

**Japantown Task Force Board of Directors Meeting  
Minutes  
Wednesday, April 20, 2022  
6:00 pm – via Zoom Meeting**

**PARTICIPANTS:**

Board Members: Chair Sandy Mori, Chair; Vice-Chair Glynis Nakahara, Secretary Alice Kawahatsu, Treasurer Mark Moriguchi, Gary Barbaree, Jeremy Chan, Lucy Fisher, Jaclyn Funasaki, Richard Hashimoto, Daryl Higashi, Richard Jue, Benh Nakajo, Emily Nichols, Yuki Nishimura, Jon Osaki, Steven Santa Maria, Beau Simon, David Takashima & Rosalyn Tonai

Absent (excused): Lori Yamauchi, Scott Hamaguchi

Staff: Dr. Emily Murase, Executive Director; Lauren Nosaka, Brandon Quan, Melissa Bailey Nihei, Max Nihei & Susie Kagami

Guests: Grace Horikiri, Kim Kolbe, Yusuke Shimada, Tatsuki Tomita, & Greg Vilorio

**I. Call to Order - Recognition of a Quorum and Agenda Approval**

President Sandy Mori called the meeting to order at 6:02pm.

It was moved by Richard Hashimoto and seconded by David Takashima approval of the agenda. The agenda was adopted unanimously. No public comment.

**II. Approval of Minutes - Minutes of the JTF Board meeting of March 16, 2022**

Lucy Fisher requested for the following correction to be incorporated into the minutes. On page 3, under Cultural Heritage Committee updates, add “since there are still differences between Kurisu’s landscape proposal and the Planning Department and the Historic Preservation Commission...”

It was moved by Gary Barbaree and seconded by Glynis Nakahara to approve of the minutes as amended (Attachment A.) The minutes was adopted unanimously. No public comment.

**III. A. Update from the Executive Director, Emily Murase PhD (Attachment B)**

Dr. Emily Murase thanked board members for their tremendous support of the Cherry Blossom Festival. There was a meeting with the Japanese Ambassador Koji Tomita to discuss the status of Japantown, and the status of the Japanese American community. Also in attendance, Lon Hatamiya, is working on a donation of 100 cherry trees to create a cherry blossom line in Sacramento. Several new businesses have opened in Japantown. The skincare store Fanloli now occupies the former Playland space. Chameleon (vintage kimonos) is moving into the

former space of San Francisco Taiko Dojo. OK Marketplace, run by Zak Mai, will focus on vintage clothing, and use the East Mall 525 as an event space. No public comment.

#### **B. Update from the Japantown Cultural District, Susie Kagami**

Cultural District Manager Susie Kagami reviewed the new logo for the Cultural District and walked the board through the new Japantown Cultural District website: [japantownculturaldistrict.org](http://japantownculturaldistrict.org).

Board members expressed their enthusiasm for the website, gave appreciation to staff, and appreciated the creativity behind the Cultural District logo. The website was created on the Squarespace platform and can be translated into Japanese. No public comment.

### **IV. Committee Reports**

#### **A. Land Use/Transportation Committee (Co-chairs Glynis Nakahara/Jeremy Chan)**

1. Recommendation that the JTF Board send a letter to the Planning Department and Commission offering comments on Housing Element Draft 3

The City & County of San Francisco is developing its Housing Element, a planning document that governs the housing supply in coming years. Jeremy Chan reported that the Land Use and Transportation Committee reviewed Draft 2 of the Housing Element and submitted a comment letter to the Planning Department. A subset of the committee that included Daryl Higashi, Rosalyn Tonai, and Lori Yamauchi, combed through Draft 3 of the Housing Element and developed key points for a follow-up letter.

Daryl Higashi explained that, per the State of California, San Francisco is obligated to fulfill new housing goals. Specifically, areas west of Van Ness are subject to dramatic increases in housing supply. Areas in the southeast of the city have already developed many new housing units. The State of California has already rejected the Housing Element plan submitted by Los Angeles because the plan was not detailed and aggressive enough to meet state-mandated housing goals. He emphasized that San Francisco is obligated to create 10,000 new housing units with a possible cushion of 10% additional units in the overall goal. The housing shortage is a nationwide issue. Rosalyn Tonai pointed to the implications of redistricting on the issue.

Glynis proposed that a comment letter on Housing Element Draft 3 go to the Planning Department and Commission.

Jeremy explained the three main talking points.

- 1) Concerns about the height and density on the mall's blocks. Time and resources to engage the community around height and density changes.
- 2) Appreciation for expanded and more aggressive approach for Certificates of Preference holders and their descendants, not only identifying them and making them aware of opportunities, but also creating homeownership programs (e.g., financial assistance for second loans, down payment assistance to lower barriers to homeownership).
- 3) Concerns about the assessment and remediation of risks to existing merchants in culturally significant districts so that housing developments do not displace existing merchants. Years ago, there was a very damaging requirement in financing terms where new developments were prevented from leasing space to "low credit" (i.e., small) businesses.

Parking was discussed in Draft 2. Sufficient parking and available transit options were mentioned in the Draft 2 comment letter from JTF.

The motion was moved by Glynis Nakahara and seconded by Gary Barbaree that the JTF Board send a letter to the Planning Department and Commission offering comments on Housing Element Draft 3. The motion was adopted with 18 in favor and 1 abstention. No public comment.

## 2. Committee Updates

### Redistricting Task Force

Glynis reported that the Redistricting Task Force will meet on April 21, 12pm, City Hall, Room 406. Jon Osaki has been involved with redistricting since the City changed to district elections and stated that Japantown's consistent engagement has made a huge difference.

