

**DRAFT Minutes**  
**Chinatown Working Group Meeting**  
**November 5, 6:30pm, 275 Cherry Street Community Room**

**Voting members present:** 83-85 Bowery Tenants Association (Shi Xiang Lin, Shu Qing Wang); Art Against Displacement (Francisca Benitez); Chinatown and Lower East Side Artists Against Displacement (Francisca Benitez); Chinese Staff and Workers Association (Zishun Ning); National Mobilization Against Sweatshops (Francisca Benitez, Steph Kranes); Youth Against Displacement (Steph Kranes, Zishun Ning).

**Also present:** Andrew Hiller (New York City Democratic Socialists of America); rob hollander (Lower East Side Residents for Responsible Development); Pat Lin; Shelly Silver (artist and resident).

Meeting called to order at 6:50pm, Francisca Benitez (AAD, CLAAD, NMASS) facilitating.

Agenda

Report on the meeting with Assemblymember Epstein

LESON legal strategy

Discussions on area A

Outreach

Jail proposal

Events

Ballot proposals

Agenda approved without objection.

Report on the meeting with Assemblymember Epstein

Steph Kranes (NMASS): Epstein asked us whether we supported implementing the CWG plan piecemeal. He seemed sympathetic to the idea.

rob hollander: He suggested that, because Niou Lin has been excluded from the Chin/Brower publicity, she might be willing to promote the LESON plan. Since the mayor has refused to accept the plan as a whole, and Cuomo is the mayor's enemy/competitor, maybe Lin can work with the governor to pressure the mayor. She might also ask for a State Senate investigation on waterfront resilience of the towers. He says that once the Senate initiates an investigation, it can look at almost anything.

Zishun Ning (CSWA, YAD): LESON met with Lin early on. She knows the LESON strategy. Her testimony at CPC was more in line with Margaret Chin's. But she seems open to us. Bowery tenants had a dinner with her. They asked her to help us get a state agency involved over the environmental issues related to the towers. We are planning to meet with

her again possibly next week. We can add the possibility of a state legislative investigation on the resiliency and sewage issues.

rob: To develop the best strategy, maybe rather than asking Lin to do something specific, ask her what she thinks she can do, and if she doesn't know what can be done, ask her whom she goes to for advice.

Zishun: So far, she has supported the Chin program.

rob: She might not see any other public role for her. Maybe you can offer her a different and more prominent public role.

#### LESON strategy

Steph: The CPC vote was postponed from Nov 13 to November 29 for assessing the comments. They will negotiate with the developers on mitigations and the developers will produce a final EIS which the CPC will vote on.

Zishun: We held a successful press conference. Chin's ULURP strategy failed, giving us an opening for an alternative on the grounds that the city is violating its own laws. CPC might agree to a ULURP, which will delay the process without changing the outcome.

Francisca Benitez (AAD, CLAAD, NMASS): Joann asked if I could be a plaintiff, but I live in Chinatown, not in the waterfront neighborhood.

rob: Fran you should be in the lawsuit. Leaving out Chinatown in the EIS is its greatest flaw. Most residents on the waterfront are stabilized and won't be displaced. Residents in Chinatown are vulnerable to displacement, yet Chinatown is not in the EIS data for possible displacement, which makes the developments look harmless. Neither has DCP done any study of Chinatown -- there's been no planning for Chinatown.

Steph: We are looking for plaintiffs who can cover all the problems that will be faced, shadows, traffic congestion -- all the aspects mentioned in the zoning resolution. Tony Queylin and a few people from NMASS came forward. We have to speak again to the lawyer to coordinate with AALDEF's legal strategy. AALDEF has a fellowship so it is taking it on pro bono for now.

Fran : If we lose?

Shelly Silver (resident artist): In taking on the city, you'd only have to pay your lawyer.

Zishun: It's not just a lawsuit. It will have the support from the community. That's the leverage for a victory.

Steph: Lands End 2 residents had a meeting with the local community to talk about the LESON strategy. The response was positive. People want to talk to their neighbors about it. We're planning more outreach and public actions to mobilize. LESON is drafting an op ed explaining that Chin is complicit in selling off public resources, against the city charter, so there's an ethics problem. However, she sits on the Ethics Committee, so we're using this ethics complaint as publicity to show that she's doing the de Blasio's administration's dirty work for them. Then the following week we would have a rally to publicize the ethics violation.

Zishun: People can distinguish our strategy from Chin's -- her ULURP process is not intended to stop the towers but to allow her to negotiate with the developers for her political advantage. It's time to call her out.

### Discussions on Area A

rob: Eva Hanhardt, who wrote the CWG plan, mentioned to me that there are discussions again with DCP about area A, the core of Chinatown, but it's not clear who is included. If there are discussions, CWG should be included. Some years ago DCP made a commitment to area A but then dropped it completely. We should find out who is involved. We should ask the CB if they are involved. No doubt if DCP is talking to anyone it's talking to Margaret Chin. You can ask her publicly, maybe at a CB meeting.

### Jail proposal

Zishun: We asked their coalition to support the CWG plan. They are divided. One is an alliance below canal including residents of Chatham Green, CCBA, Victor Papa, Jan Lee and Chris Marte (he goes to all the meetings). They object to the speed of the process and the lack of consultation with the community. They want the process to start over again. They collected a petition and delivered it to Chin for a photo op. We think they just want to open the process to negotiation.

rob: Victor Papa wants something from it.

Zishun: The other alliance of tenants associations is saying a strong no to the jail. They want Chinatown to be protected as the East Village is. Their position is consistent with the CWG position. We should bring them into CWG.

rob: Maybe we should engage with both groups -- to keep tabs on what they are doing. What about the promise to give the Tombs building to the community?

### Outreach

Steph: We need flyers and a message. The message is the same: towers are illegal, call the city to enforce its laws. We could put any actions on the flyer.

Zishun: The Town Hall meeting will be early in December, to spread the word. It's a good time to bring in more people. December 12.

Steph: We could talk about the role of the plaintiff.

Zishun: Maybe we'll do it at Seward Park High or at the Abrams Center.

Andrew: Just a thought, not sure how viable: DSA might be able to do canvassing. We're focused on universal rent control but maybe we could do some joint canvassing.

Fran: NMASS has been doing local outreach in NYCHA including the Seward Park extension tower two days before the hearing. And outside St. Teresa Church.

### Events

Andrew: March Thursday Nov 15, the Housing Coalition is gathering support for strengthening rent regulations across the state when they are up for renewal this June. We'll march to the Rent Stabilization Board. Let me know if any of you want to speak at the event.

Fran: Let's decide that now.

Zishun agrees to speak at the march rally on behalf of CWG.

Fran: We spoke on the Rev. Billy radio program.

### Ballot proposals

The citizen budgeting and the community board proposals appear to be cynical ploys to increase mayoral control with a mayor-controlled sham budgeting board which will by-pass community boards, while eliminating the experienced members of community boards.

Meeting adjourned, 8:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
rob hollander, CWG Secretary