



# 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, JUNE 11, 2019**

**(BOLD = COMMITTEE MEMBER)**

**BOARD MEMBER PRESENT:**

Sandy Mori, **Jeremy Chan**, **Rich Hashimoto**, **Kenta Takamori**, **Glynis Nakahara**, **Alice Kawahatsu**

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Nina Bazan-Sakamoto

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Tomo Hirai, **Linda Walsh**, Kathy Inamasu, Anniescott Rogers, **Karen Kai**, **Bob Rusky**

The meeting began at 6:00 p.m.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

ADDITIONAL LU COMMITTEE MEMBER

Since recommending Tomo to be a LU Committee member, Tomo's job situation with Nichi Bei has changed. The recommendation was made under the assumption that Tomo would not be reporting on JTF. However, because the Nichi Bei is short staffed, Tomo may be assigned to report on JTF.

When reporting on JTF, Tomo could identify themselves as a member of the Land Use Committee. However, Tomo feels like that could be a conflict of interest and call into question their journalistic integrity. Also, if Tomo is covering larger issues of JTF, those topics could include Land Use.

Glynis commented that all committee members have affiliations that could be considered a conflict of interest. For example, Tomo could recuse themselves from situations where they are reporting on that topic.

Glynis, Alice, and Karen commented that Tomo's experience and insight would be valuable to the committee. Karen also suggested that the JTF conflict of interest policies should be acknowledged / clarified, and that some current conflict of interests are larger than Tomo's potential conflict of interest.

Bob commented that disclosure of a conflict can be sufficient, since the remaining committee can then assess what impact that conflict will have on the discussion. Financial conflicts tend to be more serious and generally require recusal.

Karen made a motion and Jeremy seconded to recommend Tomo as an LUT committee member. It was unanimously approved.

## SUTTER STREET TRANSIT SAFETY PROJECT

SFMTA is proposing to restripe the 3 lanes going west from Laguna to Webster into 2 lanes. SFMTA is proposing to add a loading zone, and a loading / pickup / dropoff zone be added by the organization.

Kathy reported that Nihonmachi Little Friends already has 30 feet of white zone in front of it, and the JCCCNC has 30 feet of white zone at the ground floor entrance for Kimochi buses. Currently there is 90 feet of white zone, and the proposed 110 feet isn't adding that much. Having an extra lane provides a safety benefit for the cars that are navigating in / out of that space.

Kathy and the JCCCNC spoke to Dean Preston's office about this. They also met with SFMTA, and it seemed that SFMTA is not being flexible with changing the proposal.

NLF will also be reopening on July 1, and the pickups will have to be spread out 6 feet apart, taking up a wider distance. Glynis and Karen commented that JCYC has a very organized system of pickup in which the parent drives up, a staff member confirms who the parent is, and then calls for the child to be taken home. Having two lanes allows cars to go safely around the cars who double park and wait.

SFMTA is "offering" that they will educate the community to not double park, which is not an effective solution.

Karen commented that the left turn lane on Webster is not there, which was one of the purposes of the one lane proposal in the first place. Kathy commented that it's only 5 blocks, a small area.

Bob asked if there is a record of any bus accidents as a result of the current lane configuration. Rich commented that there is a history of bus accidents on Sutter, some of them involving serious injuries. Karen suggested that the LUT committee analyze these records.

Glynis has requested another committee meeting, but has not received a reply. Rich said he can nudge them, but it's possible that they already think they have done enough community outreach. Due to budget cuts, they may not be able to conduct additional outreach.

Karen suggested that LUT make a concerted effort to bring different organizations to the table so that SFMTA can see the different organizations that use this street.

Glynis commented that it isn't helpful that SFMTA has been having separate meetings with individual organizations.

An engineer hearing is scheduled.

Karen commented that if the community presents enough of an objection, SFMTA may not decide to go through with it if it's too expensive to justify the project to the community.

Bob commented that perhaps the organizations (JCCCNC, NLF) directly affected should take the lead, and JTF can provide support. Glynis agreed, because JTF has not been privy to all of these discussions.

Glynis said it's possible that we could also play the role of coming up with a better solution.

Glynis commented that once the hearing is announced, there may only be one week, maybe two weeks to organize everyone. The hearing has not been scheduled yet.

Karen asked if LUT needs permission from the board to attend meetings and organize around this issue. Sandy clarified that the committee can make recommendations to the board, and that the committee does not need permission to conduct research.

Under that guidance, Karen recommended that the LUT committee continue to pursue this issue, and personally offered to follow this issue. Glynis emphasized that JCYC should also be included in these conversations; Bob recommended Erika Tamura be involved.

Rich provided Geary BRT updates. The construction process went by very smoothly and is ahead of schedule. The Steiner Street bridge was removed during Memorial Day weekend (a time lapse video is available on the website). Rich serves on the Community Advisory Committee for Geary BRT, so please contact him if you have community concerns. Two trees will be removed.

#### JAPANTOWN CULTURAL DISTRICT

Nina reported that the final town hall meeting will be on June 25 on Zoom, 4pm-6pm. The maximum attendees is 100. They are still on track to submit a draft to MOHCD for their input. Currently, a draft is posted on the JTF website. The supplemental draft is 125 pages, while the CHHESS report is 20 pages.

On June 15, they are meeting with Kinmon Gakuen to negotiate using it as a community space.

Two focus groups occurred over the past month: the Resiliency focus group and a meeting with San Jose, Los Angeles, and Sawtelle.

Jeremy commented that the final town hall is not on social media. Nina said she made a Facebook event and will check on that, and that it will be posted on Instagram.

