



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

1684 POST STREET
TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2015

BOARD MEMBER PRESENT:

Rosalyn Tonai, Judy Hamaguchi.

STAFF PRESENT:

Bob Hamaguchi, Greg Marutani

OTHERS PRESENT:

Patty Wada, John Ware, Jonathan Lammers

The meeting began at 12:05 p.m.

TEA GARDEN IN PAGODA

John Ware from the Park Alliance, explained the history of the pagoda in the Japanese Tea Garden in Golden Gate Park appears to have been a part of a merchandising vendor, probably in the “zone” to attract visitors to the 1915 Panama exhibition in San Francisco. His research reveals that the pagoda was moved from the exhibition to the tea garden displacing the Shinto Shrine that once existed in the Tea Garden.

An assessment was conducted by the Recreation and Parks Department and the Park Alliance in 2005 on the status of all of the structures in the Tea Garden. That study resulted in an estimate of over \$2 million of work was needed to restore the aging structures.

Mr. Ware added that his research seems to indicate that the pagoda, which is in need of renovation and painting as well as having its base stabilized, received an oral proposal to demolish the existing pagoda and replace it with a brand new one designed with the appropriate dimensions would run in the neighborhood of \$500,000. However, the City’s Preservation staff may be reluctant to remove a “historic” structure in the Japanese Tea Garden even though the structure is not to scale of a traditional pagoda.

It was recommended to reach out to the Hagiwara family for their views on whether to proceed with repairs to the existing pagoda or build a more appropriate one.

LANDMARKING THE PAGODA

Jonathan Lammers of the Planning Department shared the initial draft of the Landmark Designation Report regarding the Pagoda and Peace Plaza, which was ready for public comment.

JTF staff recommended that the May 27th meeting for public comment be postponed until key officials from the Department of Public Works, Recreation and Parks Department, and SF Municipal Transportation Authority can meet with JTF to discuss ramifications of the Peace Pagoda and Peace Plaza landmark designation.

He added that Commissioner Diane Matsuda Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) placed an article in the Nichi Bei Weekly (April 16, 2015) that announced the availability of the draft report and comments were welcome through May 30, 2015.

Jonathan added that once the comment period is closed the report would go to the to be introduced and voted upon, then there would be another meeting of the HPC that would vote on the designation at which time it would then proceed to the Board of Supervisors.

Concerns were raised about the impact of the designation on any further attempt to solve the leaking of water into the Japan Center Garage (JCG) if the Peace Pagoda received landmark status. Jonathan commented that the entire surface of the Peace Plaza could be removed to solve the leakage.

Then the concern was that if the entire Peace Plaza was landmarked, it would make it very challenging for the Recreation and Parks Department the SF Metropolitan Authority (SFMTA) and the Department of Public Works (DPW) to come to an agreement for possible repairs.

Jonathan referred to the recommendations cited in the draft report (page 58) and said that a portion or all of the Peace Plaza might be restored to the original design as long as it retained the elements of the original Peace Plaza design.

It was noted by the Committee that more information was needed from DPW, including the architectural and engineering designs of the 2091 Peace Plaza renovations as stated on page 26 of the draft report.

It was decided that this item would be discussed at the June 9 meeting of the CH to formulate a position and/or recommendation to be presented to the JTF Board at its June 17, 2015 meeting.

RUTH ASAWA FOUNTAINS IN BUCHANAN MALL

Nothing new to report at this time.

BUCHANAN MALL

The Nihonmachi Parking Corporation (NPC) is waiting on the bids to refurbish the benches in the Buchanan Mall that will include a revision in the design that incorporates armrests in the middle of each bench. This project should be completed by June 30, 2015.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The next meeting will be at Noon, Tuesday, June 9, 2015 at the NJAHS,

The meeting adjourned at 1:40 p.m.