

Minutes of the Chinatown Working Group (CWG)
10am to 12pm, Friday, November 7, 2008
South Bridge Towers Community Room

Attendees (See Attached Sign-In Sheet):

ORGANIZATIONS (Representatives): Asian Americans For Equality (Chris Kui, Richard Lee); CAAAV/Chinatown Tenants Union (Helena Wong); CCRC/Hamilton Madison House (Jan Lee); Chai Educational Network (Jack Bloom); Chinatown Partnership (Wellington Chen); Chinese Progressive Association (Mae Lee); Chinatown Manpower Project (Pearl Chin, Stephanie Lau); CREATE in Chinatown (Amy Chin); LMBSC (C.K. Chung); MCAD Associates Ltd. (Maria Ammirato); Municipal Art Society (Eve Baron); Two Bridges (Victor Papa); Margaret Chin

PUBLIC OFFICIALS (Representatives): Mayor Bloomberg (Pauline Yu, Claudia Filomena); Assembly Speaker Silver (Michael Chan, Karen He); Council Speaker Quinn (Jasper Li); City Comptroller Thompson (Sandra Ung); MBP Stringer (Jen Hong, Greg Kirschenbaum); State Senator-Elect Squadron (Alex DeLisi)

COMMUNITY BOARD (Representatives): CB#1 (Planning Fellow Kasey LaFlam); CB#2 (James Solomon); CB#3 (Pearl Chin, John Leo, Susan Stetzer)

MEDIA (Representatives): *Sing Tao Daily* (Lotus Chao, Jacky Wong)

I Update on Recent Developments

1. RE. Research for CWG. Chairperson James Solomon introduced Kasey LaFlam, CB #1's Urban Planning Fellow, who will be contributing five hours/week to the CWG. Kasey is currently working on a simplified zoning analysis of Chinatown, which she will present to the full committee in December. Chairperson Solomon also reported that Joyce Moy (AAARI/CUNY) is seeking to raise funds for a demographic, economic and social analysis of Chinatown including a matrix comparing data from previous Chinatown studies.
2. Chairperson Solomon reported that Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer and his staff met on October 23, 2008 with CB #1, #2 & #3's representatives to the CWG plus the chairs of CB1 & 3. The BP requested the meeting to express his enthusiasm/support for the CWG. He emphasized that the CWG should be a community-based initiative; encouraged all three CB's representing Chinatown to actively participate in this endeavor; offered to personally reach out to community leaders to urge them to join the CWG; and pledged his office's assistance on land use and other matters.
3. CWG members reported on a recent meeting of Chinatown community leaders convened by Councilmember Alan J. Gerson's office. The purpose was to gather feedback on the EV/LES Rezoning plan. Several CWG members expressed a concern the meeting was "closed" and called on the Councilmember to clarify the intent of the discussion to the CWG. (Gerson has since indicated he will meet with the CWG Steering Committee on Nov. 13.) Acknowledging that communication styles can vary, CWG states for the record that it is open to any and all airings of opinion be it by email, public discourse, direct dialogue with CWG's Chairperson, or smaller sub-group discussions. CWG's goal is to have a broad-based sharing of ideas in as large a community forum as possible.

4. CWG meeting minutes will be sent to current and former attendees in a blind copy email. Meeting sign-in sheets will be included as an attachment to the minutes.

II Draft Mission Statement

1. A draft mission statement prepared by James Solomon was distributed for review and recommendations. Suggestions included:
 - Underscore, in last paragraph, that CWG is community-based and emerges out of active input by community members
 - Craft a shorter condensed version for ease of everyday use
 - Use pro-active language in the condensed version (ex. 'Chinatown Working Group is a coalition to produce a community-based plan, etc.)
 - Highlight the fact that greater Chinatown includes non-Asian ethnic populations
 - Include some action or implementation steps
 - Reference Chinatown's origins as an historic gateway for diverse immigrants (e.g. New York's oldest Jewish cemetery is in Chinatown)
 - Stress Chinatown's role as vital link to nearby neighborhoods, infrastructure, and development
 - Establish CWG's identity in opening paragraph rather than later in the narrative
 - Name targeted audience/service group (e.g. residents, businesses, visitors, etc.)

