

**Minutes of the Chinatown Working Group (CWG)**  
**4pm to 6pm, Monday, February 2, 2009**  
**American Legion L.T. Kimlau Post 1291**

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**Attendees:**

**ORGANIZATIONS (Representatives):** American Legion Post 1291 (Gabe Mui, Mimi Wang,); Asian American Arts Center (Robert Lee); Asian American/Asian Research Institute-CUNY (Susan Wong); Asian Americans for Equality/DMCDC (Chris Kui, Thomas Yu, Richard Lee, Brian Cho); Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (Bethany Li, Mabel Tso); Bowery Alliance of Neighbors (Mitchell Gruber, Michelle Campo); CAAAV (Helena Wong, Jenny Ye); CB2 Cert (Jerry Chan); Chatham Green (Danny Chen); Chatham Towers (John Lee, Toby Turkel); CCBA (Wee K. Wong); Chinatown Partnership (Michael Moi); Chinatown Manpower Project (Yen Le); 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, Joel Feingold); Hester Street Collaborative (Anne Frederick); LES Residents for Responsible Development (Rob Hollander); Lower Manhattan Business Solutions Center (C.K. Chung); Organization of Chinese Americans-NY (Jerry Cheng); Two Bridges (Victor Papa); 250 Canal Street Property Owner (James Caseley, Keith Lipstein); Elite HK Corp (Victor Pei); Margaret Chin; Gigi Li; Way Moy; Lora Tennenbaum; Jennifer Lim; Heung S. Tam; Kai Yin Liu; Stephanie Pinto.

**PUBLIC OFFICIALS (Representatives):** Assembly Speaker Silver (Karen He); Mayor's Community Affairs Unit (Pauline Yu, Claudia Filomena); City Comptroller Thompson (Sandra Ung); MBP Stringer (Jen Hong, Greg Kirschenbaum); State Senator Squadron (Mary Cooley); Assembly Member Glick (Matt Borden); Council Member Gerson (Matt Viggiano)

**COMMUNITY BOARD (Representatives):** CB#1 (Michael Levine, Kasey LaFlam); CB#2 (Zella Jones, Edward Ma, James Solomon); CB#3 (John Leo, Pearl Chin, Susan Stetzer)

**MEDIA (Representatives):** *The Epoch Times* (Sally Sun); *Sing Tao Daily* (Lotus Chau, Mike Lin); *World Journal* (Anne Huang); Sino TV (Tina Yang)

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**1. Acting Chair's Report**

Acting Chair James Solomon welcomed everyone. Attendees identified themselves and their affiliations. Noting recent community tragedies and general economic downturn, Chair Solomon emphasized the importance of working together on improving the community's future. He praised the regular attendance and dedication of many CWG members. Attendance by six first-time CWG attendees was also acknowledged.

**ACTION:** Members are asked to encourage more community leaders to get involved in CWG.

CWG has 28 voting members at this time. Pending expected approvals from their respective oversight bodies, an additional 2 organizations have pledged membership thus bringing the membership total to 30. (Please note: as of 02/09/09 there are 31 voting members of the CWG. For a complete list check CWG's website.)

CWG's website at [www.Chinatownworkinggroup.org](http://www.Chinatownworkinggroup.org) is now active thanks to the generous volunteer efforts of Zella Jones. Help is still needed with Chinese translation of the contents. An auto-translation software link has been posted on the website as a temporary aid.

**ACTION:** Bilingual members are asked to test out and report on the functionality of the translation link. Members are also asked to help CWG locate volunteer translators.

New attendee Jerry Cheng was welcomed. Mr. Cheng recently retired from a long career as a principal planner with the City of New York. He has offered to contribute his knowledge and expertise to CWG's community planning efforts.

Asian American/Asian Research Institute is examining all the major planning studies of Chinatown completed since Sept. 11, 2001 and creating a comprehensive matrix. The purpose is to learn from prior research and avoid redundancies as CWG embarks on its own planning initiative. A draft of this matrix will be presented at the next CWG meeting.

The CWG Steering Committee with the help of Susan Stetzer has composed a letter to the City in an effort to clarify the scope and requirements of a funding allocation that has been identified for CWG's planning work. Steering Committee representatives will follow up by meeting with Councilmember Gerson and relevant City agencies and report back to the CWG membership.

The most recent Steering Committee meeting was attended by representatives from ¼ of all voting members. These meetings are open to all. Members are invited to send a representative to Steering Committee meetings. The only stipulation is that Steering Committee members may not miss more than 3 consecutive meetings.

Senator Squadron's office helped with an application for an intern to provide administrative support to CWG.

Thomas Yu and James Solomon volunteered to help set up and dismantle chairs and tables prior to and after each CWG meeting at the American Legion. Other CWG members are welcome to assist.

CB1 is providing CWG an official mailing address and a desk at their office.

## **2. CWG Strategy & Timetables**

Michael Levine (CB1) provided an overview of the scope and average timetables for two major kinds of planning – 197a and Re-zoning. (See attached document for details). Both must comply with ULURP timetables.

197a is a process mandated by the City Charter and can be initiated by any local community group(s). 197a plans are comprehensive and can include a broad range of community concerns. 197a plans often require 2-1/2 to 3 years to complete. The plan needs review and approval by the community board and Borough President before getting final approval from the City Council. After formal City Council adoption, the plan becomes the guiding principle for all future planning within that community.