### Osaka Way Improvements

On March 31, the Planning Department and the Department of Public Works hosted a walk-through of the Osaka Way improvement. The Department of Public Works staff conducted outreach at the Cherry Blossom Festival JTF information booth and plans to conduct further outreach at the Children's Day JTF booth on May 7.

## **B. Cultural Heritage Sustainability Committee (Co-Chair Lucy Fisher/Gary Barbaree)**

Gary Barbaree reported that the committee did not meet last month, but will plan to meet at 5:30 pm on Monday, May 2.

1. Unfinished Business: CHSC recommends that JTF continue to work with the Japantenna steering committee to support future Japantenna proposals

The board heard a presentation on Japantenna from Co-Founder of Japantenna Tatsuki Tomita and Consul for Intergovernmental Affairs of the Japanese Consulate Yusuke Shimada (Attachment C.) Tatsuki thanked the JTF for supporting the pilot project. He recognized that the project could not have succeeded without JTF support. Consul Yusuke Shimada explained that there is considerable interest in Japantenna among several prefectures.

At its February 7, 2022 meeting, the Cultural Heritage Sustainability Committee passed a motion to recommend to the full board that the JTF continue to work with the Japantenna Steering Committee to support future Japantenna proposals.

Given the Japantown Merchants Association early support of Japantenna, Richard Hashimoto requested that page 3 of the slide presentation feature the Association's logo more prominently and that the Council of District Merchants Association be appropriately acknowledged.

Regarding areas for improvement in the pilot project, Tatsuki explained that volunteer staffing was a major challenge. Additional planning time would have allowed for greater outreach to partner merchants. He stated that the shochu tasting was piloted and could be improved. Tatsuki mentioned that as for future plans, prefectures have very diverse ideas about how to participate. One prefecture is looking at a two-weekend event. Board members urged that a robust marketing plan be developed and executed in future projects by, for example, partnering with San Jose Japantown.

Emily thanked Former JTF Executive Director Steve Nakajo and Sandy for their support of Japantenna and, in particular, securing the Mayor's appearance at the ribbon-cutting ceremony. No public comment.

It was moved by Lucy Fisher and seconded by Richard Hashimoto that the JTF continue to work with the Japantenna Steering Committee to support future Japantenna proposals. The motion passed unanimously.

**C. Peace Plaza Committee (Co-chairs Jon Osaki/Richard Hashimoto)**

There were no new updates. President Sandy Mori mentioned that the board packet included Peace Plaza Renovation Projected sketches from RHAA (Attachment D).

**D. Ad hoc Japan Center Malls Technical Committee (Chair Lori Yamauchi)**

There were no updates since Committee Chair Lori Yamauchi was not present.

**V. Update from the President/Executive Committee**

- A. Updates on the JTF Board Retreat Planning for Friday, May 20, 2022, 12:30 pm-5:30 pm at Hinode Towers Building, 1615 Sutter Street. Bento dinner will follow. Sandy thanked Alice for securing the venue and asked all participants to be masked except when eating. The board commented that they will follow the Terraces specific guidelines on COVID measures.

**VI. General Public Comment**

Members of the public may address the Board for up to two minutes with respect to each item on the agenda and may speak for up to two minutes regarding matters not on the agenda during general public comment. No public comment.

**VII. Announcements**

- "Songs for Jtown," presented by First Voice and co-sponsored by JTF, will be held on Saturday, April 23, 7:30pm at the Presidio Theater, 99 Moraga Ave, San Francisco. Board members are encouraged to volunteer at the event as greeters. Volunteers will receive complimentary tickets to the show.

- Richard Hashimoto announced the Japan Center Garage Customer Appreciation Month in June, with activities planned for every weekend. A drawing with a grand prize of \$5,000 is part of the promotion. Steve Nakajo serves as a consultant for this project. Richard also commented on the appearance of new encampments on the Geary Boulevard median. He has reported the situation to the Department of Public Works and the Healthy Streets Operation Center which responded quickly.

- Daryl Higashi announced that the Commonwealth Club will be having an "Inclusion: How Hawaii Protected its Japanese American From Mass Incarceration After Pearl Harbor" on Wednesday, May 11 at 5:30pm. The event will be held both in-person and online.

- Lucy Fisher announced that there will be an exhibit of Ansel Adams Photographs in the Santa Rosa Museum.

- Lucy also announced there will be a Manzanar Community Archeology Program at the end of May and September. Please let Lucy know if you are interested in participating.

- Grace Horikiri announced that May is AAPI Heritage Month. JCCCNC will be hosting the Children's Day Festival on May 7 11am-4pm. The Asian Pacific Islander Cultural Center will be celebrating their 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary and will be having their United States Asian America Festival on May 14 11am-4pm at the Peace Plaza.

- Grace also announced that the JCBD Street Lamp Banners will be up in Japantown by April 25. She thanked the Japantown Merchants Association, San Francisco Council of District Merchants and Avenue Greenlight.

- Dr. Emily Murase announced that Congressman Mineta has been hospitalized and to keep him and his family in everyone's thoughts.

### **VIII. Adjournment**

Sandy adjourned the meeting at 7:40 pm.

\* May require board action.

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### **NEXT MEETINGS:**

Wednesday, May 18, 2022

Wednesday, June 15, 2022

Wednesday, July 20, 2022

Wednesday, August 17, 2022

Wednesday, September 21, 2022

Wednesday, October 19, 2022

Wednesday, November 16, 2022

Wednesday, December 21, 2022