

Minutes of the Chinatown Working Group (CWG)
4pm to 6pm, Monday, January 5, 2009
American Legion L.T. Kimlau Post 1291

Attendees:

ORGANIZATIONS (Representatives): American Legion Post 1291 (Frank Gee, Gabe Mui, Harvard Tang, Mimi Wang,); Asian American Arts Center (Robert Lee); Asian American/Asian Research Institute-CUNY (Susan Wong); Asian Americans for Equality (Thomas Yu, Richard Lee); Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (Bethany Li, Mabel Tso); Bowery Alliance of Neighbors (Mitchell Gruber); CAAAV/CTU (Helena Wong, Esther Wang); CB2 Cert (Jerry Chan); Chatham Green (Danny Chen); CCBA (Justin Yu, Wee K. Wong); Chinatown Partnership (Michael Moi, Taylor Zhou); Chinatown Manpower Project (Stephanie Lau); Chinese American Medical Society (Jamie Seto); Chinese Chamber of Commerce (David Louie); Chinese Progressive Association (Mae Lee); CREATE in Chinatown (Amy Chin); GOLES (Damaris Reyes); Lin Sing Association (Eddie Chiu, Jimmy Chue); Lin Ze Xu Foundation (Steven Wong); Myanmar Chinese Association of NY (Way Moy); PS 130 Parents Association (K Webster); Red Brick (Sheldon Chan); United Fukinese American Association (Jimmy Cheng); 250 Canal Street Property Owner (James Caseley, Keith Lipstein); 98 Allen/99 Orchard Property Owner (Lou Holtzman); LES Residents for Responsible Development (Rob Hollander); Sanctuary for Families (Yi Jen Chang); Two Bridges (Victor Papa); Margaret Chin; Gigi Li; Jennifer Lim; Kui Lin; Paul Newell; Anthony Ng; Lena Sze.

PUBLIC OFFICIALS: State Senator Daniel Squadron; Councilmember Alan Gerson

PUBLIC OFFICIALS (Representatives): Assembly Speaker Silver (Karen He); City Comptroller Thompson (Sandra Ung); MBP Stringer (Jen Hong, Greg Kirschenbaum); State Senator Squadron (John Raskin); Assemblymember Glick (Matt Borden); Councilmember Gerson (Tammy To)

COMMUNITY BOARD (Representatives): CB#1 (Michael Levine); CB#2 (Zella Jones, Kimmy Lee, Edward Ma, James Solomon); CB#3 (John Leo, David McWater, Susan Stetzer)

MEDIA (Representatives): *The Epoch Times* (Peter Wei); *The New York Times* (Sophia Hollander); *Sing Tao Daily* (Lotus Chau, Mike Lin); Sino TV (Tina Yang)

1. Acting Chair's Report

Acting Chair James Solomon welcomed everyone and noted the presence of many first-time attendees. Attendees identified themselves and their affiliations. The Acting Chair gave a brief history of the Chinatown Working Group (CWG) and its activities since its initial July 2008 meeting. Minutes from previous meetings are made available publicly. CWG has committed itself to a transparent, open, and democratic process and has been conducting extensive community outreach in order to engage as many people as possible.

Today's meeting begins the official process to formalize CWG's organizational structure. The mission statement and governance structure were drafted, reviewed and revised during previous full meetings of CWG and its Steering Committee. (See attached "Chinatown Working Group Governance and Decision-Making Procedures", draft dated 12/19/09.)

To join the working group and to get involved is as simple as coming to a meeting. To get more actively involved requires endorsing the mission statement. There are different levels of endorsement, requiring different degrees of commitment (see Levels of Endorsement, below).

According to the CWG Procedures, matters of substance will be decided by vote at full CWG meetings. Votes must be cast in person, at stated meetings. To be able to cast a vote requires endorsing the mission statement as a full member. Full members are those organizations or groups active in Chinatown who have endorsed the mission statement. Individuals are encouraged to form groups so that they can acquire a vote. All votes will be recorded and available for public review.