A re-zoning process is just one aspect of a 197a plan. It can be conducted simultaneously with or as a preliminary lead up to a 197a plan. The time table is shorter than for 197a and can be completed as quickly as 6 months if conducted efficiently, but 1 to 1-1/2 years is more realistic.

It was suggested that CWG might consider targeting a few top issues to be addressed through the re-zoning process and achieve a quick outcome for CWG while working on the longer term, larger scope of 197a. Concern was expressed that this strategy might compromise or undermine other sub-committee priorities.

### 3. CWG Working Teams

#### a. Acting Chairs

Acting Chairs were assigned for CWG sub-committees/working teams. Acting Chairs will schedule, convene and facilitate the first team meetings before the next full CWG meeting. At the first meetings, each committee will elect its own Chair(s). Attendance should be taken. Any votes to approve team resolutions should be recorded and tracked. To avoid perceptions that any organization is exercising excess influence on the CWG process, teams should avoid electing a Chair from an organization that might also be chairing another team.

**ACTION:** Details of confirmed meeting times, dates, locations should be submitted to James Solomon for posting on the CWG website

#### b. Guiding Principles

Working teams will identify issues and refine those into 3 general goals that defines what the working team hopes to achieve. These goals will be reported back to the full CWG and will be used to inform CWG's overall guiding principles. (See attached examples of "guiding principles")

Brief discussion notes or bullet points should be recorded at each team meeting. These notes will be published on the CWG website. This does not represent an endorsement of the ideas expressed, but is strictly to let the public know what topics are being discussed

Committees were reminded that the issues they discuss will be difficult and challenging. There will necessarily be inherent conflicts (e.g. desire for affordable housing vs economic development) so it is critical for everyone to work towards common ground and shared purpose. We must be mindful of the fact that we will not agree 100% of the time, but can be respectful of one another's views.

### 4. NOMINATIONS for CWG Co-Chairs

As per CWG's governance structure, the CWG will have two Co-chairpersons – one from a member community-based organization and one from a member community board. Each will be elected to a one-year term by a majority of the Working Group voting members. The Co-Chairpersons have no greater authority than any other CWG voting member in policy or activities of the CWG; the Co-Chairpersons have an equal vote with all other CWG members on any matter before the CWG.

John Leo (representing CB3) nominates James Solomon (representing CB2) and Thomas Yu (representing Asian Americans for Equality) for the positions of CWG co-Chairs. The nomination is seconded by Victor Papa (representing Two Bridges Neighborhood Council)

No other nominations are put forward by the membership.

Summary of comments and suggestions from the floor:

- A request is made for biographies and background information on the nominees
- Concern is expressed that one nominee is both a community and a community board representative
- A recommendation to extend the nomination period to March 2<sup>nd</sup>
- A suggestion to move scheduled March 2<sup>nd</sup> election to current meeting
- A suggestion that votes should be by secret ballot

MOTION #1: A motion to close nominations on February 2<sup>nd</sup> as previously planned and stated in prior meetings was approved by CWG Voting Members. (See attached for detailed voting record on Motion #1.)  
Tally of votes: 16 – In Favor / 1 – Opposed / 2 – Abstentions

MOTION #2: A motion to adopt a policy of electing CWG co-chairs by secret ballot at next month's meeting was rejected by CWG Voting Members. As a result, voting will still be conducted by ballot but each vote cast will be available for public review. (See attached for detailed voting record on Motion #2.)  
Tally of votes: 19 – In Favor / 0 – Opposed

**ACTION:** Formal election for CWG Co-Chairs will be held at the next CWG meeting on March 2, 2009. Voting Members must be present at the meeting to cast a vote.

**ACTION:** Biographies for Nominees Thomas Yu and James Solomon will be disseminated by email to CWG members prior to the election

## 5. Community Announcements

All are invited to attend CB3's Chatham Square Task Force meetings to listen, learn and ask questions:

- 6:30pm, Feb. 18<sup>th</sup> at Confucius Plaza Community Room, 33 Bowery
- 6:30pm, Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup> at P.S. 124, 40 Division Street at 6:30pm. At this meeting, the City will present revised plans for Chatham Square and CB3 will discuss plan modifications.
- 1<sup>st</sup> week of March (exact time/date/location TBD) there will be an overview and presentation by the City covering the construction mitigation plans.

CWG Zoning sub-committee will hold its first meeting 1pm, Tuesday, February 10<sup>th</sup> at CB1's office, 49 Chambers St., Rm 709.

Asian American Arts Centre has a free exhibition of Tibetan thanka paintings at its gallery, 26 Bowery, on view through March 13<sup>th</sup>. Opening reception is on Sunday, Feb. 8<sup>th</sup> from 3-5:30pm.

Bowery Alliance of Neighbors is working to prevent high rise development on the Bowery. Business owners and residents are asked to sign a petition requesting that City Planning rezone the east side of the Bowery.

Chinatown Manpower is seeking work sites for placement of summer youth workers. CWG members wishing to host summer youth workers can email [pearlchin@cmpny.org](mailto:pearlchin@cmpny.org)

At 10am on Thu, Feb 5<sup>th</sup>, there will be a public hearing on the Chatham Square Redevelopment in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor hearing Room in City Hall with the Dept of Transportation.

### **NEXT CWG Steering Committee Meeting:**

**Wednesday, February 11, 4-5:30pm**  
Community Board 1, Rm 709  
49-51 Chambers Street

### **NEXT Full CWG Meeting:**

**Monday, March 2, 4-6pm**  
American Legion L.T. Kimlau Post 1291  
191-193 Canal Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

[Amy Chin generously compiled these minutes.]