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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PLANNING & PRESERVATION OF JAPANTOWN

**NOTES FROM THE LAND USE/TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING
OF THE JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE
1765 SUTTER STREET / RING CENTRAL MEETING
THURSDAY, MARCH 11, 2021**

BOARD MEMBER PRESENT:

Glynis Nakahara*, Kenta Takamori*, Jeremy Chan*, Alice Kawahatsu*, Lori Yamauchi*, Ros Tonai*

STAFF PRESENT:

Nina Bazan-Sakamoto

OTHERS PRESENT:

Karen Kai*, Linda Walsh*, Tomo Hirai*

* Member of the Land Use and Transportation Committee

The meeting began at 6:00 p.m.

STAFF/COMMITTEE UPDATES:

CULTURAL DISTRICT / CHHESS

The JCBD interviewed four people for the business coordinator and selected Max Nihei.

Natasha Tamate-Weiss's last day was February, 25, 2021. Her position no longer exists, since the Cultural District is shifting its priorities. Desi will potentially be brought on board for cultural district planning assistance, including web development and co-creative hub.

Tentative date Apr 15 set for a panel discussion with LTSE and a Chinatown organization regarding the creation of entities related to land acquisition by the community.

Linda asked if there would be any signage for the Japantown Cultural District. Grace is looking into when the pole banners will be renewed, and introducing Japantown Cultural District signage upon that renewal.

Nina thanked everyone who attended and assisted with the Housing Element meeting.

JAPAN CENTER MALLS

Glynis reported that Roy Ikeda gave a history and overview of the covenants during the last ad hoc committee meeting. Kenta added that Roy clarified that so long as 3D Investments owns the mall, they are impacted by the covenants (ex. maintaining culturally relevant businesses, etc.) 3D Investments is required to maintain ownership until May 21, 2021. After May 21, they can sell it.

Kenta also reported that there is nothing in the covenants to bind future buyers. Lori noted that

theoretically, after May 21, 3D Investments could sell the building, and a new owner would not be bound by the covenants.

Glynis reported that 3D Investments has not currently been following some of the covenant requirements, such as consulting with a community advisory group. That may provide potential leverage. Tomo noted that the covenants are currently unclear about enforcement.

Lori noted that it is still unclear how the ad hoc committee interacts with the covenants committee chaired by Paul Osaki. She also noted that the meeting was attended by several young leaders, including those that were invited to the Consulate General focus group.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

POST + UPCOMING MEETING UPDATES - HOUSING ELEMENT, SFMTA TREE REMOVAL, CONGESTION PRICING, SF CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

The SFMTA Tree removal happened today - thank you to those who testified and gave emails. There were 27 emails of support.

Jeremy reported that a decision will be made in 15 days. The procedure was in many ways like a pseudo court proceeding - the person who objected to the tree removal acted as an "appellant," and a hearing officer's role is to explore the evidence and facilitate a discussion.

Karen reported that the verbal comments were about 8-3 in favor of removal, and that most of the emails were predominantly in support of removal.

Glynis asked Nina for help in creating an eventbrite for the SF Climate Action Plan meeting.

There will also be a Congestion Pricing meeting.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY - POST/OCTAVIA PETITION AND WALKSF TRAINING

Alice discussed the Post crossing near Nihonmachi Terrace that currently poses a safety risk. The current system has a push button for pedestrians that creates blinking lights, which is seen as insufficient. There is a campaign to implement additional safety measures in this area.

Lori noted (based on her experience with SF Mission Bay campus) that SFMTA has sufficient criteria to implement a stoplight. One of those criteria is "imminent danger," and unfortunately, they sometimes wait until an accident actually occurs to implement it. She noted that data will be important to support the implementation of a traffic light, such as number of crossings, speed of oncoming cars, and a traffic engineer's report. Impact on public transit (buses) and proximity to other traffic lights are also important.

Alice noted that WalkSF is scheduling a training with JTF to cover these issues. Thursday March 18, 5pm. She also noted that SFMTA, WalkSF, and Supervisor Preston have come to take a look at the site. Alice has also reached out to other community organizations, including Kimochi and JARF.

Ros asked if Alice has spoken to Judy Hamaguchi, because in the past, SFMTA has given a report on why a stoplight wouldn't be implemented at this intersection.

Jeremy noted that in previous meetings, it was suggested that implementing a stop sign might be quicker / easier than implementing a stop light.

The Bobs suggested not specifically asking for a stop light, since if that gets shut down, then the whole process might end.

Ros made a motion and Linda seconded for JTF to issue a letter in support for additional safety measures at the mid block crossing at Post and Octavia St.

The motion passed unanimously.

Kenta noted that it's been 7 months since his best friend was killed at the intersection of Geary and Gough. The perpetrator shared his speeding on Instagram. Kenta noted that the driver is entering behavioral health court and will be released soon. As of now, he has not been found guilty of any crime. He noted the complexity of mental health but also expressed his regret at how the situation has developed.

Alice noted that District Attorney Chesa Boudin has been criticized for his handling of pedestrian deaths. Glynis also noted that Chesa has been criticized for his handling of the Hanako Abe case.

Ros asked and Kenta confirmed that the family has retained an attorney with respect to the civil wrongful death case, but that the direction of a criminal case is determined by the district attorney's office.

Alice noted that Japantown is second only to the Tenderloin in pedestrian fatalities.

CCA: COMMON GROUND COLLAB

CCA is proposing to have a small workshop on April 5, and a larger workshop later in April, with a final design crit in May. Tomo noted that April 5 is Easter Sunday, and Karen noted that's when the Cultural Heritage Sustainability committee meets. These interim meetings will just be with Japantown and not the other neighborhoods.

CCA asked JTF to sign an MOU, which Glynis will be having the Executive Committee review. The document covers expectations as well as intellectual property.

Karen noted that she felt unsure if the Japantown students were up to speed on the neighborhood. She offered herself as a resource if needed.

2021 COMMITTEE GOALS

Lori asked for clarification about planning commission meetings and topics. Kenta said it is okay to start small and follow individual topics that may interest you, and then report back to the LUT committee. Lori will try to get on the list that the commission secretary maintains.

NEW BUSINESS:

SF GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

Glynis noted that the Housing Element is one of four parts in updating the San Francisco General Plan, including the Community Safety Element, Environmental Justice element, and Transportation Element.

Glynis asked if we should engage in these. The Environmental Justice element is “closely coordinated” with the Climate Action Plan. Glynis suggested that the Transportation Element seems relevant. Kenta said he is interested in that and will engage in upcoming workshops and keep the Committee updated.

Nina noted that there are grants for community organizations to work on this. She is engaging on the environmental / climate front.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Tomo has been asked to speak on a J-Sei panel as part of a series on “Seeing LGBTQ Nikkei.” The panel is called “On the Frontiers of Gender Identity” that discusses the challenges of coming out as a transgender Nikkei. Register at

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/seeing-queer-nikkei-tickets-141077369209#listing-organizer>

Alice and Linda participated in a “Daylighting” activity. It’s a term that refers to ensuring there is ten feet of unobstructed view of pedestrians. They did some checking, measuring, and mapping of crosswalks.

The meeting adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

The next meeting will be at 6:00 p.m., April, 8, 2021 online at Ring Central.