

DRAFT – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
Minutes of the Chinatown Working Group (CWG) Full Group Meeting
4pm – 5:30pm, Monday, November 12, 2012
American Legion L.T. Kimlau Post 1291

Voting members present: American Legion Post 1291 (Gabe Mui); Asian American Arts Centre (Robert Lee); Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (Bethany Li); Bowery Alliance of Neighbors (Mitchell Grubler); Chinese Staff and Workers Association (Wendy Cheng, Josephine Lee); Committee Against Anti Asian Violence (Billie Zhu); Community Board 1 (Michael Levine); Community Board 2 (Antony Wong, Jerry Chan); Community Board 3 (MyPhuong Chung); Immigrant Social Services (George Leung); Lower Manhattan GOP (Jim Chen); Museum of Chinese in America (Ryan Wong); National Mobilization Against Sweatshops (Louise Velez); Two Bridges Neighborhood Council (Wilson Soo).

Press: Clement Lee (World Journal); Bonnie Li (Sing Tao Daily News); Sophia Su (China Press).

Also present: Jerry Chan (Community Emergency Response Team); Rob Hollander (Lower East Side Residents for Responsible Development); Irving Lee (Property Tax Payers); Tommy Wu (Tenement Museum).

Meeting called to order at 4:15pm, CWG co-Chairs Wilson Soo and Antony Wong facilitating.

1. Introductions.

2. Agenda approval.

>>**No objections, agenda approved.**

3. October minutes approval.

>>**No objections, minutes approved by all present.**

RFP update and Consultant Selection Review Panel, Anthony Wong presenting

Anthony Wong: The schedule: we will post the RFP on the LMDC website and our website as well as the American Planning Counsel website. All the applications will come sealed to CB1. Take a look at the panel member tasks. We are taking nominations, but there is no quorum yet, so we cannot appoint members yet. We may be able to post the advertisement at the end of December, wait until the third week of January for the applications to arrive. There will be a pre-bid meeting for all CWG members to ask questions of the applicants, then the five member panel (could be more), made up of the two co-Chairs and three other CWG members. The panel will unseal and read the applications all at once in one room, usually all in one entire day. The top three to five, depending on the number of applicants, will be presented to CWG for a second round of reviewing.

Mitchell Grubler: I nominate Michael Levine.

Anthony Wong: He has indicated that he would prefer not to be a member of the panel.

My Phuong Chung: What other commitments are there?

Michael Levine (arriving): I do not have the time to be on the panel.

Anthony Wong: Rob Hollander has volunteered to be on the panel.

Rob Hollander: Only if no one else wants to do it.

Michael Levine: There is an open consultant meeting which the panel should attend, then the panel must report to the CWG, and the second round of reviewing.

Adding a line in the LMDC grant for past expenses, Anthony Wong presenting.

Anthony Wong: Jim Solomon paid out of pocket \$15,300.00 administrative fees to Elisa Espiritu for the purpose of holding the two town halls including rental fees and supplies. Jim is requesting reimbursement for \$15,000.00 of those out-of-pocket expenses. The State, through State Senator Daniel Squadron, transferred \$15,000.00 to LMDC for Jim's reimbursement, but LMDC says those funds are HUD money for housing, and can't be used for this reimbursement. That money is no longer available. However, following discussion with LMDC and Squadron, it is possible to ask for extra money for the consultant contract. So if we were to reserve \$15,000.00 in the grant contract for past expenses (as Jim's reimbursement), then we can hope that LMDC might contribute later an additional \$15,000.00.

Michael Levine: LMDC indicated that it is not likely to offer the additional \$15,000.00. They do not appear to have the resources nor desire to add to our \$150,000.00 grant.

Josephine Lee: Will LMDC verify the receipts?

Anthony Wong: LMDC will only reimburse if they accept the receipts.

Josephine Lee: Can Daniel Squadron write a letter of support to LMDC to add 15,000.00?

Anthony Wong: In discussion with Mary Cooley, he will.

Rob Hollander: Is there any adverse consequence to adding the line?

Anthony Wong: None. We don't have to spend it for reimbursement, but if we add the line, we can reimburse.

Mitchell Grubler: But it lowers the amount that we can offer the consultant.

