

DRAFT Minutes
Chinatown Working Group Meeting
April 6, 2020, 6:30pm, Zoom Conferencing

Voting members present: Art Against Displacement (Francisca Benitez, Vanessa Thill); Chinese Staff & Workers Association (Zishun Ning)

Also present: Grace Lee (resident); Rob Hollander (Lower East Residents for Responsible Development); Fannie Ip (East River Park Action); Andrew Hiller (Democratic Socialists of America); Loan Tran (resident); Jen Chantrtanapichate (Sixth Street Center); Yue Ha (guest); Susan Yung (Gowanus Canal Community Advisory Group)

Meeting called to order, 6:30pm Susan Yung facilitating

Open agenda:

Fran: Gave a pitch for Census taking that rather than door to door census taking during the pandemic, it is quicker to respond by internet; phone, mail, However, it does not make illegal immigrants accountable where door to door can be more explicit.

Zishun: The Coalition reports about small businesses & press conference for workers and small businesses to file unemployment applications which of course is over loaded. Must encourage Federal govt to expand its policies. Especially for Nail Salon workers where there barely are no business.

In comparison, the Coalition to Protect Chinatown and Lower East Side in 9/11 did a lot of relief work within Chinatown. However, it's not enough and only limited to Chinatown businesses as oppose to no relief north of Canal St.

The city & state had started displacement since 9/11. Always whenever there is a bad situation as in "this crises", State officials push bills for 3 months that actually subsidizes the landlords.

Andrew: Questions the coalition in how to activate community?

Zishun: Holding rent & encourage paying other bills during a rent strike

Grace Lee: Will there be press conference for undocumented workers as well as using crowd sourcing? Demand a petition; most unreliable population like home attendants to ascertain that impact home care workers. Need larger relief.

Jen: questions Real Estate ... As a member of a community center, we are unable to pay workers for non profit, small loans with interest. There are pay check programs due to Care Act of SVA for payroll to small businesses and non profits.(?)

Vanessa: Follow up with project

Rob: Community Partnership will look up

Grace Lee: How about using digital Zoom with coalition?

Rob: Virtual meeting can be troublesome when there are those with no computer connections & what can CWG do?

Zishun: Big concerns for those with no communication except to talk to people who have no context, no protection & (?)

Rob: How about moratorium?

Zishun: Attempted strikes are essential to workers who recognize the abuses and still being abused to speak out as well to be heard. There should be better correlations of long standing issues with recent & present issues. There are many discontentments and how to connect with other political movements?

Vanessa: How to make into a political act?

Jen: making a DSA plug for: Housing Justice for All had developed rent strike tool kits.

Andrew: It does its part but has not reached Chinatown yet in combining labor and housing.

Rob: Zoning plan and waterfront is CWG's main interests and need to explain to other groups of its importance to prevent gentrification .

Zishun: Working groups with other different groups is goal to form a coalition. And in addition to establish relief funds rather than bailout landlords. To prepare a working plan for long term with rent strikes and to prevent displacements. Ultimately, the final solution is to support CWG's planning proposal.

Andrew: There is a backlog of evictions that need rent cancellation during pandemic.

Zishun: Housing Courts are judgmental to tenants not paying rent as individual cases. We must go beyond individual cases and continue promoting CWG policies.

Rob: DSA or number of groups for rezoning battles.

Andrew: DSA supports legislation for tenants and most activities.

Starting May 1st to have massive rent strike and direct support for political bills. There are no explicit legislators to question a budget for tenant relief. (Before closing State budget.)

Vanessa: tool kit blurring line of breaking law with demands is stressful problem for displacements to understand crises and prevent such crises occurring

Zishun: need to formulate next move necessary beyond rent strikes while gov't is messing up.

Andrew: So far 86,000 signatures for rent strike and pressure the gov't.

Jen: 6th St Coalition for food provides mutual aid and coordinate (?)

Zishun: Lawsuit of Mega towers is being appealed by developers so need further finances to appeal further postponement.

Time to Adjourn

Susan Yung, Sec'y Pro Tem