

Minutes of the Chinatown Working Group (CWG) Full Group Meeting  
4pm-5:30pm, Monday, May 5, 2014  
American Legion L.T. Kimlau Post 1291

Voting members present: Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (Bethany Li); Bowery Alliance of Neighbors (Mitchell Grubler); Chinatown Business and Property Owners Group (Anthony Borelli, Keith Lipstein, Douglas Woodward); Chinatown Partnership Local Development Corporation (Patrick Kwan); Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (W. Y. Tan); Chinese Progressive Association (Mae Lee); Chinese Staff and Workers Association (Vincent Cao, Josephine Lee, Wah Lee); Committee Against Anti Asian Violence (Anj Chaudhry, Cathy Dang, Amany Mahfouz, Billie Zhu); Community Board 2 (Edward Ma); Community Board 3 (MyPhuong Chung, Gigi Li); Good Old Lower East Side (Ginger Lopez); Hester Street Collaborative (Shelma Jun); Lower East Side Mujeres & Hombres (Yolanda Donato); National Mobilization Against Sweatshops (David Tieu, Louise Velez); Property Tax Payers Association (Dean Fong, Irving Lee, Jan Lee, Mee Wong); Two Bridges Neighborhood Council (Wilson Soo); 61 Delancey Street Tenants Association (Zhi Qin Zheng).

Planning consultant: Mercedes Narciso (Pratt).

Media: Epoch Times (Hannah Cai); World Journal (Daisy Lee).

Also present: Rob Hollander; Don Lee; Sam Stein, Deng Xue Yuan, Susan Yung; Y. Z. Zheng.

---

Meeting called to order at 4:15pm, Wilson Soo, presiding.

1. Introductions

Wilson Soo: Is there anyone who can assist Bethany with translation?  
[No volunteers. Bethany Li translated.]

2. Agenda: approved with no objections

3. Minutes: approved by all present

4. Nominations for CWG co-chairs

Wilson Soo: Nominations for community board co-chair are open.

Rob Hollander: I nominate Antony Wong.

Doug Woodward: I second the nomination.

Wilson Soo: Antony is hosting the AAARI conference this evening. He emailed us that he will accept a nomination. Any further nominations for community board co-chair?

Anj Chaudhry: How about someone from Community Board 3?

Wilson Soo: MyPhuong declines. Are there any further nominations? Seeing none, nominations for community-based organization co-chair are open.

Doug Woodward: I nominate Wilson Soo.

Ed Ma: I second the nomination.

Wilson Soo: Any further nominations? Seeing none, we will move the agenda.

5. CWG Public Info Session, Wilson Soo announcing

Wilson Soo: Pratt is organizing a public information meeting at MS 131, 100 Hester Street, June 18, 6:30pm-8:30pm. Pratt will present the final proposals. A flyer will be available. Please distribute it to your members.

Anj Chaudhry: Will it be translated?

Wilson Soo: We are working on it.

Billy Zhu: Will all the Pratt consultants attend?

Wilson Soo: We will try to get as many as possible. Give Pratt comments by the end of this week.

Jan Lee: Can this diagram be translated?

Wilson Soo: We are trying.

Jan Lee: What will happen at the public meeting?

Mercedes Narciso: Pratt will present the options in the plan. We haven't designed the session yet. When we have it planned, we will share it with CWG. Three Pratt members have confirmed to attend. We will try to get more.

#### 6. Report on meeting with DCP, Gigi Li and MyPhuong Chung, presenting

Gigi Li: MyPhuong, myself, Wilson, Antony and Linda Jones, Chair of CB3's Land Use Committee, met with the Department of City Planning. We went through the Pratt report with them. They will come back with their thoughts. We met there with Joel, Adam Wolf and Edith Szuchen.

MyPhuong Chung: It was a productive meeting. They were impressed with CWG's work and impressed that CWG had brought such a large group together to find consensus to hire such a professional consultant. We explained the subdistricts and their interrelations. DCP would like us to get consensus for a plan and prioritize the areas. They were receptive to what we presented.

Gigi Li: Joel deals with our area, Adam is Manhattan deputy. Edith is director of Manhattan. They asked if we had met with NYCHA and recommended that we do so and get their feedback. They need more time to look through it, and will get back to us.

Ed Ma: The mayor's affordable housing plan has just been published. What is intended for Chinatown?

Doug Woodward: I have the plan and can distribute.

Irving Lee: There is no consensus.

MyPhuong Chung: I meant only consensus on coming together and hiring Pratt. Yes, we have more work to do. That is what we're meeting for today and why we're holding a town hall on the work so far.

Rob Hollander: Was this the very first time DCP had seen the plan?

Gigi Li: I think Eva had emailed it to them. I spoke with Joel to be sure that they had seen it. This was the first time we'd had a sit-down meeting with them on it.

Bethany Li: They asked us to prioritize?

Wilson Soo: Yes.

Gigi Li: They commented on the comprehensiveness of the plan and felt it would be helpful to prioritize.

Sam Stein: Did they want CWG to speak to NYCHA leadership or tenant leadership?

Wilson Soo: NYCHA leadership.

Ed Ma: CWG should be proud that CCBA is attending today. It is beneficial for CWG to have the attendance of CCBA in light of the public controversy.

