

Minutes of the Chinatown Working Group (CWG) Full Group Meeting  
Monday, March 3, 2014, 4pm-5:30pm  
American Legion L.T. Kimlau Post 1291

Voting members present: American Legion Post 1291 (Gabe Mui); Bowery Alliance of Neighbors (Mitchell Grubler); Asian American Arts Centre (Bob Lee); Chinatown Partnership Local Development Corporation (Wellington Chen); Chinese Progressive Association (Mae Lee); Chinese Staff and Workers Association (Wendy Cheng, Wah Lee); Committee Against Anti Asian Violence (Anj Chaudhry, Ed Zheng, Billie Zhu); Community Board 2 (Antony Wong); Community Board 3 (MyPhuong Chung, Gigi Li); National Mobilization Against Sweatshops (David Tieu); Property Tax Payers Association (Irving Lee); Two Bridges Neighborhood Council (Victor Papa, Wilson Soo).

Media: Ming Pau (Eddie Lau), Sing Tao (Lotus Chau, April Xu), World Journal (Name Unknown)

Also present: Yolanda Donato (Mujeres & Hombres), Rob Hollander, Zella Jones (NoHo-Bowery Stakeholders Inc.), Sam Stein.

1. Introductions.

2. Agenda approval.

Rob Hollander: Will we discuss meeting times?

Antony Wong: Let's survey preferences after the minutes approval. Agenda approved by all present.

3. Minutes. Approved with spelling corrections.

4. Survey of meeting time preferences.

Rob Hollander: Who prefers 4pm, who prefers 5pm, who cannot attend at 4pm, who cannot attend at 5pm?

David Tieu: Those who have a day job can't attend at 4. We should try to accommodate them.

Antony Wong: Bear in mind that to meet every week at 5:30pm it would place a burden for American Legion.

Zella Jones: Would 5pm be better for American Legion?

Gabe Mui: Yes.

Rob Hollander: Hands again for 4pm. Who for 5:30pm. Who cannot 4pm. Who cannot at 5:30. And how about 5pm?

11 prefer 5:30pm, 9 prefer 5pm, 3 prefer 4pm.

5. Report from the CB3 Land Use Committee meeting, MyPhuong Chung, presenting.

MyPhuong Chung: The Land Use is considering options A and B. The general feeling was that the plan was too large. A smaller task group will look into the subdistricts. Today was the first meeting of the small task group.

Anj Choudhry: Who are the members and can community members attend?

MyPhuong Chung: It's not an official task force of the community board. Members are myself, Gigi...

Gigi Li: ...as CB chair, I am not a member of any committee...

MyPhuong Chung: ...Eva Hanhardt attended, but I don't know whether she will attend all the meetings.

Gigi Li: It's not an official task force of the community board. The members are: MyPhuong Chung, Bill LoSasso, Carlina Rivera, Linda Jones (Chair of the Land Use Committee). No decisions will be made by this subgroup.

Antony Wong: The Land Use Committee of CB3 will meet next on March 12, 6:30pm at Seward Park Extension, 56 Essex Street. They are still working on subdistrict A. Please attend. David Tieu: Were there any specific concerns at the Land Use meeting? MyPhuong Chung: Mainly that it was too large to digest...

Antony Wong: ...and they solicited volunteers for the small group...

Gigi Li: ...and agreed to speak to DCP to address feasibility.

David Tieu: There's a need for simplifying the plan for the general public.

Antony Wong: With the few dollars left over from the grant, Eva plans to write a simplified brochure, translated into Chinese and Spanish.

#### 6. Report on the CAPZ meeting, Wilson Soo presenting.

Wilson Soo: I presented a summary of the differences between the options in subdistricts A and B. There was no consensus on the options.

