

Chinatown Working Group Immigrant Affairs/Social Services Work Team
Meeting Minutes

Date: Thursday April 2, 2009

Time: 4:00 pm

Place: Community Board 1, 49-51 Chambers Street

Present:

Steven W. Wong (Chinese Hotel Association of New York), Mae Lee (Chinese Progressive Association)
Thomas Yu, (Asian Americans for Equality)

Media representatives in attendance: Sally Sun (Epoch Times)

The meeting began at 4:00 pm

Mae Lee, the acting chair of the work team briefly introduced the purpose of the work team and the agenda for today's meeting. Attendees introduced themselves and their respective organizations.

Thomas Yu, the CWG's co-chair, gave a brief synopsis of discussions from other work team meetings where the issues intersected with immigrant issues. He reported that the CWG steering committee has been discussing ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the work teams. One option presented was that work teams that address overlapping issues can coordinate or consolidate with each other. Since immigrant issues will likely intersect with that of several other work teams, this was suggested as an option to consider.

Issues to be discussed. Goals and/or Guiding Principles

Attendees discussed issues and concerns:.

a. Labor & workplace issues - Steven Wong stated that there is an on-going need protect workers rights and protect workers against employment discrimination. It was decided that there is a need for on-going education and outreach about workers rights and employment discrimination for both employees and employers. Chinatown needs to be a good place to work as well as to live and visit. Steven also said that currently the five-star hotels in Manhattan employ very few Chinese people. It was noted that as additional hotels are being opened in lower Manhattan – we should question if they are providing jobs for Chinatown residents.

b. Language access – translation and interpretation services for immigrants in our community was still in need of improvement. While not a problem for community based organizations or immigrant-run businesses, it was a problem for the institutions that serve our community (schools, hospitals, city, state, federal agencies)

c. Families – Since some of those who signed up for this committee addressed family issues and domestic violence, this was cited as an issue to explore

d. Housing affordability is an issue of concern since many new immigrants are low-income or have limited resources.

e. Immigration legal status and the immigration legal process - this was stated as an important issue of concern for both documented and undocumented immigrants in our community

Potential Stakeholders and/or experts to invite to future meetings

Attendees made an initial list of stakeholders who have an interest in immigrant issues but have not yet signed up for this committee:

1. Community based/social service organizations: Asian Women's Center, Chinese American Planning Council, Chinatown Manpower Project, Immigrant Social Services,
2. Coalitions - New York Immigration Coalition,
3. Government agencies: Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, NYS Department of Labor, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
4. Labor unions
5. Religious/faith-based groups

Information needed before deciding recommendations to make to CWG

It was decided to discuss this at a later time. No recommendations about guiding principles were made at this meeting. It was decided that more people need to be present before recommendations can be made.

Electing a “permanent” chair and/or co-chairs

Mae Lee was elected as the chairperson of the work team. If the function of this work team changes, this issue can be revisited.

Next meeting

A date will be set after reaching out to others who were not present to get their feedback about a convenient time/date.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 pm