

Notice of Public Hearing:
105 Keefer Street

Tuesday,	May 23, 2017	6:00	pm
Thursday,	May 25, 2017	6:00	pm
Friday,	May 26, 2017	5:00	pm
Monday,	May 29, 2017	9:30	am

Council Chamber
Third Floor, City Hall

On the following pages are six transcripts of artists, writers, arts administrators, gallery technicians, and artworkers speaking before City Council at the public hearing regarding the rezoning of 105 Keefer Street from a Chinatown Historic Area (HA-1A District) to a Comprehensive Development (CD-1 District).

I've been thinking a lot about how to contextualize these speeches within the pages of our publication, and the question I keep trying to answer is why readers of Charcuterie would care about 105 Keefer. The words published here solicit no justification, nor were they solicited, but they are very necessary. Art and political life share consciousness, but the words and actions here demonstrate how that critical partnership is necessarily deployed outside the scope of our creative practices, in the world, our city, our neighbourhood.

Currently, the height allowance for the 105 Keefer site is 90 ft because it is zoned as a Chinatown Historic Area. The Beedie Group's application to rezone the site went to public hearing

because the height restriction on this site can be raised up to 120 ft if the developer can demonstrate that the density of the building will subsequently serve the surrounding community's interests. This process of requesting a height increase within the Chinatown Historic Area is something that a developer can pursue because of the Rezoning Policy for Chinatown South (HA-1A). The policy is supposed to function as a kind of moral compass for whether or not the "development of higher buildings in this area shall balance the opportunity for additional growth and resulting public benefits with preserving the important heritage and cultural character of Chinatown." This policy should make us question how apt the correlation between height, density or volume and the public dividend of such buildings can really be: the rezoned height of 105 Keefer is double that of the Chinese Cultural Centre/Chinese Canadian Military Museum (60 ft) and that of the 100 East Pender New Sun Ah Building (55 ft), which is steps from the 105 site. Aligned with these terms, it ought to be twice as socially meaningful, but if anything this rezoning would precipitate the reverse. If the application had been approved, Chinatown would now be anticipating a 12-storey mixed-use building with commercial-use at the ground floor, 25 units of "social housing" on the second floor and nine floors of market housing sitting at a towering 118 ft.

Last May, many, many people signed up to speak before council, subjecting City Council to a total of 26 hours of public hearings over the course of three days. In these terms, the relationship between volume and social meaning became very palpable. On June 13, council rejected the rezoning proposal because for the most part, what the community groups and the residents of Chinatown think of 25 units of 1) externally managed suites with 2) a provincially funded housing non-profit subsidizing these suites from their market cost, 3) couched within a massive condo cannot be called social housing but a rather morbid twist on the whole concept of what constitutes housing. It was not 28 ft of additional height that Beedie was trying to

broker for by supplying 25 units, but a fortress of exclusionism emblazoned with superficial homages to Chinese culture. In July, Beedie submitted another application, this time within the height restriction of Chinatown Historic Area zoning, and without a trace of social housing. If their intentions to develop the area gratuitously without regard for the community weren't obvious earlier, those who spoke in favour of 25-units of "fake" social housing can now eat their words.

This sort of thing is routine for a developer, but it was rather moving, in the last few months to see how members of the art community have been shedding some of their reticence to participate or listen to these punishing civic processes. At the hearings I was present for, there were many more than just these six members of the artistic community published here who also excused themselves from their desks, laptops, studios, galleries, books, research—our niche practices that we all conduct to varying degrees of self fulfillment—to wield their uniquely composed experiences as citizens. They did not claim a struggle that is not theirs to claim, but rather staked a position with the power or privilege they have as cultural workers. Their actions are not a project, a performance, a piece, or a work. It is a civic responsibility to contest a bold-faced anti-poverty, indiscriminate gentrification machine in solidarity with the residents and community groups who are a directly impacted and involved. In Chinatown, a neighbourhood that is important to many people who read and are involved with the conversations that inform the contents of Charcuterie, this is happening.

