



**JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE BOARD MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2015
UNION BANK COMMUNITY ROOM**

Minutes

ATTENDEES: Anthony Brown, Seiko Fujimoto, Richard Hashimoto, Miki Heitzman, Alice Kawahatsu, Mark Moriguchi, Glynis Nakahara, Steve Nakajima, Jon Osaki, Neal Taniguchi, Rosalyn Tonai, Paul Wermer

ABSENT: David Ishida, Judy Hamaguchi, Benh Nakajo, (all excused)

STAFF: Bob Hamaguchi, Greg Marutani, Greg Vilorio

GUESTS: Bob Larocca, Keiko Nelson, Corrine Nagata, Patty Yamazaki, Joey Yasuhiro, Tomo Hirai, Michiko Yamada, Karen Kai, Robert Rusky, Kathie Cheatham, Vicky Mihara-Avery, Chelsea Hayashi, Sophiae De Santis, Lois Ohwa, Robert Sakai

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 June 17, 2015.

It was moved by Paul Wermer and seconded by Glynis Nakahara to approve the June 17, 2015 minutes as submitted.

Motion unanimously approved.

III. Consent Items – Board President Kawahatsu moved the Neighborhood Commercial District to the Land Use Committee Report.

IV. Special Guests

- a. **Robert Sakai, Nihonmachi Parking Corporation** – Robert Sakai, President of the Nihonmachi Parking Corporation, discussed what the Nihonmachi Parking Corporation (NPC) and how it currently operates. Sakai explained that NPC operates what is known as the upper and lower parking lots on each side of Buchanan Mall. NPC also operates the Buchanan Mall and is responsible for its upkeep. Sakai stated that NPC was created as a for-profit corporation established during the re-development time when the redevelopment agency wanted to create more parking space. In exchange for the land for the parking spaces, affected property owners were given shares in NPC. Sakai shared that NPC charges \$180 per month for a parking space and there is currently a waiting list.

Comments: Sakai was asked about the increase in homeless in the parking lots and he responded that the codes have been given away by parking tenants over the years which has complicated the problem and that they were aware of the problem. Sakai added that the gates were added to decrease burglaries to the businesses and residents whose property are bordering the parking lots. It was commented that the SF Arts Commission has jurisdiction or oversight of the cobblestone walkway and fountains. In

addition, the SF Arts Commission is currently getting a study done on the repair of the fountains. It was commented that there is a Memo of Understanding with the city and NPC that the street belongs to the city, and what is on the top of the street is the responsibility of NPC (including the special lamp fixtures that are currently in the Buchanan Mall.)

V. Committee Reports

a. Land Use / Transportation Committee (Paul Wermer)

i. Neighborhood Commercial District (NCD) Zoning

Paul Wermer reported that a motion is proposed to approve the NCD legislation wording. Wermer described the NCD as a legislative document that dictates zoning controls and puts certain conditional-use controls which drives public notifications to the Japantown community. The legislation also allows the community to control the cultural look and feel of the neighborhood. The committee is recommending a named Japantown NCD. The proposal will be submitted in mid August and targeting bringing it to the planning commission in September. Legislation will be at the Board of Supervisors for review and approval sometime in Q4.

Motion: Neal Taniguchi motioned that the board formally endorse the Land Use Committee recommendation of a proposed Japantown NCD as stated. (See Handout A). Rosalyn Tonai seconded.

Motion passed unanimously.

ii. Design Guidelines

Wermer released the floor to Glynis Nakahara to report on the design guidelines. Nakahara reported that the sub-committee has met for the second time and has made great progress. The goal is to develop design principles and guidelines for developers and property owners for the Planning Department to decide if appropriate for the neighborhood and is meant to be more descriptive than prescriptive. Next meeting is scheduled for August 4 at 6pm in the Union Bank Community Room.

iii. Geary BRT

Wermer updated the group that a discussion about the Geary BRT was brought up at the Land Use Committee meeting on July 9. There is still concern about the Webster Street Bridge. Wermer highlighted a point brought up in the meeting that if the schools are indeed concerned, they should ask for support from the community as well as be visible at public meetings.

Comments: The JCYC was also concerned about the elimination of the Webster Street bridge as their programs use the bridge. It was discussed that another platform for comment is at the Geary BRT San Francisco County Transportation Authority Citizens Advisory Committee (Geary BRT CAC) meetings and SF MTA board meeting. The meeting for August is cancelled will be rescheduled. All is encouraged to attend the next Land Use Committee meeting (held 2nd Tuesday of every month) to help give comment and contribute to an organized response.

Action: The Land Use Committee is directed to craft a formal position from the JTF about the pedestrian bridge.

iv. 1481 Post St. Project

Wermer reported that the developer will be meeting at The Sequoias on July 27 at 1:30p as part of their continued outreach.

