

**JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2020
6:00 PM – VIA ZOOM MEETING**

ATTENDEES: Sandy Mori, Alice Kawahatsu, Glynis Nakahara, Daryl Higashi, Elena Nielsen, Jeremy Chan, Seiko Fujimoto, Beau Simon, David Takashima, Jacquelyn Chew, Jon Osaki, Kenta Takamori, Lucy Fisher, Mark Moriguchi, Richard Hashimoto, Rosalyn Tonai, Scott Hamaguchi, and Benh Nakajo

ABSENT: None

STAFF: Steve Nakajo, Lauren Nosaka, Brandon Quan, Nina Bazan-Sakamoto, Max Loubet, Wes Nihei

GUESTS: Grace Horikiri, Karen Kai, Masahiro Inoue, Michiko Yamada, Steve Nakajima, Tomo Hirai, Kiyomi Takeda, Hillary Nakano

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by President Sandy Mori. A quorum was acknowledged.

New board member, Daryl Higashi introduced himself.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes of the JTF Board meeting of June 17, 2020.

It was moved by Jon Osaki and seconded by Richard Hashimoto to accept the minutes from the June meeting (Attachment A).

The motion passed unanimously. No public comments.

III. UPDATE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, STEVE NAKAJO

Steve Nakajo reviewed the highlights from the June 17, 2020 ED report (Attachment B). JTF staff collaborated with the Peace Plaza Committee co-chairs to organize a Peace Plaza support letter campaign. Over 300 support letters were sent to the Board of Supervisors. The JCD team had their last town hall meeting on June 25. The CHHESS supplemental report was submitted to the community at large for feedback on May 29.

No public comments.

UPDATE FROM THE JAPANTOWN CULTURAL DISTRICT, NINA BAZAN-SAKAMOTO

Nina Bazan-Sakamoto reported that the team will have the final town hall on June 25 4-6pm on zoom. JARF, JCYC, JCBD and Nihonmachi Little Friends shared the town hall information on their email servers. The team is working on extracting the important points from the CHHESS supplemental report into a 25-30-page report (Attachment C).

No public comments.

UPDATE FROM THE 2020 CENSUS PROJECT, BRANDON QUAN

Brandon Quan summarized his monthly report (Attachment D). He is working on distributing 2020 Census information to the community through social media and the JTF website. The San Francisco self-response rate for those who answered the Census is at 59%. For Japantown specifically, it varies from 50-62%

response rate. The US Census Bureau of SF opened on June 8 and will resume the process for enumerators. The Census has been extended until August 31.
No public comments.

UPDATE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF JAPANTOWN COMMUNITY BENEFIT DISTRICT (PROPERTY OWNERS IN JAPANTOWN), GRACE HORIKIRI

Grace Horikiri summarized her monthly report (Attachment E). JCBD staff has continued to keep the community and small businesses informed through newsletters. They will be holding a virtual Jtown town hall on June 19 via zoom webinar in partnership with the Japan Center Malls and the Japantown Merchants Association. The goal of the town hall is to show the small businesses that the city is supporting them and making sure that they survive this pandemic. At the June 10 board meeting, the JCBD Board decided to vote for a new Board President and the new President is Emily Glick of the Buchanan Hotel. As part of the Japantown COVID19 Recovery effort, JCBD launched the Heart of Japantown Resiliency Fund in support of small businesses on May 26 with a goal of \$500,000. An anonymous donor gave a matching donation of \$10,000 if JCBD could reach \$10,000. JCBD is \$1,750 away from \$10,000. Another donor gave a gracious donation of \$480,000. A portion of the funds will be used to purchase sneeze guards for the businesses. Merchants will fill out an application to receive funds from the Heart of Japantown Resiliency Fund. JCBD completed phase 4 of the Safe City Camera Program and are moving into phase 5.

No public comments.

IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Land Use/Transportation Committee (Co-chairs, Glynis Nakahara/Kenta Takamori)
1. Recommendation to add Tomo Hirai to the Land Use/Transportation Committee

Glynis Nakahara reported at the June 11 LUT Committee meeting, the committee voted to recommend to the Board to add Tomo Hirai to the committee.

It was moved by Beau Simon and seconded by Jacquelyn Chew to approve Tomo Hirai to be added to the Land Use/Transportation Committee.

The vote passed unanimously. No public comments.

2. Sutter Street Safety Project Updated

Glynis reported that the Sutter Street Safety Project is on hold due to COVID19. This is the reconfiguration of the west bound lane from Laguna to Webster from two to one lane. There has been concern from JCCNC and Nihonmachi Little Friends due to loading issues. The committee has been contacting SFMTA. Their latest proposal was to extend the loading zone a few feet. The committee has asked SFMTA to attend another community meeting but have not heard back from them yet.

Public Comments:

- We need to have representatives from any other group that are affected by this to get together and to advocate to change SFMTA's proposal.
- Inform SFMTA why we are impacted and emphasize the safety of the younger people participating in the programs.

