
February 4, 2015

**STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGES & ELECTIONS RE: THE PROPOSED APPOINTMENT OF
WELLINGTON Z. CHEN AND KIM LEE VAUSS TO SERVE ON THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION
COMMISSION**

Good morning, Chair Lander and Council Members.

I am Blaire Walsh, speaking on behalf of the New York Landmarks Conservancy. The Conservancy is a private, independent, not-for-profit organization, founded in 1973. Our mission is to preserve and protect historic resources throughout New York.

Wellington Chen and Kim Lee Vauss have distinguished backgrounds. They have experience in architecture, building, and planning. We appreciate their willingness to serve on the Landmarks Preservation Commission, and look forward to working with them should the Council act favorably upon these candidacies.

The Landmarks Law calls for a Commission with a minimum of three architects, a historian, a City planner or landscape architect, a realtor and at least one resident of each of the five boroughs. Those requirements are currently and will continue to be fulfilled with the appointments presented today. When the Law was passed, however, there were few preservation professionals and few if any academic programs. Due in part to the success of the Law, both are plentiful now. We believe that the Commission would be strengthened if, when there is another opening on the Commission, it be filled by someone with professional preservation experience.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Conservancy's views.

Kim Vauss

Opening Remarks before the Committee on Rules, Privileges and Elections
February 4, 2015

Good morning Speaker Mark-Viverito, Chair Lander, and members of the Committee on Rules, Privileges, and Elections. Thank you for this opportunity to speak before you this morning and answer any questions. I am extremely honored and excited to be nominated as a Commissioner on the Landmarks Preservation Commission by Mayor de Blasio, and I respectfully ask you for your support.

As a native New Yorker living in the South Bronx in the 1960s, I passed the Third Avenue Court Building almost every day and marveled at this imposing white building that was decorated with statues of people. It was unique amid a dreary forest of tenements and commercial spaces. Moving to the central Bronx in 1967, I lived across from the Old Borough Hall at Third and Arthur Avenues. It was a stunning ornate building that sat loftily on a hill in the park; it also impressed me. Sadly, I later watched this great edifice burn to the ground one summer night, never to be rebuilt. It is my lifelong affinity for the rich and notable architecture of our city which brings me before you today.

After graduating from Stuyvesant High School, I attended City College where my respect, knowledge and appreciation of historic preservation grew under the tutelage of the renowned chronicler of NYC architectural history, the late Professor Norval White. After graduating from CCNY, I was employed by the City of New York for ten years, starting at the Loft Board and later at the Department of Buildings where I represented the DOB Commissioner at Loft Board hearings.

At the Loft Board I conducted code compliance meetings with building owners and tenants, I clarified Building Code and Zoning Resolution requirements to staff and tenants, and I also periodically met with DOB staff to discuss building code changes that affected loft conversions.

As a DOB examiner, I reviewed and approved many historic buildings being converted to loft dwellings and occasionally enlarged, and I became very familiar with the challenges inherent in the reuse of historic buildings to comply with the

requirements of the NYC Zoning Resolution, Building Code and Landmarks Preservations Commission rules. I gained a broad knowledge of building code, zoning, and its impact on applicable preservation on all categories of construction.

Upon leaving the public sector, I entered private practice as a code consultant, and am currently the Director of Technical Affairs at Outsource Consultants where I oversee building code and zoning analysis on a diverse array of projects, where including new residential and commercial buildings, residential loft conversions, office renovations and retail renovations.

My recent service as a member of the 2014 Building Code Revision Committee, involved about two years of meetings with DOB and other industry shareholders to help revise and update the 2008 Building Code, further strengthened my collaborative skills and knowledge of building codes.

Currently, I serve as the President of the Architects' Council of New York; a member of the Bronx Chapter of the American Institute of Architects; and I was also a past President of the New York Society of Architects from 2002 through 2013. My experiences participating in these professional organizations has helped me understand the difficulties architects and their clients have in balancing the often conflicting requirements of multiple city agencies with their clients development goals and deadlines.

New York City's architecturally, historically, and culturally significant buildings and districts tell a story ... from the stunning leaded glass brownstones of Bushwick, the grandeur of Staten Island Borough Hall , the stately limestone townhouses of Hamilton Heights, the Art Deco Apartment Buildings along the Grand Concourse, and the ivy laden townhouses and cottages of Forest Hills Gardens. New York is unmatched by any other American city in its grandeur, size, diversity, and history.

