

Minutes of the Chinatown Working Group (CWG) Full Group Meeting
Follow-up Meeting to Approve a Planning Consultant
4pm to 5:30pm, Monday, March 11, 2013
American Legion L.T. Kimlau Post 1291

Voting members present: American Legion Post 1291 (Gabe Mui); Asian Americans for Equality (Douglas Le); Asian American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (Bethany Li); Bowery Alliance of Neighbors (Mitchell Grubler); Chinatown Business and Property Owners Group (Douglas Woodward); Chinatown Partnership Local Development Corporation (Wellington Chen); Chinese Progressive Association (Mae Lee); Chinese Staff and Workers Association (Wendy Cheung, Josephine Lee); Committee Against Anti Asian Violence (Jason Chen, Helena Wong, Billie Zhu); Community Board 1 (Michael Levine); Community Board 2 (Edward Ma, Antony Wong); Community Board 3 (Gigi Li); Good Old Lower East Side (Damaris Reyes); Hamilton-Madison House (Mark Handelman); Immigrant Social Services (George Leung); International Chinese Transportation Professionals Association (Jerry Cheng); Lower East Side Business Improvement District (Tim Laughlin); Museum of Chinese in America (Nancy Bulalacao, Ryan Wong); National Mobilization against Sweatshops (Louise Velez); Two Bridges Neighborhood Council (Victor Papa, Wilson Soo); 61 Delancey Street Tenants Association (Julie Zhang); 197 Madison Street Tenants Association (Fuko Poon); 318 Restaurant Workers Union (Jason Chen).

Also present: Rob Hollander (Lower East Side Residents for Responsible Development); Susan Yung (Gathering of the Tribes)

Press: Sing Tao Daily News (Bonnie Lee); Sinovision (Yuanchen Liu).

Meeting begins at 4:35pm, Wilson Soo and Antony Wong presiding.

1. Introductions
2. Choosing a planning consultant, Antony Wong presenting.

Antony Wong: Thank you for attending. We issued an RFP in December and received five applications. Our seven-member scoring panel reviewed the applications according to the scoring matrix that the CWG approved in 2010. The top three applicants then presented to CWG last week. For those who were not present, you may read through the draft minutes to familiarize yourselves with the presentations. Pratt was the top choice in the second scoring round. The order of the second round was: Pratt, BFJ, WXY. The panel therefore recommends Pratt. Discussion here will be limited to fifteen minutes because some members must leave early.

Mitchell Grubler: I'd like to hear more about the scoring and the criteria and how they were applied.

Bethany Li: The scoring followed the matrix approved two years ago. The matrix is available online. The applicants were scored 1 to 5, 5 being the highest score. In the first round, BFJ scored highest, Pratt second. In the second round, Pratt scored higher than BFJ by one point. Therefore the panel recommends Pratt.

Josephine Lee: In the first round BFJ scored higher because of their experience and professionalism. Their application was the most comprehensive and detailed, and more specifically acknowledged all our needs. In the second round we considered not just professionalism but also the extent to which the applicant would work with the community and how the applicant would be involved in the community. That's why, at the presentation, I asked BFJ about willingness to meet more frequently. Pratt seemed more willing to go beyond the budget. They have access to interns and can bring a lot of people to work on it and go beyond their contract.

Tim Laughlin: So am I right that we're going with Pratt because they have student and intern labor? What's the process of guiding the consultant? What's next -- will they eventually present a proposal that we vote on and present to the community board?

Antony Wong: Once CWG approves a planning consultant, they will sign this Friday. One month later, April 15, they begin their work. In the thirty-day interim prior to April 15, they will review our documents, our preliminary action plans, both those approved and proposed but not approved. They will report to us on what's feasible with an initial recommendation. They will then work with the co-Chairs Antony Wong and Wilson Soo on their schedule and work plans. The planning consultant will meet monthly with the CWG Coordinating Committee. All the teams will have a representative there to hear the planning consultant's update. There will be three main meetings where the planning consultant will present reports -- an initial, an interim, and a final report.

Bethany Li: The determinant was not student and intern labor, but rather that, while BFJ was most professional both in its application and presentation, Pratt was more amenable to and flexible in dealing with the community's needs, which works better for a group like this.

