

Japantown Task Force
Cultural Heritage & Sustainability Committee
Notes of June 7, 2021 (on-line via Zoom)

Committee members: Lucy Fisher (co-chair), David Takashima (co-chair), Gary Barbaree, Jeremy Chan, Benh Nakajo, Rosalyn Tonai

Board members: Sandy Mori, Kenta Takamori, Glynis Nakahara

Staff: Steve Nakajo, Susie Kagami, Brandon Quan

Guests: Emily Nichols, Derek Tahara, Joyce Nakamura

- I. Call to order at 5:32PM by Lucy Fisher, co-chair. Quorum was present.
- II. Approval of April 5, 2021 minutes.
Benh reported he did not receive a copy of the May minutes. Lucy will send minutes when she sends the agenda to committee members prior to each meeting. Moved by David and seconded by Benh to approve the May minutes. At Karen Kai's request, Lucy requested amendment to strike "Keibei Sansei" and replace with "Kibei Nisei" to correct spelling and Seizo Oka's correct generation. Motion passed unanimously as amended.
- III. Staff report:
Steve: Mayor Breed submitted the full budget allocation for cultural districts; there are three possible additional cultural districts. Board of Supervisors will vote on the budget on June 22.
Sandy, Steve and Benh discussed the future of Benkyodo with the owners, including continued use of that name for the shop.
They also spoke with the Nakamoto building owners about the sale of their building.

Susie: met with Japanese Counsel General Maeda who is challenging the Next Generation group to re-imagine Japantown in new ways. Susie described the challenge of viewing JTown vis-à-vis multi generations, relations with Japanese businesses, and dispersal of JA to live outside San Francisco. Sandy added that Susie is continuing to work with about 30 Next Generation participants, exploring their individual interests and continuing engagement with the JTF and the community.

IV. Unfinished business:

Lucy reported that she, Sandy, David, Benh, and Susie toured the Nichi Bei Kai building. Benh said this was his 4th visit and that the building, especially the tea house is not used as much as it deserves. For example, this is the first authentic tea house in the U.S., it was built in Kyoto, Japan and shipped to San Francisco. The two tea ceremony schools use it about once a month. Sandy noted that the building is owned by the organization, so access should be discussed with them. Glynis, and particularly Steve provided more information about Nichi Bei Kai and welcomed their presentation to the committee.

Lucy announced that Gary is the newly elected president of JARF. Gary will send a letter to the 12 member congregations for information on any archival collections they may hold. He also reported that the Oka Collection of the JCCCNC will be the sole applicant to the Mellon grant from the JA community but the executive directors of the three major archival collections will continue to collaborate on grant applications.

V. New business:

Seiko Fujimoto of the Japanese Benevolent Society of California invited committee members to tour the cemetery and columbarium. Lucy will send possible dates for this tour to occur for members to attend.

Lori Yamaguchi has resigned from this committee; she has been tapped to chair the Ad Hoc Japan Center Malls Technical Committee. Formal vote on June 14 for Lori to become chair.

Lucy opened a discussion for next priorities for this committee, after the archival organizations complete their presentations to this committee. Benh suggested an assessment of properties/buildings in the community to locate possible shared work and performance spaces. Steve suggested possibilities from the CHHESS report, including a visitor kiosk and updating an extant directory of traditional cultural organizations. He reported that New Generation focus groups inquired about underutilized space for rehearsals and performance; Konko Church and Kinmon Gakuen's spaces may be available to promote and stage festivals and events.

VI. Public comments: none offered

VII. Announcements:

Kenta reported exploratory plans to create Prefectural "Antenna Shops" to bring Japantown closer to Japan, especially rural/regional areas often neglected by tourists. These less-visited areas have unique foods, goods, culture, folk art, etc. that are unfamiliar to many tourists. This idea could include retail space to rotate among prefectures (e.g., 1X month). Committee members engaged in a robust discussion of

suggestions and possibilities, resulting in a uniform support of this idea. Kenta was invited to return to this committee to support this venture.

Benh announced he will co-chair of Cherry Blossom Festival 2021, which was cancelled last year due to the COVID pandemic.

Ros and David were congratulated on their recent presentation of the new USPS stamp featuring the JA soldier in WWII.

VIII. Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 7:10pm.

Next CHSC meeting via Zoom on Monday, July 5, 2021.