Representatives of elected officials will participate as non-voting members. Any individuals not formally affiliated with an organization are welcome to participate as 'Friends' but with no voting power. Each organization may have only one vote. Votes must be cast in person.

2. Endorse CWG's "Mission"

Copies of the CWG Mission Statement with an attached Endorsement Form were distributed.

Levels of Endorsement

- **Voting Member:** An organization that has endorsed the mission statement. The organization's appointed representative (including alternates appointed by the organization) will cast the organization's vote at stated meetings.
- **Friend:** An individual not representing an organization, or an organization/entity/firm that works with the CWG or supplies services, such as consulting, meeting space, etc.
- **Supporter:** An individual not representing an organization, or an organization/entity/firm that may sign petitions, postcards, etc. advocating the mission or subsequent principles.

Community Boards 1, 2, and 3 have already endorsed the mission statement and signed on as voting members of the CWG. It was noted that having full cooperation and agreement from three community boards is a major achievement.

The following organizations also stated for the record that they endorse the CWG mission statement and have formally signed on as voting members:

- American Legion L.T. Kimlau Post 1291
- Chinatown Partnership Local Development Corporation
- Chinese Chamber of Commerce
- Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association
- Chinese Progressive Association
- CREATE in Chinatown
- Lower Manhattan GOP
- Two Bridges Neighborhood Council
- United Fukinese American Association

Please note: Since the meeting on January 5, 2009, these additional organizations have signed on as “Voting Members” of the CWG (as of 01/13/09):

- *Asian American Arts Alliance*
- *Asian American Arts Centre*
- *Asian Americans for Equality*
- *Chatham Green*
- *Chatham Towers*
- *Chinese American Planning Council*
- *Chinatown Manpower Project*
- *Committee Against Asian American Violence*
- *Greater Chinatown Community Association*
- *Lin Ze Xu Foundation of USA*
- *Lin Sing Association*

The office of State Senator Daniel Squadron officially signed on as a non-voting CWG Friend, as did the Property Owner at 250 Canal Street. (*Since the meeting, Sanctuary for Families has also joined as a CWG Friend.*) Noho Manhattan.org and *Sing Tao Daily* signed on as CWG Supporters.

ACTION: All attendees are asked to take the Endorsement Form and Mission Statement back to their respective organizations for consideration and return signed endorsements to Acting Chair James Solomon as soon as possible. Please fax to him at 212-965-0021.

3. The Process for electing CWG’s Co-chairs

Oversight for CWG activities will be directed by two Co-Chairs. One Chair will be a representative from a Chinatown community organization and the partnering Chair will be a representative from a peripheral community entity. Responsibilities of the Chairs are primarily administrative – responding to inquiries, taking care of correspondence, chairing meetings, facilitating communication, and maintaining order. Co-Chairs do not formulate policy. Each co-chairs will be elected for a concurrent one year term of service.

Nomination of Co-Chairs was originally scheduled for the current meeting, but in light of the large showing of first-time attendees, this action will be postponed to the next meeting.

ACTION: CWG voting members should prepare to nominate candidates for Co-Chairs at the February 5th meeting

Only voting members will be eligible to nominate candidates. All nominees will be tallied and statements will be solicited from each nominee as to why they want to be co-Chair.

The election of Co-Chairs will be held at the March meeting (03/02/09). Each member organization will be allowed only one vote. The voting member must be physically present to cast a vote. Email or proxy votes will not be accepted.

4. Identify CWG's Priorities – Proposed Working Teams

A main CWG function is to identify priority issues and work collectively in working teams to address them. Culling ideas from the larger group, the CWG Steering Committee will establish agendas, hone topics and establish chaired sub-committees to focus on identified issues.

ACTION: Voting members were asked to send representatives to the monthly Steering Committee meetings.