Yours,

Steffanie Ling, Editor
October 2017

陳聽春 listen chen

As a settler & a member of the owning class, I think a lot about what it means to practice allyship. You’ve heard many different speakers, from Chinese & non-Chinese backgrounds, support & oppose the rezoning. You obviously can’t please everyone, nor should you try to. Whatever decision you make will function to prioritize some voices over others. In urging you to reject the application, I am first & foremost urging you to prioritize the voices of some of the most disenfranchised people in our city.

Beedie’s application is not just about an extra 30 feet, or a single parking lot, or even the future of Chinatown. It’s also about how gentrification is destroying & displacing poor, working class, and racialized communities all over the world. You ask us, Mayor, to keep our comments to the rezoning, but the rezoning application doesn’t exist in a social or historical vacuum. It emerges from an insidious neoliberal paradigm that narrows the social & political imaginary until people believe that the only options available to them are an empty lot or a condo building with a few social housing units thrown in as an afterthought. I have to reject this framing & what it forecloses. I believe that more is possible.

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When I look at the people who support the rezoning, I see a profound amount of class privilege. I see people whose motivations are about profit, like Bob Rennie, who seems to think that TripAdvisor is an appropriate metric to gauge the social well being of a neighborhood, & that catering to tourists is more important than housing poor people. I see employees of real estate firms & people with varying degrees of power who want more options than they already take for granted. I empathize with millennials who are worried that they can’t afford to buy a home in the city, but at the same time, I cannot ignore that there are over 2000 homeless people in Vancouver alone. Those of us with college degrees and stable incomes can afford to take a step back and challenge the narratives of class mobility we’ve been inculcated with, because those narratives hinge on leaving some people behind.

When I look at the people who oppose the rezoning, I see people who live in Chinatown out of necessity. I see people who are on the cusp of homelessness. I see people who are fighting for their right to survive, people who are marginalized by

the language of “revitalization” economically, politically, socially, culturally, & linguistically. & I see allies standing beside them out of personal commitments to economic & social justice.

Bob Rennie says we need more warm bodies on the streets of Chinatown. There are warm bodies on the streets of Chinatown—they’re homeless people, but for people like Rennie, they might as well be invisible because they can’t afford condo mortgages or \$7 pour over coffees. I firmly believe that by approving this application, you will be perpetuating a rhetoric & ideology that directly contributes to their deaths. I am dismayed by how many people can only voice support for this project in a way that dehumanizes & invisibilizes the most vulnerable residents of Chinatown—ones who cannot afford to weather the blow this building will deliver to their communities. When we assess community benefit, we need to be clear about which communities have the most at stake.

The fact of the matter is that Beedie’s project was never intended to benefit the community in the first place: it’s a for-profit initiative that is offering tokenistic contributions in order to obtain public approval, & what meager benefits these tokens offer to the community are not enough to merit the rezoning. A 1000 square foot seniors space & 25 units of social housing do not offset the damage that this development will do to the city’s most vulnerable populations. We need a seniors space that does not come attached to ten storeys of market condos that will irreparably damage Chinatown’s communities—communities whose histories are defined by resiliently surviving the violences of colonialism, racism, and gentrification. Be an ally to them & reject the rezoning application.

Councillor Stevenson: I hear your list including Bob Rennie that you take issue with on the side of the pro-side, but what I didn’t hear, and what I’ve heard are quite a number of seniors who’ve come and who live in Chinatown and have said that they want this project to go ahead. So I don’t know how you marry that.

listen chen: Yeah, well what I meant by the neoliberal imaginary narrowing the horizon of possibilities is that if you say to somebody that their only two options are twenty five units of social housing and a one thousand square foot senior space, or an empty lot, then obviously the way in which you frame that question is going to affect what somebody thinks is possible. And in fact, many of those seniors have said—and the one that just spoke—said that he wants more than twenty five units, but that’s just not been offered to him. And I also question whether or not these seniors understand the impact of gentrification on the housing prices in the surrounding areas...

