

Congress Working Group meeting

August 27, 2005 Location: DWP cafeteria meeting room

Observer: Mark Elliot, Neighborhood Participation Project/Collaborative Learning Initiative

This meeting addressed the two most pressing issues facing the Congress of Neighborhood Councils Working Group at this point: the legitimacy of this group (as represented at meetings) to formulate a guiding document given perceived insufficient participation of councils; and the guiding document itself as the stated purpose for, and described structure of, the congress.

Much of the meeting was devoted to debating the legitimacy of the Working Group. The notification efforts thus far were weighed against the non-representative turnout (described as progressively disappointing) at the meetings. The balance of the meeting was devoted to a line-by-line review of the draft guiding document. It was decided to complete that effort before sending it to neighborhood councils, labeled as a 'draft,' and sent under the cover of a letter explaining in general terms the purpose of the organization.

Procedurally, significant developments concerned how to identify the working group's effort and how it should proceed to outreach to neighborhood councils. The effort was renamed as a 'coalition' to reflect existing disagreement regarding the purpose of the envisioned larger, citywide body, and to communicate that the current effort is only a working group – not the congress itself.

Regarding outreach, it was agreed that the coalition would next meet September 10, at which time there would be a finalized document for distribution to neighborhood councils (though there was no specific feedback mechanism described). There appeared to be consensus to distribute the document and notice of that meeting, 1) first to all existing working group participants (instead of a 'core group,' as represented in this meeting); then 2) an email blast to the universe of councils. It was not clear whether the blast would include all presidents, officers, or indeed all elected board members. (There seemed to be disagreement on this point.)