so through the means available to them individually.

Wendy Cheng: Given all the work that we've done – a lot of consensus work and a lot of progress -- CB3 needs to see that we are a real community planning initiative. We should be part of this process because of all the work that we've already done.

Zella Jones: I agree with Mae. We have smaller and smaller quorums; the group is too diverse for one person to represent without encountering objections within the group. It's great that we've come to consensus on many issues, but SPURA is just too hot. We're better off attending meetings, and we should send someone or two members to attend the meetings as observers to come back to CWG with information.

Wilson Soo: We don't have enough membership to pass anything.

Antony Wong: With the three abstentions from the CBs, CWG could vote now, but nothing could be passed.

Victor Papa: Can it be brought back? We're disappointed in CB3.

Josephine Lee: Gigi said she'd bring it to CB3, but there was never any response. It seems to me that CB3 ought to bring this to us.

Rob Hollander: We can vote, but it won't pass. Or we can hold this over to the next meeting and move on to the next agenda item.

Victor Papa: It doesn't matter to me since I don't believe any part of that letter because Gigi did agree to represent this at the CB.

6. Proposals to the New Museum, Robert Lee presenting.

Robert Lee: It would be great for CWG to have a relationship with the New Museum and the arts

community which is bringing galleries into Chinatown, and, with galleries, the attending commerce and gentrification. The festival is an opportunity for us to forge relationships with many organizations focused on commerce, arts and tourism. MoCA is participating. The festival focus is similar to the planning ideas of the CWG. [See the proposals attached.]

Victor Papa: The New Museum should be attending our meetings and then we should talk with them.

Robert Lee: It's up to us to convince them to take an interest in us. This is an opportunity to encourage them to hear and attend.

Rob Hollander: These proposals give the organizational members of CWG to participate in these events. Those organizations can go forward with these proposals and CWG can come along as we move forward. This can be viewed as an informational item at this point.

Mitchell Grubler: What happened to our quorum? The CBs aren't going to abstain.

Rob Hollander: CB3 has indicated abstention.

Wilson Soo: With the CB abstentions, there is not a sufficient number of voting members to pass a resolution. We will move on to community announcements.

7. Community Announcements

Rob Hollander: Nydia Velasquez now includes Chinatown in her district. I have been talking with her office about getting Federal grants for CWG work. She has no current Chinatown office. She is looking for office space. Wellington Chen has been looking on her behalf as well. If you know of any available space, please let me know.

Mitchell Grubler: I've been part of a community advisory curbside management study. Tomorrow, the final plans for parking and pedestrian traffic will be presented at CCBA, 62 Mott Street, 5:30pm-7pm.

Antony Wong: Douglas Le of AAFE has been working with the DoT on this.

Douglas Le: Tomorrow night will be the last public meeting.

Antony Wong: Also tomorrow at 4pm at CCBA there will be a workshop on restaurant/commercial delivery.

Robert Lee: Laurie Cumbo is bringing an arts background to her candidacy. She is a strong community advocate and is looking for support.

Wilson Soo: Meeting adjourned at 7:07pm.

Antony Wong: Next meeting in the New Year on January 7 at 4pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Rob Hollander, Secretary

Addendum: Roll calls

Resolved: Include \$15,000 of past administrative fees in the \$150,000 RFP for the consultant.

Yea, 16

American Legion Post 1291 (Gabe Mui);
Asian American Arts Centre (Robert Lee);
Asian Americans for Equality (Douglas Le);
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (Bethany Li);
Bowery Alliance of Neighbors (Mitchell Grubler);
Chinese Progressive Association (Mae Lee);
Chinese Staff and Workers Association (Josephine Lee);
Committee Against Anti Asian Violence (Helena Wong);
Community Board 1 (Evan Lacher);
Community Board 2 (Antony Wong);
Community Board 3 (MyPhuong Chung);
Community Emergency Response Team #2 (Jerry Chan);
Immigrant Social Services (George Leung);
International Chinese Transportation Professionals Association (Jerry Cheng);
Lower Manhattan GOP (Jim Chue);
Two Bridges Neighborhood Council (Victor Papa).

Nay, 0. Abstentions, 0

Resolved: Josephine Lee, Bethany Li, Helena Wong shall join CWG co-Chairs Wilson Soo and Antony Wong and the representatives from Community Boards 1 and 3 to constitute the RFP bid panel.

Yea, 16

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Nay, 0. Abstentions, 0