As an architect, I do not take our built environment for granted, and I believe architects have an opportunity beyond their public safety duties to celebrate history. New York's neighborhoods are a vivid collage of visually striking facades, structures, neighborhoods that are worth preserving and showcasing.

I see being a member of the LPC as an opportunity to participate in public service by helping preserve historic architecture for the future, promoting rehabilitation and reuse while striking a balance between old and new development.

I believe my twenty five years of expertise with New York City's zoning and building codes, dedication and collaborative skills, coupled with my lifelong appreciation of the irreplaceable architecture and structures makes me a worthy candidate for confirmation to the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

If appointed, I look forward to bringing my experience, dedication and collaborative skills to aid the Landmarks Preservation Commission fulfill its mission. Thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

List of links re Wellington Z. Chen

Monday, January 12, 2015

<http://video.pbs.org/video/2224365579/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Otz6cGMMmNs>

<http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20130624/chinatown/new-pedestrian-signs-aim-help-lost-new-yorkers-tourists>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kYfCrbvbqLg>

http://www.ny1.com/content/shows/one_on_1_archives/98899/one-on-1--wellington-chen-reflects-on-personal--professional-history/

<http://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-museum/press-room/news/2006/wellington-z-chen-elected-a-trustee-at-metropolitan-museum>

<http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=video&cd=3&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCQQtwiwAg&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DiNJRWY1IFuw&ei=LuzVKS3EZDGsQT0u4DACQ&usg=AFQjCNH2HgeUD8Z1-iZkDXg1w3l62Ri7g&bvm=bv.83339334,d.cWc>

<http://www.oneprize.org/12jury.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lBr8E3eCPE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R3C4TSGK1g4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpFJtks-40c>

<http://www.theepochtimes.com/n3/1121491-this-is-new-york-wellington-z-chen-a-social-architect-who-hopes-to-revive-chinatown/>

<https://nycfuture.org/research/publications/qa-with-wellington-chen-is-flushing-poised-for-future-growth>

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/01/nyregion/chinatowns-renew-push-for-traditional-gateways.html?_r=0

http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/epaper/2013-09/24/content_16989825.htm

<http://www.voicesofny.org/2014/05/frimonday-chinese-waste-pickers/>

Wellington Z. Chen
60 St. James Place, NYC 10038
Mobile: (917) 577-7003
E-mail: wellingtonzchen@gmail.com

2006 – Now Executive Director – Chinatown Partnership Local Development Corporation
Launched the new 501 (c) (3) Community based organization from the ground up
From start-up to value demonstration, outreach to forming one of the largest NYC BIDs

1995- 2005 Senior Consultant/Advisor – Planning Advocacy Group
• Strategic planning and consulting services
• Initiatives turned former brownfields into new revitalized quarters

1990 – 1995 Commissioner – NYC Board of Standards and Appeals
• New York City’s quasi-judicial zoning board of appeals
• 1st Chinese American to serve in agency’s history
• Reviewed thousands of land-use cases during 5-year tenure

1989 - 1990 President – Tri Plus Construction Corporation
• Co-founded the company to help create affordable housing for NYC
• Awarded numerous housing projects within months of creation e.g. in Bed-Stuyvesant
• Company still in existence headed by former partner

1985 - 1989 Vice President – Urban Living, Inc.
• Coordinated the company’s Design & Planning Division
• Designed/Built a number of mixed-use projects in New York City
• Designed the structure which now houses the Tonga Mission to UN at East 51 Street

1980 - 1985 Technical staff - I. M. Pei & Partners
• Part of team for the 70-story Bank of China in Hong Kong and other towers in Dallas

Prior Technical staff – various NY and NJ architectural firms
• Worked on numerous small & mid-size projects
• Created drawings, presentation materials and models

Affiliations: Bowne House Historical Society – Trustee
CAUSE New York (Creating Awareness & Understanding
through Service and Education) – with Jewish Community Relation Council
City University of New York – Trustee
CUNY Construction Fund – Trustee
Greater New York YMCA – Public Policy Committee
Metropolitan Museum of Art - Trustee
NYC & Company – Ex-officio Member
NYC Regional Economic Council/NY Rising Post Sandy board member
Steven Newman Real Estate Institute – Advisory board member
Healthcare Chaplaincy – Board of Directors
School of Public Health Advisory Board
YMCA of Greater New York – Board Member

Participations: Cooper Carry’s Downtown Flushing Planning Framework
Deutsche Bank’s International Design Workshop – Oct. 2001
Downtown Flushing Revitalization Campaign – decades of efforts

