



**JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE BOARD MEETING
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2015
UNION BANK COMMUNITY ROOM**

Minutes

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

ABSENT: David Ishida (excused)

STAFF: Bob Hamaguchi, Greg Marutani, Greg Vilorio

GUESTS: Elizabeth Hirose, Karen Kai, Kathie Cheatham, Beau Simon, Nancy Nagano, Vicky Mihara-Avery, Michiko Yamada, Lois Ohwa, Grace Shimizu, Tomo Hirai, Mary Ishisaki, Steve Kitajima, Sandy Mori, Caryl Ito

I. Call to Order

The meeting called to order at 6:03 p.m. by Alice Kawahatsu, President. Kawahatsu called roll of the board members.

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

It was moved by Paul Wermer and seconded by Mark Moriguchi to approve the July 15, 2015 minutes as submitted.

Motion unanimously approved.

III. Consent Items – No consent items

IV. Guest Speaker

A. Jon Osaki / California Japanese American Community Leadership Council (CJACL) Meeting – Osaki reported he attend a recent CJACL yearly meeting Little Tokyo. Osaki reviewed that the CJACL is a group of JA leaders from all over California representing the whole state. The group was responsible for starting many initiatives - SB 307 – California Japantown Preservation Project, Nikkei Internship program, and started the initiative to get more Japanese Americans connected to US – Japan relations to name a few. Osaki reported that he was asked to represent SF Japantown and part of the agenda is that each Japantown give an update and created a video. Osaki reported that the group was a little disappointed about the SF Japantown involvement because all Japantowns have similar issues. Jon’s 9 minute video was played for the attendees.

V. Committee Reports

- A. Land Use / Transportation Committee (Paul Wermer)
 - i. Neighborhood Commercial District (NCD) Zoning
Paul Wermer reported that the support letter has been distributed.

Motion: Wermer motioned that the board approve the letter as stated. Anthony Brown seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

ii. Design Guidelines

Wermer released the floor to Glynis Nakahara to report on the design guidelines. Nakahara reported that the Architecture portion has been completed. Nakahara reported that the next action is to document the work to date and summarizing the next steps for the board.

iii. Geary Bus Rapid Transit (Geary BRT) / Webster Street Bridge

Wermer gave the floor to Karen Kai to update. As a follow-up action from the last board meeting, Kai presented a report and recommendations from committee on the removal of the Webster Street Bridge. Kai reported that the committee reviewed the materials presented by the San Francisco County Transportation Authority (SFCTA)/ Geary BRT staff as well as comments from affected groups (Rosa Parks Elementary School, Nihonmachi Little Friends, JCYC as well as senior groups) and recommend that the JTF board take the position of opposing the SFCTA/Geary BRT staff recommendation of the removal of the bridge and that the street level pedestrian crossings at Geary and Webster and not adequate solutions for kids and seniors to the demolition of the bridge.

Comment: Board comment suggested some wording for the SFCTA letter and suggested that the committee get the voice of St. Francis Square residents as well as other senior groups and to adequately document the historical significance. Wermer suggested people to work with the Land-Use Committee on the draft wording. Public comment supported the opposition to the removal of the bridge and its plan to use grade-level crossings as the replacement and that the bridge for seniors with impairment or without impairment provides a safe haven for to get to Safeway.

Motion: Wermer motioned that the board take the recommendation of the committee that the SFCTA-Geary BRT staff recommendation of the removal of the Webster Street bridge and instruct the committee to draft a letter opposing the removal of the Webster Street Bridge and reasons for why the removal to the SFCTA and SFMTA boards.

Motion passed unanimously.

iv. 1481 Post St. Project

Wermer released the floor to Bob Hamaguchi. Hamaguchi reported the developer have a community meeting in Japantown on Tuesday, September 15, 2015 from 6pm to 8pm.

Comment: Public comment suggested that people look at the Nichi Bei Weekly article on the 1481 Post St. project to prepare for the upcoming meeting. Kawahatsu thanked the Nichi Bei for providing information on this project to the greater community.

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

- i. 2015 Japantown Holiday Sub-committee (Vicky Mihara-Avery/Judy Hamaguchi) – Vicky Mihara-Avery gave a background on the Japantown holiday committee creation for new guests. Mihara-Avery reported that the committee is still developing the final scope along with selecting the lighting vendor and establishing the marketing budget. Judy Hamaguchi reported that at the last committee meeting that it was recommended to start with a \$15,000 budget target for the first year. Hamaguchi also reported that the Japan Center Garage and Japan Merchants Association have pledged support. Richard Hashimoto confirmed that both organizations have pledged \$5,000 each bringing the pledged amount to \$10,000 for the 2015 Japantown Holiday funds. Committee is encouraged that with this support that the other big potential contributors can now contribute more funds.
- ii. Japantown Visitor's Center Update (Alice Kawahatsu) – Kawahatsu reported that we are still looking to setup the tent at the Sumo exhibition in September. There is still concern about staffing and operations.
- iii. NCI Interns Follow-Up Meeting – Kawahatsu gave the floor to Greg Vioria. Vioria reported that Kawahatsu and he had a follow-up to last month's meeting with the NCI interns and that they gave valuable suggestions to help promote events to the younger people at Japantown. Jon Osaki added that the young people from the NCI program expressed that they were not being marketed on Japantown events adequately. Osaki stated that we should develop strategies to better communicate amongst ourselves in Japantown. Kawahatsu added that the interns said they felt were on the fringe.

