

**DRAFT Minutes**  
**Chinatown Working Group Meeting**  
**January 7, 2019, 6:30pm, 275 Cherry Street Community Room**

**Voting members present:** Art Against Displacement (Francisca Benitez, Vanessa Thill); Bowery Alliance of Neighbors (Christina Glaviano); 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 (Caitlin Kelmar, Steph Kranes, Zishun Ning, Kai Wen Yang).

**Also present:** Hank Dombrowski; rob hollander (Lower East Side Residents for Responsible Development); Robert (Not One More Block); Susan Yung (artist).

Meeting called to order at 6:52pm, Hank Dombrowski facilitating.

Agenda

CWG review

Law Suits

MLK Day March

Public Advocate election

Amazon letter

Presentation to DSA Lower Manhattan Housing Committee

Agenda approved by all present without objection.

Minutes

Minutes approved by all present with typo corrections.

[Introductions]

Review

Fran Benitez (AAD, CLAAD, NMASS): Renew our commitment to the comprehensive plan for the neighborhood. What about direct action? Take it up a notch?

rob hollander (Secretary): CB<sub>3</sub> has a Chinatown Committee.

Caitlin Kelmar (YAD): It was created a couple of years ago.

rob: But now there's been some talk about rezoning Chinatown. We shouldn't leave it to the community board. Shouldn't we try to become a public member of the committee? Not to participate would be an abrogation of our responsibilities.

Caitlin: I went to one of their meetings. They were concerned more with the issues between CB<sub>3</sub> and CB<sub>2</sub> and not with the CWG plan. That was two years ago and so far as I know they haven't met since. It was mostly Trevor and Wellington Chen.

rob: I think that should concern us.

Caitlin: We should attend if they reconvene.

Kai Wen Yang (NMASS): Chin went to CB<sub>3</sub> thanking CB<sub>3</sub> and CWG for their work but said that she had her own plan. If you look at her plan it involves a rezoning only of a narrow portion of Chinatown. She refers to the Rebuild Chinatown Initiative, which is basically an AAFE plan from 2002- 2004. Their plan recommends privatization of NYCHA and building tall, slim buildings on the waterfront.

rob: After DCP rejected the CWG plan, Chin began working with Edith Hsu-Chen at DCP to rezone Chinatown. That plan was dropped. But a few months ago, Eva Hanhardt, who wrote the CWG Plan, told me that there are new discussions about Chinatown. We seem to be out of the informational loop. They are doing things without us.

Robert: Their tactic is to create division within the community to 'divide and conquer'.

Hank: It's good to identify your enemy. It's good to be present to hear what they are up to.

Zishun: We have been active and successful with the 83-85 Bowery struggle. We mobilized around the waterfront towers and held a town hall. We are holding back the development. We spoke to Stringer with Yuh-Line Niou. He said, "Zoning is power." Even if we were on the CB committee, and they wanted to exclude us, they'd just talk behind our back. So we can always go to the public meetings, and if they act shiftily, we can still call them out.

Hank: Are you saying that it would be counterproductive to expend energy on them?

Zishun: We can keep an eye on them, attend their meetings.

Caitlin: We should continue to outreach to former members, show them that we're active, have a new website and invite them to return.

Steph Kranes (NMASS): We can have a public presence at events.

Hank: It bothers me that people refer to the “city” when it’s really the corporate raiders who are raiding the public assets. It’s confusing language. The mayor is a corporate raider. It’s not the city that’s doing this.

Caitlin: None of this would happen unless it came from the top.

Robert: Marissa Lago worked at Citibank. She left just before the financial crisis. I too have been thinking about language, for example “development.” Can we reclaim the language?

Christina Glaviano (BAN): I think of chain stores, luxury stores and big businesses -- are these what the people of the city really want?

rob: The problem with the EIS is that the developers wrote it for DCP. So the reason why the EIS shows that there wouldn’t be much displacement is because the EIS excluded Chinatown from its study area, and Chinatown is the area vulnerable to displacement, not the waterfront. So I want to know what’s the objection to CWG having a public member on the CB<sub>3</sub> committee? All of this happened because the CWG did not step up and prevent CB<sub>3</sub> from letting DCP to divide the plan. Because we weren’t there. Instead, MyPhuong was there.

Caitlin: There’s no objection to going to these meetings.

Steph: If we become members we are compromised.

rob: GOLES publicly voted against the Seward Park Urban Renewal Plan. They weren’t compromised.

Kai: To flip the question, Why are they not here?

Hank: Going to different groups creates a confusing mass chaos. We should grow our group. Can we talk about language?

rob: We’ll put language on the agenda for the next meeting.

#### Lawsuit

Steph: LESON has all of the plaintiff statements. We submitted the statements to our lawyer, who will file the lawsuit by the end of January.

#### MLK march

Zishun: We will start at the Extell tower. We have invited groups across the city -- the groups against Amazon, the resistance to the Inwood rezoning, and other groups to hold

the mayor accountable. We end at City Hall. We also invited elected officials and candidates with a pledge against de Blasio's agenda.

Kai: David Eisenbach will definitely sign.

rob: Extell was Bloomberg....

### Public Advocate election

Caitlin: Petitioning is over this week. We'll know at the end of this week who will be on the ballot. David Eisenbach has been attending many of our events for a couple of years. Denis O'Donnell RSVP'ed for the town hall.

### Amazon letter

Fran: [Reads the letter]

Vanessa Thill (AAD): I like the idea, but I'm not sure about not communicating with Amazon or anyone aligned with Amazon.

Zishun: We met with their coalition. We asked what the target is. Should it be Amazon or the mayor, to bring in the wider context and more groups. That was our suggestion to them.

rob: There must be many other groups opposing Amazon. DSA has been attending CWG. Where does DSA stand?

Caitlin: DSA has been working with a different group.

Vanessa: The only sticking point is not allowing any communication with elected officials.

Fran: Maybe we should see who attends our march and talk to them before we decide. Let's take it to our respective groups and discuss.

Zishun: We can do that.

### DSA

Caitlin & rob will attend and present the CWG history and plan to DSA.

Fran: Michele de la Uz was the only City Planning Commissioner who voted against the developers. Should we talk to her?

rob: She was the head of the 5th Avenue Committee in Brooklyn. She supports communities against developers.

Caitlin: We should be cautious with someone who works for City Planning.

rob: She doesn't work for City Planning -- she's a commissioner.

Caitlin: The mayor is writing her check.

rob: are you sure she's paid by the mayor?

Hank: What can we say to the new people? How can they help?

Robert: How can we support?

Steph: Come to the march and bring five people with you. Bring signs!

Meeting adjourned, 8:15  
Respectfully submitted,  
rob hollander, CWG Sec'y