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Chinatown Working Group Immigrant Affairs/Social Services Work Team Meeting Minutes

Date: June 4, 2009

Time: 4:30 pm

Place: Community Board 1, 49-51 Chambers Street

Present:

Elizabeth Adam (Joint Public Affairs Committee Jewish Association for Services of the Aged), Fanny Chan (MFY Legal Services), Mae Lee (Chinese Progressive Association), Gigi Li (Community Board 3), Han Wong Lee (LDS Missionaries), Bonnie Li (Ming Pao Daily News), Hiroko Tachibana (Council Member Alan Gerson's office)

Report and feedback on June 1 Town Hall

Gigi provided a brief report of the Town Hall held on Monday, June 1st at PS 124. The event was attended by close to 200 people. About 100 surveys were returned and data is in the process of being compiled. A wide array of issues and concerns were voiced by attendees. Among the key issues raised that touches upon immigration and social services is housing rights. Tenants of 11 Essex St. described a forced eviction where they had 4 hours to vacate their apartments and were relocated hours away without consideration for the needs of the senior citizens. An additional issue that was raised focuses on the accessibility of accurate information to the immigrant population. Looking ahead, CWG would like each working team to develop tasks and action plans to address the concerns raised.

Next steps

Mae Lee reported that one of the things the work team should think about is how to increase participation in the work team and the working group. Possible solutions could changes in meeting time to evenings or even fundamental changes in the way the meetings are conducted

The idea of merging with another work team was raised as a way to facilitate further involvement. It was agreed that the priority issues that had been discussed in the April 2 and May 14 meetings intersected with the following 5 work teams: education, affordability, economic development, zoning, parks. Work team members could not decide upon one single work team with whom the issues were most closely connected. However, most of the discussion centered around education (schools), affordability (housing), and economic development (workplace and jobs)

After some discussion, the work team also identified two other equally important areas that were specific to immigrants but not addressed by any work team.

- 1) Need for dissemination of reliable, accurate legal information for immigrants
- 2) Need to for greater support of immigrant families, immigrant youth, and immigrant senior citizens in our community

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Fanny Chan stressed that there is a need for more community-wide education about employment rights. She asked if the CWG or the work team could host forums or workshops about this topic. It was suggested that an event to increase participation in the CWG and foster more thinking about long-term solutions for Chinatown should include education about basic immigrant rights in the workplace, in housing, and other areas. This could serve two purposes - provide useful/vital information and attract more people to attend the event and participate.

Announcements:

Han Lee Wong announced that LDS Missionaries is looking for appropriate volunteer opportunities for their youth members who have a variety of interests. Gigi Li suggested that the CWG full meeting may be a good place to make an announcement.

It was announced that the next CWG full meeting will be held on Monday July 13 at 4:00 pm at the American Legion office

Next meeting of the Immigrant Affairs/Social Service workteam:

Thursday, July 9, 2009 at 4:30 pm, 49-51 Chambers Street – Room 709