Action: Board President Kawahatsu moved the recommendation of follow-up to the concerns the economic development committee for review and recommendation.

C. Cultural Heritage Committee (Rosalyn Tonai)

- i. Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza Landmarking - Rosalyn Tonai gave the floor to Bob Hamaguchi. Hamaguchi reported that committee recommended that we have a cross-agency meeting that had jurisdiction of the Peace Pagoda and Peace plaza, namely, Planning Department, SF Metropolitan Transportation Agency, SF Recreation and Park Department. The meeting date is yet to be set.
- ii. Arts Commission Passport Event – Tonai reported that we are moving forward on the passport event. The event is held every year by the SF Arts Commission(SFAC) and will be held in SF Japantown on Sunday, October 18 from 12p to 4p. This event will involve merchants hosting each of the selected artists to stamp the collectors passport book. There will be more updates as the planning becomes finalized. Passports will cost \$25 as a fundraiser for SFAC and should be purchased in advance.

Comment: Tonai was asked if there were any community artists involved. She responded that Leland Wong and the Miharas were proposed. The final approval comes from the SF Arts Commission. Kawahatsu added that the SF Arts Commission is using a community artist to create the brochure and logo for the event.

D. Finance Committee (Bob Hamaguchi)

- i. Time did not permit update

VI. New Business:

- A. Sandy Mori and Caryl Ito informed us about the resolution titled “City and County of San Francisco to establish a memorial for “Comfort Women.” sponsored by Supervisor Eric Mar with 7 other supervisors where it instructs city agencies to work with community organizations to design and establish the memorial. Mori informed us that the memorial is planned for Portsmouth Square in Chinatown. Mori commented that this is not only a local San Francisco issue but also an international issue. Mori called attention to the wording of the resolution (See “Handouts” for August board Meeting on www.japantowntaskforce.org for the actual proposed resolution), which Mori felt puts a negative light on Japan and Japanese. Ito warned that the resolution would fuel anti-Japanese sentiment and would open Japanese and Japantown businesses to becoming misdirected targets of anti-Japanese sentiment. Mori reviewed that Supervisor Mar presented this to the board but could not get the unanimous votes to pass the resolution so Board President London Breed referred the resolution to committee for public comment. The next opportunity to issue comment is September 17 at Eric Mar’s committee. Ito stated that there should be direct concern for the community of Japantown because of the strong connection and history to Japan and urged the Japantown Task Force to comment.

Comment: Comment was made that there should be promotion of common ground and healing on this issue not promotion of hatred or misguided blame. Another comment made was that international issues, especially ones that include Japan, have affected this community in the past. Comment was made that the promotion of dialog with Supervisor Mar is very important to understand this issue.

Action: Board President Kawahatsu referred this issue to the Cultural Heritage Committee for review and recommendation.

VII. General Public Comments:

No Public Comments

VIII. Staff Reports

- A. Time did not permit

IX. President’s Report (Alice Kawahatsu)

Note: Below is a summary of the president’s handout. Time did not permit presentation. For full text see Handouts for the August Board meeting at japantowntaskforce.org

- A. June 27th – Attended the luncheon for the new 51st Japanese Consul General Jun Yamada hosted by Japanese Chamber of Commerce at the JCCCNC conference room. A nice bento lunch was served and the Consul General spoke about his past experience serving in such countries as Russia (3 times) 10-15 years handling Economics, Trade talks and Politics. After that, he has served in Thailand, Belgium and Tokyo. Consul General Yamada has 17 people on staff here in San Francisco. Three of his staff reps were in attendance: Ken Funahashi (Economic Issues) works directly with Junko

Nakagawa, Ms. Hayashi (General Affairs/Political), Mr. Sakata (Consular Services/ Visa/Passports). Some of the items he covered were his hope for Japantown in San Francisco to continue to have more visibility to the Cultural Arts and traditions. He also is committed to helping host the 110th year anniversary of Japantown and the relationship between Japan and the U.S. Consul General Yamada felt that there was good momentum of relations to Japan and America for the past 2-3 years. Each attendee in advance submitted brochures and information about their organization.

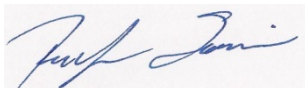
- B. August 1 & 2, 2015 – Nihonmachi Street Fair was well attended. As a special treat, Ray and Young, future managers of the upcoming Pearl Spa came with their Bonsai plants and showed people how to prune Bonsai. Rev. Kawahatsu from Konko Church brought his calligraphy work. Merry Nishimura brought a Japanese doll project. I was in attendance with Secretary Rosalyn Tonai along with volunteer – Lois Ohwa On Sunday April 2nd, a special performance and blessing was presented by Dr. Anthony Brown and the Asian American Jazz Orchestra in conjunction with the 70th anniversary of the Hiroshima/Nagasaki bombing. Following this, the JARF interfaith group performed a blessing. At least 80 or more people a day visited the booth and great conversation and an exchange of Information about Japantown and its history was enjoyed by all.

X. Announcements –

- A. Next JTF board meeting will be Wednesday, September 16, 2015 at Union Bank Community Room.
- B. September 13, 2015 – Kimono Day
- C. September 19, 2015 – JCCCNC Tabemasho annual dinner
- D. September 20, 2015 – Sumo Exhibition @ Peace Plaza
- E. September 26, 2015 – Konko Church Yard Sale
- F. October 3, 2015 – Nikkei Pilgrimage to Angel Island (Nichi Bei Times/NJAHS)

IX. President adjourned the meeting at 8:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Rosalyn Tonai
Secretary