



**JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE BOARD MEETING
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2014 @ 6:00 P.M.
UNION BANK COMMUNITY ROOM**

Minutes

ATTENDEES: Seiko Fujimoto, Miki Heitzman, Alice Kawahatsu, Richard Matsuno, Mark Moriguchi, Steve Nakajima, Benh Nakajo, Paul Wermer

ABSENT: Rosalyn Tonai (excused)

STAFF: Bob Hamaguchi, Greg Marutani, Greg Vilorio

GUESTS: Rich Hashimoto, Glynis Nakahara, Kathie Cheatham, Jill Shiraki, Marissa Bergmann, Michiko Yamada, Karen Kai, Robert Rusky, Vicky Mihara-Avery, Judy Hamaguchi, Mary Ishisaki, Hiroshi Fukuda

I. Call to Order

The meeting called to order: 6:08 p.m. by Alice Kawahatsu, President. There was a quorum.

II. Approval of Minutes of the Board Meeting on October 15, 2014.

Motion: It was moved by Steve Nakajima and seconded by Seiko Fujimoto to approve the October 15, 2014 minutes as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Guest Speakers:

- a. Jill Shiraki and Marissa Bergmann for Brenda Wong-Aoki and Mark Izu, First Voice introducing the Suite J-Town: The Art of Resilience project.

The Suite J-Town: The Art of Resilience is a project envisioned by Brenda Wong-Aoki and Mark Izu partially funded by the Creative California Communities grant for the purpose of revitalizing neighborhoods. First Voice is an Arts organization where Brenda Wong-Aoki and Mark Izu collaborate on creative works together.

Brenda Wong Aoki and Mark Izu would like to work with Japantown. Marissa Bergmann discussed the concepts of the project. The project envisions a multidisciplinary, intercultural, multi-generational site-specific series of performance events celebrating the 120-year history of Japantown. Their plan is to hold a series of seven performances with small audience groups capturing the different eras of Japantown held at various locations in Japantown. First Voice is currently raising funds (grants, donations) and its goal to make it a free event. Their hope is that it is a venue to help the Japantown Task Force (JTF) connect with more people.

Board Comment: Steve Nakajima suggested that since he has an interest in activating the Peace Plaza on a more consistent basis. He suggested starting there or make a consistent presence there.

Public Comment: supported Nakajima's idea of making a consistent presence in the plaza. Asked Shiraki to contact the San Francisco Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League for their involvement.

Motion: Paul Wermer motioned and seconded by Mark Moriguchi that we move that further action and discussion with First Voice from the JTF go to the Cultural Heritage Committee. Motion passed unanimously.

- b. Rich Hashimoto, Japantown Representative on the Geary Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) gave an update:
 - i. Hashimoto provided an update from last week's meeting on the Geary BRT pedestrian crossings, Fillmore-area recommendation, 2016/17 Transit Bulbs and updated Geary BRT milestones and timelines.
 - ii. At the August 21st Geary BRT CAC meeting, Karen Kai and Robert Rusky expressed concerns about crossings and as a result Geary BRT staff met with NLF and Rosa Parks. It was reported that NLF liked the pedestrian bridge to Peace Plaza.
 - iii. Hashimoto reported that the next steps for the Geary BRT were (1) Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) should be out by end of the year and (2) San Francisco County Transportation Authority's (SFCTA) next meeting is February 19, 2015.

Board Comment: Paul Wermer asked if the Geary BRT designers could maintain both the pedestrian walkway and the pedestrian overpasses? Hashimoto responded that the JTF should ask them at the next opportunity.

Public Comment: Karen Kai clarified that Rosa Parks had some concerns. Kai also mentioned Kathy Cheatham asked about the redesigned pedestrian refuge (pedestrian island). Hashimoto stated that the designers are expanding it.

*Action: Rich Hashimoto to obtain a write-up from the SFCTA/Geary BRT Staff on both Nihonmachi Little Friends and Rosa Parks meetings.

*Action: Rich Hashimoto to get a new estimated date of the DEIR release.

*Action: Rich Hashimoto to invite SFCTA to a future community meeting when scheduled.

*Action: Rich Hashimoto to get design dimensions from SFCTA designers for the pedestrian crossing refuges.

Motion: Paul Wermer moved for the Land Use Committee to work with Rich Hashimoto to schedule an SFCTA update meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. Committee Reports

- a. Land Use Committee (Paul Wermer)
 - i. 1481 Update – The Committee invited the 1481 developer to discuss their plans in detail to the November 11 committee meeting but they declined to meet.
 - ii. Design Guidelines – The Committee had a good meeting with Maia Small who is leading the design guideline actions for the Planning Department. The committee decided to take the existing draft and expand it to include “good” and “bad” examples and do a walk-through Japantown looking for examples as well. Zoning controls gets more complicated with mixed-use architecture. The Design Guidelines are still on-track in the future to schedule a public meeting to go over the guidelines. Committee

is also looking at special signage recommendations for the Special Use District (SUD).

Board Comment: Steve Nakajima asked what was the backup plan for 1481 if they chose to continue to decline our invitations. Wermer responded that the community will have to make it clear at the Mayor's office, Supervisor Breed's office and with 1481 that 1481 has not met with the community and their response has been unsatisfactory and JTF could not support a building above current zoning restrictions and if that does not work, go to the public Planning Commission meetings to voice our concern.

b. Economic Development and Marketing Committee (Alice Kawahatsu)

Alice Kawahatsu deferred to Greg Vioria for the report. Vioria reported that the first combined JEDM meeting was held on November 19, which discussed the Japantown Merchants Survey, and starting the Visitors Center subcommittee.