ACTION: James Solomon will revise the draft mission statement per CWG suggestions. A revised draft will be presented for review at the next Steering Committee meeting (Nov. 13).

2. Mission Statement will be revised but will remain as a draft pending CWG approval until such time that CWG has adopted a formal voting structure.

III Discuss Boundaries of Chinatown (Working Group)

1. As an initial step in defining the geographic area that CWG will study, attendees were asked to consider:
 - Will it encompass only Chinatown or also parts of the Lower East Side?
 - Is it limited to areas outside of the Lower East Side Rezoning?
 - Are issues of transportation, tenant advocacy, open space, historic preservation, and other interests also to be included?

Jen Hong distributed a map of the general area for group discussion. (See attached.) The purpose of this exercise is to gather input on a general boundary as defined by CWG. Jen will compile the group's input for review at the next meeting.

ACTION: Draw solid boundary lines demarcating your concept of a proposed Chinatown study area. Other notations regarding areas of local priority, special types of districts, preservation concerns, etc. should be included. Please fax or email your completed maps to Jen at JHONG@manhattanbp.org or 212-669-7862. (ASAP, but no later than Nov. 21, 2008)

NOTE: Use dark highlighter/marker if faxing; use dashed line for other 'special' districts for consideration; write notes in the margins or attach a written description if desired.

IV Governance

CWG does not yet have a formal governance structure. Participants represent themselves as individuals unless they have authority to represent the views of their organizations.

ACTION: A subcommittee consisting of James Solomon, Eve Baron, Jen Hong, Chris Kui, Victor Papa and Susan Stetzer will draft a proposed governance, membership and voting structure for CWG, which will be presented at our full committee meeting in December. Please note that voting structure/governance will be the main topic of discussion at the next CWG Steering Committee meeting (November 13, 2008)

V Community Outreach

It was noted that CWG meetings regularly includes strong representation from governmental bodies, but greater community participation is still needed for this to be a truly inclusive effort.

ACTION: All current participants are asked to recommend individuals and organizations in the community who should be involved in CWG. Names and contact information should be submitted to James Solomon who will reach out to them. The Manhattan Borough President has also expressed a willingness to call these individuals personally.

VI Other Announcements:

1. CBs 1, 2, and 3 are holding a joint public presentation and hearing regarding the redesign of Chatham Square at 6pm, Friday, December 2nd at P.S. 124, 40 Division Street. Some CWG members requested this hearing be postponed until after Chinese New Year, but Susan Stetzer indicated if the redesign is to have any impact on other related infrastructure improvements planned or soon to be underway (e.g. reconstruction of Brooklyn Bridge), it is necessary to hold it now. CWG members are asked to urge community attendance/input.
2. Council Districts 1 and 2 together with CB3 are holding a public forum on rats on Wednesday, November 19th from 6:30-8:30pm at P.S.63, 121 East 3rd St. (See attached.)
3. Two Bridges Neighborhood Council is undertaking a study to designate Chinatown and Little Italy as historic districts. Contact Victor Papa for more information. (See attached)
4. Any items for future upcoming meeting agendas should be submitted to James Solomon.

MINUTES COMPILED BY: Amy Chin

NEXT CWG STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING:

Thursday, November 13th, 4pm-5pm at CB1 Office, 49 Chambers Street, Room 709
(Normally, meetings are on the second Tuesday of every month at 4pm, however Tues, Nov. 11 is a holiday)

NEXT CWG GENERAL MEETINGS:

Monday, December 1st, 4pm to 6pm, Location TBD

Monday, January 5th, 4pm to 6pm, Location TBD

(Normally, meetings are on the first Friday of every month at 10am, however, date and time change for next two meetings have been changed to encourage greater participation from other sectors of the community)