



**JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE BOARD MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 2015  
JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE HQ**

**Minutes**

**ATTENDEES:** Anthony Brown, Judy Hamaguchi, Miki Heitzman, David Ishida, Alice Kawahatsu, Mark Moriguchi, Glynis Nakahara, Steve Nakajima, Jon Osaki, Neal Taniguchi, Rosalyn Tonai, Paul Wermer

**ABSENT:** Richard Hashimoto, Seiko Fujimoto, Richard Matsuno, Benh Nakajo (all excused)

**STAFF:** Bob Hamaguchi, Greg Marutani, Greg Vilorina

**GUESTS:** Grace Horikiri, Cece Carpio, Meg Shiffler, Tomo Hirai, Michiko Yamada, Karen Kai, Robert Rusky, Kathie Cheatham, Suzanne Smith, Beau Simon, Eben Marsh, Vicky Mihara-Avery

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Alice Kawahatsu, President.

**II. Approval of Minutes of the Board Meeting on April 15, 2015.**

It was moved by Paul Wermer and seconded by Anthony Brown to approve the April 15, 2015 minutes as submitted.

Motion unanimously approved.

**III. Consent Items – No Consent Items**

**IV. Special Guests – Grace Horikiri - Nihonmachi Street Fair & Cece Carpio | Meg Shiffler – SF Arts Commission Gallery Passport Day**

- a. Grace Horikiri, Nihonmachi Street Fair – Grace Horikiri updated the board on the 42<sup>nd</sup> Nihonmachi Street Fair. This year's Nihonmachi Street Fair will be held on August 1 & 2. The festival operates two stages, food area, doggy world, children's world, Sounds of Thunder car show and Adult co-ed basketball tournament. Horikiri added that this year also marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. The festival is partnering with Anthony Brown and his musical group to commemorate the anniversary, which will be playing on Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Leading up to Sunday's special music show, the festival is partnering with Linda and Vicky Mihara of Paper Tree to make cranes for a special art installation and encouraging artists and community organizations to contribute.
- b. Cece Carpio | Meg Shiffler – SF Arts Commission Gallery Passport Day – Cece Carpio announced that SF Japantown has been selected to participate in the 2015 SF Arts Commission Gallery Passport Day. The Passport Day is an annual event in its 7<sup>th</sup> year and last year was held in the Mission District. Meg Shiffler added that the passport is a collectable book that has pages for people to get specially designed stamps from

selected artists. All artists with stamps are positioned in businesses so that the neighborhood merchants get additional exposure from the event. Businesses have used this event to offer special discounts and deals to capitalize on the event. The passport books cost \$25 and typically sells over 300 books. The event attracts between 300 to 500 people. The Japantown event is scheduled for a Sunday in late October from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

- c. Comment: Carpio and Shiffler were asked how artists are selected for the passport and they commented that there is a selection committee that selects the artists. Carpio added that anyone who has any artist suggestions to email her at [cece.carpio@sfgov.org](mailto:cece.carpio@sfgov.org). It was suggested that activating the Peace Plaza during this event with music would be a plus.

## V. Committee Reports

### a. Land Use / Transportation Committee (Paul Wermer)

#### i. 1801 Buchanan Condominiums

Paul Wermer announced that there is a project proposed for the open space between Hotel Tomo and 1875 Buchanan Condominiums. The project is part of lot split that 3D made before they sold the Hotel Tomo to Kimpton keeping the air rights above the hotel garage. The project is a proposed six-unit residential building. Wermer added that he and several people from Japantown Task Force (JTF) attended the pre-application meeting. Wermer added that the project sponsor would be invited to the next Land Use Committee meeting to get more dialog about the project.

Comments: There was a question if Nihonmachi Little Friends showed up and Wermer said they were not present at this meeting and they were on the notifications list. Wermer added that Kinmon Gakuen was not present at the pre-application meeting.

#### ii. 1481 Post St. Project

Wermer reported that the project sponsors have refused to meet with the Land Use Committee. The questions that were provided were too difficult to answer and had to check with headquarters on the response.

Wermer reported that at the last Land Use Committee, that they had a discussion about community benefits. The committee is looking into outreaching to other community organizations about this project and to get comment on community benefits.