Councillor Stevenson: Why wouldn’t they? They’re pretty bright people, most of them.

listen chen: Well because nothing they’ve said has evinced an understanding

of that. It hasn't even been acknowledged in what these seniors have said that support the housing that they understand the wider implications of gentrification. And in fact, some of them have said things that are poor-bashing, that are stigmatizing for drug-addicts and homeless people, that hasn't been acknowledged. Lots of people have spoken to those seniors including me in Mandarin and Cantonese and some of them don't even seem to know the details of the project that they've come here to support. So I think there's lots of issues.

Councillor Stevenson: I just feel you're sort of throwing a whole group of people under the bus that have come with real deep concerns themselves. I have a fairly good understanding...

listen chen: I'm not throwing them under the bus, in fact we share the same concerns. I think those seniors and the seniors who oppose the project all want social housing. It's just that one group of seniors understanding of the situation is such that this is the only option that's been offered to them, and what I'm urging you to do is expand your understanding of the political landscape and imaginary so that we can give them something better.

[cheers from the crowd erupt]

Councillor Stevenson: No I...

Mayor Robertson: I'm just going to intervene a bit here because this is a conversation of what other people might think and we need to stick to what we know, and what your opinions and responses are. I just want to caution everyone on speaking on behalf of others.

Councillor Stevenson: I think that was my point too. Thank you.

Councillor De Genova: I was just going to say the same thing Mr. Mayor. I think people should keep their comments focused to only their comments.

Byron Peters

First, like many others today, I would like to acknowledge that we are having this public hearing on unceded Coast Salish territories, that of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples.

This is extremely important, especially as we discuss the use of land, the re-purposing of land.

I speak to you today from a place of urgency.

A bit about me: I am from the Lower Mainland. My father's family is from the prairies, my mother's family is from Chinatown, with roots there since the late 19th Century.

I speak to the latter because it is relevant here. My grandfather, with the family name Louie, grew up living on Georgia Street, and my grandmother with the family name Yip, on Keefer. My great-grandfather, Hok Yat Louie, came to Vancouver in 1896.

In Chinatown today, I talk to residents who are having to leave, or to close their shops. But I am convinced that this does not have to be the case.

I am opposed to the project proposal and rezoning.

Many have pointed out that what happens at 105 Keefer stands as a symbol for the city's respect and approach to Chinatown's future.

Within the last six years, the number of green grocers has gone down 50%, herbal stores 33%, and fishmongers, 60%.*

As of February 2017, 362 new units were proposed for Chinatown. But no low-income housing was proposed, only four units lost. For 2016, 398 unaffordable units opened, and only 11 at welfare/pension rate. That's a ratio of 36:1.* There are enough market condos in Chinatown already going ahead. This proposal is not needed, it is not practical.

The banality of evil is a very real thing. You start to use phrases that sound like "It is the way it is", "Change is inevitable", "I am just doing my job."

This proposal and many of the project modifications I have been hearing are disappointing. And frankly they surprise me in their limited scope. With the stakes

so high with this project, its location at the heart of Chinatown, the social needs of the neighbourhood so great, the proposal comes back to this chamber over years now with discussions, for example, of reducing the tower by a single floor? Slight alterations to building massing?

Such items, at this point, are like focusing on a single detail without seeing the larger problem, thus losing track of the solution. A horse wearing blinders focuses ahead, as it takes the course chosen by its rider.

Zooming out: We are discovering, in this political moment in history, that this approach of head down, the focus on small alterations, isn't enough, and in fact, it is dangerous. The banality of evil is a very real thing. You start to use phrases that sound like "it is the way it is", "Change is inevitable," "I am just doing my job." But I think your job does not have to be facilitating the displacement, disenfranchisement, and replacement of low-income people.

