



**JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE BOARD MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2015
JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE HQ**

Minutes

- ATTENDEES:** Anthony Brown, Seiko Fujimoto, Judy Hamaguchi, Miki Heitzman, David Ishida, Alice Kawahatsu, Richard Matsuno, Mark Moriguchi, Glynis Nakahara, Steve Nakajima, Benh Nakajo, Neal Taniguchi, Rosalyn Tonai, Paul Wermer,
- ABSENT:** Richard Hashimoto, Jon Osaki, (all excused)
- STAFF:** Bob Hamaguchi, Greg Marutani, Greg Vilorio
- GUESTS:** Naomi, Kathy Cheatham, Michiko Yamada, Tomo Hirai, Vicky Mihara-Avery, Arnold Townsend, Brenda Wong-Aoki, David Berg.

I. Call to Order

The meeting called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Alice Kawahatsu, President. Quorum established at 6:10 p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes of the Board Meeting on February 18, 2015.

M/S/C: (David Ishida/Anthony Brown) to approve the February 18, 2015 minutes as submitted. Motion unanimously approved.

III. Consent Items – No Consent Items

IV. Special Guest – Board of Supervisor’s President and District 5 Supervisor, London Breed

- a. Board President, Alice Kawahatsu, presented London Breed with a Yasukochi Coffee Crunch Cake to celebrate her appointment as Board President and to welcome her to Japantown.
- b. Supervisor Breed discussed some initiatives she’s been busy with at City Hall.

Expanded Police Department and Public Safety Services – Supervisor Breed announced that in the next two years, there would be an additional 300 police officers in San Francisco. Supervisor Breed is working with Chief Greg Suhr to make sure that a lot of the officers are serving the local communities. Supervisor Breed added that Mayor Lee has agreed to support a cadet program to bring younger officers to the police force. Succession planning and strategic planning is also important with all our safety departments. More MUNI drivers are also planned.

Low Income Housing - Low-income housing is a priority for the Supervisor. The city has rehabilitated 160 empty housing vacant 80 families have been moved in to date. The city expects \$500M in housing rehabilitation to be invested in the coming years. San Francisco has \$200M in deferred maintenance and the federally funded, Rental Assistance Program (RAD), can help here. Western Addition Access Point, which operates out of the Safeway parking lot area, is run by a new operator and very successful in an information and advocate for disadvantaged individuals.

- c. Alice Kawahatsu shared some initiatives that JTF is pursuing and needs Supervisor Breed's support:

- i. Peace Pagoda Landmarking and Peace Plaza Activation – Kawahatsu stated that Park and Rec operates the Peace Plaza and wants Supervisor Breed to not only support the landmarking but also support the plaza activation of the venue for the children of Japantown and neighboring places like the Fillmore and Western Addition who can come and enjoy it. Kawahatsu gave an example of Brenda Wong-Aoki and her Suite J-town in creating a way to activate places in Japantown. The Suite J-town will have a Mandala exhibit where many local organizations can contribute to its creation. Kawahatsu added that the JTF's dream is to make the Peace Plaza thrive and activate the plaza twice a month to reconnect the Western Addition back to Japantown.

Kawahatsu introduced Rosalyn Tonai, chair of the Cultural Heritage sub-committee, to Supervisor Breed. Tonai added that Anthony Brown has been added to the board because of his work both nationally with the Smithsonian and locally with music in the schools, bringing both communities together through the arts. Dr. Anthony Brown explained that he has been using Jazz to bridge the Western Addition and Japantown communities for over 35 years. Brown added that he has been commissioned for the 70th Anniversary of Nagasaki / Hiroshima to create a music piece that will use a fusion of jazz and Japanese music. Tonai emphasized that the plaza has been used to host not only festivals, but multi-cultural concerts for kids from the Western Addition. Yet, It is in need of much repair and renovation. The landmarking will hopefully attract money not to help preserve the Peace Pagoda but to attract international public support to make the plaza open, inviting and functional.

