

Draft Minutes
Chinatown Working Group
December 7, 2020, 6:30 via Zoom

Present: Art Against Displacement (Francisca Benitez, Vanessa Thill); Chinese Staff and Workers Association (Zishun Ning); Lower East Side Preservation Initiative (Richard Moses) National Mobilization Against Sweatshops (Steph Kranes, Briar Winters); Youth Against Displacement (Caitlin Kelmar)

Also Present: Rob Hollander (Friend of CWG), East River Park Action (Fannie Ip, Pat Arnow) Downtown Independent Democrats (Tom L); Greenwich Village Society for Historical Preservation (Harry Bubbins), Kaiyu Li (Ph.D candidate at University of Illinois Chicago, observing)

Facilitating: Rob Hollander
Note taking: Francisca Benitez

Agenda:

1. Administrative request
2. Community alliances
3. City-wide declaration letter

1. Administrative request

Rob Hollander has been the CWG secretary for a decade. He decides to step down and suggests that other people start taking notes. CWG expresses gratitude for the work he has done all these years. We ask for a volunteer to take notes for this meeting.

2. Community alliances

B: Report on the coalition's Phone ZAP went great.
collective Zoom phone zap: bit.ly/notowersphonezap where we made calls together, called the The Brian Lehrer Show (WNYC, New York Public Radio), and called de Blasio's office number 212-788-2162 at the same time (Thursday December 3 from 1pm to 2pm).
We were able to press the mayor and talk about CWG. We hope people got to hear it.

2a. NOHO-SOHO Alliance

H: Thanks yes we heard it, you were great and clear.
There is a hearing tomorrow before the ULURP clock starts. We encourage people to attend. It's an opportunity to leverage our common interests.
We want to put forward a positive and affirmative vision for the neighborhood, with an emphasis on residential affordability and not doubling the FAR!

Specially in the southern edge, by Canal St. where they are proposing FAR 12.
This is going to bring a lot of displacement pressures to current residents.

And there's the other problem that at state level they want to stop all height caps (**double check this)

R: like the Extell tower or higher!

B: Read the community plan and I will try to encourage mutual support

Z: Yes we met with Pete Davis and Jeannine.
Is there any public housing in the SOHO-NOHO area?

H: No

2b. East River Park Action.

F: East River Park Action explains the polemic that has risen about two posters that were put out in the city, they took pictures of those posters and put them up in their social media platform to call attention to the struggle, to get our elected officials to stand up for us. But the posts gathered a few negative reactions, and then several elected officials used the opportunity to attack East River Park Action. East River Park Action apologized and took the post down, but AMNY put out an incendiary article quoting several establishment democrats attacking the posters even saying the Chinzilla poster is "xenophobic".
Carlina had an interview with City and State and Blasco found out about it. It didn't matter to them that ERPA had not actually done the posters.

Pat: We've been needing these politicians for a while, they used the opportunity to band together and attack ERPA as racist.
So we appreciate NMASS calling for a press conference tomorrow.

S: we can win if we stick together.

Pat: I understand the poster was done a while ago

Fr: yes the poster was done in early 2017, at the time when Margaret Chin was running to get a 3rd term in office. We put it up and took it to several actions including protests outside Margaret Chin's office. We looked at tons of monster movie posters and settled for this one (Godzilla 1954) due to the similarities of the location depicted in the poster with the Two Bridges Area, you can see the foot of the bridge, and Godzilla destroying things in a similar position of where the Extell tower is. (aka One Manhattan Square).

S: The poster is attacking Margaret Chin's actions, not her race.
Like Fanny said, they are trying to look like victims, they are desperate.
We are happy that you are joining CWG, cause this is an anti-racist plan.

F: We've been wanting to join, happy that we are doing it.

P: we are natural allies cause we are all against these luxury developments.
NMASS press release is very good. Mic drop!

F: we'll put the press release out in instagram and tag the elected officials.

P: we'll send out to our list of 1300 people and 100 press contacts

F: will tag J. Blasco

Z: I'm glad that a bad situation is turning to become a good thing. Our struggle goes back to 2008 when the East Village rezoning got passed and we were excluded, even though we were asking for the same zoning protections that our neighbors got. Our plan speaks to the interests of our neighbors in the East Village as well. We know Chin is very unpopular, among Chinese residents as well.

P: What can we do for you?

C: can you explain the relationship and/or differences between East River Park Action and East River Park Alliance?

P: We are sister organizations. They ask good questions, they are more contained and they read all the reports. We are the rude sister, we are bigger and baggier.

AAD: we welcome you to CWG

3. City-wide declaration letter

Community Declaration on the Future of New York

To Elected Officials, Candidates for City Office and to New Yorkers Everywhere:

We, the undersigned, demand an end to the destructive up-zonings, the seizure of public spaces for private gain (including public housing), and the excessive influence of real estate on our city government. We demand reform of the fake community consultations on zoning that serve only to sideline true debate and dissent. We are outraged by the racist displacement of working-class people and small businesses and deplore the excessive demolition of our city that Mayor de Blasio's affordable housing policy imposes. We insist upon a new framework for affordable housing that is free of the negative effects of the current policy.