I believe revitalization should be defined as ensuring Chinatown is affordable for its current residents, thus facilitating life.

The idea of BC Housing paying \$7.3 million to a developer—who was going to build this building anyways, i.e., pay for the land and the building's infrastructures—to float 25 token social housing units that won't be affordable for low-income residents is clearly a raw deal.

Right in front of us is an opportunity to begin fresh. Make this a project that does justice to the history of Chinatown, and serves the people who live there. But for now, the first step would be to reject this proposal and rezoning.(3)

Imagine, in the future, as Chinatown becomes wealthier, it is not because new residents of a different class have replaced peoples who have lived there for generations. But rather, at this central location, if you find a way to provide actually affordable housing for local people and support the economy and culture that already exists in Chinatown, you will find that Chinatown will survive and grow from its history and present, not overtop of it.

Thank you.

NOTES

(1) Carnegie Community Action Project's 2016 Hotel Survey and Housing Report" Maria Wallstam, Lenée Son, King-mong Chan, Beverly Ho, Lama Mugabo, & Jean Swanson, 2017.

(2) Vancouver Chinatown Food Security Report" Angelo Ho and Alan Chen, Hua Foundation, August 2017

(3) Some demands set forth by Chinatown Action Group: 1) No market housing at this site 2) For all 3 levels of government to acquire the site of 105 Keefer Street 3) 100% Social housing at shelter rate or 30% of the Old Age Security income 4) An public, intergenerational, multi use community space, with an emphasis on seniors. See People's Vision of Chinatown.

Stephan Wright

My name is Stephan, I'd like to acknowledge that our residence here is on the unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations.

I appreciate having this forum to express my concerns about the proposed development and rezoning at 105 Keefer St in Chinatown.

I've been coming to Chinatown since I was little. I currently reside in Mount Pleasant, I work in Chinatown five days a week, as I have for the last couple of years. But I spend most of my free time there as well.

I've gotten to know many residents and regular visitors of Chinatown. Business owners, residents of all ages and backgrounds. What makes Chinatown Chinatown is embodied substantially in the people that I see in the street there, most of whom reside there and have grown up in the community for a long time. The proposed development at 105 Keefer threatens the health and well being of the people who make Chinatown what it is.

Struggling business owners, long time residents, people without homes, people of all ages and backgrounds are being pushed out by rising prices including but not limited to property tax, rent, and food. As far as I can see, this is a direct result of gentrification in the neighbourhood and I hope that I don't need to define gentrification here.

Many of the residents of the community live on a fixed income, and thus depend on low rent that is affordable, culturally appropriate food and community ties.

Many have financial and physical mobility restraints, and thus cannot afford or are not able to travel to other neighbourhoods that can provide them the community that they need.

Plus, those other neighbourhoods aren't actually Chinatown.

To ask Chinatown residents that make Chinatown what it is to go somewhere else to get what they need to continue making Chinatown Chinatown is an absurd

They do not owe anything to Beedie Living. They do not owe them their homes or their community. They do not owe them this rezoning.

proposal that will necessarily result in the erasure of Chinatown outside of an officially recognized name and preserved building facades.

In the last couple years, at least half a dozen times I've had friends or strangers say to me "Chinatown isn't even Chinatown anymore" or "Chinatown is dead." Often they remark that it seems like new eastward version of Yaletown.

This is disturbing to me, but it is not at all surprising. They remark on the new tall cold and grey buildings and new businesses that have very little relevance to the existing community that they affect. Luxury grocery stores and their patrons living above don't contribute to long running family businesses in the neighbourhood.

Luxury homes are not only absurd in the current context of Chinatown, but they actively serve to displace the existing community. A dragon sculpture at the door of a luxury condo does not help to protect the people that make Chinatown what it is. The communal dynamic of unaffordable luxury condos does not evince anything to my knowledge that acknowledges the community in which it is situated.

