

DRAFT Minutes
Chinatown Working Group Meeting
April 1, 2019, 6:30pm, 275 Cherry Street Community Room

Voting members present: 83-85 Bowery Tenants Association (Vincent Cao); National Mobilization Against Sweatshops (Steph Kranes, Briar Winters); Youth Against Displacement (Caitlin Kelmar, Steph Kranes).

Also present: Lazar Bloch (Democratic Socialists of America); Andrew Hiller (Democratic Socialists of America); rob hollander (Lower East Side Residents for Responsible Development); Susan Yung (artist).

Meeting called to order, 6:50pm, Steph Kranes (NMASS, YAD) facilitating.

AGENDA

Steph: Briar wants to add to the agenda.

Briar Winters (NMASS): Long range planning.

LAW SUIT AND PRESS

NEWSLETTER

EMAIL LIST

EAST VILLAGE COMMERCIAL REZOING

LONG RANGE PLANNING

CWG PLAN REVISION

Agenda approved by all present with no objections.

LAW SUIT AND PRESS

Steph: AALDEF says the court will follow the city's timeline. We expect to get a response from CPC to the suit in April. Then AALDEF will respond to it. In May there should be a hearing on the law suit. We should plan for that to mobilize the community into the courtroom.

We neglected to approve the March minutes.

MARCH MINUTES

Susan Yung (artist): I felt I was misquoted.

rob hollander (LESRRD): Send me the changes and I'll add them to the minutes. [See the addendum attached.]

THE LAWSUIT cont.

Andrew Hiller (DSA): I was impressed with the amount of press attention.

Briar: The suit asserts that the changes that are being done are inappropriately being treated as minor, rather than major, changes, and according to the zoning law the environmental impacts are disallowed.

rob: Is there a pdf of the law suit?

Steph: Yes. I can forward it to Susan.

NEWSLETTER

Briar: Caitlin and I discussed whether to include the law suit. She had reservations about including it. I thought there should be something very simple and brief. Has everyone seen the newsletter rob sent around?

rob: I made a suggestion.

Briar: I made that change of ordering of items in the newsletter. We started with our raising awareness of the plan through marches and rallies, creation of the new website, recruiting of new members, screening movies for the public at the Seward Park Library. [Reads the proposed brief paragraph on the law suit:] *Last year, the CWG voted to endorse the legal strategy put forward by the neighborhood group LESON (Lower East Side Organized Neighbors) to stop the luxury towers proposed for the Two Bridges area. On March 22nd 2019, LESON filed their lawsuit against the city for violating zoning law, and we look forward to following the case as it moves forward.* Is everyone okay with this?

rob: One more sentence introducing the issue and how important it is?

Briar: Something to distinguish the LESON suit from the others?

Steph: How the towers violate the zoning. And something like “these towers are an example of what would never have been allowed in the first place if the CWG plan had been accepted and implemented by the city” to show why CWG is necessary -- to prevent these towers and others like it.

rob: Can we see this version within the week for review?

Briar: Yes.

EMAIL LIST

rob: I've streamlined the two email lists so anyone can use it. I don't see any reason why I should be the only person controlling it. At the very least the co-chairs should have access to it. There is a certain amount of sensitivity to a large email list.

Briar: Yes, I don't think a lot of people should have the list, but at least there should be more than one person controlling it.

rob: The two lists are an 81-person list of active members and a larger list from Zella with dead addresses deleted.

COMMERCIAL REZONING

rob: I emailed Harry Bubbins, but it turns out that this is not a GVSHP initiative but a EVCC one. I no longer have any close contact with the new administration at the EVCC. My impression from CB3 meeting records is they are nowhere near implementing it. I'll ask Damares at GOLES for more details.

LONG-RANGE PLANNING

Briar: Zishun and I were discussing how to prioritize our limited resources. Aside from supporting the law suit, what should we be promoting.

rob: Linking to other groups city-wide.

Briar: DSA was going to have town hall.

Andrew: We're not going ahead with that because there's another town hall on rent control that Cooper Square has organized and it seems to be covering the same issues and direction and intent. We plan to include CWG issues when we table in the coming weeks.

Steph: There are upcoming environmental events throughout the city. I can share information on these.

Briar: Charles at Lungs may be of help. Lungs will be holding an Earth Day event at various gardens and ending on Avenue C on April 14. They are inviting people to table. The Coalition will be there.

We need to work with local groups to plan for the elections. Caitlin is in touch with the SoHo-NoHo group.

rob: What about zoning issues across the city?

Briar: Zishun and I were thinking about the importance of connecting to other local downtown groups like Lynn Ellsworth's Human Scale. She's close to the Democratic clubs, which may be useful. Also we're looking to expand the membership. Citygroup, the architects who attended last month, is applying for a grant to help with visualizing the plan. DSA is thinking of joining.

Andrew: Yes, it's on our agenda for this month.

Steph: We're thinking of decals for small businesses.

Briar: Caitlin has been collecting signatures for Stephen Wong who is running for District Leader.

Vincent Cao (83-85 Bowery Tenants Association): He's from the Chinese Hotel Association.

Briar: He promoted Chris Marte's candidacy.

rob: The Hotel Association was a member of CWG.

[Caitlin arrives.]

Briar: Zishun and David Tieu have been drafting a platform that they would like downtown groups to sign on to. It could be city-wide too, but they'd like it to focus on the coming elections. I'm sure they'd welcome your assistance. We'd like to get a draft out for distribution soon.

Caitlin: I have a draft. Also, whenever we promote LESON we should include mention of the CWG. We need to be more vocal and visible and make clear our associations to make clear where the CWG stands in relation to distinct strategies and players. We should not be negative about other strategies, but be clear that CWG is supporting the LESON strategy and that any strategy that doesn't promote the entire plan is not consonant with CWG's goals. I suspect that some GOLES members are not aware of the history or the implications of partitioning the plan, so I'm eager to meet with them. I still see opportunity for all the players and groups to work together.

Vincent: It's important to find the right target, otherwise we spend our resources fighting some landlord or developer in court, when the source of the problem is City Hall.

Caitlin: In all our Two Bridges work, we always mention CWG, but CWG itself has to be more vocal about it.

rob: Who's meeting with GOLES?

Caitlin: Tanya, Julian and me.

Briar: How shall we move this electoral plan forward? Complete the platform. Maybe each of us can take a group to connect with. What about social media?

Caitlin: We're in a unique position, having already completed and submitted a community-based plan that the city has rejected, while other groups are still in their initial stage of advocating for their community-based plan.

Steph: Click on our website chinatownworkinggroup.com to raise our search profile.

Meeting adjourned, 7:58pm.

Respectfully submitted,
rob hollander
Secretary, CWG

ADDENDUM

Amendment to the March minutes:

“Susan: I saw on a website called ”Think! Chinatown” that Margaret Chin is trying to set up a new community arts center with Chinese opera and other traditional arts. It was difficult to become a member unless you're an artist associated with another art group, so I used Minerva's Drawing Studio. Then I was invited to a ULURP workshop that further explained the new prison to be built at 125 White St. next to a senior citizen residential. Towards the end of the workshop exercise, participants were encouraged to rally on March 25th, 2019, 10am at City Hall. I never got any further information about the rally.”