



**JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE BOARD MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2015
JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE HQ**

Minutes

ATTENDEES: Judy Hamaguchi, Richard Hashimoto, Miki Heitzman, David Ishida, Alice Kawahatsu, Glynis Nakahara, Steve Nakajima, Jon Osaki, Neal Taniguchi, Rosalyn Tonai, Paul Wermer,

ABSENT: Anthony Brown, Seiko Fujimoto, Richard Matsuno, Mark Moriguchi, Benh Nakajo, (all excused)

STAFF: Bob Hamaguchi, Greg Marutani, Greg Vilorio

GUESTS: Jason Tran, Jimmy Chang, Robert Sakai, Ray Giron, Kathie Cheatham, Mary Ishisaki, Michiko Yamada, Beau Simon, Karen Kai, Robert Rusky, Tomo Hirai, Sandy Mori, Vicky Mihara-Avery

I. Call to Order

The meeting called to order by Alice Kawahatsu, President. There was a quorum.

II. Approval of Minutes of the Board Meeting on December 17, 2014.

Motion: Dennis Ishida motioned and seconded by Paul Wermer to approve the December 17, 2014 minutes as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Committee Reports

a. Land Use Committee (Paul Wermer)

i. Neighborhood Commercial District Zoning

Paul Wermer reported the Japantown Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy (JCHESS) includes a recommendation that there be a Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District zoning for the commercial district. The endorsement by the City bodies included funding of Planning Department staff for fiscal 2014-15 to support the passage of enabling legislation. To move the Japantown NCD zoning there needs to be a final review by the LU Committee and to conduct an introductory meeting for property owners and businesses. The LU Committee will final the proposed zoning at its next meeting on Tue Feb 3, and will hold the property owner meeting on Thur Feb 26 at Nihonmachi Terrace. The proposed zoning will be presented at the next board meeting on Feb 18.

ii. 1656 Post Robert Sakai Project (Pearl Spa / Apartments)

Paul Wermer introduced the project at 1656 Post Street– apartments and spa at the site of the old Uoki Sakai market. The expansion of the building and change of use of the 1st floor is triggering the noticing and planning approval of the project. The project includes the conversion of the second floor to four apartment units (called Uoki Apartments) and another project on the ground floor is going to be a new

business called Pearl Spa and is expanding the building towards the rear. Currently, the project is combined into one application at the planning department. Wermer introduced Robert Sakai (property owner), Jason Tran (project manager), Jimmy Chang (architect) and Ron Giron / Young On (managing partners) as presenters for this project.

Jason Tran (Kwan Henmi Architects for Robert Sakai) presented the scope, schedule and current status of the project. The scope of the project is taking the existing building which consists of a basement, 1st floor retail space, mezzanine level and 2nd floor and modify it to accommodate the spa on the basement, 1st floor and mezzanine levels and apartments on the 2nd floor.

Currently the project is going through an infrastructure upgrade which includes American Disabilities Act (ADA) upgrade, electrical upgrade, new elevators, and seismic upgrades. The infrastructure improvements hope to be completed in April 2015. The Planning Commission hearing for the project is targeted for February 2015 or March 2015. Tran mentioned that for all heavy activities they plan to notify Richard Hashimoto, president of the Japantown Merchants Association, the Japantown Task Force, and notify the neighborhood. A flag man will also be available to direct traffic.

Jimmy Chang, Architect for Pearl Spas, discussed the Pearl Spa business plan and benefit to the community. Chang envisions the proposed spa will serve as a typical Asian spa that serves the Asian culture and sees it fitting into the uniqueness of Japantown. The proposed spa is a "woman's only" spa and hopes to bring a lot of traffic. The planned hours of operation is 8a - 10p, 7 days a week.

There were three concerns brought up in the Land Use committee meeting of January 13 -- (1) about discrimination of men, (2) handling of transgender customers, and (3) how does this business fit into this community.

Ray Giron, managing partner, addressed these concerns. The spa will now offer services to both men and women and similar to the Kabuki Springs and Spa business model where there will be designated days for Men, Women and a mixed gender day. In regards to the issue about discriminating men, Giron want to change their business model from "women only" spa to a "Women and Men Spa". Giron mentioned they can ally with Kabuki to schedule the days with them so they don't try to compete with the same customers. Regarding the Transgender issue – Giron proposed that people need to be checked in and will be checking gender identity by Government ID and will accept the gender identified on that ID. Regarding how Pearl Spa can fit into the community, the business plans to outreach to all the clubs and organizations in Japantown to see how they can help.

Board comments and questions included a resistance to vote for the support of the spa because of the questions about the business plan; Insuring against employees or guests that are unsavory acts which affects the reputation of Japantown; Owners need an outreach plan to the neighborhood especially adjacent neighbors on the 1600 Post block.

The Land Use Committees recommends supporting the Apartment project, and recommend no action on the spa which means the JTF is neither for nor against the spa.

Board comment on the recommendation from the land-use committee included that board would like an overview of the recommendation and project in the future to help frame the context of the recommendation; help work on the perception of an “oriental spa” in Japantown to the neighborhood.