MyPhuong Chung: Both options in the Chinatown core are intended as a preservation zone. The options are similar. The first option designates a C4-4A, modified for specific uses. Both options prohibit hotels and allow manufacturing. Also they both cap building heights at 85 feet. Option 1 allows less commercial and community facility, allowing only 4 FAR. Option 2 allows FAR 6 for residential, commercial or community facility use. Option 1 can be viewed as a downzoning, allowing fewer development opportunities than option 2. Option 2 would designate a C6-2G, closer to the current zoning.

Wilson Soo: CAPZ then voted.

Victor Papa: The vote was tied. The consensus was that the meetings should be expeditious and coordinate with the community board. We have to vote on these options expeditiously. There is hardly any more discussion left. Those votes will come back to the CWG which will make the final decisions. Wilson reminded me that the members here have to take this back to their membership, otherwise I would have asked to hold a vote today.

Mitchell Grubler: Is the simplified version uploaded on the website?

Wilson Soo: It will be soon.

Zella Jones: It was included as an attachment to the email blast for this meeting.

Anj Chaudhry: Even just the options for A and B are complex, so it may take some time for us to consult with our constituency to make sure this plan is in their interests. This is an important decision that will impact their lives. Pratt has not even completed its informational brochure that we need in order to give the community an explanation. We need to take some more time. We need clarity on the differences between the options.

Wendy Cheung: I agree. We couldn't come to any consensus. There is still a lack of clarity. It would be good if the Pratt consultants would attend the CAPZ meeting. What is distributed to the community has to be comprehensible.

Victor Papa: Having sat here for six years...

Zella Jones: ...close to seven years...

Victor Papa: ...what more can we do? You voted for it...

Wendy Cheung: You were pushing for a vote. The questions were not all answered clearly.

Victor Papa: Two Bridges cannot afford to sit around this table for another six years. We're not going to do that. We want this expedited.

Yolanda Donato: I agree with [Wendy]. We should give it time since the community does not know about this process or the plans. We have a letter to invite people into the process.

Victor Papa: Senora, esta carta es la misma carta e corriendo en los minutos [trans: this letter is the same letter that was recorded in the minutes.]

Yolanda Donato: You were rushing...

Victor Papa: ...don't say rushing -- six years.

Yolanda Donato: You don't have a minute to give the community to decide what they want for their future?

Zella Jones: It's hard to imagine how much more outreach there could be. Six years.

Rob Hollander: What I see from the community is a desire to be well-informed and careful about a huge issue and a concern about outreach that Pratt themselves expressed. They felt their outreach was not adequate in this process. They had only \$135,000. Also, as a professional planner they are constrained to produce a certain kind of document. It's amazing and wonderful but it is constrained to the parameters of what is acceptable practice. There is work remaining. The plan is a good start, but there are pieces of research that are missing, and decisions cannot be made without those pieces in place. I hear non community members insisting on rushing forward and the chair of the CAPZ attempting to railroad the process. I think the chair of CAPZ should step down.

Lotus Chao: What do you define as the community?

Rob Hollander: Lotus, if you have any questions as a journalist, interview me.

Irving Lee: Subdistrict A is the critical area and where the plan will have the most impact. Is there a schedule? Should we focus only on Subdistrict A only at the next CAPZ meeting?

Rob Hollander: It would make more sense to take the other subdistricts first since there's a lot of research that needs to be done on Subdistrict A. Useless to discuss A without that research.

Victor Papa: CAPZ had a vote and it should not be ignored. Rob Hollander: The final vote was a tie.

Gigi Li: CB3 Land Use Committee expressed an interest in guidance from CWG on Subdistrict A.

Rob Hollander: The tie vote was the end of the discussion on A. There's research remaining.

MyPuong Chung: Time is of the essence. If there are questions, they can still be answered. I'd like to know, what research remains, Rob?