Rudin and Senator Charles Schumer's Group of 35 Research/LES Blueway Study

Past services: 1977-1990 Community Board #7Q – 1st Asian American/Served for 13 years
1978-1986 Downtown Flushing Development Corporation (LDC) - volunteer
1980s Channel Thirteen - Board of Community Advisors
1973+ Chinese American Benevolent Association in Queens - intern
1979+ Chinese American Planning Council Advisory - Queens Branch
1983 Chinese American Voters Association
1990s New York Wall Street Lions Club – Secretary
2003-2005 Downtown Flushing Transit Hub BID – Executive Board
2002 New York City Charter Revision Commission –
(Served with former Police Commissioner Bob McGuire)
2004 New York State Education Reform Commission – Frank Zarb
1998-2005 Flushing Council on Culture and the Arts – Board of Director
1990-2000+ Queens County Traffic Safety Board – Vice Chair
Queens Chamber of Commerce – Executive Board of Directors
-2010 Queens Economic Development Corporation – Board of Director
2003-2005 NYC 2012 – organize volunteers in support of NYC's historic bid
Others Queens Botanical Garden; Bklyn/Queens Conservatory of Music boards

Background: Bachelor's degree–CCNY School of Architecture & Environmental Studies
Construction Management CEU – SUNY at Farmingdale
Architecture & Acoustics CEU – Harvard Summer School
Coro Leadership: Neighborhood Leadership Program Graduate
Focus & interest: Community Empowerment/Revitalization, Placemaking, etc

Awards: 2014 Kiwanis of Chinatown 30th anniversary Walter Zellow Fellowship Award
2014 New Immigrant Unit of NYPD Community Affairs – Community Service Award
2014 New York Chinatown Lions Club – Community Service Award
2013 Transfiguration Award for work done at Chinatown Partnership LDC
2013 Chinese Theatre Works 1,000 mile Horse Whisperer Award
2012 Asian Jade Society – Lifetime Achievement Community Service Award
2011 NYC SBS Neighborhood Achievement Award for BID formation campaign
2011 Cosmopolitan Lions Club – 2011 Distinguished Leadership Award
2010 Immigrant Social Service (Oct. 28) – Community Service Award
2010 Transfiguration Education Association/School – (May 7th) Award
2009 Community Service Award from Comptroller William Thompson
2009 Liberty Freedom Medal – New York Post – Immigrant Category
2008 OCA (Organization of Chinese Americans)-Community Service Award
2008 Local 23-25 UNITE Chinese Retirees Community Improvement Award
2007 American Legion Lt. Kimlau Post – Neighborhood Improvement Award
2004 AAARI (Asian American/Asian Research Institute) Multiple awards
2003 Business Person of the Year –Queens Chamber of Commerce
2004 NAACP Northeast Branch – Robert Gavin Finance Award
2002 Flushing YMCA Board of Managers – Community Service Award
2001 NAAPAE (Nat'l Assn. Asian Pacific American Education) Leadership Award
2000 Flushing Council on Culture & the Arts – Community Service Award
2000 Queens Botanical Garden – Rose Community Service Award
1990 "Vision & Planning to Improve Flushing" award - Flushing Chamber of Commerce
1987 10-year Community Board Service Awards from Mayor Koch and
Queens Borough President Claire Schulman plus a few others

Wellington Chen
Opening Statement before City Council
Wednesday, February 4, 2015

Good morning Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, Chair Lander, and members of the Rules, Privileges, and Elections Committee of the City Council. My name is Wellington Z. Chen, and I am the executive director of the Chinatown Partnership Local Development Corporation (CPLDC) - a non-profit, community-based organization created after 9/11 to help connect the different stakeholders of Chinatown, Five Points, Little Italy, the garment and jewelry district and the many other neighborhoods of the Lower East Side and Lower Manhattan and to help preserve the diverse and rich culture of that community.

Many of you participated and helped us during those difficult and challenging periods and for that I thank you for all your assistance in helping to preserve and stabilize our community.

It is a pleasure and honor to appear before this committee this morning in a room full of people who care deeply and passionately about this City, and to be able to share a few moments with all of you and to introduce myself.

I have been blessed to have been asked to serve my community and City in many different capacities. I came to this City as a teenager after having lived in many different cities and countries. For the last 44 years I've been a resident of this great City and been able to work on quite a wide range of efforts and issues.

This includes spending several years being active on my local community board in Flushing, Queens when the area was struggling and trying to stem the urban flight to the suburbs like so many other communities.

