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Chinatown Working Group Full Meeting
Monday, February 14, 2011 - 4:00 pm
Minutes

Present:

American Legion (Gabe Mui), Asian American Arts Centre (Robert Lee), Asian American Legal & Defense Education Fund (Bethany Li), Asian Americans For Equality (Douglas Le), Bowery Alliance of Neighbors (Mitchell Grubler), CAAAV (Esther Wang), Chatham Square Library (Marie Coughlin), Chinatown Partnership LDC (Wellington Chen), Chinatown YMCA (Glenn McAfee), Chinese Progressive Association (Mae Lee), Chinese Staff & Workers Assn (Wendy Cheung, Josephine Lee), Community Board 1 (Michael Levine), Community Board 2 (Antony Wong), Community Board 3 (Gigi Li), CREATE in Chinatown (Amy Chin), Immigrant Social Services (Victor Papa), Manhattan Borough President's Office (Lin Zeng), Noho Manhattan (Zella Jones), NYC Department of City Planning (Reza Tehranifar), Sing Tao Daily (Ray Du) Two Bridges Neighborhood Council (Wilson Soo), World Journal (?), My Phuong Chung, Norma Ramirez, Rob Hollander, Susan Yung

Gigi announced that the meeting is being recorded by a device attached to the microphone. She reminded all that minutes would be written up from the recording so that all should speak into the microphone

Gigi Li announced that the Jan 2011 minutes not ready, so meeting will proceed to item #3.

Michael Levine spoke of four different approaches to community planning (based upon recommendations from Dept. of City Planning). (This presentation was given at a previous CWG meeting):

- 1) District service cabinet
- 2) Local zoning proposal (197c zoning amendment),
- 3) Develop a task force to work on a series of interrelated issues (interagency task force – elected, comm. Reps, reps from city agencies sit on this task force),
- 4) comprehensive 197a – gets passed by the city council and becomes a compelling document for

He also stated that the three Preliminary Action Plans (parks/open space, immigration/social services, education/schools) have become Action Plans (APs) by virtue of being approved by full CWG. He proposed CWG should follow strategy 3 for these plans on the way to a 197a plan which is ultimate goal in the future.

Victor: this gives CWG an opportunity to move toward while deciding other issues. He moved to begin adopting a more progressive approach. He proposed a task force of representatives from these 3 workteams to identify agencies CWG can dialogue with.

Mae: plans of 3 workteams cover many of the same city agencies. This will help avoid duplication of work.

Governance committee update

Gigi introduced items to be discussed both the consensus and non-consensus items. She stated that non consensus item being reviewed in order to open decision making to larger group

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Gap...

Mae reminded all that at last meeting members voted to extend co-chair terms to end of March with following timeline being outlined:

Today – discuss proposal

Next few weeks – organizations consider and consult

March - Vote on proposals

April – Elections

Still behind schedule that is why there are 2 different documents (consensus/nonconsensus)

Mission (reviewed by Mae)

Governance committee report presented by Rob Hollander

He listed some of the people who had participated in the meetings over the past few months: Victor Papa, Doug Woodward, Zella Jones, Danny Chin, Jeanie Chin, Jan Lee, Josephine Lee, Michael Lalan, K webster, Paul Gong, Elisa Espiritu, Wilson Soo, Susan, Rick Leung, John Leo, Mae Lee, Gigi Li, Bob Lee, Bethany Li, Esther Wang. (might be missing some others).

Rob gave an overview of process committee went through. One perspective – heavy work load requires work of co-chairs needed to be redistributed. Another perspective - responsibilities, information, decision making rested with co-chairs and needed to be redistributed as well. Result – proposal to renamed “steering committee” to “coordinating committee” with a number of officers

Committee also identified a need for continuous identifiable clear leadership so that city agencies, CWG members know who to appeal to. Some felt need for more participation and “rotating co-chairs was suggested. Since these two are incompatible, a compromise was suggested: Executive co-chairs who provide continuity and ___ ; a rotating plenary facilitator responsible to keep order, present agenda.

Committee created Community Board 1, 2, 3 liaison positions. One co-chair doesn’t have to come from a CB. Reasoning is that this open chairperson position up a bit while still giving CB’s a place in coordinating committee

Other positions: Membership coordinator, Treasurer, Fundraising team plus point person, Parliamentarian/process monitor, archivist, workteam chairs, and chairs of any task forces and committees created later on

Proposed coordinating committee responsibilities: come together to share information (create tentative agendas for meetings, give guidance to cochairs. Rob described it as giving information and helping cochairs in their jobs. Policy decisions to be made by vote of full group. There is an administrative assistant position. Voting process remains open question. Rob reported that another membership criteria was added to allow other groups to join: 50% of residents in building sign on to so that building could become member.

Questions and answers were taken for consensus document.

Michael Levine – what if coordinating committee doesn’t agree on agenda item? How does coordinating committee resolve them if they don’t vote. Rob said that it was not discussed. He suggested that in such a situation, it might be put on agenda anyway and full group decides.

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Zella – re voting/quorum. She expressed concern about attendance. Zella felt that 50% requirement was too low because many meetings could be missed. She stated that the establishment of quorum still needs to be fleshed out and that attendance problems need to be addressed. She stated that democracy depends upon attendance and participation.

