

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

1684 POST STREET
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2016

BOARD MEMBER PRESENT:

Rosalyn Tonai, Seiko Fujimoto

STAFF PRESENT:

Greg Marutani

OTHERS PRESENT:

Shiz Mihara, Karen Kai, Susan Parks.

The meeting began at 12:05 p.m.

S.F. HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION LANDMARKING OF JAPANTOWN PROPERTIES

Susan Parks, from the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) of the S.F. Planning Commission, was in attendance to review the Landmarking Designation Work Program (LDWP). She pointed out that the Peace Pagoda, Kinmon Gakuen, and the Japantown YWCA (Nihonmachi Little Friends (NLF) are on their list as a result of the adoption of the JCHESS plan.

In August 2016 the Japanese American Citizens League (JAACL) Headquarters building located at 1765 Sutter was added to their list as a significant civil rights site due in large part to a grant the HPC received from the National Park Service to identify under-represented communities. St Francis Square was also listed.

Ms. Parks explained that applying for recognition on the National Register is more of an honorary one and does not prevent the change of the structure or destruction of it to be used for other purposes. ,

Being designated a local San Francisco Landmark involves a very specific ordinance that outlines the historically significant features of the building that could not be altered without careful review and approval with the Planning Department, thus protecting the building from major renovation as well as from being demolished. If the building is sold the new property owner would still be required to maintain the specific features designated as "historic" within the ordinance.

Good news is that through this recently acquired NPS grant, HPC/Planning Dept is able to contract a trained professional to undertake the process of compiling the report for landmark registration. Donna Graves has been hired to do this. Cost for this work is covered under the grant.

With respect to the Japantown YWCA (NLF) building, it has already gone through the process of having a Historic Structure Report (HSR) completed during the initial purchase of the building by the NLF that has served as the major document for any revisions being done on the original building design by Julia Morgan.

Rosalyn pointed out JTF's interest in keeping w/ the recommendations of JCHESS would be to help support the landmark registration process in the best interest of the building owners, to get

the word out to building owners whose building are named on the HPC list, to help preserve historically significant structures within Japantown, and to put them on the map for national recognition.

When asked, Ms. Parks agreed to prepare a chart showing the various stages of obtaining LDWP indicating the approximate time involved with each stage and approximately where the various properties within Japantown are currently at this time.

When asked about what, if anything the JACL could or should do, she said sending a letter indicating their interest in learning more about what is involved with the process, yet acknowledging that no commitment was being made through the letter of interest and inquiry.

UPDATE ON LANDMARKING THE PAGODA

Ms. Parks agreed to look into the status of the assessment report recently completed on the Peace Plaza, assuming it was ARG who was contracted to do the work.

While the recent assessment there is interest on what their recommendations would be to resolve the leaking of water into the Japan Center Garage (JCG).

It was Ms. Parks belief that it would be better for the JTF to determine if the Peace Plaza and Pagoda or only the Pagoda should be landmarked and the HPC would begin to move forward on the request.

UPDATE ON REPAIR OF THE RUTH ASAWA FOUNTAINS

As the Nihonmachi Parking Corporation (NPC) is responsible for the maintenance of the above ground of the Buchanan Mall and the Department of Public Works (DPW) responsible for the maintenance of the below ground items such as the plumbing that the repair of the pipes to get water flowing to the fountains would involve digging up some of the cobblestones to gain access to the pipes, NPC would not endorse the current proposal for the repair of the fountains because the assessment did not address the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) issue of the cobblestones not being brought into compliance with ADA standards and that the liability of any accident to any pedestrian needed to be addressed at the same time of the repair of the fountains.

He added that if the NPC endorsed the repair of the fountains it would appear that the NPC supports keeping the cobblestones as they currently exist.

NEW BUSINESS:

None at this time.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Karen Kai announced that the designs for the "Comfort Women memorial would be on display at the Chinatown branch library located at 1135 Powell Street from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. A select team would narrow the 30+ designs to three and take public comment on the three finalists.

The meeting adjourned at 1:25 p.m.

The next meeting will be at Noon, Tuesday, November 8, 2016 at the NJAHS.