DOUGLAS WOODWARD:

It has been nine months since the idea of proportional representation was first raised by CSWA. A concrete and specific proposal is long overdue. But I don’t think there needs to be lengthy debate; the concept is clear, only the specifics are missing. The proposers of the idea should be prepared to fill in the blanks and we can then discuss the substance of the idea rather than the procedural details. We need simply to understand exactly what is on the table, and for that, the following questions need to be answered:

1. What are the categories of groups for which greater voting rights are being proposed?

2. What are the criteria for inclusion in those groups?

3. How would eligibility for inclusion in the preferred voting group be verified?

4. What specific extra weighting is proposed—how many extra votes per preferred group or what percentage extra weighting of votes?

5. For which specific preferred groups among the voting members of the CWG are greater voting rights being proposed and which groups are being relegated to a lesser category with fewer voting rights and on what basis? Here is a list of the current membership as shown on the website. Which of these groups is proposed for increased voting power and why?

VOTING MEMBERS:

- American Legion Post 1291
- Asian American Arts Alliance
- Asian American Arts Centre
- Asian Americans for Equality
- Asian American Legal Defense & Education Fund
- Bowery Alliance of Neighbors
- Chatham Green
- Chatham Towers
- Cherry Street Tenant Association
- Chinatown Business & Property Owners Group
- Chinatown Partnership
- Chinatown Rotary Club
- Chinatown YMCA
- Chinatown Youth Initiatives
- Chinese American Planning Council
- Chinese American Medical Society
- Chinese Chamber of Commerce of NY
- Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association
- Chinese Progressive Association
- Chinese Staff & Workers’ Association
- Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence
The strategic significance of this discussion is clear: certain groups within the CWG feel that they should have greater power to determine the outcome of deliberations within the group and should be granted extra voting rights. We need to ensure that any proposal does not have the effect of silencing the voices of those who do not support the agenda of the groups proposing greater power for themselves (another reason to be absolutely clear for which groups the extra power is proposed to accrue). To ensure that no group is disenfranchised, I recommend very strongly that the three sponsoring community boards—CBs 1, 2, and 3—and not just their representatives on the CWG, be asked specifically to review and approve the apportionment of “proportional representation”voting blocks once a clear proposal is offered.