



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 1765 SUTTER STREET (VIA RING CENTRAL) THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2020

BOARD MEMBER PRESENT:

Rich Hashimoto, Glynis Nakahara, Alice Kawahatsu, Jeremy Chan

STAFF PRESENT:

OTHERS PRESENT:

Tomo Hirai, Nina Bazan-Sakamoto, Linda Walsh

The meeting began at 6:00 p.m.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

SUTTER STREET TRANSIT SAFETY PROJECT

No update - it's currently on hold. SFMTA is not holding any public hearings, and construction is only working on major projects. Geary BRT, however, is moving forward.

Sophia is transitioning to a different project, so Amy Fowler should be contacted from now on re: Sutter Street.

Clint asked Glynis about a bulb-out in front of Super Mira. The bulb out would be helpful for seniors, and also provide a place for a bus shelter, benches, etc. Sophia said that this would involve a totally different group, and gave the contact information, but it takes 2-3 years. Sophia suggested making a 311 comment, and it would be assigned to an engineer for evaluation.

Rich commented that this is a good idea because currently, the bus shelter is in the middle of the sidewalk, but he is not sure if SFMTA has the budget.

Jeremy commented on what effect the bulb out would have (if any) on traffic in front of Nihonmachi Little Friends, since that was the original concern of the LUT committee. Bulb outs are designed to prevent cars from passing a bus that is picking up / dropping off customers. However, it's probably better for cars to wait behind the bus, rather than try to go around the bus and then block the bus while picking up children.

Tomo commented that Sutter Street striping could affect a potential bulb out.

Jeremy asked and it was confirmed that asking about a bulb out would merely start the process, and there would be further community vetting sessions, etc.

Rich will reach out to Amy Fowler regarding a public hearing engagement / session before the Sutter St restriping. (This idea was previously discussed with Sophia)

JAPANTOWN CULTURAL DISTRICT

Glynis reported that the LUT committee met to review the CHHESS report as of 04.0

Jeremy gave some of the major highlights, and a written example will be forthcoming:

The LUT Committee focused on the strategic areas of focus in the Land Use section. Because 10 is a large number, they discussed which areas to prioritize, and what important topics were missing.

Glynis and Jeremy clarified that it would be helpful to have a specific version of the document for the board/committee to review by a certain date.

CDI staff: they are sending a draft to MOHCD staff on April 11, and will be having a published public version in May.

They are planning a Town Hall in June.

Nina confirmed that the circulated document is the Supplemental report. They are working on that document first, and then will use that to create the Executive summary report.

Nina said that the next version circulated will incorporate this, and any revisions will not be included until the next version.

Jeremy and Glynis also commented that the supplemental CHHESS should include quantifiable data with respect to all of the focus group. This would promote the integrity of the study.

Glynis cited Rec and Park as an example - for the Peace Plaza project, they quantified the data that they gathered from the surveys.

Jeremy commented that community members have been asking what came about from the focus groups. Glynis said that the butcher paper / notes from the focus groups should be included in the appendix. The BNP / JCHESS provided documentation of all of the community input that went into the project.

Alice commented that data on how many people attended each focus group would also be helpful.

Glynis said it would be helpful (but perhaps resource intensive) to take the butcher paper notes and categorize them into a graph format.

Jeremy suggested to do a Word Map from all of the transcriptions of the butcher paper, audio recordings, etc.

Glynis commented that Nina should lean on the rest of the CDI staff for support regarding these topics.

Nina confirmed that the timeline has been pushed back - the public version will be released in May.

Jeremy commented that the LUT committee discussed that the CHHESS report should lean more

on the JCHESS. Certain sections in the report are underdeveloped compared to JCHESS. The CDI team should use the JCHESS as a resource

Nina reported that the CDI team will be creating a matrix showing up the CHHESS strategies compare to the JCHESS strategies. Nina has been using the October LUT committee meeting notes as a resource, during which we evaluated all of the proposed strategies and the current state of those.