#### 7. Full Group Meeting Location, Wilson Soo, presenting

Wilson Soo: This will be the last meeting at American Legion. The American Legion has withdrawn its membership from CWG. Please contact us if you know of a meeting place.

Doug Woodward: Why did they leave?

Wilson Soo: They did not specify. It was a decision made at their board meeting.

Anj Chaudhry: The 4pm time is inconvenient. Can we meet at 5:30 from now on?

Ed Ma: Can Antony negotiate with American Legion for another 6 months? Their choice has political impact. But CCBA is now attending, so the Legion's withdrawal sends the wrong message. Controversy is always the property of a community process. If we don't talk, we don't understand. This is a real problem of our culture. We should continue with negotiations.

W. Y. Tan: I can speak for the American Legion. After five and a half years there has been no progress. That's why the American Legion withdrew.

Mitchell Grubler: Can University Settlement provide space?

Billy Zhu: I hope you realize that many community groups have worked hard on this.

W. Y. Tan: I understand that you work very hard. But it's a lot of noise and no action.

Doug Woodward: We owe a debt of gratitude to the American Legion and to Gabe for hosting so long.

#### 8. CAPZ Working Team Report

Wilson Soo: There was a mix up over whether there was a meeting scheduled last Monday. I did not receive any message. I apologize for the mix up. In the past the meetings were announced through Zella's email blasts.

Bethany Li: Why did NMASS, CSWA, AALDEF and CAAAV alone not get notified that the meeting was cancelled?

Rob Hollander: The CAPZ meetings are not notified by Zella or by anyone. No one gets notifications about those meetings. This is an oversight of the CAPZ co-chairs. They should notify the participants.

Jan Lee: There is no conspiracy. Victor notified me at another meeting by coincidence.

Wilson Soo: It's posted on the website.

Rob Hollander: I looked at the website, so I knew not to go. Participants should be notified by email and not just notified by the posting on the website. Victor took blame for this and apologized. The next step is to improve the notification procedure.

Louise Velez: We are concerned that the projects are going to be sold out.

Wilson Soo: At the prior CAPZ, Eva presented some of the options. The follow up meeting was to consider the impact of the air rights transfers from subdistrict A to subdistricts C and D.

Jan Lee: Eva explained that there are more air rights available in subdistrict A than subdistricts C and D can receive. So Rob asked who would get to sell the rights? Also stakeholders from subdistricts C&D might want to weigh in on the air rights.

Dave Tieu: I came in late because this meeting time is inconvenient. We have to commit to a later meeting time. Transfer of air rights do not contribute to the well-being of the community. They add to development and are detrimental to Chinatown.

MyPhuong Chung: In light of the mayor's proposal, the time is right to continue our work.

Ma Wah: [Translated] I have been working on these issues for twenty years. Small business owners need translation for them to understand what's going on here.

Jan Lee: Anything left in the budget for translation?

Wilson Soo: There is nothing in the budget. Pratt is volunteering.

Jan Lee: We need more funding.

Anj Chaudhry: I was disappointed in the article. I thought we were making progress with all the members of the community. For the property owners to go to the press and undermine the process was inappropriate. I ask that we try to work together in the future.

Jan Lee: Property owners did not call a press conference. CCBA asked us to make a presentation, which we did. Our presentation was no different than what we have presented to CWG. We have no control over CCBA's actions with the press.

Rob Hollander: It was written by Sing Tao. Sing Tao has both written about and participated in CWG, which seems to me journalistically inappropriate. Sing Tao has been intrusive in the process.

Ed Ma: Judgmental.

Gigi Li: I understand that Lotus suggested that CCBA should withhold judgement until there was more progress. My understanding is that Lotus defended our process of the last six years.

Ed Ma: Who made translation of the article?

Rob Hollander: There were inaccuracies in the article.

Ed Ma: Mainstream attention is good for us. We are working on the problems. Consensus is the most important.

MyPhuong Chung: I express my gratitude to American Legion. It is an unfortunate time to leave, since the mayor has published his housing plan. Now's the time to have an influence on the neighborhood. The door should be left open for American Legion to return. Change will happen with or without us. Please read the mayor's plan.

Jan Lee: After the June 18 town hall, is Pratt all done? Will the rest of the work be done entirely by CWG?

Wilson Soo: I can't commit them, but they have expressed an interest in following the process to its end.

#### 9. Other Business/Community Announcements

Wilson Soo: On May 17 there will be a reception and ceremony for the naming of Danny Chen Way, Canal Street & Elizabeth Street. There will be an event at PS 130, 10:15am - 1pm. For more information, go to [OCA-NY.org](http://OCA-NY.org).

Don Lee: The police have been harassing street vegetable stand owners, even licensed owners. The abuses have been extreme, callous and repetitive. Also the District Attorney has threatened deportation

to coerce guilty pleas. Call the Department of Consumer Affairs to demand fair treatment for the Chinese people of Chinatown. It is way past time for reform. Call your elected officials, the DA and DCA.

Mae Lee: The movie "Documented" about immigration is being shown at Village East until May 8th, a powerful documentary.

Ed Ma: Two crises: the press focuses on negative controversies -- we need to promote the positive; and we should have a committee to find a new space.

Wilson Soo: Next meeting: June 2, 5:30pm. Please look for a meeting place.

Meeting adjourned at 5:42pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rob Hollander, Sec'y