#### iii. Design Guidelines

Wermer announced that there is a meeting is scheduled for May 30 to review that latest draft of the guidelines. Wermer commented that the 1801 Buchanan Project might provide an opportunity to do a "trial" run of the guidelines.

#### iv. Neighborhood Commercial District (NCD) Zoning

Wermer reported that the committee still had concerns about noise control. Wermer reported that they met with Planning department's Steve Wertheim and Conor Johnson at Supervisor Breed's office on what should be permitted. Wermer added that he and Bob Hamaguchi met with Wertheim and Johnston and came to an

agreement on an improved notification process above what the entertainment commission currently does to alleviate concerns. Hamaguchi added that Wertheim will redraft the Neighborhood Commercial District zoning and the board should wait on any action until that is completed and reviewed. Hamaguchi said that they should have that draft by the next Land Use Committee meeting in June.

v. 1656 Post Street Project

Wermer reported that the Planning Commission approved this project unanimously.

vi. 1991 Sutter Street - Pinot's Palette

Wermer reported that the committee reviewed a project proposed for 1991 Sutter St. called Pinot's Palette. Pinot's Palette is a franchise business, which serves beer and wine with art classes. The business is formula retail under the Special Use District (SUD) requires a public hearing and approval by planning commission. Wermer introduced Eben Marsh who is seeking to open Pinot's Palette. Supervisor Breed's office suggested that Marsh contact the Japantown Task Force.

Comments: Wermer was asked about the long-term ramifications that this approval would carry. Wermer responded that if the business fails, and the new business is a "similar use" and formula retail, the new owner can operate the business as a bar, limited to the time restrictions as stated. If a new business does come into the space the California Department of Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) requires a notification to be placed in the window. If the new business is not formula retail then they can operate within the time constraints determined by the Fillmore Neighborhood Commercial District (Fillmore NCD). Marsh was asked about the demographic and Marsh responded that 90% would be female, 25-55 years of age. Marsh added that corporate and private parties are another part of its customer base. Marsh was asked about if he has reached out to Fillmore NCD or Fillmore Merchants Association and Marsh commented that he has reached out but has not heard anything from any of them. Alice Kawahatsu asked Marsh to step out to carry further discussion. There was comment to the Land Use Committee on what are the criteria on what type of business adds value to Japantown as a whole. Wermer responded that they would bring that subject up in the July Land Use Committee meeting. There was concern that Marsh has not had any contact with any Fillmore district merchant groups.

It was moved by Paul Wermer and seconded by David Ishida to approve the Land Use Committee recommendation that the JTF support the Conditional Use application for Pinot's Palette, located at 1991 Sutter Street with the condition that the hours of operation from noon to 10:00 pm. A roll-call vote was called with the following votes

Anthony Brown – Abstain  
Seiko Fujimoto – Absent  
Judy Hamaguchi – Abstain  
Richard Hashimoto - Absent  
Miki Heitzman – Abstain  
David Ishida – Yes  
Alice Kawahatsu – Abstain  
Richard Matsuno - Absent

Mark Moriguchi – Yes  
Glynis Nakahara – Yes  
Benh Nakajo - Absent  
Neal Taniguchi – Abstain  
Paul Wermer – Yes  
Steve Nakajima – No  
Jon Osaki – No  
Roselyn Tonai – Yes

Vote Summary (Yea/Nay/Abstain) – 5 / 2 / 5 with 4 absentees

Motion did not pass.

It was moved by Paul Wermer and seconded by Ros Tonai to take this matter back to the committee and do the following: 1) discuss criteria for business approval 2) help with outreach to Fillmore 3) work with Marsh on Japantown community benefits.

The motion passed.

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

- i. 2015 Japantown Holiday Sub-committee (Vicky Mihara-Avery / Judy Hamaguchi) – Mihara-Avery reported that the committee gathering ideas and costs **on** a holiday activation.
- ii. Comment: There was a question about the scope of the committee if it encompasses marketing outreach. Mihara-Avery responded that marketing is in the scope of the committee. There was a suggestion that the committee look to collaborate with the Nakayoshi of the Japanese American Citizens League (JAACL).
- iii. Visitor's Greeting Pilot (Alice Kawahatsu) – Kawahatsu reported that we have launched a Saturday program and have tried two weekends so far. There were an average of 30 people visiting the table during its four-hour operation. This pilot will continue till the Soy and Tofu Festival.

c. Cultural Heritage Committee (Rosalyn Tonai)

Rosalyn Tonai, co-chair, reported that the committee is delaying the May 27 Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza Landmarking public meeting until there is a meeting of the various affected city departments. Tonai requested that board members to review the draft report of the landmarking of the Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza that is on-line at <http://www.sf-planning.org/index.aspx?page=2907>.

