



**JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE BOARD MEETING
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2014
NIHONMACHI TERRACE**

Minutes

ATTENDEES: Seiko Fujimoto, Miki Heitzman, Alice Kawahatsu, Rosalyn Tonai, Steve Nakajima, Paul Wermer

ABSENT: Richard Matsuno, Mark Moriguchi, Benh Nakajo, (all excused)

STAFF: Bob Hamaguchi, Greg Marutani, Greg Vilorio

GUESTS: Judy Hamaguchi, Glynis Nakahara, Rose Hillson, Graig Inaba, Rich Hashimoto, Kathie Cheatham, Mary Ishisaki, David Ishida, Neal Taniguchi, Michiko Yamada, Katarina Forck, Beau Simon, Karen Kai, Robert Rusky, Tomo Hirai

I. Call to Order

The meeting called to order: 6:04 p.m. by Alice Kawahatsu, President. There was a quorum.

- a. Holiday blessing by members of the Japanese American Religious Federation (JARF).

II. Consent Items

- a. **Approval of Minutes of the Board Meeting on November 19, 2014.**

Motion: It was moved by Rosalyn Tonai and seconded by Steve Nakajima to approve the November 19, 2014 minutes as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

- b. **Interim Committee Operating Guideline Change**

Board Member Paul Wermer/committee submitted the Interim Committee Operating Guideline document to act as an interim operating guideline for all Japantown Task Force (JTF) committees before a final guideline is developed.

Motion: It was moved by Rosalyn Tonai and seconded by Steve Nakajima to approve the Interim Committee Operating Guidelines as submitted by Paul Wermer. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Committee Reports

- a. Land Use Committee (Paul Wermer)

- i. Geary BRT – Paul Wermer turned over the floor to Rich Hashimoto. Hashimoto, Japantown Representative on the Geary Bus Rapid Transit Citizens Advisory Committee (Geary BRT CAC), gave an update on Geary BRT. Hashimoto informed us that the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) will be available by the February San Francisco County Transportation Agency (SFCTA) – Geary BRT Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting. At which time, the CAC will comment on the DEIR and forward their comments to the SF Board of Supervisors for review. At that time, the DEIR will be open for public comment of the Geary BRT staff recommendations. Hashimoto encourages everyone who has comments or concerns on the Geary BRT to come to the February meeting of the SFCTA Geary BRT CAC.

- ii. 1481 Update – Wermer reported that the 1481 developer did acknowledge the JTF Land-Use Committee’s request for the meeting but declined the invitation until they spoke with everyone else. Wermer interpreted this as the developer’s unwillingness to discuss the project with the committee in any substantive dialog. Wermer stated that when the comment / response period for the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) becomes available, the committee will need to meet to draft a position response on behalf of the JTF.
- iii. Neighborhood Commercial District Zoning – Wermer reported as per the JCHESS guidelines, we are proposing to redo the zoning of an area that includes Japan Center Malls, Post Street frontage and Buchanan Street into a named area called the Japantown Neighborhood Commercial Transit district or Japantown NCT. The motion to initiate this zoning was done last year during the SF Planning commission endorsement of the JCHESS. To move the Japantown NCT to final approval, an internal review by the Land Use committee is needed -- which meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month (next meeting is January 13th). The public is welcome to attend. Wermer added that there will be community outreach and that outreach meeting is scheduled for February 26, 2015 at the Nihonmachi Terrace dining room. Time will be announced in postings and email when finalized.
- iv. Design Guidelines – Wermer reported that the committee still needs to take the existing draft and expand it to include “good” and “bad” examples and do a Japantown walk-through looking for examples and documenting them through pictures. The Design Guidelines are still on-track in the near future to schedule a public meeting to go over the guidelines. The committee is also looking at special signage recommendations for the Special Use District (SUD). Wermer encourages people to attend the Land Use committee meetings to get involved.
- v. General – Wermer reported that the old Uoki Sakai grocery store is being converted to another use – Spa and apartments above. Mr. Robert Sakai, the property owner, is scheduled to address the next Land Use committee at the next meeting on January 13, 2015.

Public Comment: Karen Kai reported that she attended the Historic Preservation Cultural Assets meeting at Paul Wermer’s request. Historic Preservation Commissioners Hyland and Matsuda comprise the committee. The purpose of the committee is to find out what the cultural assets are in each San Francisco community and devise a plan to preserve them. SF Heritage has a number of programs sustaining cultural assets including a Restaurant and Bar program which would be of interest to Japantown. SF Heritage is a 501(c)(3) charged with preserving and enhancing San Francisco’s unique architectural and cultural identity. Kai suggested we look into working closely with them and invite them to a future board meeting.

Action: Land Use Committee to consider working with SF Heritage on their programs.

- b. Japantown Economic Development and Marketing Committee (Alice Kawahatsu)
 - i. Alice Kawahatsu deferred to Greg Vilorio for the report. Vilorio reported that Craig Waterman, General Manager, updated the group on the Hotel Kabuki upgrade plans and they are still targeting April/May 2015 for a start date and expect work to be completed by the end of the year.

- ii. Viloría also reported on the Japantown Merchants Survey that was completed at the end of November. The survey was targeted to merchants and property owners in the main corridor – Kinokuniya Mall, West and East Malls, Post Street from Webster to Laguna and Buchanan St from Bush to Post Streets. Dawn Shalhoup of PR Potion summarized the surveys into a report that was distributed at the meeting. Viloría reported that Japantown merchants have felt crime increase over the last year and put security over marketing and maintenance in the survey. The merchants surveyed also are willing to contribute funds to ensure tighter security. The data will be used for the security report to be compiled by JTF staff by the end of the year. Full report will be made available after the first of the year.

