

JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE BOARD MEETING

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2016

UNION BANK COMMUNITY ROOM

ATTENDEES: Alice Kawahatsu, Anthony Brown, Judy Hamaguchi, Rich Hashimoto, Mark Moriguchi, Glynis Nakahara, Jon Osaki, Beau Simon, Neal Taniguchi, Rosalyn Tonai, Paul Wermer.

ABSENT: Seiko Fujimoto, David Ishida, Benh Nakajo, Clint Taura.

STAFF: Greg Marutani

GUESTS: XXXXX Nagano, Kathie Cheatham, Karen Kai, Jeremy Chan, Vas Kinris, Bernie Cohen, Lisa Scott, Rose HiXXXX, Ed Ong.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Alice Kawahatsu, President.

It was moved by Jon Osaki and seconded by Paul Wermer to accept the agenda as submitted.

The motion was passed.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING OF OCTOBER 19, 2016.

It was moved by Neal Taniguchi and seconded by Glynis Nakahara to accept the October 19, 2016 draft minutes as amended acknowledging Richard Hashimoto as being present at the October 19, meeting and in the Geary BRT update that it would be next year for Phase II of the Geary BRT recommendations to be released.

The motion passed.

III. GUEST SPEAKER

Yoshi Tasaka, from the Japan Consulate came to the meeting to announce that after nearly ten years as the liaison to the community he will be returning to Japan in late December 2016.

Alice expressed her appreciation of his diligent work and support in Japantown.

IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Land Use / Transportation Committee

1. Geary BRT Update

Paul Wermer reported that his meeting with representatives from the SF County Transportation Authority (SFCTA) and the SF Metropolitan Transportation Agency (SFMTA) are not willing to change their recommendation to keep Laguna as a Local stop and not include it as a Rapid stop in spite of the letter sent by the JTF requesting the rapid stop.

Paul invited them to attend the January 2017 LU/T meeting to hear from the merchants.

Rich added that the other members of the Citizens Advisory Committee to the SFCTA seemed to support the staff recommendation to limit the Laguna stop to a Local only.

2. City-Wide Design Guidelines

Glynis Nakahara reported she is still working on setting up a time with the planning department to discuss the existing draft. She will try and set up a meeting with the Planning staff for December 5, 2016.

3. Nihonmachi Parking Corporation (NPC) Update

Paul Wermer stated that the NPC has received a couple of responses to their Request for Qualification (RFQ) as possible developers of one or both parking lots that the NPC owns and operates. He will invite the president, Robert Sakai to a LU/T meeting.

Jon Osaki stated the JTF has access to major pieces of information and one of our roles is to share information as widely as possible.

Steve Nakajo added the parking lots belong to the shareholders; that the Redevelopment Agency (RDA) offered the parcels to the community as redress for the impact they had in the A-1 and A-2 development; that the LU/T continue to follow the development of the parking lots as this will have a major impact on the community.

Jon Osaki reiterated that the JTF has access to a great deal of information that should be made available to the broader community, as it is important for the future of Japantown.

B. Economic Development / Marketing Committee

1. Holiday Lights

Alice Kawahastu reported that much of the holiday lights have been installed; that Richard Hashimoto from the Japantown Merchants Association (JMA) stepped up to handle the logistics of procuring and coordinating the work; that JTF will work toward raising the funds to cover the expenses of approximately \$23,500; that as JTF's fiscal sponsor, JCYC is waiving their ten percent fee; that JTF contributed \$2,000 to repair the damage that resulted from last year's holiday lights on the Torii gate on the Sutter Street side of the Buchanan Mall; that a "cushion" of approximately \$7,000 to take care of incidentals and miscellaneous expenses such as the electrical usage; a banner acknowledging the major donors would be included; that the lights were installed in order to light up Japantown as a group from the US-Japan Council would be touring the area on Sunday, as well as Tuesday; that there would not be a lighting ceremony.

2. International Origami Crane Tree

Alice Kawahastu reported special origami paper is being used with designs of various country's flags; that the Manzanita tree would be on display during the Santa's visits during the first two weeks in the Japan Center Malls; possibly in the Community Room of Union Bank for a couple of weeks.

