**Chinatown Working Group Meeting**

**May 6, 2019**

**6:30pm, 275 Cherry Street Community Room**

**Voting members present:** Chinese Staff & Workers Association (Zishun Ning, Vincent Cao); National Mobilization Against Sweatshops (Steph Kranes, Briar Winters, Francisca Benitez); 83-85 Bowery Tenants Association (Vincent Cao); Youth Against Displacement (Caitlin Kelmar, Steph Kranes, Zishun Ning); Land’s End 2 Residents Association (Mercer Jabul); Art Against Displacement (Vanessa Thill, Francisca Benitez, Caitlin Kelmar); Lower East Side Organized Neighbors (Arnette Scott)

**Also present:** Peizing Wang (Columbia Student Urban Studies); Joan Zhang (Columbia Student Urban Studies); Pei Zou Shih (Columbia Student Urban Studies); Ian Phillips (documentary filmmaker); Michael Cohen (citygroup architects)

Meeting called to order, 6:45pm, Steph Kranes (NMASS, YAD) facilitating.

**Agenda:**

-Long-term planning

-Election planning

-Updating the plan

-LESON hearing

-Outreach

-Soho/Noho

Fran moves to add:

-report from Jane’s Walk

-2017 Museum of City of New York’s exhibition about zoning (mentioned in CWG March meeting)

Agree to discuss these items first

**Jane’s Walk**

Fran, Briar & Mercer: Great feedback from attendees, and a report back from Jamie Chan, they said it was easier to visualize. Walk ended at NMASS. It was very intimate, people talking to one another, some NYU students attended.

Vanessa: Would there be a way to see your materials for those who couldn’t attend?

Fran: I will clean up our working document. It was framed in the struggle of Jane Jacobs and LOMEX, the walk included the sites of the proposed luxury towers, the high water mark from hurricane Sandy, NYCHA La Guardia Houses.

Vanessa: It would be great to turn this into an online resource.

Briar: Jung from DHCR came on the second day, he had info that we may want to mention to AALDEF (Home funding? Question about what this is?)

Fran: There was a walk done in the area by Rachael Mazur, from MAS, it was not well attended, maybe cause it was on a Friday, but there was strong interest in a walk organized against displacement, hearing from not just scholars.

Mercer: A lot of neighborhood residents attended, people from Madison Street.

Ian (a filmmaker who worked on the anti-Amazon campaign): I have video footage.

Vanessa: I’ll email you for that, someone named Kamille Johnson from AAD has web engineer experience. Perhaps we can make this into an online interactive resource.

Fran: Alessandra also has photos.

Briar: By the way, we are invited to the MAS celebration party and photo contest.

*- to do: share footage/notes and figure out a method to share info*

**Museum of the City of New York: Zoning exhibition (**<https://www.mcny.org/exhibition/mastering-metropolis>**)**

Fran (showing images she took at the exhibition, 2 years ago): This was an exhibition that looked at zoning in NYC from 1916-2016. Madeleine Jackson (NMASS/CWG member) kept encouraging us to go see it. It was a mainstream show (the show was co-sponsored by NYC Planning, Carl Weisbrod, etc) showing the evolution of zoning laws in NYC. But the relevant part for us was that at the end it asks where is zoning going? and there is a mention of community-led rezoning with a picture of one of the Coalition to Protect Chinatown against & LES protests at Gracie Mansion in 2015 due to De Blasio’s rejection of the CWG. These pictures were only a hint at community participation in the planning process, but it is significant that they were featured at all in this historical narrative.

Also, there were maps showing the amount of rezonings enacted in NYC from 2002- 2016 (map shows major rezoning all over NYC), so when they tell us “your plan is too ambitious” or “too large”, just look at the amount and sizes of those rezonings.

Briar: Were those upzonings?

Fran: These are both upzonings and downzonings depending on the neighborhood.

Briar: Let’s get in touch with the Museum of the City of New York to see if they want to explore it further. It would be interesting to find out who was behind the curatorial planning. There must have been someone sympathetic to us.

* *to do: reach out to the museum to find out contact*

\*update by Fran: the show curator was Andrea Renner; Associate curator Eric Goldwyn; Project Director Autumn Nyiri; Director of Exhibitions and Installation Todd Ludlam; Curatorial Associate Sara Spink; Exhibition Design MGMT design & Corey Yurkovich/William Watson; Illustrations MGMT design.

**Long term planning / Election planning**

Briar: We are moving toward elections! Is Steven Wong running in District 65, part D?

Vincent: No, he dropped out for District Leader.

Caitlin: Justin will be uncontested.

Briar: Is there anyone who is running that we can work with to advance our platform?

* *to do: research candidates*

Arnette: Daisy Paez might be running, maybe against Andrew Ford. Jonathan (on CB3), Aitza’s nephew (tenant leader of Smith housing).

Briar: The election is on June 25th

Fran: I will be working at Confucius Plaza (on election day).

Arnette: I will reach out to Daisy. I can ask her to come to the next CWG meeting on June 5.

Briar: Everyone look up your district to make sure we know what’s going on.

Steph: We are also gearing up for city council elections in 2021.

