



**JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE BOARD MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2015
UNION BANK COMMUNITY ROOM**

Minutes

ATTENDEES: Anthony Brown, Seiko Fujimoto, Judy Hamaguchi, Miki Heitzman, Alice Kawahatsu, Mark Moriguchi, Steve Nakajima, Jon Osaki, Neal Taniguchi, Paul Wermer

ABSENT: Richard Hashimoto, David Ishida, Richard Matsuno (resigned), Glynis Nakahara, Benh Nakajo, Rosalyn Tonai (all excused)

STAFF: Bob Hamaguchi, Greg Marutani, Greg Vilorio

GUESTS: Augie Phillips, Kenta Takamori, Cece Carpio, Meg Shiffler, Cathy Inamasu, Tomo Hirai, Michiko Yamada, Karen Kai, Robert Rusky, Kathie Cheatham, Vicky Mihara-Avery, Rumiko Tauber, Naomi Miura, Warren DiFranco

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 May 20, 2015.

It was moved by Paul Wermer and seconded by Neal Taniguchi to approve the May 20, 2015 minutes as submitted.

Motion unanimously approved.

III. Consent Items – No Consent Items

IV. Special Guests

- a. **Chester Fung – Geary Bus Rapid Transit (Geary BRT) Project Update** – Chester Fung of the San Francisco County Transportation Agency (SFCTA) updated the board and guests on the current status of the Geary BRT. The current status is to provide 2 lanes of traffic and one bus lane in each direction. Also proposed is to create a crossing at Buchanan and Geary (from St. Francis Square to Peace Plaza), demolition of the Webster St. bridge and the creation of pedestrian walkway on the West side of Geary and Webster Streets for ADA accessibility. Mr. Fung suggested a phase in plan to gradually change the configuration. The project timeline for the project will start with the roadway reconfiguration around mid-2016, Webster Street crosswalk creation around mid-2017, creation of Buchanan crossing by end of 2017 and bridge removal early 2018. The Geary BRT team has outreached to Rosa Parks Elementary School and Nihonmachi Little Friends. The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) will be available for public comment in the August/September timeframe. At that time, public comment will be able to be put on record. Revisions to the plan are scheduled to be presented in the spring of 2016.

Comments: A parent from Rosa Parks commented that the bridge demolition was a strong concern at the meeting even with pedestrian refuges. Another comment mentioned at the Rosa Parks meeting, it was mentioned that the ADA crosswalk at Webster and Geary did not necessitate the demolition of the bridge. Additional comment mentioned the nice job of Octavia St in the Hayes Valley. Another comment ask Mr. Fung if replacement of the bridge is possible. Mr. Fung responded that the current footprint of the bridge prohibited ADA accessibility but they can continue to look at it. Board comments were against the removal of the bridge for historical reasons and if the Geary BRT team looked at creating an ADA compliant bridge to the Peace Plaza.

V. Committee Reports

a. Land Use / Transportation Committee (Paul Wermer)

i. 1801 Buchanan Condominiums

Paul Wermer reported that this project will be a great test for the proposed design guidelines.

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 that the developers came to the last Land Use Committee meeting and the developer's plan has not changed - a 400 ft building is still planned. The developer stated that if there were going to be any community benefits, the up-zoning has to be supported. The Land Use committee expressed continued concern that spot Up-zoning is not appropriate. The community benefits will be funneled into a City-managed fund. The Developers were asked if they were interested in a community wide meeting and currently has not responded.

iii. Design Guidelines

Wermer reported that they had a good working meeting. Next meeting is July 6 at 6pm at the JACL, 1765 Sutter St.

iv. Neighborhood Commercial District (NCD) Zoning

Wermer reported that there was dialog with the Planning Department and Supervisor's Breeds office about arcade games permitted-through. The committee met with Conor Johnson (Supervisor Breed's office), Steve Wertheim (Planning Department) and Jocelyn Kane (Executive Director – Entertainment Commission) and there will be adequate noticing of a 30 days on any changes. There will be one more pass on the final draft of the NCD registration document and will be reviewed at the next Land Use Committee meeting. The intent is to take the document to the planning commission in September. A report will be available at our next board meeting.

v. 1991 Sutter Street - Pinot's Palette

Wermer reported that they held their pre-application meeting. No update yet to answers to questions from the Land Use committee. More updates at next months meeting.

- b. Japantown Economic Development and Marketing Committee (Alice Kawahatsu)
 - i. 2015 Japantown Holiday Sub-committee (Vicky Mihara-Avery) – Mihara-Avery reported that Judy Hamaguchi and herself met with Light Pros who do a lot of holiday lighting displays in San Francisco. The committee will be receiving a quote in the next two weeks. There is concern from the committee about the outreach process for funding and approval.

Comment: Mr. Miwa has been doing the holiday decorations in Japantown so he should be added to the committee. The committee will reach out to him.

- ii. Japantown Visitor's Center Update (Alice Kawahatsu) – Kawahatsu and Viloría presented a summary of the Japantown Visitor Center Pilot program. The pilot program lasted five weeks and covered five Saturdays for four hours each day. The program interacted with 237 visitors. A final report with recommendations will be sent to the board.
- c. Cultural Heritage Committee (Bob Hamaguchi for Rosalyn Tonai)

Bob Hamaguchi reported that the landmarking of the pagoda is moving forward. Hamaguchi also reported that the intention is to meet with the stakeholder city agencies to inform them about the landmarking to notify them of the issues and recommended improvements for the plaza. The intention is to meet with Recreation and Park, Metropolitan Transportation Agency and Planning Department before a community meeting is held.

Comment: A guest mentioned that the Department of Public Works was the lead agency for the plaza re-construction. Hamaguchi will follow up with them.

- d. Finance Committee (Bob Hamaguchi)

Bob Hamaguchi reported that the Japantown Task Force (JTF) has been told that been included in the Mayor's budget. Hamaguchi has not received the official announcement so he will not comment on the final amount.

Hamaguchi released the floor to board member Jon Osaki to discuss the Asian Pacific Islander Council. The JTF is now a member of this council.

Jon Osaki introduced the Asian Pacific Islander Council (APIC) as a coalition of Asian Pacific Islander non-profits to serve as a voice of issues affecting this community citywide. The APIC also advocates for greater resources for the member groups.

VI. New Business: Roostertail is selling their business to a business called Gardenias.

VII. General Public Comments:

VIII. Staff Reports

- a. Crime Report (Greg Marutani) – Greg Marutani reported that there is nothing to report since the meeting was cancelled.
- b. Web Report – Greg Vilorio shared observation that Japantown is generally known as a food community and event community based on posting and data from the web.

IX. President's Report (Alice Kawahatsu)

- a. Alice announced that Richard Matsuno has resigned due to personal issues but will stay on the Land Use Committee.
- b. Kawahatsu reported that there will be the United Nations Charter Anniversary at City Hall on June 19.
- c. Greg Marutani announced he is putting together a “happenings list in Japantown”.
- d. “Conference of Mayors” is in town starting June 18 and continues over the weekend.
- e. Kawahatsu urged everyone to download the 311 app and use it to report issues in the community.
- f. Kawahatsu mentioned to support Japan Day is on June 28. It will be featuring at 4pm Japantown Merchants Association Obon.
- g. Kawahatsu mentioned that the Board Retreat is targeted for a date in August and asked the board to check their schedules.

X. Announcements – Next JTF board meeting will be Wednesday, July 15, 2015 at Union Bank Community Room.

IX. President adjourned the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Paul Wermer
Vice President
Japantown Task Force Board