They were briefly discussed in the meeting

- Japan Center Mall
- Community Development Corporation
- streetscape / better street plan

Jeremy commented that the LUT committee discussed how strategies relating to the “Japantown Master Plan,” including public realm, streetscape, transportation, etc. were not listed in the strategic areas of focus. Glynis commented that the idea of a “Master Plan” was conceived after JCHESS. A Master Plan looks at all of these topics cohesively, as opposed to in individual spheres.

With respect to the Community Council, Glynis asked about the “JTF + JCBD” notation, and commented that Japantown Task Force should strive to become more like a community council. What would JTF need to do to serve that role as community council. Nina confirmed that she understood from the focus groups that this was the feedback.

Tomo commented that even though JTF was heavily involved in the JCBD, JCBD had to be a separate organization because it financially handles money from property owners for a specific purpose. Structurally, JCBD cannot be a community council because it consists of the specific JCBD constituency (property owners + business owners).

Nina commented and Rich confirmed that there is discussion with respect to dissolving the Japantown Merchants Association because the JCBD serves that role. It may occur when the covenants expire. Glynis commented that the property owners and merchant interests may be mutually exclusive.

Nina said she wanted to discuss more at a future time about the Neighborhood Commercial District, Special Use District, and other JCHESS strategy topics, etc.

RETAIL APOCALYPSE - CCA STUDIO

Glynis updated on the CCA student project that is investigating retail neighborhoods including Japantown.

The students recently presented an early report on how their projects are going. Glynis will share the PDF synopsis of these.

Glynis also reported on another project about the Outer Mission / Excelsior, focusing on the historic “Grand Bazaar” that was there to sell food, jewelry, etc. He took this concept and applied it to the commercial corridor in the Outer Mission. Glynis liked its ideas with respect to retail and

public realm.

NEW BUSINESS:

NEW LUT COMMITTEE MEMBER

Glynis presented that Tomo Hirai is applying to be a LUT committee member.

Rich commented that it's uncommon for members of the press to serve on board/committee meetings, and asked how Tomo's role would affect this.

Tomo said he was not intending to continue working in the press. Tomo has requested to not work on topics relating to JTF, and is aiming to not report on editorial matters about Japantown.

Rich commented that Tomo's knowledge of merchants (Tomo's father was a merchant owner in Japantown) would prove valuable for the committee.

At the Executive Committee, Glynis said it was discussed that voting must wait until in-person meetings. Jeremy asked and Glynis clarified that because the by-laws do not specifically address online meetings,

Rich motioned and Jeremy seconded to approve Tomo as a committee member.

Glynis commented that Tomo would make an excellent committee member. Their past reporting demonstrates that they have a deep knowledge of the history and relevant issues in Japantown.

Alice commented that Tomo has reported previously on JTF and Land Use, but so long as they are not doing that going forward, their presence on the committee is most appreciated. Because the by laws do not specifically discuss voting by phone or video, the Executive Committee did not feel comfortable allowing voting by teleconference.

Rich commented that the board of supervisors is meeting virtually, and the city attorney has approved it.

Tomo clarified that their current position at Nichi Bei is more of a production manager than a writer, so they don't have as much of an editorial voice in the writing.

Alice commented that JTF will not be having board meetings in April or for the new future.

Glynis recommended to Sandy (as part of the By Laws committee) to look at this issue of video conferencing.

Rich said that under the Brown Act, telephone isn't permissible, but video may be. Rich said that Glynis followed protocol.

Rich asked if we could approve Tomo on the contingency that video conferencing gets approved by the board.

Jeremy said he wasn't sure, but assumed not if the assumption is that committees are not even allowed to hold votes. However, functionally, Tomo can still participate as if they are a committee member, such as by attending and participating in meetings, and being added to the listserve/google group.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

AMC may file for bankruptcy. They are currently renting from the Flannigans. When they came in, they adopted the 25 year lease that Sundance had. Jeremy said

Glynis asked about the queen program. It was cancelled, and the 2019 queen will continue to serve into 2020.