Rob Hollander: Irving asked me about my proposal to lower the heights while raising the FAR. For such a proposal, CWG needs to know how much air rights in square feet -- not in FAR -- are currently available in Subdistrict A, and exactly how much cultural space, community space and affordable housing in square feet CWG or the community wants to see developed, and how much market rate development CWG is willing to accept. One of the early proposals from the Cultural and Historical Preservation Team was to use air rights transfers to fund cultural uses in certain areas. Ed Ma was also adamant about creating community space. So first you have to quantify the exact air rights currently available, then subtract that from the various kinds of development you want to create. The answer will give you a sense of how much in air rights or FAR you need to accomplish your goal. You can distribute that remainder into all of the properties in Subdistrict A. That's a possible plan distinct from Options 1 or 2. But first CWG has to decide exactly how much development CWG or the community wants. That amount is quantifiable and can determine the options or alternatives to the options. But you have to reach out to the community, figure out or intuit what the community needs and wants.

Anj Chaudhry: Also the guaranteed Inclusionary Zoning is unclear. Option 1 has a bonus; option 2 has a requirement for inclusionary zoning. But the City Council is working on that now. It could change, so we should be talking to people in the Council. Also changes in the 421a tax policy may also change. We need to spend more time with those and also the consequences of the FAR in detail so everyone understands the impact. I think we should discuss it further. The response from the community will also help CB3 to make its decisions. There's also a need for more technical assistance for understanding the plans. CAAAV works with other planners, so we could bring in a second opinion if Pratt is not available. But we do need more time with A. We may not also agree on C or D, so we should continue with A while the Community Board is talking about it, and present to them a really solid proposal. We do have some time since the new Planning Commissioner has only been just appointed and DCP is not yet prepared to look at a rezoning for Chinatown.

Zella Jones: If you walk from Broadway to Centre Street, the international shops that looked like Chinatown are now all gone. All those buildings are gone. You need to designate the lot envelope. [Mayor] De Blasio hasn't decided what he wants for inclusionary zoning. When those city decisions are made, it may all be too late. So designate the envelope and the particulars can be dealt with later.

Victor Papa: CWG must also weigh in on the NYCHA proposals. We have to say that now. I propose that the CAPZ vote be reported to CWG at its next meeting, and CWG consider it and vote on Subdistrict A.

David Tieu: It seems clear that we need more time to discuss this.

Victor Papa: Do you need two more meetings?

David Tieu: I can't say.

Anj Chaudhry: Why don't we handle this at the next CAPZ and continue there with A.

Victor Papa: Why can't we vote now?

Antony Wong: We cannot vote today. The CAPZ vote is duly noted. The discussion has to be done in depth at CAPZ. The CB3 representative will take those discussions and votes to CB3. I recommend that CAPZ discuss the issues of tax abatements, FAR, etc. related to Subdistrict A. Regarding time, we have plenty of time. The other agencies are not prepared for action yet either. Everyone here wants to see our communities and families protected. Your vote still stands. You can discuss Subdistricts C and D.

Victor Papa: The discussion could go on endlessly. I'm not going to go through that.

David Tieu: I think the chairperson of the committee is acting unprofessionally. He should listen to the members of the committee and not run through his own agenda.

Antony Wong: So the intent of the [CAPZ] chairperson is not to discuss subdistrict A further in his committee.

Victor Papa: I will take your recommendation and bring it back to the committee.

MyPhuong Chung: When is that meeting?

Wilson Soo: March 10.

MyPhuong Chung: That's before the Land Use Committee meeting.

Gigi Li: I understand the tug and pull here. It may be that consensus will not be achieved. A tie would still be helpful for the Land Use Committee if CAPZ would clearly articulate the key points and concerns of difference and the reasons given. A mere vote is not useful for the Land Use Committee.

MyPhuong Chung: Rather than just objecting that the plan is incomprehensible, please ask specific questions. Make an effort to go through the plan.

David Tieu: We have raised questions about the inclusionary zoning.

Antony Wong: The [CAPZ] chair will reach out to Eva to see if she can attend.