Elected officials and candidates should:

- **Stop all rezonings—be they neighborhood-wide or “spot”—that allow more luxury high rises and condos to be built. This trickle-down approach to housing only serves to displace residents and small businesses, over-scale our neighborhoods, strain our underfunded public infrastructure and take away our sunlight. It renders our communities unaffordable and alters the places that we call home in ways that make them unrecognizable.**
- **Reject the housing policy that is based on enormous giveaways to luxury real estate developers in exchange for a small percentage of dubiously named “affordable” housing. Stop the use of “affordable” as a safe word to justify towerization or as a substitute for real, multi-generational affordability for low-income people.**
- **Reinvent the rigged land-use process to allow for legitimate community-led planning instead of imposing “done deal” developments. No land-use review process should be allowed to use “virtual” meetings—such as Zoom—as a substitute for public hearings.**
- **End the reckless conversion of still useful manufacturing space into gentrified housing.**

Endorsed so far by the following groups:

Art Against Displacement
Artist Studio Affordability Project
Artists Alliance Inc.
Bed-Stuy Tenant Union
Bowery Alliance of Neighbors

Chinatown Working Group
Civic Gaps
CPW Neighbors Association
Committee for Environmentally Sound Development
CORD/Carroll Gardens Coalition for Respectful Development
East River Park Action
Flower Lovers Against Corruption and Movement to Protect the People
Flushing Workers Center
Friends and Residents of Greater Gowanus FROGG
Human-scale NYC
Inwood Preservation
Justice for All Coalition
Lower East Side Dwellers
Lower Seaman Tenants Association
Madison-Marine-Homecrest Civic Assn.
Mi Casa No es Su Casa
Mi Casa Resiste
Moving Forward Unidos
Occupyradio.net
Orchard Street Block Association
Preserve Our Brooklyn Neighborhoods
Preserve BAMs Historic District
Respect Brooklyn
Save Cortelyou
SoHo Alliance
South Village Neighbors
Stop REBNY
Stop Sunnyside Yards
TakeBackNYC
The Church of Stop Shopping
Voice of Gowanus
Washington Street Advocacy Group

V: should we endorse?

F: can we add environmental concerns?

V: at this point, to this letter, no cause we have already groups endorsing. But we can all bring that to the December 14 city wide action at City Hall.

Fr: yes lots of groups have been organizing that

Z: Letter is good, maybe could have been clearer and shorter, but I don't think it contradicts what we want.

And it connects with other groups

V: people are talking about CWG at these organizing meetings

H: I saw this there is a widespread sentiment of stopping all rezonings, what they mean is top-down rezonings

Z: yes, we wanted to say explicitly stop developer-led rezoning and pass community-led rezoning

AAD: let's make that banner

R: so, does CWG endorse the City-wide declaration letter, any objections?

All present: no objections + one abstention

R: LESPI abstains. We will have a meeting to figure it out.

V: CWG is not often seen out there, it would be great if someone can speak on behalf of CWG at the December 14 rally.

B: yes would be good

R: Briar and Zishun are chairs

B: this month is really busy for me

Z: I can take it up. Last time I did City Hall, I think I can do it

Fr: AAD can make/bring banners

B: vanessa and Zishun you've been at the organizing meetings

Z&V: Yes

V: there's a flyer being made right now

S: would CWG send out our press release for tomorrow's press conference?

R: I'm concerned it could harm Chris's campaign, what do you think Caitlin

C: I'm not in this meeting in that capacity.

It might be a bit touchy, but it's ok, that poster is already featured in a campaign video. We are not gonna disassociate from CWG because of that.

R: I think it's good that NMASS is doing this press conference, but there's still concern of public perception. It's inflammatory. NMASS has always used that tactic. CWG however has one essential program and it is to work with city agencies and elected officials to get the plan enacted. NMASS doesn't have that program.

C: yes, it feels more like a Coalition action more than CWG

Z: We joined as CSWA, if other groups want to join, great.

B: I echo what Rob says, we do have different roles, we have to be strategic.

S: can you email the media advisory.

V: NYCHA Blueprint plan. State Assembly hearing tomorrow. Get in touch with me if you want to organize around this.

F: Jasmine is doing something and Sunrise.

V: Yes I'm in touch with them

Z: the goal of infill is to put in market rent units.

Meeting adjourned at 8pm

CHAT:

Pat Arnow, East River Park Action

19:29:47 From Pat Arnow : arnowp@gmail.com

19:29:51 From Harry, Village Preservation : Harry Bubbins, hubbins@gvshp.org. Village Preservation

19:29:54 From caitlin : Caitlin Kelmar - Youth Against Displacement - caitlinkelmar@gmail.com

19:30:00 From Fannie Ip : Fannie Ip East River Park Action

19:30:07 From Stephanie Kranes : steph kranes - kranes33@gmail.com

19:30:10 From Vanessa Thill : Vanessa Thill, Art Against Displacement, vsthill@gmail.com

19:30:11 From Richard Moses : Richard Moses, Lower East Side Preservation Initiative, Richard@LESPI-nyc.org

19:30:13 From Fannie Ip : fipper@gmail.com

19:30:20 From Zishun Ning : Zishun Ning CSWA zishun.ning@gmail.com

19:30:30 From Robert Hollander : Rob Hollander (Friend of CWG)

19:30:42 From Kaiyu Li : Kaiyu Li, kli20@uic.edu, phd candidate at university of Illinois Chicago, here to observe. thank you.

19:31:40 From briarwinters : Briar Winters briar.winters@gmail.com NMASS

19:32:42 From Vanessa Thill : my bad

19:32:44 From Vanessa Thill : thank you

19:32:55 From Vanessa Thill : you're a great representative

19:35:23 From Pat Arnow : Do send flyers, etc., to Fannie and me.

19:35:33 From Pat Arnow : Whenever you want something spread around.

19:41:13 From Vanessa Thill : I realized I have another topic that should be mentioned. NYCHA Blue Print

19:44:14 From briarwinters : I agree, Caitlin. It feels like not our roll to play.

19:44:35 From briarwinters : Feels more like a Coalition role.

19:55:03 From Kaiyu Li : thank you, have a good one

*

P.S. December 14 city wide action at City Hall was changed to December 16.