This idea that Chinatown is dead or dying creates an attitude that for-profit development need not be respectful of the community. Almost as if there is none. It gives the impression to people outside of Chinatown that there is no living community worth supporting.

New uncaring and ignorant for-profit development in Chinatown and a lack of consistent and substantial civic support has largely contributed to the idea that Chinatown is dead or dying. Especially to people outside of Chinatown.

Developers and ignorant or insensitive new business owners treat the living community as if they are a withered husk, a cultural accoutrement with which to stylize their venture to maximize their profits.

Chinatown is not dead. The neighbourhoods are more warm and lively than any community I've had the pleasure of spending so much time. Every day I'm greeted by such warmth walking through Chinatown. This warmth is cultivated by those who depend on Chinatown for their life, for their vitality. They do not owe anything to Beedie Living. They do not owe them their homes or their community. They do not owe them this rezoning.

The city needs to reject the rezoning application and do something to protect vulnerable people of Chinatown before any further rezoning and before approving any more for-profit market developments. You cannot expect to preserve or revitalize Chinatown by preserving an image alone. I don't think buildings alone are useful. It's the people that occupy them that make a building a building.

You cannot treat the living people in the community as a disposable aspect of Chinatown. They are Chinatown.

Also, I'd just like to add, with an education and background as an artist and designer, I must say, these buildings are extremely... extremely unattractive.....in the context of Chinatown.

Dan Pon

Thank you mayor and council.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional and unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples.

For the past three hearings, today, and online I have heard a tremendous outpour of opposition to the rezoning and the 105 Keefer development. Today I would like to add my voice to those who oppose this problematic project.

As a second generation Chinese Canadian I am gravely concerned about the impact of this development not only on the physical spaces of Chinatown, the memorial monument, the Sun Yat-sen gardens, and cultural centre, but on the intangible cultural heritage of this area and its people represented most vitally, by the elders of this neighbourhood itself, the living connection of this community to its past.

In our culture, the importance of respect for our elders cannot be understated. It is certainly more important than the profits for the few that will benefit from this project. Actions should be taken in consultation with our ancestors, this one is being made at their expense. The offerings of senior housing units and space by Beedie are totally inadequate. Previous speakers have demonstrated this. You have heard them.

No doubt change is inevitable. But there is a thoughtful, inclusive, and sympathetic way of doing it that is not represented by this rezoning application.

Beyond this, as a mechanism to advance the developer's agenda via the avoidance of DCLs(1) and the misappropriation of public money via BC Housing to fuel private profit, they are in fact an insult to the very people they pretend to benefit.

Chinatown grew as a place where the Chinese, excluded from other parts of the city and from 1885 to 1947 from coming to this country at all, could create their own community amid widespread hostility. The result is one of Canada's most celebrated historic neighbourhoods and we see this in the pride that today's youth take in Chinatown's embodiment of their heritage and their bravery in standing up to protect it. Ironically it is this very authenticity

that has aroused Beedie and the developers that will surely follow a decision in favour of this project. Their actions will destroy this character and homogenize this neighbourhood amid the faceless Yaletowns and Olympic Villages of this city. It is nothing less than an assault on some of the most vulnerable members of our society.

No doubt change is inevitable. But there is a thoughtful, inclusive, and sympathetic way of doing it that is not represented by this rezoning application. Council you have the opportunity to stand on the right side of this historical decision, one that can show our city government's value for its people and culture. I urge you to reject the rezoning and not to miss this opportunity to stand with the community you represent.

Thank you for hearing me and to all the folks who have spoken against the rezoning.

(1) Most new development in the City of Vancouver pays Development Cost Levies (DCLs). A DCL is paid by property developers based on square footage and are a means to pay for facilities such as: parks, child care facilities, social and non-profit housing, engineering infrastructure.

Kay Higgins

What we find is that the Chinatown community is immensely accepting and curious.