Karen Kai spoke on the 20-foot tree that will be on display at the Rotunda in City Hall and that this is the 20th anniversary of this project. They gathered over 1,000 cranes and have saved all of them. She invited volunteers to help decorate the tree the week after Thanksgiving and includes plans to invite two survivors from the Pulse shooting in Florida for the December 7th tree lighting ceremony.

C. Cultural Heritage Committee

1. Landmarking – Recreation and Park Request Update

Rosalyn Tonai reported there was nothing to add at this time.

2. Landmarking Issei Women's Building

Karen Kai asked that the 1830 Sutter building be referred to the Issei Women's Building rather than Nihonmachi Little friends (NLF). They are working with Donna Graves, who has been contracted by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to assist with the application to landmark the building.

Jon Osaki asked that the assessment of the Peace Plaza be kept on top of the status of this project as it involves at least three departments. The Cultural Heritage Committee (CH) has turned this portion of the project over to the LU/T Committee to ensure it does not disappear.

Richard Hashimoto added that the structural analysis has been completed and it is now with the SFMTA. SFMTA's coordinating with the Department of Public Works (DPW) and Parks and Recreation as to how to proceed with the recommendations made in the report.

D. CBD Steering Committee

Greg reported the CBD Steering Committee selected Kristin Lowell, Inc. as the contractor to develop assist in the formation of the Japantown CBD.

He added the CBD Steering Committee is a separate committee that was established as part of the requirement in forming a CBD. Funds have been awarded to the JTF as the city only contracts with nonprofit organizations that are officially tax-exempt organizations. The meetings are open to the public. The next meeting will be Thursday, December 15, 2016 at the JACL HQ and begin at 6:00 p.m.

E. Finance Committee

Mark reported the JTF is still awaiting formal approval of the two remaining amendments with the City.

F. Executive Committee

JTF By-laws: There is no update and the matter is still in discussion.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Community United for Compassion

Judy Hamaguchi reported that the Bay Area Day of Remembrance Coalition (BADR) is working to sponsor a vigil on November 22nd that would take place in the Peace Plaza at 6:00 p.m. A "Wall of Compassion" will be available for individuals to write and share their thoughts.

Rich Hashimoto expressed his concern about the possibility of graffiti might occur as one of the ramifications of hosting this type of event.

VI. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

Bernie Choden suggested contacting the Coalition of San Francisco Neighborhoods what concerning Japantown. Coalition of Neighborhoods will have a meeting on December 11, 2016.

Support for the holiday lights should be solicited from areas outside Japantown.

He also spoke about the high cost of residing in San Francisco.

Judy provided an update on the "Comfort Women" project stating that the selection of the monument would be made by a panel of judges. She added that the site for the monument at

the roof garden of the St. Mary's Square. The verbiage for the plaque is still being worked on at this time.

VII. STAFF REPORTS

A. Crime Report

Greg referred the Board to the monthly report.

B. Japantown Observations

Greg reported that there recently was one story in the November Observations that went outside of Japantown referencing retired Steve Nakajo carrying a placard supporting Measure I on the Geary median at Divisadero.

VIII. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Alice will be posting the President's report.

She added that Steve Nakajima, a former member of the JTF Board member has volunteered to assist the staff during Bob's reduced work time. He will assist as much as possible, especially with the administrative side of the staff work.

Regarding the Kabuki Sundance, parking validation has been suspended as an agreement with the new operators was not reached.

The next Board meeting will be Wednesday, December 21, 2016 at the Union Bank Hospitality Room. A poll via e-mail will be conducted to see if a quorum will be possible due to the closeness to Christmas Holiday.

Anthony Brown announced the Jazz Ensemble would be performing at the Nihonmachi Little Friends fundraising event that will take place on Friday, November 18, 2016.

Judy Hamaguchi announced the JACL Spaghetti Crab Feed will take place on Saturday, December 4, 2016 and the proceeds would go to the Japanese Benevolent Society.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosalyn Tonai
Secretary