

Minutes of the Chinatown Working Group (CWG) Full Group Meeting
5:30pm-7pm, Monday, June 2, 2014
University Settlement, 273 Bowery – Classroom 4

Voting members present: Bowery Alliance of Neighbors (Mitchell Grubler); Eddie Chan (Chinatown Manpower Project - Business Outreach Center); Chinese Progressive Association (Mae Lee); Chinese Staff and Workers Association (Wendy Chung, Wah Lee); Committee Against Anti Asian Violence (Anj Chaudhry, Billie Zhu); Community Board 2 (Antony Wong); Community Board 3 (MyPhuong Chung); Create In Chinatown (Amy Chin); Good Old Lower East Side (Mayzabeth Ginger Lopez); Hester Street Collaborative (Shelma Jun); Lower East Side Mujeres e Hombres (Yolanda Donato, Louise Velez); National Mobilization Against Sweatshops (David Tieu); Property Tax Payers Association (Dean Fong, Irving Lee, Mee Wong); Two Bridges Neighborhood Council (Victor Papa, Wilson Soo).

Media: Epoch Times (Hannah Cai); Sing Tao (Lotus Chao, April Xu); World Journal (Yi Chen Tu).

Also present: Dan Ping He; Rob Hollander; Nancy Ortiz (Vladeck Houses Residents Association) Jonas Siregar; Sam Stein; Alixia Torres (Smith Houses Residents Association); Jenny Ye.

Meeting called to order at 5:42pm, Wilson Soo, Antony Wong presiding.

1. Introductions

2. Agenda approved by all present

3. Minutes approved by all present

4. Meeting locations

Antony Wong: This space is only for this month. We are looking for future spaces. Also check your spam folder for CWG email blasts.

5. Pratt public Info session, Antony Wong presenting.

Antony Wong: Pratt Center will present their report that they presented in December and January. It will be held at Middle School 131 on Hester Street 6:30pm-8:30pm. We are looking for translators.

6. CAPZ working report, Victor Papa, presenting

Victor Papa: I will read a report drafted by myself, Anj (CAA AV) and MyPhuong (CB3). [See document.] The group voted for option 1 in area A because it allows an increase in residential FAR and a decrease of commercial FAR more accurately reflecting the area as it exists and will preserve rent stabilized housing and encourage affordable housing development. This was determined by majority with the exception of Property Tax Payers' Association (PTP) which prefers option 2 because it provides more commercial FAR for owners. Some members agreed that air rights transfers are not helpful for the tenant and community groups who would not like more FAR at the waterfront. PTP was not against air rights transfers but opposed to limiting them to "buildings of significance" since as written it would make the burden upon the owner would make the benefit of these air rights negligible. CB3's Land Use Committee has also voted

support for option 1 in area A with no air rights transfers, and then declined to change the vote after new information was presented at a later meeting, although they agreed to discuss further as the process continues. That's my report.

Antony Wong: CAPZ is at an impasse, as PTP is unhappy over the air rights transfers.

Dean Fong: We are dismayed by CB3's straw vote to re-affirm their position on air rights transfers.

Antony Wong: Since their straw vote, Eva has presented additional information on air rights transfers. However we must consider this prior to giving the information to CB3.

Nancy Ortiz: I was at the committee meeting -- I am president of the resident association of Vladik houses representing 2,000 families and a public member of the Land Use Committee. The committee is considering the community. Most of them are opposed to the air rights transfers. We have an obligation to the community.

Antony Wong: There is no proposal to transfer air rights to area B. To recap, so far CWG has considered only area A in depth. CB3 voted on area A. Certain groups here are unhappy about the results. In terms of area B CAPZ has considered, but the whole group itself has not considered, and the whole groups must go to NYCHA first before going further.

David Tieu: The majority of CWG members oppose air rights transfers from area A to area C.

Alixia Torres: Any part will affect everybody. We must work together, however, it is unacceptable to bicker over decisions that have already been made through agreements in the process. If we want to save Chinatown and public housing, then we have to work together.

Victor Papa: The property owners object to CB3's pre-emptive vote. But CB3 seems to be willing to review its vote.

MyPhuong Chung: The CB Land Use Committee voted to oppose air rights transfers, and then re-affirmed its vote by straw poll.

Victor Papa: But you are still open to review.

MyPhuong Chung: Yes, but it is unlikely that the committee will change its position. The property owners felt that the air rights were negligible anyway. They were more focused on tax abatements. No one seems to want these air rights badly, and there are those who oppose it strongly.

Anj Chaudhry: Since the property owners do not care about the air rights transfers, and most of the groups have agreed to option 1 in area A and the principles of the options in area B, why don't we move those forward?

Victor Papa: I failed to include the tax abatement issue in the report.

MyPhuong Chung: We didn't consider the tax abatement because it's not a zoning issue. CWG should deal with it in a committee with more representation from property owners along with other experts on the matter. We need a committee to devote itself to it and have an action plan.

Irving Lee: The air rights proposal was designed to compensate owners for the loss of commercial FAR. The air rights proposal, however, gives more air rights than can be consumed,

raising the difficulty of who gets to sell air rights or who decides. Also, many owners would prefer not be treated as buildings of historic significance. The tax issue is crucial for maintaining affordable housing. It's the most sensible proposal, but it's a long shot. I prefer option 2 for area A because it allows more commercial FAR and is least restrictive. There's not a lot of housing that we can build -- our lots are small -- and commercial space is a valuable commodity.

Nancy Ortiz: Building affordable housing will impact our community. We need hospitals, schools, affordable food services, clothing stores. We need to solve our existing problems before we add to them.

MyPhuong Chung: The mayor's new affordable housing plan includes tax abatements.

