

Japantown Task Force
Cultural Heritage & Sustainability Committee

December 7, 2020 (on-line via Zoom)

Board members present:

David Takashima (co-chair), Lucy Fisher (co-chair), Benh Nakajo, Jeremy Chan, Glynis Nakahara

Staff present:

Steve Nakajo, Nina Bazan-Sakamoto, Natasha Tamate-Weiss

Guests present:

Judy Hamaguchi, Karen Kai, Derek Tahara, Lori Yamaguchi

- I. Call to order at 6:07PM
- II. Approval of October 5, 2020 Minutes
David moved and Benh seconded to approve minutes. Minutes approved.
- III. Staff report:

Steve:

- Negotiating with the city to use one-time funds for 4 project areas and consultant hiring positions. These project areas are 1) small business & artists assistance and media center, 2) intergenerational co-creative hub for small business and artists, 3) establish a community development corporation/land trust/investment fund, 4) develop a preservation and development Master Plan.
- Passage of Proposition A: met with Phil Ginsberg; finalization of Peace Plaza project is about 2 years away; RHAA will continue as community advisors for design input.
- Legacy designation: started process for Onishi's Japan Video business

Nina:

- SF Arts Commission grant is due so meeting with artists to review their work.
- Working on 4 priority project areas for one-time fund allocation. Numbers 1 and 2 (see above) were selected for more immediate impact; numbers 3 and 4 are more complex with longer term impact. Met with JTown organization EDs to discuss strategies, pool resources, and establish collaborative relationships: Japanese Chamber Commerce, Nakayoshi Young Professionals, JCBD, JCCNC and JCYC. Fund-raising specialist position will be posted to write grants.

Questions:

Glynis: how far will these priorities get to completion? Nina: #1 expected to be completed in a year; second two will be longer to complete. Is the city requiring milestones for funding? Nina: specific steps are in process including collaborating with partners. How will the four align? Nina: want to keep it open-ended. Steve: city wants doable projects, for us to be fluid and consider history of each project area. Will continue to ask for community feedback and consider what is realistic/short range and

long range. Virtual small business/artist center is an immediate need; virtual co-creative hub is the second priority to help businesses. Final two are important but longer-range.

David: estimate on cost for #1 and 2? Steve: Line item in budget for each area: \$15K each for first two so consultant has budget to work with. Plan is to develop 2 platforms.

Natasha introduced herself as the project district associate hired a month ago; is an artist and film-maker. Working on 2 priorities: small business/art center and co-creative hub. Created and distributed the first JTF newsletter last week.

IV. New Business:

What are priorities from CHHESS report for committee members? Nina requesting feedback and will email the chart to folks: "type in the ones for committee".

Jeremy: what topics should committee prioritize? Support small businesses, which are in economic distress and critical to sustain cultural heritage.

Benh: asked Jeremy about specific suggestions, i.e., where does committee fit in supporting businesses, since JCBD exists?

Jeremy: leverage our connection with malls; we could support stands by City's Board of Supervisors; ask merchants what would be helpful to them.

Lucy: our committee should not dominate/initiate support for small businesses. We can help but not take over.

Jeremy: CBD is funded by assessment on property owners so it shouldn't be the only body to influence economic recovery.

Benh: CBD constituency is both property owners and merchants/businesses, not just property owners. Jeremy agreed.

Glynis: question to staff and committee – how will committee be integrated into cultural district work? How will committees be leveraged to supporting this work?

Lucy: read mission of Task Force and Don Tamaki's letter about role of Board members to clarify boundaries/parameters of staff and board directors.

Steve: board members have responsibility for policy oversight – the "greater, greater cause" but we can broaden this definition of the role since the committee's been a part of JTF for a long time. Examples from priority areas: long-term program areas (e.g., Master plan) can involve the Board and committees. Collaboration is important, especially since the two long-term priorities is a "big bite" (for staff to undertake). Artist survey important to identify traditional and non-traditional groups but is a work effort.

Jeremy: function of this committee is best for policy issues and compared to Land-use Committee.

V. Public comments:

Lori: it would be useful for this committee to define the baseline of what cultural heritage is trying to sustain, considering the mix of cultures in JTown and how they are expressed. Suggest we determine what metrics should/can we use to assess strength and characteristics of these cultures, including physical features, to advance, preserve

and sustain. The City was expected to provide data for CHHESS report but thus far, has not been provided.

Can use data to measure success, i.e, Is this committee and JTF making a difference – what does success look like? Can ask other organizations (e.g., legacy business, non-profits, artists) to discover this information. Having a snapshot in time including physical and virtual presence could help this committee define starting points and goals.

Lori not sure what data points the City is supposed to provide for CHHESS report; JCHHESS has 2013 snapshot but needs to be updated.

City asked the cultural district to determine strategies for 7 key areas, not to provide a comprehensive inventory. The SF Planning Department created the Better Neighborhoods Plan in 2009 which included an inventory.

VI. Announcements:

David: will investigate CARES Act (date for passage is uncertain but hopefully in next few months). In the first PPP, non-profits rec'd funds so he will investigate possibility for JTF to apply to fund first two projects. Glynis: anyone know if JT businesses received funds? Grace's staff said 70 recipients in JT district. David: Chinatown had 2 staff working to secure funds, including churches & non-profits and were awarded millions of dollars.

JTF exec sent letter of support to Historic Preservation Commission for local marking of Nihonmachi Little Friends. Karen: next is approval by Board of Sups, then to the Mayor.

David: update on landlords and tenants? Steve: not privy to further information, still the status quo. Kinokuniya? No law suit but JTF staff is trying to support negotiations.

Jeremy: virtual panel on 12/9/20 of impact of COVID on businesses.

Benh: what was the latest draft of CHHESS report? It is dated 11/11/20.

VII. Adjournment: meeting adjourned at 7:35pm

Next CHSC meeting is Monday, January 4, 2021.