



# JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE

日本町の経済発展・計画・保存

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PLANNING & PRESERVATION OF JAPANTOWN

## NOTES FROM THE LAND USE/TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE

ONLINE VIA RING CENTRAL (VIA RING CENTRAL)

THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 2019

### **BOARD MEMBER PRESENT:**

Kenta Takamori, Glynis Nakahara, Jeremy Chan, Rich Hashimoto, Ros Tonai

### **STAFF PRESENT:**

Nina Bazan-Sakamoto

### **OTHERS PRESENT:**

Tomo Hirai, Linda Walsh, Karen Kai, Bob Walsh, Seth

The meeting began at 6:00 p.m.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

#### BROWN ACT

It was discussed whether the JTF LUT committee is subject to the Brown Act. If so, then the meeting cannot happen over the phone.

There was disagreement over whether the committee is subject to it.

There may be exceptions due to Covid-19, but we are not sure.

Since there are no action items on this meeting, it is not an issue - discussion is okay.

Kenta was asked to discuss with the Bylaws committee meeting. It was discussed that this isn't necessarily a bylaws issue, and should be brought up with the board.

#### SUTTER ST SAFETY PROJECT

The SFMTA folks, including Sophia, have reached you to JCCCNC, Nihonmachi Little Friends, etc. They are having good conversations. Sophia presented the proposal at our last meeting. The hearing is currently scheduled for late spring.

The transit folks are okay with having another community meeting. They suggested having it in late spring, closer to the hearing date, due to the current Covid-19 concerns.

Karen expressed concern over having less time between the community meeting and the hearing date. She suggested that they also push back the hearing date so that our community has enough time to learn about and digest the proposal.

It was decided that Glynis will reach out to Sophia to postpone both the community meeting and the hearing date so that the community has enough time.

## BIKESHARE

The meeting to discuss merchant sponsorship re: bikeshare was postponed yet again, this time to COVID-19.

Glynis asked if any community comments have been made about bikeshare. Rich commented that he's noticed it being used more; both Rich and Glynis have noticed that more docking stations are empty. Glynis used to count an average of 15 bikes missing, but now notices more than that.

Linda commented that sometimes bikes are relocated to another station, so we may not know how much the bikes are used.

Glynis/Rich will be following up with BayWheel to remind them that they should be gathering data re: station usage to present to us. Previous statistics have included rideshare data as well, so we need to specifically ask for just bike data.

Tomo noted and Jeremy reinforced that BayWheels is collecting data on specific bikeshare stations, and it has been shared with JTF before.

## CULTURAL DISTRICT

Nina reported back. 6 focus groups have been completed. They are synthesizing everything that was said. They are submitting a draft CHHESS on Friday (tomorrow) to Sandy and will present at the board meeting.

Sandy is determining if there will be a quorum at next Wednesday's board meeting.

For the Grand Launch event, they have 17 artist applicants, and selected 10 of them. However, the Grand Launch event has been postponed because the Cherry Blossom Festival was cancelled.

So far, the City has not changed the Cultural District timeline in light of Covid-19. On April 11, a CHHESS draft will be posted to the public. The CDI team will present their areas of focus / next steps and ask for me.

It was discussed that for the past several months, the public notice for the JTF board meeting has only included the Agenda and not the advanced materials. Previously, the Advanced Material has also been made available to the public.

Glynis said that the presentation should include clarification about the role that the committees will be playing, and how best they can support the CDI process. Glynis noted that the committee includes broad expertise that is not necessarily represented on the board.

Karen commented if the report will be including a report on the impact on Covid-19 on local merchants, who will be facing extreme economic loss due to the cancellation of the Cherry Blossom Festival. She noted that 3D Investments has not changed their policy, and they have an annual rent increase that is scheduled soon.

Rich noted that the merchants are collecting data right now on their losses. At the greater Japantown marketing committee meeting, at which 3D was present. Currently, the only concession is a reduction in the marketing fee.

Karen noted that JTF is currently negotiating with 3D over the kiosk, and JTF is in a position to advocate on behalf of merchants.

Jeremy noted that there used to be JEDM committee, but without the JEDM committee, this issue would either fall under the Land Use or Executive Committee.

Kenta noted that JCBD and the Merchants Association are better equipped to deal with the issue.

Glynis noted that resiliency should be included in the CHHESS report.

Nina reports that the section writers are broken up as follows:

Arts and Culture: Mark Izu  
Cultural Competency: Mark Izu + Nina Bazan-Sakamoto  
Cultural Heritage Sustainability - Lewis Kawahara  
Economic Workforce Development - Wes Nihei  
Tenant Protections - Wes Nihei  
Land Use and Environmental Resilience - Nina Bazan-Sakamoto

Glynis noted that it was originally noted that one writer would be drafting the whole report - Wes Nihei as Editor. Nina clarified that Wes will take what is written and put it all together.

### SPECIAL AREA DESIGN GUIDELINES

Maia and Trent reached out, since a meeting was originally supposed to be scheduled in March but now everything is up in the air because of Covid-19.

Glynis said it would be good to identify what our goal/target is. Going back to the original motion, the goal was additional outreach to property owners.

She suggested that the committee should meet internally, and then with planning staff to discuss which areas to augment, and then have something before outreaching to the public. She does not see value in rehashing parts in the current guidelines, outside of parts previously noted.

If we need to meet remotely, Ros noted that we should use Zoom/video technology to better understand the issue.

Kenta said that there were two separate goals: community outreach and refinement of the guidelines. He asked which should be prioritized (amount of time), and which should be accomplished first.

Ros noted that community outreach may be challenging due to social distancing.

Jeremy noted that after doing the community outreach, the committee will need to go back and refine it. Glynis noted that the committee / planning staff should refine the document before presenting it for outreach.