Tim Laughlin: It is important that, given the breadth of the map, representatives from the Lower East Side and Chinatown -- businesses, property owners, tenants -- a full range be consulted so that all the interests be addressed.

Michael Levine: You asked whether the planner will bring a final report for the community boards. We don't know. We asked in the scope of work that the planner make recommendations for future actions to city agencies, to community boards, or elsewhere. We don't know. The planning consultant will recommend to us where we should go next.

Douglas Woodward: For such a short period, it's particularly important to supervise day to day. BFJ is professional. Pratt will need oversight. They don't usually do work on plans of such broad scope.

Damaris Reyes: I have worked with Pratt. They have loads of experience and are involved with community. They are known especially for going above and beyond the contract. Also they are committed to these kinds of community process. Keep in mind the mission. Pratt is in line with the mission. Also, even the city has called on their expertise. They have a well-balanced approach -- they consider business as well as residential interests.

Douglas Woodward: Using graduate students is problematic.

Damaris: Students are only supplemental.

Douglas Woodward: I've worked with all three. Pratt is the weakest planning consultant for zoning.

Michael Levine: Zoning may not be necessary.

Edward Ma: Congratulations to the whole group and the leadership for coming to this point. Can we hear more about the supervising process, to make it more successful.

Michael Levine: BFJ is professional. Pratt is atypical. They work more closely with community. We are atypical too. CWG includes sixty-six groups. We need something with more leeway than a traditional planner with a single goal. We are not looking specifically for a zoning recommendation, nor specifically a landmarks, housing, or a retail business recommendation, or something of all of those, or maybe not all, or maybe something else. I don't know of another group consisting of sixty-six different organizations. It needs a different kind of supervision, not quality but schedule supervision: are they meeting deadlines, how are they meeting with the community, is everything understandable to the community? They need managers, not supervisors. Antony is fully able to handle that managerial task.

Mitchell Grubler: Was it planned that there would be a second round?

Gigi Li: Yes. The top three applications made presentations to CWG. The second round scored those presentations. The highest score was Pratt and therefore the recommendation.

Mitchell Grubler: Are there minutes of the scoring rounds?

Wilson Soo: There are no minutes, but scoring sheets.

Michael Levine: Send a memo of explanation about the process.

Gigi Li: Everything was done as required by LMDC. All the documents will be compiled and will be duly submitted.

Antony Wong: Wilson will call the roll for a vote on the panel's recommendation that Pratt be approved as planning consultant.

Wilson Soo: Roll call:

>>23 yes, 1 no [see roll call vote, one (Create in Chinatown) vote by proxy]. Pratt is approved.

Michael Levine: I move for a resolution to thank the scoring team for their work.

Douglas Woodward: Second.

Michael Levine: Can we approve by acclamation? [Room voices acclaim.]

>>CWG thanks the scoring panel for its time and effort.

Antony Wong: Community announcements?

Rob Hollander: Cathy Hung of the New York Chinatown Cultural Center has graciously donated her space May 1 6:30-8:30 for "Ideas Chinatown," an event coordinating with the New Museum on Bowery. The program will include short presentations from Chinatown organizations followed by a panel discussion. If you know any organization that might want to present its work to the public, or if your organization would like to participate with such a presentation, please contact me. We want this to be an exciting event for Chinatown and the New Museum.

Victor Papa: The Bowery was recently registered as a National Historic Place. We are sponsoring a celebration at the Bowery Hotel. We welcome you to celebrate with us.

Antony Wong: Information forwarded by Mitchell Grubler about a recent article by The Lo-down (on line Lower East Side news blog) on the history [of public housing] in the Lower East Side.

Damaris Reyes: Tonight at 150 Elizabeth Street we are meeting about Hurricane Sandy long term recovery, unmet needs and disaster preparedness, mitigation and relief. This is just the first of a series of meetings. If anyone was overlooked, I apologize, but please come to this meeting to represent your organization so we can move forward. At this meeting we will look at what the process should be and what level of engagement each organization wants.

Wilson Soo: Meeting adjourned at 5:00pm.