Public comment included that the owners would love to have a list of outreach organizations (Japantown Merchants Association, from the JTF; seems that there was a lack of research into the neighborhood considering there are many spas in the area,

Action: Staff to provide an overview of the project and recommendation of the project to the board at least 1 week prior to the board and attendees by the next board meeting.

Motion: David Ishida motioned to table the vote on the recommendation by the Land Use Committee and to move that this issue go back to committee to propose a new resolution to the board since new information was introduced at this meeting. Glynis Nakahara seconded the motion. Board voted unanimously to move it back to committee.

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

- i. Alice Kawahatsu deferred to Greg Vioria for the report. Vioria reported that three task forces were created to address some of the Japantown Merchants Association and JTF’s near term goals. Vioria reported that the last meeting was facilitated by Emily Glick , General Manager of Hotel Tomo, which was well attended with new faces. The committee launched the Visitor’s Greeting task force to provide ways of guiding visitors in Japantown. Vioria added that the committee launched the 2015 Holiday Planning task force with the goal of Japantown holiday beatification and holiday promotion for Japantown. Lastly, the committee launched the task force for the questionnaire of visitors to Japantown as a follow-up to last year’s survey of merchants about the maintenance, security and marketing of Japantown. The committees hope to kickoff with a meeting in the next two weeks. Anyone willing to serve should contact Alice Kawahatsu or Greg Vioria.

Board commented that the survey results should be available for the Visitor’s Greeting taskforce to use it for their planning purposes.

There was no public comment.

c. Cultural Heritage Committee

- i. Rosalyn Tonai announced that there is a launch of the JTF’s Cultural Heritage committee on February 10, 12pm at the National Japanese American Historical Society, 1684 Post Street. The main committee task for this year is the landmarking of the Peace Pagoda. Anyone who is interested should attend this kickoff meeting.

Board commented should the landmarking of the Peace Plaza be included in the scope. Bob Hamaguchi recommended that would be too big of a scope at this time.

IV. New Business:

No new business.

V. General Public Comments:

No public comments.

VI. Staff Reports

a. Crime Reports (Greg Marutani)

- i. Monthly Community Police Advisory Board Meeting - Four homicides on Laguna / Page were a big topic at this meeting.
- ii. Crime Reports - No data available because of IT issues at the city. Hope to have a report as soon as the data is available.
- iii. Redistricting of SF Police Station Boundaries – The city is required by law to look at the districting. The Northern Station is expanding. Meeting on February 10 at Jones Methodist regarding the redistricting.
- iv. Foot Patrol for Japantown – Hayes Valley, Fillmore and Japantown are targets based on the availability of new cadets.
- v. Proposition 47 Meeting Update – Asst. District Attorney Karen Catalona, and Northern Station Captain Greg McEachern spoke about the impact of Proposition 47 on San Francisco and Japantown. Catalona said that there will be no impact in San Francisco due to the progressive in jailing criminals of a non-violent crime unless it is a repeat offense. McEachern emphasized that It is critical that crimes are reported.

Board Comment – Buchannan and Bush had a lot of noise complaints – any reason for it? Marutani mentioned that he does not know if what the exact cause because the corners are only reported.

- vi. American Disabilities Act (ADA) Meeting – Alice Kawahatsu mentioned that the Mayor’s Office of Economic Development is sponsoring a local Japantown meeting on ADA tips and protecting yourself against lawsuits on January 26, 2014, 2:30p @ Union Bank Community Room.
Public Comment: Mentioned that

b. Web and Social Media Update

Greg Vilorio reported that the sfjapantown.org website had a up year from the previous year. Will provide the board full access to the report by email.

Public Comment included that it appears that we can monetize the site with advertisements soon.

Action: Staff to provide a copy of the report to the board.

VII. President's Report (Alice Kawahatsu)

- a. Welcoming New Directors – Alice Kawahatsu called for directors to sign up to committees.

Action: Staff to send out committee descriptions

- b. Orientation for new board directors – Kawahatsu asked the new board members what time and date is good to inform them on the policies of the JTF and general activities of the JTF. Targeting February 9, Monday at 6p at JACL.

- c. Public Area Trash Cans – As a result with the meeting from the Mayor, it was heard that Japantown had an interest in new trash cans and the city had extra trash cans so some were installed in early January.

- i. Supervisor Breed Congratulatory Letter – Bob Hamaguchi, Greg Marutani and Alice Kawahatsu drafted a letter to congratulate her on her election to the President of the Board of Supervisors.

Action: Staff to send letter to be sent out to board.

VIII. Announcements

- a. Opportunity to meet city department leaders on Saturday, January 31, 9a-1p at UN Plaza by joining the “Clean Team “ event.
- b. Films of Remembrance – Tomo Hirai announced that six films will be shown on 2/21 @ New People Cinema.
- c. Day of Remembrance on 2/22. Tickets at <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/bay-area-day-of-remembrance-2015-tickets-15445976331?aff=es2&rank=9>
- d. SF JACL is sponsoring presents the award-winning comedy troupe, THE 18 MIGHTY MOUNTAIN WARRIORS (18MMW) on February 28. Proceeds benefit SFJACL Yo Hironaka Legacy & Education Fund. More info at <http://www.sfjacl.org/#!events/c21kz>.

IX. The meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Rosalyn Tonai
Secretary