Anthony Wong: It lowers the amount only by \$5,000. We lowered the sum from \$150,000.00 to \$140,000.00 in order to provide a cushion of \$10,000.00 in case there were some need for additional funds. Must we vote on adding this line?

Michael Levine: We need a parliamentarian to advise.

Rob Hollander: If LMDC would add the past expenses only if and when an additional \$15,000.00 were added to the grant, there'd be no need for a vote, since CWG has already voted to reimburse Jim. But if there is no other way to get the \$15,000.00 except by lowering the sum offered to the consultant, then CWG should vote on the change in the contract.

Anthony Wong: There is no other way. We will vote on this at the next CWG meeting.

Michael Levine: We will need a quorum.

Irving Lee: What is a quorum?

Antony Wong: 15 voting members. We will work to get a quorum for next meeting.

Michael Levine: When we will be ready for the posting?

Antony Wong: Dec 3 we will decide on the past expenses line, tell Zisser of University Settlement, he will relay it to Plotch at LMDC and we hope that a posting will be ready by the end of the month.

Michael Levine: Then we are still on target for a review panel in January.

SPURA Task Force, Wendy Cheung presenting

Wendy Cheung: The SPURA panel has already been chosen. The context has become even more dire since the hurricane. NYCHA will take three months to address basic needs. So it is more important than ever to have 100% lower income housing. Ben Wong's offer of 100% affordable housing is historic and makes this goal realizable. We'd like CWG to express support for 100% affordable housing.

Louise Velez: Rents are rising and there is still a need for low income housing.

Mitchell Grubler: Who, or which organizations, are on the Task Force?

My Phuong Chung: The composition has been announced on the CB3 website. An additional member has been added to the Task Force to represent a former site tenant.

Irving Lee: What is the racial composition?

My Phuong Chung: Tito Delgado is latino, Gigi is Chinese.

Josephine Lee: All the others are white.

Rob Hollander: To express support for 10% affordable housing would confrontationally challenge CB3's guidelines. I suggest that CWG first ask for a seat at the Task Force, and if we are denied, then express our support for 100% affordable housing.

Josephine Lee: That makes sense since a new member has already been added to the Task Force. Gigi also was aware that CWG is broadly inclusive of the community.

My Phuong Chung: I don't think advocating for a seat should preclude expressing support for 100% affordable housing. The guidelines require only a minimum of 50% affordable housing. No one on the committee would object to more affordable housing.

Antony Wong: If we want to pursue the letter, we will distribute it to the membership for consideration at the next CWG full meeting.

Michael Levine: Does the letter include support for 100% affordable housing?

Josephine Lee: No, it asks only for a CWG seat on the Task Force. Ben Wong, who offered to develop 100% affordable housing, proposed to support the housing with commercial. He could come to CWG to discuss his proposals before their RFP comes out. We want to bring him to the community for questions.

My Phuong Chung: The RFP is expected around January.

Irving Lee: He couldn't go to the Task Force since the Task Force will be taking bids. Does the Task Force have a time table?

My Phuong Chung: The Task Force will be produce an RFP early in 2013 and hold a review process in the summer.

Irving Lee: It's important for us to have quorum at the next meeting.

Antony Wong: Yes we certainly need quorum also for the panel confirmations.

Michael Levine: CB1 will not know how to vote on this letter without CB3's view. It's a peculiar situation, since the letter is going to CB3. The CB's could abstain, but a CWG vote will be weaker without CB support.

Rob Hollander: The CB's can recuse themselves from the vote.

Michael Levine: That's a good idea.

Antony Wong: We will work as hard as possible to make sure that there are at least 15 voting members to vote on the letter to CB3 as well as the addition in the LMDC contract and later on maybe [Josephine] can invite Ben Wong to come to CWG before January. All members will receive a notice indicating that voting members should attend because a vote will occur at the meeting, and each individual will receive a personal notice asking whether he or she will attend.

What can individuals about the Pathmark lot? Wilson Soo presenting.

Antony Wong: Wilson will present. CAAAV would have presented on this but they are busy with disaster relief. They have been doing great work in the community. Also Two Bridges.