Victor Papa: Yes.

Mae Lee: People should be up front about their disagreements.

MyPhuong Chung: Let's discuss the plan and address questions about it, not discuss the length of the process anymore.

Antony Wong: Read the plan on the website.

Wilson Soo: Also check the attachment that was sent out with the notice for this meeting.

Zella Jones: That can be uploaded to the website too.

Antony Wong: That CAPZ meeting report will be available on the website too.

#### 7. Recruiting members for a new economic team.

Antony Wong: An economic team can address issues that do not have to wait for zoning. These might include items you received at last month's meeting.

Irving Lee: Park Row should be included.

Antony Wong: Transportation is included along with affordable commercial space, parking issues among others. These are issues that we need to pursue with the government.

Victor Papa: So Irving will convene the meetings?

Antony Wong: We have reached out to those who participated with the previous Economic Team. Are you willing to join [to Irving]?

Irving Lee: Yes.

Antony Wong: Zella has volunteered. Rob also. I reached out to Peter Cheng, representing [Indochina Sino-American Community Center] who cannot attend our Monday CWG meetings but has volunteered for the economic meetings. Is Wellington willing also?

Wellington Chen: Sure.

Irving Lee: Who will coordinate the meetings?

Antony Wong: The members have to coordinate with themselves.

Rob Hollander: I can contact people through the email list.

Gigi Li: Regarding Park Row, Gail Brewer, Marge and I have agreed that opening Park Row is important. We're actually on the list to meet the new DoT commissioner to discuss this. When it does happen, I will try to get a representative from this group if possible. If not, I will definitely report on the how that conversation went. We're also on the list to meet with NYPD, but I have a feeling the meeting with DoT will happen first.

Wilson Soo: Going back for a moment to CAPZ. Although on subarea B there was a lot of confusion, we agreed on the principle of having the least possible mappings for the entire subarea. We just weren't clear from the document which option that was.

David Tieu: We also agreed that the other NYCHA properties in CD3 should also be mapped.

Wilson Soo: We recognised that we couldn't add those properties in the plan, so we would recommend that those properties be mapped and that this should be a city-wide policy.

Yolanda Donato: This is an issue for the residents in the NYCHA properties, who believe that NYCHA property should be devoted to low-income people only.

Gigi Li: The Bloomberg plan is no longer on the table. What is your concern about SPURA.

Yolanda Donato: The community is concerned that SPURA will include hotels and housing that will not be for low-income residents.

Gigi Li: Hotels are not included in the SPURA plans. Fifty percent of the residential units planned will be devoted to affordable housing.

Yolanda Donato: That is not enough.

Gigi Li: The community board had a year-long process. The process has gone forward with a concrete plan.

Yolanda Donato: My community feels that it has been ignored and left out.

Rob Hollander: Gigi, could you comment on the other NYCHA properties in CD3?

Gigi Li: Currently there are no mayoral plans for any of those properties. We have recommendations about those properties so we can still have influence on how those properties will be used.

Victor Papa: Are we limited in our recommendations to the NYCHA properties within the boundaries of the plan? Since those NYCHA properties are the target of a pilot, isn't our response relevant to the entire city?

Antony Wong: That is a matter for CAPZ to decide.

David Tieu: The CWG membership certification rules state that if a group does not meet the meeting minutes requirement, the group can submit signatures from more than 50% of its membership petitioning to join if the group has a membership of at least ten. Yolanda says she has fulfilled that.

Antony Wong: We will talk to Yolanda.

Billie Zhu: As you know, our neighborhood has the highest rate of elderly people. We should reach out to senior centers, at least get input from the seniors.

Antony Wong: Again, CAPZ will meet March 10, 5pm-6:30pm; CB3's Land Use Committee will meet March 12 at 6:30pm at Seward Park Extension; CAPZ will meet again March 24, 5pm. Meeting adjourned at 5:53pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rob Hollander, Secretary