Briar: We want to create a platform and work together with other downtown groups. Michelle Rosenberg emailed about talking with Grand St Democrats, they want to hear what we are working on with the towers and have asked if someone can attend their meeting on Thursday May 16. They want a 15 min presentation from us, is that AAD/Coalition/CWG? Michelle thinks AAD shouldn’t be recruiting there because the group is not artists? Who is available to go?

Fran: It’s also the night of the dinner at NMASS.

*- to do: connect with Grand St Dems, need volunteer to attend 5/16 mtg*

Briar: We are starting to meet with people who are potential candidates for office, in tandem from Human Scale NYC. And DSA? Margaret Chin is done, so we must be strategic.

Steph: Long term, we should work on events leading up to the election and ways to showcase the citygroup visuals? Just more info about what the plan is. More public-facing materials to promote the CWG.

Briar: Are we working on a downtown platform that we can ask candidates to sign on to?

Zishun: The goal is to build alliances with groups from other neighborhoods downtown. It’s something similar to the Coalition platform with the demand to stop the towers. It’s a fight for community-led rezoning, working with Soho in particular.

Fran: I got an invite from Jei Fong, working on similar issues in Sunset Park.

Briar: We should still pursue those citywide links but for election we have to focus on this district for our representative.

**Group Coordination/Updating the plan**

Briar: Updating the plan is still to be done, we wanted to update demographics info.

Steph: We can get that from the census.

*- to do: find a volunteer who knows how to search for that info?*

Briar: The flier from Jane’s Walk needs to be updated as well.

Steph: I can ask Paula Crespo and Tom Angotti, Eve? at Pratt, about editable file.

Michael: If you email it to me I can update it.

*- to do: update the trifold flyer*

**Hearing**

Steph: The hearing will be at June 5, 10am. GOLES will be there, their lawsuit will be on the same hearing schedule as the Coalition. City Council’s lawyer will also be there, same schedule. There is now a 4th lawsuit being brought by the Two Bridges Townhouse Association. Jihae knows more about that.

Mercer: They used to be more active in showing up to things we were doing. I’m surprised they have a lawsuit. Info that had trickled down to me was that they had gotten something they had wanted, which was why they became less involved.

Steph: I think they filed it already so it should be available to read.

Fran: We need to work on getting people to come.

Briar: I will send out a save the date email to Lynn.

* *to do: send save the date email (can also go out to other email lists YAD, etc)*

Steph: There is no official capacity, the room may not fit a lot of people inside.

Fran: We will be outside!

Steph: We should have a press conference prior, maybe at 9:30am.

Caitlin: Let’s discuss this more on Wednesday.

**Outreach**

Vanessa: The stickers are ready for targeted outreach. We can also create a postcard version, perhaps with hearing info on the back.

Caitlin: Let’s discuss at the Coalition meeting.

Steph: We can do some small business outreach- bring some to SBJSA, dinner May 23 at 6 at Jing Fong. It would be a good event to give out stickers.

Briar: Will you create google dog to plan outreach?

Vanessa: Yes, we can go door to door.

*- to do: google doc to coordinate outreach for stickers*

Fran: In the outreach about that over the next month, make sure to emphasize hearing.

Steph: I have the flyer Ryan made I can email it.

**Noho / Soho rezoning**

Briar: Do you have an update about Soho?

Caitlin: Let’s invite someone to come speak about it at the next meeting, Someone from Save Soho, maybe Sean from Soho Alliance, or Broadway Neighbors?

* *to do: reach out to Soho group, invite to next meeting*

**Additional items:**

**CWG Quote for Press Conference**

Caitlin: Because the LESON lawsuit is the official lawsuit of the CWG, let’s vote on a quote that we can include in our press release. I will draft a quote and we can vote for it on the next meeting. Endorsers of the lawsuit will be quoted on the press release.

**Pressure on Public Advocate**

Mercer: So remember the new public advocate, Jumaane Williams?

Fran: I invited him to press conference (when we filed the lawsuit in March) but never heard back.

Arnette: I had the idea to do a sit-in at his office.

* *to do: reach out to Jumaane for support on CWG / lawsuit / etc. Decide on strategy?*

**Further publicity for CWG**

Michael: We applied for a grant, but if we get it, it will be in the fall, but we want to start working on it even if we don’t get it. It’s about publicizing the zoning plan. In the next month, we can set up meetings about this.

Fran: The stickers will begin to help with publicity since it links to the CWG website.

*- to do: set up meetings for CWG’s public-facing project*

Briar: I also want to get an Op-Ed published in the next month. Maybe I can ask Lynn to work on something.

Vanessa: Forgot to mention in person that Arnette and I will have a radio convo on Montez Press Radio about the Two Bridges fight on May 23, we can prioritize time-sensitive things to plug!

**Miscellaneous:**

Brief mention of the petition that the Coalition has created, which has begun to be circulated.

One more point about the New York State Association for Affordable Housing, who petitioned Cuomo to support the Williams pipeline in Rockaway. These luxury towers use fracked natural gas as well. Frustrating false choice- the governor's office will decide about the pipeline within the next two weeks.

Meeting adjourned, 7:50pm.

In absence of CWG’s Secretary Rob Hollander

minutes were taken by Vanessa Thill (AAD)

with minor edits from Francisca Benitez (AAD/NMASS)