Glynis commented that limiting it to 100 is an issue, and that it does not cost that much to increase the meeting capacity.

Kenta asked about the relation between the supplemental CHHESS and the final CHHESS report. JTF will present the shorter version to the board of Supervisors, but the supplemental CHHESS will remain.

The supplemental CHHESS will be discussed during the town hall. The final town hall meeting will help inform priorities to place in the final CHHESS report. Kenta emphasized that the community should be able to review the final CHHESS report as well. It may be more important for the community to review the shorter document than the longer one, as the shorter document will determine what is being prioritized. Nina said that this feedback is currently planned to be collected by email and the online form on the website.

Bob asked if the Supplemental / Appendix CHHESS report will be submitted to the board of supervisors. Nina said it wasn't planned to be. Jeremy suggested that it should be. Karen added

that submitting the appendix does not prevent it from being a living document / reference for the community. Making it a public record puts the board of supervisors and other organizations on notice.

The LUT committee previously met to review the draft and consolidate comments. Glynis asked if the committee would like to meet again, which the committee agreed. Kenta will send a doodle poll.

Nina said that receiving feedback before the town hall would be preferred. She also said she would appreciate if the LUT could discuss what parts of the Appendix should be prioritized in the shorter CHHESS report.

Tomo said it should be marked clearer on the website as to the date of each uploaded version.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

### HOTEL BUCHANAN

Sandy commented that Hotel Buchanan will begin housing homeless people. The City is contracting with different hotels throughout the city to house homeless people. Sandy attended the CBD meeting, and raised the issue in public comment. Emily Glick of Hotel Buchanan discussed that they will be providing 130 rooms for homeless people, as well as staffing who will provide support services. Alice added that the population will be mainly seniors. Sandy commented that the homeless population is very diverse. Sandy noted that hotels have an incentive to join this program because their revenues are down due to Covid-19.

Alice expressed her concern at the lack of community outreach, especially since JCCCNC and Nihonmachi Little Friends are on the safe block. Alice also asked about parking concerns (they will be providing 3 meals a day), and Sandy brought up the issue of safety and security.

Sandy commented that businesses and organizations have already provided feedback, since this information just came up.

Sandy is trying to find out additional information. Sandy characterized Emily's response as a "thin response," perhaps because she's not directly involved in the operations / support services. Oftentimes, the city hires a community based organization to provide the social services in the hotel, as well as security, etc.

Glynis asked and Sandy confirmed that none of the property owners asked questions about it. Sandy thinks that several of the other board members knew about this project.

Sandy emailed Supervisor Preston's office and asked if he was aware, and they said they hope it will be a successful program. Preston's office, and Preston personally, have supported this program.

Glynis commented that it would be good for the committee to consolidate facts to present to the community. Bob commented that without knowing, there's a risk of spinning it to the worst case

scenario, so we should find out more information.

Bpb commented that the City has been using public land to house homeless people, and that so far it's been working pretty well, despite community concerns. Being in a place with some structure / oversight helped them feel security, and that their belongings would be safe.

Alice has been in conversation with Marlayne Morgan from the Cathedral, who provides programming on homelessness. They will be providing a series on homelessness (June 18, June 24, July 1), featuring a doctor, a reporter, and Dean Faigman from UC Hastings who recently sued the city for their lack of response to the homelessness situation in the Tenderloin. Visit [rescuesf.org](http://rescuesf.org)

Jeremy commented that he has been uncomfortable with J-Town conversations about homelessness, as they are often based on negative and untrue stereotypes and perceptions of homeless people. He hopes that J-Town takes this opportunity to respond to homelessness in a thoughtful and compassionate way.

Kenta suggested that Preston's office could host a town hall or community conversation to explain more about the program and explain his position. Given that both Preston's office and Hotel Buchanan are in support of this, there isn't necessarily a path to stop this from happening. It could potentially provide leverage with Preston on other issues that the community cares about. Sandy clarified that this is not about stopping it (the contract is already signed). Her goal is to get factual information so the neighborhood is aware.

Glynis agreed with Kenta's suggestion. Preston can obtain the information to get the facts straight. It also supports him since he can be seen as a leader of communication on this issue.

Glynis emailed Abby (one of Preston's staff) to ask her about helping to facilitate communication about this issue. She suggested that Preston's office could create an FAQ to answer questions.

Sandy noted that Hotel Buchanan is currently boarded up; it may take them time to get the hotel ready, but we don't know for sure.

Kenta noted that Supervisor Stefani was caught unaware when hotels on Lombard started housing homeless people.

Karen suggested Kenta talk with Preston Killgore, since he's organized some of the zoom calls for small businesses, and they were structured well. The Supervisor spoke, but also they had various city / organization representatives speak. It becomes a more doable task, and is a more positive way to go about doing it.

Kenta noted that Preston has an office hours tomorrow to talk about shared spaces.

Glynis sent an email to Emily and Abby with the tone of "help us help you guys" to help facilitate communication so that people don't jump to the wrong conclusion unnecessarily.

Glynis suggested JTF send an email about a brief notification saying "we are aware of the issue and are gathering more information." Sandy suggested we should find some more information first. Bob agreed, unless Sandy starts getting an increasing number of more and more hysterical phone calls.

Jeremy noted that Japantown could also face backlash if it responds poorly to the issue.

Karen noted that we should also loop Grace and the CBD into these conversations. Sandy has spoke with Grace.

Sandy said Nihonmachi Little Friends (Kathy) has already been notified, and that parents are expressing concerns.

Kenta asked if Hotel Kabuki is planning to participate in this program; Sandy said she wasn't sure. Tomo noted that Hotel Kabuki is larger.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

None

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

None