Thank you, thank you for your welcome. Good afternoon your worship

Mayor Robertson, members of council. I'd like to thank you also for having made the territorial acknowledgment to open this meeting—it's very important to me. I urge everybody who makes or hears a territorial acknowledgment to go beyond it, and to look at ways to decolonize what you do in your everyday life. It's very, very important to me.

I'm here to oppose the rezoning of 105 Keefer St. I'll give you a little bit of history of my involvement with the neighbourhood. Since 2010 the Unit Pitt Society has been located first at 222 Georgia, then at 15 East Pender in the Chinese Times building, and currently on a 15-year lease at 236 East Pender—a building that was once one of the major groceries on that block that is setup as a wholesaler with warehouse space and so on, so that enables us to provide affordable space for artists as well as for programming and to engage with the community, which is something we are just in our infancy with. What we find is that the Chinatown community is immensely accepting and curious. It's an ideal place for artist-run culture, in fact.

We can't say the same thing of the new residents that are coming to Chinatown, who seem to be mostly young professionals, who are young people in the TAMI fields: technology, advertising, marketing, information. What they do when they come to the neighbourhood is they develop their own businesses. That is, in a sense, they are overlaid on the community that is already there. I don't know what the secret is to actually integrating the two communities but it is one put down on top of the other. Unfortunately, one has got a lot more resources and can outcompete the original Chinatown community as consumers.

Another knock-on effect of development is the overall rise in assessments. Now, as an organization paying triple net(1) we are vulnerable to increases in the assessment because it increases the tax rate. We can go and negotiate a lower basic rent with our landlord, but we do not control this lift. The assessment of the building has increased from 1.1-million in 2014 to 2.35-million this year, and it's not something we can actually anticipate, except that we know it seems to be tied to the further development of the neighbourhood.

What you have here in this proposal is further development—further increases—and we believe further increases in the valuation of land which has knock-on effects in terms of traditional businesses not finding it affordable, being able to close out. The effects on housing are being felt, even though a lot of it is clan housing, clan association housing and so on. The primary potential I think that we’re losing is—I think I heard a comment that we need almost \$400-million to make up the gap in social housing that really should be built here and that’s expected to be negotiated from other levels of government but those levels of government have to come on board. Well it’s going to become even more expensive if we do not do something to depress the rise in property values in Chinatown, and to preserve the remaining brownfield sites on which social housing can be built. For that reason, I concur with the advocates that we’ve been hearing from the opposed side here, that what we want to see on this site is 100% social housing.

City of Vancouver (CoV): My question is around the issues you’ve raised: new development coming in, new kinds of activities, increase in land value and consequently through triple net, you said you could negotiate a lower rent, but I’d like to know if you’ve ever been successful at doing that, and/or if your rent has gone up as the property values have?

Kay: Okay, so we have pre-negotiated 15-year lease, the building itself is unusual, in that it doesn’t fit most of the incoming new retail use. That is, it was set up as a large grocery [store] with warehouse capacity. And it would be a bit of a white elephant. So we can negotiate the basic rent that we pay, but the triple net part of it, the property tax part of it, that’s on us. That’s totally on us. We could, maybe, as one small leaseholder try to negotiate with the city for a reduction in taxes. I don’t really see that happening because the general tendency is toward trying to have fairness across the board in taxes, and not go case-by-case, so you get a break, you get a break, you don’t get a break.

CoV: Okay you don’t have to answer this question, but if you could it would be helpful. How much has the triple net part of your rent payments increased?

Kay: Oh it’s doubled. It has doubled in the last four years.

CoV: You referred to—I just want to be very clear—you’re not seeing the new people who are coming in, coming in buying art at the gallery and consuming, purchasing and supporting, collecting?

Kay: They seem fundamentally incurious. But perhaps I have little prejudices of my own. We’re an unassuming space, we don’t look like a high-end gallery. We have a new condo development across the street, which has just

had move-ins. And our one interaction with the people who have newly moved in was actually hostile. It was a visit from new residents who came in hot going “What is this place and what are you doing here?” I said we were in between exhibitions, but if they wanted to come back in another couple of weeks, they might see something that would really annoy them, and I encouraged them to do so.