Comments: There was comment if the document was in its completed form. Tonai responded that the document is missing sections and the reason for the meeting was to help facilitate the completion of those sections as well as add any missing information to other sections. There was comment that the Peace Plaza section of the document is missing and should be included. Tonai and Hamaguchi responded that that is the goal is the completion of the landmarking document.

Staff Action: Facilitate the department meeting to move the project forward.

d. Finance Committee (Bob Hamaguchi)

Bob Hamaguchi reported that the Japantown Task Force (JTF) has received a \$40,000 grant from the city. Unfortunately, this amount is below the amount requested. The committee has requested an additional \$100,000 to execute the Invest in Neighborhoods and the Japantown Cultural Heritage and Economic Development Sustainability Strategy (JCHESS). Hamaguchi also reported that the JTF Finance Committee had met with Kate Howard, the Mayor's budget director, to explain the additional request of funds for the JTF. Hamaguchi reported that the committee also presented the budget at Supervisor Breed's District 5 meeting with both Supervisor Breed and Mayor Lee in attendance.

Hamaguchi also reported that the JTF is now part of the Asian Pacific Islander Council (API Council), which is very influential in tracking and advocating for Asian Pacific Islander organizations. The JTF request for additional funds is in a request made by the API Council. Met with Supervisor Breed about the District 5 items on the API Council requests. Jon Osaki added that Supervisor Breed said that the JTF was a main priority for her.

Comment: There was comment as to developing an additional strategy if the line item does not appear in the budget. Jon Osaki responded that with the presentation to Kate Howard, London Breed, there was as much as the committee can do at this point. The committee plans to follow up with Kate Howard in the coming week.

**VI. New Business:** No new business.

**VII. General Public Comments:** No public comments.

### **VIII. Staff Reports**

- a. Alice Kawahatsu reported that Greg Marutani created a summary of happenings here in Japantown (See Addendum A)
- b. Crime Report (Greg Marutani) – Overall crime has increased in San Francisco and Auto-Boosts (Car Break-Ins) have increased substantially, including Japantown.
- c. Comment: There was comment that all incidents need to be reported to be thoughtful about creating awareness that Japantown does not allow crime in its neighborhood. Kawahatsu added that she would be going to the Hall of Justice to follow-up on her citizen's arrest of a homeless person for indecent exposure. There was comment that if the JTF has ways of informing and educating the general community on best practices for crime awareness and prevention.
- d. Staff Action: Look into ways to communicate information for the general community good.

### **IX. President's Report (Alice Kawahatsu)**

- a. Board Retreat – Kawahatsu reported that the JTF is planning a summer board retreat. Kawahatsu and Hamaguchi will be developing the agenda. No date has been set yet.

Staff Action: Staff will send some target dates to test

- b. NJAHS Annual Ceremony – Kawahatsu attended the awards ceremony which fellow board member Seiko Fujimoto was honored.
- c. Consul General Watanabe Farewell Dinner – Kawahatsu and others from the board attended Consul General Watanabe's Farewell Dinner. The new Consul General is Jun Yamada and will arrive on June 21.
- d. Suite J-Town – Kawahatsu attended the Mother's Day performance of Suite J-Town and was well attended both inside the space in the mall and outside in the plaza.

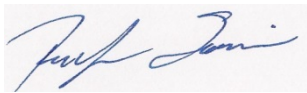
Comment: There was comment that the Arts Commission did not fund Suite J-Town because Japantown was not in a cultural corridor.

Staff Action: Investigate how Japantown can be recognized as a cultural corridor and develop an action plan.

**X. Announcements** – Next JTF board meeting will be Wednesday, June 17, 2015 at Union Bank Community Room.

**IX.** President adjourned the meeting at 8:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rosalyn Tonai", is placed on a light gray rectangular background.

Rosalyn Tonai  
Secretary