Bob noted that if the committee discusses internally first, then when doing outreach, the community members should be made aware that the document has been modified and is not what was adopted by the Planning commission. Glynis said she did not think people would have a hard time understanding the sections that are modified.

#### JAPAN CENTER MALL AD HOC COMMITTEE

Glynis said that a technical committee is being created, with individuals with expertise including: planning development, land use, community benefits, etc.

Karen noted that small business representation and small business advocates should be included.

Jeremy asked if the Executive Committee has assembled a slate late. Glynis said she has missed the last two executive committee meetings and does not know. She noted that the Executive Committee is meeting on Monday.

Karen asked if Glynis gets minutes of those meetings. Glynis does not. Karen noted that there should be minutes of those meetings.

Rich said that there has been no meeting and no connection has been made. He noted that Sandy has reached out to Rich Hillis.

Jeremy noted that Sandy has asked board members to provide recommendations for people to join the committee. Jeremy has indicated his interest, and has recommended others, and asked if any LUT committee members would like to be recommended.

Neither Glynis nor Rich know what the specific goals of the committee are. Sandy reached out to Hillis re: how to proceed.

Glynis reported that Paul Osaki convened a committee meeting with Supervisor Preston re: the covenants. Glynis is not sure how that effort relates to the JTF ad hoc committee, if at all.

Ros reported that Sandy articulated during that meeting that the JTF committee would be a more "technical" group, doing things like creating "verbiage" to present to the board of supervisors. Ros

noted that Paul's group is the "pressure" group, and Sandy is working on the meats/nuts and bolts about the Japan Center Mall remaining in community control.

Karen noted that the committee description has been general and vague. With new players entering the field, the committee's goals should be further clarified. Things like negotiating building heights fall into the scope of Land Use. She does not want 3D Investments to be handed a "blank check."

Nina said that her understanding of the committee is to negotiate with 3D Investments. Bob said that's a large amount of authority to entrust the committee with.

Tomo noted that passing JCHESS was a long journey - multiple comments were made along the line about how much the community was involved. If the committee is not defined enough and representative of Japantown's voice / to the best interest of Japantown involved, folks are going to interject.

Nina noted (re: the focus group) that it's been suggested that Japantown should have a community council where each community stakeholder has a seat at the table. Jeremy said that JTF is a pseudo-representative body, but was not sure why JTF was created in that fashion.

Bob noted that it's not necessary for everyone to speak with one voice. There may be multiple opinions, and all of those opinions should be presented. Glynis said that Paul, through a vetting process, is trying to boil it down to one voice. Bob said it might not be possible to have one voice. Glynis noted that without one voice, it provides less community leverage.

Re: sending the Advanced Material to the public.

Jeremy asked if he should email Steve about it. Glynis said it should be brought up at the board meeting. Karen commented that JTF markets itself as a transparent organization, and should not require the authority of the act.

Tomo noted that when he was reporting on JTF, he would ask for copies of documents, and there was no follow up.

Jeremy said that on the JTF website, Advanced Material has not been posted since December 2017.

Ros noted that in the past, minutes have been critical to understanding what was decided.

## RETAIL APOCALYPSE - CCA STUDIO

Christopher Roach

California College of Arts class is investigating the death of retail through the lens of multiple neighborhoods, including Japantown. They had a kickoff workshop at SPUR. They want to continue engaging with JTF.

Upcoming events:

Studio presentation of work so far - purpose is to receive community input.

Monday April 6  
Where: California College of Arts  
1-3pm  
3:30pm-6:00pm

Glynis said keep in mind that this is a student project, so please keep that in mind when providing feedback.

Karen asked if there was any information online regarding this project.

Glynis reported that at the workshop, they discussed the Taiwan airport (land side and air side) and analogizing that to Japantown.

Linda asked if these proposals might be implemented anywhere. Glynis noted that student projects often push the envelope, but there might be interesting ideas that might actually be implementable.

Glynis will ask Christopher to send a synopsis.

Glynis said that at the workshop, she met a woman that ran a nonprofit commercial brokerage that provided business incubation/curation, and thought it would be a good resource for Japantown.

Linda suggested using empty / vacant spaces temporarily for alternate usages. Tomo said there are about 10 vacant spaces right now.

Karen noted that the promotional event needs to benefit the businesses they are promoting. For example, the businesses asked that the Halloween event be cancelled, because it resulted in increased attendance, no increased revenue, and higher costs (had to hire additional staff to pass out candy). Tomo echoed that merchants have noted that events that draw an increased crowd doesn't necessarily lead to increased shopping.

Karen noted however, that Cherry Blossom Festival actually results in increased sales: April sales are about as good as November.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Tomo asked about the process for officially joining the committee. Glynis said it will go on the agenda next month.

Jeremy explained the process as follows: the committee members submits a resume / statement of interest. The committee votes to send a recommendation to the Board, after which the board votes to approve the committee member.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Bob announced that SFUSD is closing school for 3 weeks, including spring break.

Tomo noted that Kakehashi students have had trouble returning to the United States.

Nina said that Sandy intends to have the board meeting and is trying to see if there will be a quorum. Jeremy, Ros, and Glynis reported that they haven't been asked yet.

Jeremy asked if there were any action items.

According to 3.7 in the Bylaws, a teleconference is permissible or the board meeting.

Ros said the needs of the nonprofit organizations need to be organized and in writing.

Re documenting the impact of COVID-19 on Japantown, Ros expressed her concern about the lack of coordinated leadership / initiative

Jeremy said it would fall on JTF's responsibility as a pseudo representative body of Japantown

Glynis suggested asking MOEWD for support regarding this issue.

The meeting adjourned at 8:24p.m.

The next meeting will be at 6:00 p.m., Thursday, April 9, 2020 at the JAACL HQ.