(1) A triple net lease (triple-Net or NNN) is a lease agreement on a property where the tenant or lessee agrees to pay all real estate taxes, building insurance, and maintenance (the three “nets”) on the property in addition to any normal fees that are expected under the agreement (rent, utilities, etc.). Wikipedia.ca. Accessed September 17, 2017

Vincent Tao

I’ve lived in this city for nearly two years now. It would be no exaggeration to say that I have spent most of this short time in Chinatown, where I have found, or rather, was taken in by, a community of peers, friends, and elders. Just two days ago, I celebrated my 26th birthday on East Georgia Street. My friends and I shared a radish cake, made and given to me as a gift by Mrs. Kong, a resident of the Maclean Park housing project. Now, if you remember, Mrs. Kong spoke early on in the hearing to voice her impassioned opposition to the proposed 105 Keefer building. Today I follow her example. It has been an honour and a privilege to be welcomed into the lives of the seniors who have been residents and stewards of Chinatown for decades; they have endured and struggled against several generations of state neglect and racist policy. Yesterday it was the freeway, today it’s 105 Keefer. While my own time in this city does not begin to measure up to Mrs. Kong’s experience, one does not need a history of Chinatown to see the gross injustice at present.

I’m here today to implore the council to reject Beedie’s Group application for rezoning the site at 105 Keefer. Beedie’s Group proposed concession of 25 units of so-called social housing, only a fraction of which are even close to being affordable to those living on welfare and pension rates, is frankly, an insulting offer, particularly if you have not chosen to ignore the people’s resounding demand for 10,000 homes, and 10,000 homes now. That BC Housing has offered to purchase these units from Beedie Group is not only an unprecedented misuse of public resources, but a sickening and absurd proposition. The offer of 25 units, on these terms, is undeniably not enough; an opinion shared by even those in support of the application. It bears repeating: 25 units, on these terms is not enough. This doesn’t need to be argued any longer. What should be named, however, is the wildly undemocratic nature of this hearing, and the councils feckless defense of what is unquestionably an untenable proposition. Convening this hearing at 9:30am on a Monday is an obstruction of the nominally democratic process of City Hall. Refusing to extend speaking times to accommodate those in need of translation services is an obstruction of that nominally democratic process of City Hall. And I say nominally democratic because any platform in which Bob Rennie can be said to have equal say in what is inflicted on Chinatown as a senior resident who picks up cans on the street to supplement their measly income assistance, this platform, which conceals the deep inequality dividing the voices of so-called stakeholders and Chinatown’s actual residents, the haves and the have-nots, is fundamentally unjust, a mockery of democracy, and slap in the face of public decency.

The only thing more repugnant than the unfolding of this hearing thus far is the council’s indecorous defense of the Beedie Group’s proposal. The council has shamelessly fawned over every ghoulish profiteer, technocrat and vulture in a suit that has shown up in support of the application*...

Mayor Robertson: I’m gonna have to stop you there. In this council chamber, respect is paramount and impugning any motives of the council is not acceptable. We sit here with our minds not made up not favouring any speaker that appears before us. I want to caution you on using that language here in council chamber and be respectful here of everyone involved.

Council De Genova: And to add to that...

Mayor Robertson: No, you don’t need to add to that, I think I have spoken my peace with respect.

[Brief silence]

What is your point of order Councilor De Genova?

Council De Genova: I appreciate what you said Mr. Mayor but I would really appreciate it if the speakers could focus to their comments and not to other speakers comments, thank you.

Vince: How much time do I have left?

Mayor Robertson: You got a minute left

Vince: Ok, yeah, I should end on a positive note I guess.