- ii. 1481 Post Street Development Project - Bob Hamaguchi explained that the JTF has made several attempts to have the 1481 Post Street engage with the community.

Supervisor Breed commented that the 1481 post project is not done and is going through its process. She has been told that the developer has met with community members. Hamaguchi explained that the developer has been meeting with individuals of the community but not the community as a whole.

David Berg, President of Northern California Presbyterian Homes and Services (NCPHS- The Sequoias), clarified that they did not have a meeting with them. Kathy Cheatham of The Carlisle also stated they have not been approached.

Reverend Arnold Townsend also commented that he has had a conversation with the developer but admitted they hadn't reached out to the community. Reverend Townsend stated that "We need to encourage them (developer) to work together and do the right thing for the community. "

Supervisor Breed stated at this time that she has not weighed in on supporting or opposing the project. She noted that having heard from JTF and community groups that the developer has not yet formerly sat down with groups in the community to work together, troubles her. She is speaking with the City Attorney and will continue to receive community comments and would encourage the developer to work together with the community groups.

- iii. Increase in Homeless Population in Japantown - Kawahatsu lastly discussed the homeless situation in Japantown. Supervisor Breed said that issue of the homelessness relating to mental health and substance abuse continues to be the most challenging for the San Francisco. San Francisco has a lack of mental health beds. The city does not have a comprehensive plan to deal with mental illness. There are examples of successful programs to deal with mental illness and substance abuse but they are lacking funding.

V. Committee Reports

a. Land Use / Transportation Committee (Paul Wermer)

- i. 1656 Post Robert Sakai Project (Pearl Spa / Apartments) Japantown Merchants Association (JMA) Meeting Update

Paul Wermer announced that the committee recommends that the board send an endorsement letter contingent on the planning department agreeing to incorporate the “recommended use” conditions stipulated in the letter. Specifically, the “recommended use” conditions, that the committee required are 1) Restricted Operating Hours (8a-10p, with last admissions at 8:30 pm) 2) Requiring that an owner be on-site at all times and 3) Restriction on Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) license. These conditions run with the ownership of the property so in case of sale of the business, these conditions will continue. Wermer applauded the project sponsors (Robert Sakai, Pearl Spa) on productive meetings with the community on several occasions.

Comments: Judy Hamaguchi asked where the “recommended use” conditions came from. Paul Wermer explained that for something to be approved for “conditional use” there needs to be conditions to be met and gives an opportunity for the community to add conditions to the project. Wermer added that the owners have approved all conditions as stated and the Japantown Merchants Association has granted a letter of support for both projects.

M/S/C: (Paul Wermer/Glynis Nakahara) to approve the endorsement letter as submitted. Motion passed 13-1.

- ii. Neighborhood Commercial District (NCD) Zoning

Paul Wermer announced that there would be a property owners meeting on Thursday, March 26, 6pm at Nihonmachi Terrace. Everyone is encouraged to attend.

- iii. 1481 Post Project – Paul Wermer reported that at the last meeting, the developers are going to be invited to the April or May Land Use Meetings. Wermer state his meeting’s goal is to receive an update from the developer and to see if the committee can help facilitate communication on community concerns, needs and benefits.

General comment: Board asked the update on the Geary BRT. Wermer said they showed up at the Seniors on the hill. Wermer added that the stop at Laguna would be for the local and not the BRT. Public commented that the stop at Laguna has been requested for a limited stop but has never been approved.

b. Japantown Economic Development and Marketing Committee (Alice Kawahatsu)

- i. 2014 sfjapantown.org Demographic Report – Greg Vioria reported that in 2014, the gender of people who visited the sfjapantown.org website were 55% female, 45% male. Two-thirds of the people who visited are of the age of 18 to 44.

In 2014, pageviews were over 600,000 which is an average of over 50,000 pageviews per month. Vioria gets over 30 inquiries at the info@sfjapantown.org per month which is another indicator that the website is a source of information for the public.