Board comment: Steve Nakajima and Paul Wermer asked if there were any actionable items as a result of the survey. Viloría responded that this survey was more of a perception survey of the merchants to the target areas of marketing, security and maintenance. Viloría added that the total picture needs the voice of the customer, which will be conducted in a follow-up survey in the spring of 2015 at local festivals and weekends. Alice Kawahatsu added that this survey had a greater response rate than that conducted over 5 years ago because of the personal outreach of the committee members and this type of outreach is needed to build community.

Public Comment: Bob Hamaguchi commented that city funding cannot be relied upon to take care of these types of items and businesses will have to pick up the slack and have to be implemented through things like a Community Benefits District. Tomo Hirai asked if the follow-up survey will include residents of Japantown. Viloría responded that anybody that is customers of our merchant population should be included in the follow-up survey.

IV. New Business:

Rose Hillson reported that she is a member of the Urban Forestry Council and attends their regular meetings. The Urban Forestry Council is part of SF Environment department of the City of San Francisco. The Urban Forestry Council (UFC) is an advisory body to all city departments, the Board of Supervisors and the mayor on developing an urban forest plan. Hillson reported that the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) will move an old cork oak tree named after Rosa Parks on the Van Ness/Jackson Street median and the UFC needs input from the community into the proper site for the tree. The UFC is to discuss this at their next meeting on January 9, 2015. Karen Kai, who is on the Rosa Parks Elementary School Garden committee, will work with Hillson on getting feedback from the elementary school. David Ishida also suggested that the Rosa Parks Senior Housing has open space for the tree.

V. General Public Comments:

Japantown Mochitsuki celebrations on 12/20 and 12/21. 12/20 will be at Christ United Presbyterian, 1700 Sutter St from 9:00 a.m. and 12/21 will be at the Konko Church starting at 9:00 a.m.

VI. Staff Reports

- a. Crime Reports (Greg Marutani)
 - i. Security Report – Greg Marutani will have to look at the data from the Japantown Merchants Survey and taking pieces from it and look into other day from the city.

- ii. Meeting Request Update on Proposition 47 – Marutani stated that Proposition 47 may cause an uptick in crime in the future. Marutani added that a representative from District Attorney Gascon's office and the captain of the Northern Station will be attending the meeting on January 9 to comment on the proposition and its impact.
- iii. Crime Reports – Greg Marutani reported that crime in San Francisco, Northern District and Japantown is going down. No auto boosts were reported to the SF Police Department in November, yet noted that anecdotal reports seemed to contradict that no auto boosts occurred in Japantown. .
- iv. American Disabilities Act (ADA) Workshop – Marutani reported that Japantown has some challenges being ADA compliant because of the age of the buildings. It was reported that a disabled individual, who has travelled to San Francisco neighborhoods, finds ADA issues and has a lawyer issue a letter to those businesses threatening a lawsuit unless the business complies, is amplifying these challenges. Diana Ponce de Leon has made arrangements from the city to have an ADA expert talk about things we can do here in Japantown. The meeting is scheduled for January 26, 2015 at the Union Bank Community Room. An announcement will be sent out and posted to confirm the exact time.

Public Comment – It was suggested that anyone can document the auto boosts by taking a picture and storing it so we can create a database of issues. The picture should be tagged by location to provide some depth to the data. This could add to the support of a surveillance system.

VII. President's Report

- a. Summary About the Japantown Task Force (JTF) – Alice turned the floor over to Bob Hamaguchi. Hamaguchi reported on a brief of what the JTF does currently so we can share with people who are new to our meetings.

Alice asked for a call for action to people who can head and fill out the JTF committees.
- b. Mayor's Visit – Kawahatsu reported that Mayor Ed Lee visited Japantown on November 21. Mayor Lee wanted to see the condition of Japantown. Bob Hamaguchi, Rich Hashimoto and Kawahatsu greeted Mayor Lee. Some of the issues brought up were 1481 Post Street development, where the developers refuse to engage with the community and the funding for the JTF.
- c. Nominating Committee Process Report and New Board Slate Vote – Alice turned the floor over to Bob Hamaguchi who reported on the JTF board nomination process for this round. As reported in last month's minutes, the nominating committee is composed of the existing JTF Board Executive Committee and one previous nominating committee member - Sandy Mori. Hamaguchi reported that the committee came up with a nominations criteria matrix consisting of many categories. For example, stakeholders or groups, residents, Japantown organizations, professional experiences, Japanese speaking, and youth were amongst the nominating criteria. Alice asked the slate members who were in the room to leave for the board to deliberate. Linda Hills withdrew her name from the original slate that was distribute. The nominating committee continues to look for additional board members and this current slate will bring the board number to 16. The current by-laws have 21 as the maximum number for the JTF board.

Motion: It was motioned by Rosalyn Tonai and seconded by Miki Heitzman to approve the slate of board nominations of Anthony Brown, Judy Hamaguchi, Richard Hashimoto, David Ishida, Glynis Nakahara, Jon Osaki, and Neal Taniguchi.

Those nominees who were present at the meeting were asked to leave the room during the discussion and vote.

Public Comment: Two people offered comments. It was commented that voting by slate tends to mix the candidates and removes individual attention and discussion of individuals. Concerns were raised about the slate process, transparency of the nominations process and the number of original Japantown Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy (JCHESS) Organizing Committee members on the board.

Action: Karen Kai requested for a copy of the board nominating criteria matrix.

The motion passed unanimously.

IX. The meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rosalyn Tonai', written in a cursive style.

Rosalyn Tonai
Secretary