



**NOTES FROM THE
JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE
CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMITTEE MEETING**

1684 POST STREET
TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2015

BOARD MEMBER PRESENT:

Rosalyn Tonai, Alice Kawahatsu, Judy Hamaguchi, Glynis Nakahara.

STAFF PRESENT:

Bob Hamaguchi, Greg Marutani

OTHERS PRESENT:

Karen Kai, Shiz Mihara, Patty Wada

The meeting began at 12:10 p.m.

LANDMARKING OF NIHONMACHI LITTLE FRIENDS (NLF) AT 1820 SUTTER

Ros and Bob reported that they received word from Cathy Inamasu, Executive Director of NLF about landmarking their building at 1820 Sutter. Cathy said they would prefer to wait until they have completed their expansion project. Karen Kai is to be their liaison to the JTF Cultural Heritage Cmt.

LANDMARKING OF KINMON GAKUEN AT 2031 BUSH STREET

Shiz Mihara stated that the Kinmon Gakuen (Golden Gate Institute) has been in operation since 1911, except during World War II. Currently, it operates on Saturday mornings with students ranging in age from five to fifteen attending one of six class levels; there are approximately 50 to 60 students representing a many ethnicities.

There are currently five Board members, primarily educators familiar with Japanese education. They are working on updating their bylaws.

Shiz wanted to know what the impact would be if the school building was landmarked. While it would draw more attention to the building there was no guarantee that it would bring funds for the needed upgrades and repairs.

It was suggested that Bill Sugaya be brought into this particular project to assist in determining the best path to pursue regarding the school. Bob Hamaguchi offered to make contact with Bill.

LANDMARKING THE PEACE PAGODA

Ros reported that Jonathan Lammers, staff member of the Planning Commission has been provided historical references and images by JTF staff and committee members, which has been most helpful in his research of the history of both the Peace Pagoda and the Plaza area. Most recently, however, he has encountered challenges in locating architectural plans from the Redevelopment Authority, Planning Department, and the Department of Building Inspection were unable to locate and original drawings.

It was suggested to contact Richard Hashimoto (Japan Center Garage) as he may have plans because of the leaks that reach the garage, which is underneath the Plaza.

It was also suggested that contact be made with George Yamasaki as he the attorney with National Braemar, which was directly involved with the overall Japan Cultural and Trade Center.

It was raised that the Peace Plaza has undergone extensive design changes and renovation to its original state since 1968, and that very few elements of historical significance may remain from its original character. While the pagoda has a good chance of being landmarked, the Plaza may not. Nevertheless, it would be a good first step to gain landmark status for the Pagoda and in the assessment, gain the City's attention on the need for the Plaza's upgrades as a related and adjoining significant structural element.

Next steps will be to follow up with Jonathan Lammers to review his historical assessment draft report. In the meantime, Bob is securing a meeting with General Manager Phil Ginsberg of Rec and Park Department which oversees the Peace Plaza.

RUTH ASAWA FOUNTAINS IN BUCHANAN MALL

Funds for conducting the feasibility study to determine what would be needed to get the fountains operational, including cost estimates have been approved by the City.

Regarding the riverbed-designed cobblestones as a public hazard, Karen Kai stated that when the two origami fountains were being replaced with the bronze ones, she recalls that the SF Arts Commission only "claimed" the two fountains as their responsibility but not the pumps, the pipes. She does not recall any mention of the cobblestones. Clarification on the cobblestones as a historically significant design element is needed from NPC and the Arts Commission so that improvements can be addressed

COMCAST AND BUCHANAN MALL

Bob Hamaguchi reported that it has come to his attention that Comcast has been in contact with Jim Yonashiro with the Nihonmachi Parking Corporation (NPC) about "trenching" along both sides of the Mall to install vaults and cables. However, it is still in the planning stages and would not occur at least until after the Cherry Blossom Festival.

Bob said he would be meeting with Jim this week to discuss this possible project and encourage NPC to seek some benefits for Japantown, such as allowing cables to be laid in their trenches to accommodate surveillance cameras or even provide surveillance cameras in the Mall.

While it would be nice to have the "trenching" and repair of the origami fountains take place at the same time, it did not appear this would happen at this time.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

A documentary commemorating the earthquake and tsunami that took place in Fukushima four years ago will be screened at the New People Theater on March 10, 2015 at 6:30 p.m.

The Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California (JCCCNC) is hosting an event "Recover - Remember - Revive" will take place on March 11, 2015 at 5:30 p.m.

Representatives from the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) just returned from participating in the march and programs that took place in Selma on the 50th Anniversary of the Edmund Pettus Bridge when the police beat civil rights marchers on their way to Montgomery Alabama seeking voting rights.

The Nakayoshi group will be conducting a volunteer clean up of Japantown in preparing for the Cherry Blossom Festival

A Community Clean Up day will take place on Saturday, April 4th from 9:30 a.m. to Noon. This event is being coordinated by the Japantown Task Force (JTF), which has done this for the past four years.

JTF learned of the Nakayoshi clean up after theirs had been scheduled and that Nakayoshi had already sent out their calendar of events to their group. Plans will be to coordinate future clean ups together whenever possible.

Curb Appeal has been contracted to power wash the sidewalks in Japantown during the last week of March. Funds for this program were provided in large part by the Mayor's Office and contributions from many of the major property owners and merchants.

Konko Church (1909 Bush Street) will have a garage sale on Saturday, March 28, 2015.

Rose Hillson who currently serves on the Public Realm Committee is seeking support to continue serving on the Committee. There will be a meeting of the Rules Committee of the Board of Supervisors on Thursday, March 12, 2015 at City Hall in Room 263. Having supporters at the meeting would be appreciated.

2016 will be the 110th anniversary of Japantown in the Western Addition. Paul Osaki is calling a meeting to help plan.

2018 will be the 50th anniversary of the Peace Pagoda.

The next meeting will be at Noon, Tuesday, April 7, 2015 at the NJAHS,

The meeting adjourned at 1:20 p.m.