During that process I became the Chair of the Landmarks Committee on the community board. During that time, I was exposed to the elegance and beauty of many historical structures, and worked to submit landmark recommendations. I am proud to have been able to help restore Flushing Town, where Ulysses S. Grant once stood on its balcony, into a vibrant community adaptive re-use structure, where many cultural and arts

performances are still being held there today under the auspices of Flushing Council on Culture and the Arts.

I have also served as a trustee of the Bowne House Historical Society since 1999. Bowne House is not only the oldest surviving structure in Queens but it is where visitors from Amsterdam are known to have come all the way from Holland to knock on its door. Bowne House is recognized as a city and national landmark and is on the New York State Register of Historic Places as a site of national significance. In fact, in October of this year Bowne House will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the landmarks law signed by Mayor Robert Wagner with a rededication ceremony, and I invite you all to join us in that celebration.

Looking back it has occurred to me that we all strive towards the same common goal of preserving and saving the best of what we all value, whether it is our communities, our culture, our history or the best of our art and architectural legacy. In essence, these things are a collection and reflection of our souls.

I believe that the land marking process plays a critical role in preserving the vibrant physical and cultural history of this great city. I am honored to be considered for a position on the Commission and I am committed to working as hard as possible in this role so that all constituencies of the Commission feel like they are receiving the very best service that we can provide.

Thank you all for giving me this opportunity to speak before you today, and I am happy to take any questions you may have.

Good morning Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, Chair Lander, and members of the Rules, Privileges, and Elections Committee of the New York City Council. My name is Hank Willis Thomas, and it is an honor to appear before you today.

I am a visual artist and a lifelong New Yorker. As someone who grew up believing that art is essential to our lives, it is an amazing opportunity to be nominated for the Public Design Commission. I attended New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and viewed New York City as my classroom. I went to graduate school at the California College of the Arts in San Francisco where I realized the value of art at the center of public life. I believe there has been steadfast growth in appreciation and enthusiasm about creativity and the value of art and design in our City. In some ways, you could say that public art has helped to make our City what it is today.

In my view this is a critical time for the arts in New York City. Renowned as the global hub of the art world, there are several other cities on the rise, doing bold and exciting things to foster the pride and engagement of citizens and visitors. As an artist, and member of the Public Design Commission, I believe that I would be a valuable resource for the Commission because I have traveled extensively - speaking, presenting and studying art. I continue to see museums and cultural centers as important places for people to discuss and interact with artwork. But I am also aware of the value of being able to do these things in public spaces where we rarely take a moment to stop, look around and appreciate all of what we have. I would like to contribute to the continued development of public art as my civic duty in the city that I know and love more than any other place in the world.

I intend to be an active voice of the artistic community and a conduit for the public. I would like the public to be more engaged in public art because I believe it makes each of us smarter, better and stronger. I want to make sure that as our city grows and matures demographically, that this is reflected in the buildings, parks and other public spaces we encounter on our way to work, to see family, and on our way home.

As an artist, I am intellectually engaged with the production of space and think often about not only the people who make the decisions, but also why certain decisions are made and how those decisions impact neighborhoods and central business districts. I have created several works of art for public spaces, and have had to consider the long-term value of what I was making for the spaces and the people who inhabit it. What makes a place important, interesting, or historic? Why do some things stand the test of time while others feel outdated and alienating? As a conceptual artist working primarily with themes related to identity, history and popular culture, these are questions that I ponder on a daily basis and would bring to every decision I made as part of the Public Design Commission.

I understand that there have been in the past and continue to be concerns with the Public Design Commission- from transparency in decision-making to delaying projects. These are concerns I take very seriously, and if appointed, intend to study to understand where the concerns come from and how to best remedy them. After meeting with the new Executive Director of the PDC, Faith Rose, I believe she is also committed to this effort. The Commission will only be successful if it is viewed as a legitimate partner in making this City a center for the best art and design. Continued dialogue with the City Council and the community is critical to that effort, and I look forward to working with you all in understanding your concerns and the concerns of your communities to improve the PDC.

Again, thank you for considering my nomination the Commission and I am happy to take whatever questions you may have.

RD

Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/4/15

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SIMON BANIKOFF

Address: 232 E 11 ST

I represent: Historic District Council

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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Date: 2.4.15

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Name: Blaire Walsh

Address: 1 Whitehall St., NY, NY 10004

I represent: New York Landmarks Conservancy

Address: 1 Whitehall St., NY, NY 10004

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