Council, you are at a juncture. Your decision, fast approaching, will disclose whether an allegiance to people or to profit is more opportune for your petty careers at the moment. We all know here the long arc of history bends. If your record of myopic vision and snivelling cronyism is any evidence, we all know how your decision will land at least two time zones away from justice. Know that when you inevitably surprise no one and decide to accept the Beedie Group’s rezoning application, the fight does not end there. Do you see the people in the viewing galleries? That have been here from beginning to end, every night of the hearing? I’m certain you’ve heard them. That is community. My community. Chinatown. And we are going to keep on fighting 105 Keefer, and we will not be quiet about it.

* The following passages were not delivered to council due to Mayor Robertson's interjection

[...and smugly reprimanded anyone registering their opposition to the supposedly generous offer of 25 units. And yes, to be sure, there have been Chinese seniors who have voiced their support of the proposed building of 105 Keefer. I acknowledge this. I'm sorry to deny you your gotcha moment, Councillor Stevenson. Accepting the opinions of these seniors in good faith, I can only say that 25 units of so-called social housing, which is practically nothing, would sound appealing if the best the city could offer, has only ever offered, is practically nothing. In the council's willingly blinkered worldview, practically nothing is extended with cruel disdain, as "better than nothing." Asking for anything more would be unthinkable, or worse, rude. Listen Chen, who spoke on Friday, identified this deliberate starving of the imagination as a hallmark of neoliberalism. Council, I wouldn't want you to be googling the definition of this word on your iPhones during a civic proceeding, you're on the clock after all, so I'll state it plainly. Those who have been deprived

of anything but the crumbs swept from the table of the rich will gladly accept more crumbs when offered, because when you have nothing, practically nothing is better than nothing.

To name the council's behavior as cowardly would be too generous, as it would presume that the council holds the lives and concerns of Chinatown's most disempowered and marginalized residents at all in mind. The naked contempt council has shown for anyone who dares to oppose the interests of the Beedie Group demonstrates to whom the council answers. No, the council is not cowardly, in fact it has fought brazenly to silence the voices of its opposition. If this hearing has been useful for anything, it has been to unmask council as the obedient lapdogs of the investor class that they are.]

Thank you.



陳聽春 listen chen
Kay Higgins
Byron Peters
Dan Pon
Vincent Tao
Stephan Wright

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IMAGE

Sticker distributed at Community Open House on September 5, 2017 at Chinese Cultural Centre.

NOTES ON THE TRANSCRIPTS

All texts were subjected to minor edits for smoother reading and grammatical correctness. In this process, we have done our best to retain the speaker’s core ideas and sentiments.

The ampersands in listen chen’s transcript are retained from original written file that was received by our editors however questions posed to chen by Council were transcribed from archived media and added. Kay Higgin’s contribution in this publication is transcribed from archived media. Byron Peters’ footnotes have been elaborated and formatted for publication. Dan Pon and Stephan’s text were received as a written files. Vincent Tao’s transcript was received as a hard copy and retyped. Additional exchange between Tao and Mayor and council was transcribed from archived media.

Kay Higgins is an artist and cultural worker based in Vancouver. She was a co-founder of Artspeak Gallery and the Pacific Association of Artist Run Centres, and is co-proprietor (with Kathy Slade) of the artist press Publication Studio Vancouver and Executive Director of the artist-run space UNIT/PITT Projects, both located in Chinatown. In the past she has been a curator, editor, factory and warehouse labourer, technology consultant, and candidate for municipal office.

Dan Pon is is the archivist at the grunt gallery and also a librarian at Langara College and the West Vancouver Memorial Library.

Vincent Tao is the librarian at Pollyanna Library, where he is responsible for the collection and associated programs. His independent research and organizing work concerns urban displacement and the right to the city. Prior to moving to Vancouver, he studied at McGill University in Montreal where he was a outreach coordinator for a worker-run community kitchen.

listen chen 陳聽春 is a daoist & a bat-enthusiast who lives & writes on unceded coast salish territories.

Stephan Wright is an artist, designer and works as the Technical Lead at 221A.

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