Dean Fong: It specifically does not. It is not within the purview of the city.

MyPhuong Chung: We can't get it unless we ask.

Dean Fong: The mayor cannot guarantee an abatement.

MyPhuong Chung: None of our plans are guaranteed.

Victor Papa: What does the mayor say? I propose that CWG form a task force to address property tax abatements and inform the mayor that it is considering it. Mitchell-Lama buildings have an automatic tax abatement.

Antony Wong: Can you convene such a task force?

Rob Hollander: Maybe Irving can convene.

Irving Lee: Jan Lee would be better.

Rob Hollander: If Jan cannot, who will?

Victor Papa: I will.

Antony Wong: I propose that we vote on area A next month. So the members will come to the meeting having considered how they will vote. Then area B will be next.

Nancy Ortiz: Areas C and D must also be considered.

Rob Hollander: If we have 15 members without the community board representatives, we can vote, especially since we already know the positions of CB3.

MyPhuong Chung: I agree, but the vote is not on the agenda for tonight's meeting, so we should not vote tonight since it wouldn't be fair to the other members.

Antony Wong: At the next meeting we will also hold our co-chair elections.

MyPhuong Chung: Why can't we also vote on area B?

Antony Wong: We can't vote on area B until we know CB3's Land Use's position. So next month we'll hold our election, vote on area A and tentatively vote on B.

Irving Lee: Will commercial uses be part of the option? We object to the restrictions on the uses. Our lots are mostly small, so we feel the restrictions are unnecessary.

Anj Chaudhry: At the last meeting we asked if anyone had any further issues, and you said no.

Mitchell Grubler: Can a memo be sent around with the options for A and B so our members can review them?

Irving Lee: What about the buildings of significance? We should consider and vote on all the issues related to zoning.

Victor Papa: You were asked for your objections, and they were all discussed. Why should be reopen?

Antony Wong: Again, next month we'll hold co-chair elections, vote on area A and tentatively on B depending on feedback from CB3. We will distribute the details of the options for A and B to the members so they can assess their voting position.

Wilson Soo: The CAPZ report will be up on the website.

7. Community announcements

A town hall June 17 on the state of the Lower East Side at the Grand Street Settlement, 80 Pitt, 6pm-8pm, addressing the mayor's new housing plan. There will be someone from the mayor's office to talk issues about NYCHA. Also one of the lawyers who file in Baez v. NYCHA, someone from NYCHA will be there as well as someone from the mayor's office to discuss the housing plan.

Nancy Ortiz: Vladick Houses is having a community outreach day, June 6, noon-4pm, 356 Madison Street, with community-based organizations. It will include emergency preparedness.

Alixia Torres: Smith Houses will hold a college fair on June 26, noon-5pm with CUNY and private colleges.

Antony Wong: The Asian American Arts Center is holding an exhibition about Tienanmen Square Demonstration at White Box on Broome Street, between Chrystie and Bowery, until June 10. Amy Chin was featured in a news story in the Chinese paper regarding her assistance with an upcoming exhibit at the New York Historical Society on Chinese exclusion in September.

Meeting adjourned at 6:50pm.

Present:

Voting CWG Members:

Victor Papa	Two Bridges Neighborhood Council
Wilson Soo	Chinatown Working Group
Rob Hollander	Member
Louise Velez	NMASS
Anj Chaudhry	CAAAV
Mitchell Gruber	BAN
Irving Lee	Property Tax Payers
Dean Fong	Property Tax Payers
Josephine Lee	CSWA
David Tieu	NMASS
MyPhuong Chung	CB#3
Bethany Li	AALDF

Non-CWG Present (See Attachment #1 - Attendance Sheet)

Victor Papa presided as CAPZ WORKING TEAM Co-chair

The meeting convened with Victor Papa presiding and the group was again directed to continue discussing Sub-district A and the question about the implications of transferring of air rights from there to the proposed receiving Sub-districts C & D.

Specific recommendations were made for Sub-districts C & D, i.e., calling for height cap restrictions or for lowering FAR in the receiving Sub-districts so as to allow more to be transferred from Sub-district A, and a call to require more affordable housing. No consensus was apparent on these recommendations.

The chair, reminding the committee that it needed to come to a resolution on Sub-district A, and not having reached one, suggested that the matter be brought to the CWG to resolve it so that it could be further referred to the Community Board. There was general agreement that a report (BELOW) would be provided to the CWG by the June 2 Board Meeting.

Mr. Papa announced that the next convening of the CAPZ sub-committee would be announced.

CAPZ REPORT TO CWG OF MAY 27, 2014 MEETING

Over the past few months, CAPZ has had several conversations about **Area A and Area B** in the proposed plan, as well as an initial conversation about **Area C and D**.

For Area A, the group voted by a majority vote to support Option 1 in Area A. The reason groups preferred Option 1 was because it allows for an increase in residential FAR and a decrease in commercial FAR, which more accurately reflects the character of the neighborhood, and will preserve existing rent stabilized housing, encourage affordable housing development (with 50% guaranteed inclusionary zoning). This decision was determined by a majority (with the exception of PTP who support Option 2 because it provides more commercial FAR for owners).

Some members agreed air rights transfers are not helpful for the tenant and community groups, since they would not like additional FAR at the waterfront. It is noted that PTP was not against air rights transfers, but rather opposed to tying air rights transfers to "buildings of special significance", since as it is written, the burden upon the owner would make air rights transfer negligible.

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Community Board 3's Land Use Committee has also voted to support Option 1 in Area A with no air rights transfers, and then declined to change the vote after new information about the air rights transfers was presented at a second Land Use meeting on Area A, though they agreed to have continued discussions as progress is made within CWG.