3. Buchanan Hotel Homeless Shelter

Sandy asked the LUT committee to take on the Buchanan Hotel Homeless Shelter issue and the committee agreed to it. Emily Glick, General Manager of the Buchanan Hotel informed JTF and JCBD that there will a program sheltering the homeless on June 4. JCBD held their monthly board meeting on June 10. Emily Glick confirmed that the Buchanan Hotel will shelter the homeless. Steve Nakajo initiated to have a meeting with the hotel and the city. The hotel

requested one representative from each organization at the meeting. Robert Walsh, the city representative, shared that the meeting with Japantown organizations was the first meeting with any of the neighborhoods for the sheltering the homeless program. They are not having meetings with any neighborhoods where the hotels are being used for this program. There are 20 neighborhoods with hotels that are participating in this program. The Buchanan Hotel decided to accept this program with the city for two reasons: the hotel needs income due to low tourism and the hotel felt it could be helpful to the homeless during the pandemic. The hotel is creating a FAQ document to be disseminated to the community.

Emily Glick will be the point person between the community and the hotel. The Buchanan Hotel will have 130 rooms available but not all of the rooms will be used for the homeless. Some rooms will be used as office space for a nonprofit service provider experienced in these types of programs. The profile of the guests at the Buchanan Hotel will be elderly, self sufficient and who can care for themselves.

The residents are advised to stay in their rooms and they will be provided 3 meals a day. No visitors will be allowed. There will be social workers and case managers on site. No weapons will be allowed. The program will last June 22 to September 30. There will be security guards on the premises inside the Hotel and in the garage. However, as to date, none will be provided to survey the Buchanan Mall and Japantown Peace Plaza and Mall. The residents are allowed go out between 9am and 10pm.

Many in the community are concerned with the residents being near children and seniors. Café Mums, the restaurant inside the Buchanan Hotel, could participate for the 3 meals a day plan but it was not a guarantee. Café Mums cannot reopen as there is no restroom access. They will stay closed until the homeless program ends in October 2020.

There were concerns:

Some mentioned that there is a program called "Harm reduction" which provides cannabis, tobacco, etc, to the residents. Police will not respond to nonviolent acts and only to immediate urgent responses. Who would be in charge of coming out in the event that there is mental health issues that may be related to the guests at the hotel? It was shared that District 5 has a new captain at Northern Station. A board member said that we should give it a chance and see what happens. SF is in a crisis now with the COVID pandemic. Another Board member suggested putting ALL concerns and questions in writing to not only Emily Glick (General Manager of the Buchanan Hotel and main contact for community concerns) but also cc the Mayor, Human Services, and Supervisors. Communication and accountability are key factors. Engage the supervisor of District 5.

Public Comments:

- As a LUT Committee, I'd like to have our committee discuss some of these issues that are coming up. Create a communication and accountability system. This first group sounds like they are very contained within the hotel.
- Don't make this a political issue. Supervisors were not supposed to talk to the communities about this.

B. Cultural Heritage Sustainability Committee (Co-chair David Takashima/Jacquelyn Chew)

1. No updates.

C. Peace Plaza Committee (Co-Chairs, Jon Osaki/Richard Hashimoto)

1. Updates on Bond Advocacy

Jon Osaki thanked everyone who submitted a letter of support to the Board of Supervisors. Late Executive Director Bob Hamaguchi started this project when it was a dream. It would be a huge accomplishment for Japantown. This is the single largest city investment in Japantown since redevelopment. The Budget and Finance Committee will have a hearing on June 24 and one of

the items is the Health and Recovery Bond. It is important for members of the board to give public comment. The meeting starts at 10:30am. The support letters can be sent until June 24. Brandon Quan is staff assigned to the Peace Plaza Project. He will work with the co-chairs and provide instructions on how to give public comment.

V. NEW BUSINESS

1. Consideration of a JTF Support Statement for the Black Lives Matter Movement – written and presented by JTF Intern Max Loubet

JTF intern Max Loubet presented a support statement for the Black Lives Matter Movement (Attachment F).

Public Comments:

- It is a good general statement about Japantown. It has no relation to the Japantown Task Force. Japantown Task Force can speak as an organization but it should not be speaking for Japantown.

It was moved by Jon Osaki and seconded by Elena Nielsen to approve the JTF Support Statement for the Black Lives Matter Movement with minor editing from Glynis Nakahara.

The vote passed unanimously.

VI. UPDATE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Sandy updated that she is working on the first meeting for the Ad Hoc Japan Center Malls Technical Committee. It will be held sometime in July.

VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following announcements were shared:

- Hillary Nakano announced that the Japantown for Justice will be having a family friendly event for Black Lives Matter at the Peace Pagoda on June 20. There will be art activities, banner draw on the Geary street bridge, and educational materials for the movement.

- Kiyomi Takeda, one of the committee members of Japantown for Justice, appreciates the support from the board.

Public Comments:

- You thought about what needed to be done and kept the well-being of the community including the African American community in your sights. Looking forward for the event and volunteering.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:33pm.

NEXT BOARD MEETING: Wednesday, July 15, 2020 TBD.