Staff Follow-up: Distribute 2014 Report to the board

- ii. Alice Kawahatsu deferred to Greg Vioria for the report. Vioria reported that Miki Heitzman, facilitated the last meeting.
- iii. No new update on the 2015 Holiday sub-committee.
- iv. Kawahatsu reported that the Japantown questionnaire of visitors to Japantown follow-up meeting was held and the final survey is ready to be distributed. A meeting will be held to organize the final details. Vioria noted that the survey will be embedded online and targeted. Craig Waterman will help with providing incentives for audience to take the survey.

Comment – Distribute questionnaires at the Sundance Kabuki Theatres, Kinokuniya Book Store and hotel. The San Francisco International Film Festival (SFIFF) will be starting April 23 and that will be another excellent opportunity to get responses. A suggestion for taglines to coach the survey takers to entice potential survey respondents was also noted.

Staff Follow-up: Staff to distribute the survey to the board.

- v. The Visitor Greeting sub-committee has made some strides in the planning the greeting desk. Kawahatsu added that the visitor greeting area can be used as an anchor for the survey volunteers. Kawahatsu visited the owners at the mall for space to be used by other events. They need to be given at least three months advanced notice. Another gate to having approval is the plan and how to organize the volunteers.

c. Cultural Heritage Committee (Rosalyn Tonai)

- i. Rosalyn Tonai, co-chair, reported that most was already stated in the update to Supervisor London Breed. The landmarking request is moving forward and committee expects to see the planning department's report soon.

VI. New Business: No new business.

VII. General Public Comments: No public comments.

VIII. Staff Reports

a. Crime / Other Project Reports (Greg Marutani)

- i. Monthly Community Police Advisory Board Meeting – Marutani reported status that crime is up all around the city. Captain McEachern of the Northern Station was concerned about the burglaries when people are at home. He suggested caution when answering doors. Marutani updated us that the police redistricting will be

recommended for approval to the police commission on April 8 and the Board of Supervisors will follow suit. Marutani reported that another class of recruits will be coming through but shared Captain McEachern's concerns about a temporary personnel void left from the officers involved in the "Texting scandal." Marutani reported at the meeting about the increase of homeless persons in Japantown. However, he noted that the police reiterated that they can only get involved if the area has the yellow "no trespassing" sign. Marutani observed an increase in police presence in Japantown as the Captain has encouraged his officers to stop in Japantown for breaks and meals. It was also reported that St. Mary's has removed the deterrent sprinkler systems on the church premises that drenched the homeless.

Comment: Public asked about the robbery on Geary and Buchanan on the morning of March 18 but Marutani had no information to report on that crime.

IX. President's Report (Alice Kawahatsu)

- a. Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival – Kawahatsu deferred to Greg Vioria , representing Richard Hashimoto for the festival. Vioria announced again that the festival will be held on two weekends 4/11-12 and 4/18-19 with the parade on 4/19. Vioria reported there is a few new things like a new area called Sakura 360 – celebrating the "new culture" of Japan, Hello Kitty Truck, Glico Pocky Truck and live streaming of the parade. All were encouraged to attend.
- b. 3/11 Ceremonies - Tohoku 3/11 Fundraising at the JCCCNC – Kawahatsu reported that she attended the 3/11 gathering at the JCCCNC on March 11 and many items from Tohoku were up for bid at the JCCCNC-4 different sake from the region and food from the region. All proceeds go to the victims of the disaster. Kawahatsu also saw the film called Tohoku Tomo on March 10 at the New People cinema.
- c. Day of Remembrance – Great turnout.

X. Announcements – Judy Hamaguchi reported that she attended a meeting on the 110th Japantown anniversary held at the JCCCNC to go over the calendar. In attendance were representatives of the Japanese American Citizens League (JAACL), Kokoro and National Japanese American Historical Society (NJAHS). Hamaguchi said that some of the ways to celebrate the anniversary was a picnic and a luncheon.

IX. President adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Rosalyn Tonai
Secretary