

japantown task force, inc.

a planning, preservation, and development organization

JTF Board Meeting February 25, 2008 @ 6:00 p.m. Japantown Better Neighborhood Plan Planning Room Meeting minutes

Attendees: Seiko Fujimoto, Caryl Ito, Sandy Mori (President), Benh Nakajo, Rosalyn Tonai
Staff: Darryl Abantao, Bob Hamaguchi
Guests: Carolyn Alexander, Rev. Emery Fleming-Hasegawa, Linda Hills, Gary Hoshiyama, Alice Kawahatsu, Walter Kaye, Olson Lee, Jeffery Matsuoya, Melinda Martin, Anjan Mitra, Emily Mitra, JK Yamamoto
Absent: Doug Dawkins, Stephen Engblom, Denis Henmi, Tak Matsuba Mark Moriguchi

Meeting called to order: 6:16 p.m. by Sandy Mori, President

A. Approval of Minutes: Meeting of January 28, 2007

B. Dosa Restaurant – Emily & Anjan Mitra

Emily & Anjan Mitra introduced themselves and gave a brief presentation about their plans to open a second location for their restaurant, Dosa. They currently have a location in the Mission location that is a 60-seat restaurant that serves only dinner. In 2007, they estimated having over 60,000 visitors in their first year of existence. They were considering a second location in the lower Fillmore neighborhood because they feel the neighborhood is evolving and it would be a good opportunity for expansion .

Dosa serves southern Indian food which is light, spicy and draws people from all over. 85% of their staff lives approximately within a quarter mile of the restaurant. The second location at 1700 Fillmore will feature a full-service bar, weekend brunch and daily dinner. They also responded that they have already joined the Japantown Merchants Association.

Bob Hamaguchi asked if Dosa requires any additional approvals. Emily & Anjan responded that they still need demolition and other various permits and are currently working on a parking plan. They have met with the Redevelopment Agency once and have another meeting scheduled. The kitchen drawings and elevations are finished and are talking with PG&E. They have a meeting with Gaynell Armstrong tomorrow to meet about the change of use to a restaurant and present initial drawings. Key improvements include an interior remodel, HPAC system, new roof and a new kitchen.

Sandy Mori asked if they have met their neighbor Marcus Books. Emily and Anjan responded that they have met some of the local people, but have not introduced themselves to Marcus Books.

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C. Town Consulting – Tony Kim

Bob Hamaguchi introduced Tony Kim and commented that as part of the Better Neighborhood plan, the steering committee felt that some concepts and language may be too complicated to comprehend and an additional consultant to the steering committee would help with understanding these concepts.

Tony Kim, a San Francisco native works with Kelly Pepper, Town Consulting and both are former SF Planning Department staff. Currently, Town Consulting has clients that represent all areas of development including homeowners, developers and the community. Tony stated that even though he may represent clients from each area, he does not have an agenda to project onto the Japantown community. Tony wants to listen to the community and interpret the technical jargon. Tony does not want to advocate for any specific change in Japantown, but if nothing changes there will be nothing to talk about. When you talk about more things, Town Consulting can give their opinion to help make a judgment to move forward with the BNP.

Tony and Kelly have attended all of the community meetings and focus groups. Hopefully the community and steering committee would like to make changes and Town Consulting's role will be to interpret and understand how zoning controls will impact the community for the next 20 to 30 years. Tony encourages people to attend the community meetings and focus groups so that when the final plan is presented to the Board of Supervisors, there will be a strong collective community voice. Before the plan is completed, people from the community need to know what the plan says and understand any changes in zoning.

D. New Liquor Ordinance – Melinda Martin, Dept. of Public Health

Melinda Martin presented a new ordinance that has been in place since 2006. Before 2006, a youth advocacy group at the Community leadership Institute wanted to be socially responsible for social activities and change. Their research found that San Francisco density for alcohol sales is one of the highest in the country with 900 liquor stores. They surveyed stores in the Mission, Marina, Tenderloin, Western Addition and Bayview districts. They also found that water was more expensive than malt liquor. In the Marina there was no malt liquor sold, but in certain neighborhoods some stores only sold malt liquor.