Events in Japantown in December - December 6-7, 13-14 – Santa's Workshop in Japantown @ Japan Center Mall; December 13; December 20 – Mochitsuki @ JCCCNC. Please check the sfjapantown.org website for more details.

Board Comment: Steve Nakajima asked if activating the Peace Plaza is part of the Marketing Committee. Vioria responded that it was in the role of the committee to do that but currently; there are no projects that the committee has for this issue.

Public Comment: It was mentioned that it is an issue of permit fees for our street fairs and festival. It was asked if JTF (could or would) be the steward of the Peace Plaza to manage the fees.

Motion: Paul Wermer moved to assign the activation of the Peace Plaza and the fees associated and make their recommendation and look into the current fees to the Public Spaces sub-committee.

Board Comment on the motion: Mark Moriguchi commented that the JTF has to get everyone to understand how and what we are doing is in the benefit of all. JTF should not be perceived in anyway of trying to take over the management of festivals.

Public comment on the motion: It was commented that it seems intrusive that there is a risk of the JTF getting into people's business too much.

Steve Nakajima called the question on the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

*Action: Greg Vioria to get minutes of the Marketing Committee meeting distributed to everyone.

V. New Business: No new business introduced

VI. General Public Comments: No General Comments

VII. Staff Reports

a. Crime Reports (Greg Marutani)

- i. Crime Reports - There is a proposal to redefine the police district boundaries. Northern Station, which currently serves Japantown, will expand under the new proposal. Overall the crime in Japantown is relatively small. There is an increase in Noise/Nuisance.
- ii. Voters in California approved Prop 47, which would reduce some non-violent crimes to misdemeanors, which means crimes such as shoplifting will be cited and not taken to jail.
Action: Greg Marutani was asked to find out if the Northern Station track violent offenders in the neighborhood.

Motion: Steve Nakajima motioned to invite the Captain of Northern District and Assistant District Attorney to speak on how they expect to deal with Proposition 47. Paul Wermer seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

- b. Update on the Economic Opportunity Council (EOC) Corridor Program – As a follow-up from the last meeting, Bob Hamaguchi reported that JTF staff met with Thomas Jefferson, the supervisor of the EOC clean up crews. Two individuals are assigned to clean Post and Sutter Streets from Fillmore to Laguna.
- c. Homeless on Webster Street Bridge – At last month’s Board meeting the issue of homeless sleeping on the Webster Street Bridge in the mornings being a nuisance for parents walking their children to Rosa Parks Elementary School was raised. JTF staff made contact with the Homeless Unit of Northern Station, which has remedied the problem.
- d. Marutani added he made it known to the Captain that scantily clothed women outside of Hush Coffee Bar. He was told unless there is a crime is committed, there is nothing that the police can do. The captain said he would have his officers monitor the situation.

VIII. President’s Report

- a. Hotel Tomo Management Meeting - Bob Hamaguchi reported on a meeting he was asked to organize with the new ownership at Hotel Tomo. Other Japantown representatives included Rich Hashimoto (Japantown Merchants Association), Alice Kawahatsu (JTF), Don Tamaki (SF Japantown Foundation), Ruby Hata (Japanese Community & Cultural Center of Northern California), Naomi Miura (Nihonmachi Little Friends), Kimpton is a group of about 50 boutique hotels across the United States. Much like Joie De Vivre, The Hotel Tomo purchase is unique because they own and operate the property and is viewed as a long-term investment. Kimpton is planning to put millions of dollars in room and lobby renovation. They will continue to support community clean-ups, Very positive meeting and will continue to use elements of the community in any of their renovation plans. Kimpton hired a San Francisco designer and hope to share and get input from the community on the renovation. They have no plans to close Café Mums. It was reported that Don Tamaki, the attorney for Kintetsu at the time of the sale to 3D, has clarified that there were no covenants on the Hotel Tomo.

Public Comment: It was asked if Hotel Tomo would keep the name? Hamaguchi said they did not say.

- b. Board Retreat Parking Lot Items – Paul Wermer reported that he is putting together a working group to address the committee structure and operating guidelines of the JTF.

Motion: Paul Wermer made the motion to establish the working group to address the committee structure. Steve Nakajima seconded the motion. Motion was approved. Miki Heitzman abstained.

- c. Approval of Proposed Nominations Committee – The nominations committee will be the existing Executive Committee and one member (Sandy Mori) from the initial nominating committee.

Motion: Paul Wermer moved to approve the proposed Nominations Committee. Steve Nakajima seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment: It was recommended that the JTF board be expanded to include people more involved in the JCHESS:

- d. Mayor Lee will visit SF Japantown on Friday, November 21 He will be escorted by Alice Kawahatsu, Bob Hamaguchi, and Rich Hashimoto. The purpose of the visit is to visit the small businesses.
- e. Next Japantown Taskforce meeting will be held at Dec 17th, Wednesday 6:30 pm. We will have a simple holiday celebration with finger foods. Contact Miki Heitzmann to offer help and support.

IX. The meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Alice Kawahatsu
President