Wilson Soo: Pathmark has not fully reopened since the hurricane. Now they are letting only four at a time to sell what remains on their shelves. They are not fully restocking because they had already decided to vacate in December. Two Bridges is proposing a shuttle service to the Pathmark on Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn.

Irving Lee: What about the pharmacy?

Wilson Soo: It's closed. People are being directed to Rite Aid. Pathmark sold their lease. They have right of first refusal to come back.

Mitchell Grubler: What can individuals do? That's what's on the agenda.

Wilson Soo: Esther can't be here. We'll call and ask her.

Josephine Lee: How has the hurricane changed Pathmark's plans.

Wilson Soo: The original plan came out around 2007 for residential high rise (not sure whether commercial was included), but we have not seen any new plans.

Michael Levine: C6-4 allows a commercial base, so the Pathmark could conceivably return.

Proposing to the New Museum, Bob Lee presenting

Antony Wong: There is an open house at the New Museum after this meeting if you want more information.

Bob Lee: Many of you came to the community breakfast a couple of months ago. During their previous festival, many spoke about the importance of integrating new developments like museums into the community. The new festival is called "Untapped Capital" so there seems to be an interest within the New Museum towards integrating its own community. This is a perfect opportunity to present a proposal that takes everyone's perspective. Maybe we can come up with one or two proposals to open this door and see where it leads.

Josephine Lee: When the galleries began to appear, they displaced members of our community. Now they are asking for our support. How can we resolve that contradiction? We should demand that they support the community and what the community needs. We should put forward CWG's plans.

Bob Lee: We need to support each other, but it's also an opportunity to include those needs and demands. For example, there was a proposal two years ago to bring architects to re-imagine the Bowery in a charrette. Tonight some of the proposals will be presented at the Museum. I am asking that CWG propose something as well that can be beneficial to the community.

Mitchell Grubler: Given the short deadline, why not present the work we've already done as a proposal. There are so many ways to interpret untapped capital: Chinatown's historic buildings, its culture, its artisans and street crafts are untapped capital.

Billy Zhu: There are so many galleries now in Chinatown. How is the Museum related to them?

Bob Lee: That's the art world. I don't know if there is a direct relation, but when galleries appear, gentrification follows. When Mr. Chen rented out his space in the arcade between Bowery and Elizabeth, it was so crowded that the Malaysian restaurant lost some access and instead they sold beer to the crowd. That's just an indication of what Chinatown is facing. We can't prevent gentrification, but we can prepare for it and let the art world know who and what we are. I would love to see a Chinese gallery, for example. In their map of galleries, there's not one Chinese gallery listed.

Antony Wong: Let's have the Coordinating Committee take this up with Bob, after he sees the presentations tonight at the Museum.

Bob Lee: Can we have some consensus that this is the direction we should go in..

Josephine Lee: We should ask them to support our CWG proposals as Mitchell has suggested.

Antony Wong: We had a cultural work team which could get together and either go with Mitchell's route presenting our PAPs or the cultural powerpoint as a proposal.

Rob Hollander: Should include the overall goals, not just cultural.

Ryan Wong: MoCA – Nancy is presenting tonight.

Antony Wong: Maybe CWG can collaborate with MoCA, if not propose its own.

Hurricane relief

Louise Velez: There are still buildings without heat or water or electricity. We are asking that authorities be accountable; we want to help get reimbursements for destruction; and more than ever we need the construction of additional affordable housing.

Antony Wong: Jerry Chan has an announcement from Community Emergency Response Team.

Jerry Chan: FEMA is working on Avenue B. You need to talk to your management. Knickerbocker's basement services were destroyed and have to be rebuilt from scratch. I am here to ask for translators between FEMA and Knickerbocker residents – Cantonese, Mandarin, Fujianese. We are using the Hamilton-Madison Houses as a base. Wilson will give you Vicki's phone number. We need food delivery as well.

Wilson Soo: There are many Chinese residents in Knickerbocker Houses.

Bob Lee: Any other groups there?

Jerry Chang: Freemasons, Young Lions...

Irving Lee: Chinatown Partnership?

Jerry Chang: No, but Wellington is there. AAFE has a great presence there.

Wilson Soo: Meeting adjourned, 5:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Rob Hollander, Secretary