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

- i. 2015 Japantown Holiday Sub-committee (Vicky Mihara-Avery) – Alice Kawahatsu reported for Vicky Mihara-Avery that the committee is moving forward with plans. Kawahatsu gave the floor to Greg Vilorio to update further. Vilorio reported that the lighting was quoted for Buchanan Mall, Peace Plaza and the Pagoda for a little less than \$55,000. There is a follow-up meeting to discuss the plans with Mr. Miwa (Mifune), Ms. Fujimoto,

Comment: There was comment that a Christmas tree would be nice. Rich Hashimoto said the Japantown Merchants Association has a 30 foot tree but it is in need of repair because of vandalizing. It was commented that a project timeline should be developed as well as a reachable scope needs to be developed.

- ii. Japantown Visitor's Center Update (Alice Kawahatsu) – Kawahatsu reported that we have purchased a tent, tables, chairs and other accessories from money from the Mayors Office of Economic Development. Kawahatsu solicited comment on the plan distributed the week of July 10.

Comment: There was the comment about getting donations for space. There was a question about the ideal location and Vilorio responded that outside the west mall outside was the best traffic location. There was a lot of comment about the virtual greeting desk center idea and would like the committee to consider it in the proposal.

c. Cultural Heritage Committee (Rosalyn Tonai)

- i. Rosalyn Tonai said that the committee is trying to accomplish two items. First, the intercommunications with city agencies and collecting stories for the 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. Currently the committee is putting together a planning grant application to the Japantown Foundation centered on a renovation plan for the Peace Plaza.

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)

- i. Bob Hamaguchi reported that the Japantown Task Force (JTF) re-affirmed that he has told that been included in the Mayor's budget. Hamaguchi reported that a request the funding of \$100k for each of the next two years be amended to the existing

contract. will have to be applied for by Request for Proposal. Until the JTF gets this funding, staff time to be reduced until the rest of the funding is delivered. Jon Osaki added that a meeting with MOED's Todd Rufo and Brian Chu is currently being set up to clear up the funding request and look at the next steps.

VI. New Business:

- a. Bob Hamaguchi introduced the motion that the JTF should apply for the Japantown Foundation planning grant for staff time for the planning of the Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza landmarking project.

Motion: Rosalyn Tonai motioned that the JTF should apply for a \$10k planning grant with the Japantown Foundation for the Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza landmarking project.

Motion unanimously approved.

VII. General Public Comments:

- a. Corrine Nagata, owner of Nagata Dance Studios, announced that there is a free performance for her Summer Camp students this Friday, July 17 at noon. Also, she announced that there will be more in August.
- b. Jon Osaki invited the Nikkei Community Internships (NCI) interns to the board meeting to share some comments about Japantown. The interns commented Japantown store times are not convenient for young people to hangout. The overall costs are A little pricey for interns. No student discounts. It would be awesome to have food trucks like "Off the Grid" at Fort Mason. They feel Peace Plaza is underutilized. There should be more communications on It was commented that there is no forum to get these types of comments noticed.

VIII. Staff Reports

- a. No staff reports this month.

IX. President's Report (Alice Kawahatsu)

- a. Gordon Chin Book Launch/ Signing (June 25)– Kawahatsu reported that she and Bob Hamaguchi attended Gordon Chin's book signing at the Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco.
- b. Blessing of Battle of Okinawa (June 27) – Kawahatsu attended the ceremony commemorating the Battle of Okinawa at Nihonmachi Terrace.
- c. Japan Day (June 28) – Kawahatsu reported that she attended the event and was wonderful.
- d. NCI Interns visited JTF (July 9) – Kawahatsu reported that the NCI Interns came to meet staff and herself. Staff presented the JTF mission and goals for the interns to learn more about the JTF.
- e. Japantown Meet and Greet of SF Consul General of Japan – Jun Yamada (July 27) – Kawahatsu reported that she is invited to meet the new SF Consul General of Japan at the JCCNC at a welcome lunch. Japantown community leaders will be in attendance.

X. Announcements –

- a. Next JTF board meeting will be Wednesday, August 19, 2015 at Union Bank Community Room.
- b. July 28 – Ginza Bazaar at the Buddhist Church of San Francisco
- c. August 2 – Nihonmachi Street Fair and 70th commemoration of the bombing of Hiroshima/Nagasaki.
- d. August 8-9 – J-Pop Summit Festival(Fort Mason), Japan Film Festival(NEW PEOPLE Cinema) and Sake Festival(Union Square).
- e. The NJAHS has a Japantown tour. Please come to NJAHS to schedule a tour.

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

Respectfully submitted,

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

Rosalyn Tonai
Secretary