This group worked with Supervisor Maxwell on an ordinance that passed in 2006. Prior to the ordinance, alcohol and beverage commission had the ability to close stores. With the ordinance, communities have the power to close stores if that particular store is causing a nuisance. The ordinance is not intended to penalize vendors who sell alcohol, but rather give them responsibility and need to be socially responsible. The ordinance is to deter people from hanging outside of the liquor store drinking alcoholic beverages. As a citizen, you are required to report crime if you witness it. The police enforce and follow performance standards. Vendors pay an annual tax fee to sell liquor. If the City's Attorney's office and police receive various calls about one store, they are able to close the liquor store.

Melinda responded to a question that the Dept. of Public Health is responsible for education and outreach and overall community health.

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E. Report from Bob Hamaguchi, Executive Director

Nihonmachi Little Friends / Kinmon Follow Up— At our last board meeting, we agreed that arranging a meeting with planning people to meet with Kinmon representatives would be very productive. Shiz Mihara, Mike Iwasaki, Rachel Force, Ruth Todd and Rosemary Dudley met and informed Kinmon representatives that:
1.) There will be a change in use if they don't lease to NLF with public hearings and
2.) the Kinmon Gakuen building is not on the historic register on the state or federal level. If they chose to, benefits include decreased refurbishment costs because of state building code and not city building code. The meeting resulted in Kinmon extending the lease for one more year so the kids in the two-year program could finish through the second year.

Japan Center Garage Funding – There will be an update to the budget next month. The Japan Center Garage is opposing another year of funding. Last year, the Department of Parking and Traffic opposed us last year, but they kept the door open at the last meeting. The Garage cannot show enough revenue increase to fund JTF.

Funding Sources – Bob spoke with Sandy Fong, Gerbode Foundation and they welcome JTF to submit a request for a 3-year contract and needs to be completed by April 1. Lisa Watada, who introduced us to the Gerbode Foundation, also would like to introduce us to the NUUMI corporation, which is a Toyota/General Motors partnership corporation.

Better Neighborhood Plan Status – Bob referenced the updated poster on the wall. We have completed the community meeting and have not scheduled the next community meeting yet. In the second series of focus groups, we have completed four out of the nine scheduled. I am amazed at the attendance with an average of 35 people. I know that people are concerned about a few of the upcoming focus groups such as Japan Center and 1481 Post Street.

Nihonmachi Terrace –

Community Clean Up Day – March 29, 2008 – On Saturday, March 29 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. there will be an intergenerational clean up event hosted by JTF and the SF Chapter – JAACL. We have received support from Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi's office and the Clean Team at the Department of Public Works.

SF Examiner Editorial – Sandy brought an editorial about the BNP community meeting and the Geary BRT project. Bob commented that JTF submitted a response to that editorial in the board packet.

Health & Safety Committee – Judy Hamaguchi – Bob, Darryl and Judy Hamaguchi had lunch after an incident when one of the seniors stepped into a planter and injured her head. Judy Hamaguchi has volunteered to work with JTF staff to lead the health and safety committee.

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Merchants Meeting – Bob met with Richard Hashimoto, President of the Japantown Merchants Association, Tak Matsuba, Keiji Miyoshi, and Ko Asakura to discuss the agenda that JTF wanted to promote and improve Japantown. Bob wanted these individuals to organize with Bob on a long term plan to promote Japantown. Everyone agreed and there was a list of volunteers who signed up at the JMA monthly meeting.

Sandy commented that she met with Mr. Alasandro, John Noguchi, Karen Kai and Kaz Naganuma at the Visitor's Bureau about promotion of various neighborhoods in San Francisco. Sandy mentioned that it would be a good idea to involve these individuals on that committee as well.

F. President of the Board Report from Sandy Mori

Board Membership – Lisa Watada – Quorum was not established and this topic will be addressed at the next board meeting.

G. Other Business and Announcements

1. Community Calendar
2. Press Clippings
3. SFHDC – Fillmore 1940's and 1950's Anniversary – February 28

The meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.