Michael Lalan - other important issues are types of participating organizations, voting structure, membership requirements

Esther - the attendance requirements she suggested was very reasonable they were intended to be a minimum. She also stated she agrees with sentiment that CWG should have more representation. She stated CAAAV's proposal of alternative membership criteria creates opportunities for greater representation, voting, and participation from tenants and workers. Also feels that CWG should go back to list of groups who are voting members and see who has participated, and those who haven't should be stricken from ability to vote.

Mae – attendance requirement should be put in a time frame, there would be a process for purging members (i.e. advance notification, being put on “probation” etc)

Other

Elected positions – could be combined. Admin asst could be folded into the other position unless CWG hires an admin asst.

Zella – the spirit of her comment was to be more inclusive and that votes should have the most numbers of people in a vote, so that as many people as possible have a representation in voting

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Mitchell – disagrees that there should be 2 reps. Maybe can be one plus alternate. Asked about CWG catchment area.

Gap.....

Michael Levine – CWG has used the words - “greater chinatown area” to include as many areas as possible. Recommends this as way to deal with issue

Norma? – community has to be more, many people interested in coming. Expressed everyone should seek more participation. She asked for further clarification on thinking process and various opinions of governance committee.

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Rob explained that governance committee was divided into 2-3 camps of opinion, although not clear cut all the time on every point. Also some did not express opinion in either way.

Wendy echoed importance of membership issues and meeting times.

Victor and Zella presented their document relating to leadership body. [Gap]..... Zella summarized – one of co-chairs is from community board, supports idea of recording secretary and archivist as officers, adopts standards for record keeping and duties of secretary. She invited people to read and consider. Stated that though governance committee didn't get a chance to discuss this document, suggests that this be added. The only difference is issue of co-chair from community board, rest of this document is supplemental to governance committee proposal

Coalition's weighted voting proposal was explained by Josephine Lee. In proposal, different sectors are identified: low income working families in Chinatown/Lower East Side w/median income of \$35k, moderate income working families, community driven small ethnic businesses, small property owners, other non-member organizations, community activists, larger developers with 10 or more properties. In the proposal distinctions between different organizations are made about organizations: membership based or not, whether or not board of directors comes from organization, who makes decisions in organization, where organization's money comes from, would be. This proposal still in flux. She stated that this is something similar to the U.S. House of Representatives. Organizations that represent larger populations get more votes. Votes of each category has different weights.

Michael Lalan stated that current composition of CWG is not representative enough and that their weighted voting proposal ensures greater voting power to certain groups and would therefore attract those groups to join.

Rob Hollander - Esther's proposal allowing tenant association and groups that don't meet on regular basis would help bring in more ordinary people of Chinatown to join CWG. He said it was a useful proposal so that is why there was consensus on it

Amy Chin stated that weighted voting proposal seemed unscientific and incomplete, asked about high income families, since they are part of community. Josephine said they would consider and incorporate.

Douglas Le – would like to see expansion of what membership is to include tenant groups and those less organized.

Josephine - their proposal voting is weighted by category e.g. 10 in one category they all share that category.

Gigi – we have sense of what is done and what needs to be done. She reminded everyone that co chairs are in their position through April meeting. Governance committee would have solidified proposal but there still

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needs to be some refinement. She asked for thoughts on moving forward. She reminded everyone that other work still needs to be done – action plans, (transportation, CAPZ, economic development).

Victor –regarding elections, governance, the 3 work teams whose plans have been approved. He stated that nothing has occurred that constitutionally prevents CWG from moving 3 workteam plans enumerated in item 3. He stated that CWG is not prevented from continuing to decide what happens to leadership. CWG has right to allow governance discussion to take place and at same time does not prevent CWG from continuing its work.

Victor: governance committee had put two concrete things on table – leadership and membership questions that can be voted on. He suggests CWG to take action on it. He stated that while members are becoming more dismayed and fatigued, CWG has not lost ability to move things forward. He reported that CAPZ has heard one zoning proposal and is waiting for another one.

Rob emphasized that progress has been made in governance proposals - 2 out of 3 parts pretty much done, CWG workteams teams need to come back and start working and moving forward. Coalition still has to present on zoning, affordability team needs to present.

Michael asked for clarification is there would be another governance committee meeting to come up with a final version. Gigi said there would be. Mae suggested coordinating committee and membership requirements should be voted upon. Victor: at least a few people drafts comprehensive document to present to body at next meeting.

Josephine – some issues need more discussion Said they can have something by March.

Gigi summarizes – next month there will be 2 governance meetings, one to compile one cohesive doc on leadership, 1 on voting concepts. Will be presented on March 7. As for CAPZ - a CAPZ meeting to be held between today and March 7. Voting on governance will take place at full group meeting on April 4

Victor – there is an urgent need to make progress. There is representative from city planning commission. CWG wants to show that it is very determined to submit a 197a plan. There should be explicit statement/resolution that those 3 working teams will form an integrated interagency committee to discuss ideas from those plans. CWG wants to be clear that this will happen.

Gigi announced next meetings – March 7 and April 4. Stated that while cochairs will work to maximize attendance, everyone should reach out to other CWG members to urge them to attend.

Submitted by Mae Lee from recording

("Gap..." = part of meeting not recorded because speaker did not speak into recording device)