Councilmember Alan J. Gerson praised CWG on its efforts and requested that the Group also begin to address the important topics from his prior month's presentation as follows:

- Establish a procedure for administering the \$100,000 secured by his office from the Economic Development Corporation towards a planning consultant to work with CWG.
- Consider ways in which CWG can support affordable housing initiatives currently underway such as the \$10 million allocation from the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation for creation of affordable housing through preservation and rehabilitation of existing tenement buildings and development of senior housing
- Identify and secure tangible ways either through zoning, BSA variances, and other methods that the City administration can act to realize the establishment of a performing arts center in Chinatown
- Secure a more community-friendly approach for the Chatham Square re-configuration and gain concessions for more public amenities as a result

The floor was opened for discussion of key community issues. Based on the identified issues and topics, sign-up sheets for the following suggested committees were drawn up and distributed. Attendees were asked to sign up to express their interest in the issue and in participating in a sub-committee. It was emphasized that while Friends may be active in a sub-committee only a Voting Member may vote. Friends are strongly urged to either sign on their organization as a voting member or to join an organization that is a voting member. The proposed sub-committees were the following (in parentheses are the number of individuals who signed onto each working team):

- Zoning (22)
- Affordability (24)
- Economic Development/Revitalization (20)
- Culture and Historic Preservation (27)
- Parking/Transportation/Circulation (10)
- Immigrant Affairs and Services (13)
- Education and Schools (7)
- Parks, Open Space & Recreation (8)
- Security/Park Row (3)

To ensure greater access and participation, CWG agendas and notices will be disseminated broadly and bilingually.

- Mr. Way P. Moy of the Myanmar Chinese Association of NY volunteered to provide Chinese translations of future agendas.

- CWG’s Mission Statement will be translated into Chinese by a volunteer from P.S.130’s Parent Teacher Association.
- The Office of the Manhattan Borough President will look into getting assistance from the Mayor’s Office of immigrant Affairs to provide translation of CWG meeting minutes.
- A CWG sub-committee is working on establishing a basic CWG website where meeting notices and records can be easily accessed.

ACTION: All members are asked to post CWG notices on their respective websites.

5. Presentation: “Understanding Chinatown’s Zoning” – Michael Levine, Director of Land Use and Planning for CB#1

To provide members with a basic overview, Michael Levine presented a Power Point summary of the primary zoning categories that currently exist within Chinatown’s general boundaries. (See attached file for full presentation).

Briefly, there are three predominant types of relevant zoning: Commercial (C), Residential (R) and Manufacturing (M). The central Chinatown core is primarily zoned C-6 and reflects the mixed use commercial nature that pre-existed the City’s adoption of the zoning code. C-6 allows for a great variety of commercial uses and is partly responsible for the continued growth and vitality in the Chinatown core. The adoption of the C-6 zone was intended to preserve this vibrant commercial character. Many downtown commercial districts such as downtown Brooklyn and Queens and also transit hubs have C-6 designation. Along the Chinatown core’s outer periphery is a patchwork of manufacturing and residential zones.

Michael Levine also provided general definitions of important zoning terms to understand such as Floor Area Ratio (FAR), Open Space Ratio (OSR), and Sky Exposure Planes (SEP) and their relevance to zoning in the area. Chinatown in general has higher FAR and lower OSR and SEP.

7. Community Announcements

Susan Stetzer announced that Community Board 3’s newly formed task force on the Chatham Square realignment plan will have its next and only meeting at Confucius Plaza on Monday, January 12th at 6:30pm. All concerned individuals are urged to attend.

Greg Kirschenbaum from the Office of Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer announced that applications for community board membership are due by January 15th. Interested individuals may download the application at ww.mbpo.org.

NEXT CWG Steering Committee Meeting:

Wednesday, January 14, 4-5:30pm
Community Board 1, Rm 709, 49-51 Chambers Street

NEXT Full CWG Meeting:

Monday, February 2, 4-6pm
American Legion L.T. Kimlau Post 1291, 191-193 Canal Street, 2nd Floor

[CWG MINUTES COMPILED BY AMY CHIN]