



**JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE BOARD MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2015  
UNION BANK COMMUNITY ROOM**

**Minutes**

**ATTENDEES:** Alice Kawahatsu, Paul Wermer Anthony Brown, Judy Hamaguchi, David Ishida, Glynis Nakahara, Jon Osaki, Neal Taniguchi, Rosalyn Tonai,

**ABSENT:** Seiko Fujimoto, Richard Hashimoto, Benh Nakajo, Mark Moriguchi (all excused)

**STAFF:** Bob Hamaguchi, Greg Marutani, Greg Vilorina

**GUESTS:** Tomo Hirai, Michiko Yamada, Karen Kai, Robert Rusky, Beau Simon, Jeremy Chan, Nancy Nagano Kathie Cheatham, Rodney Chin

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting called to order at 6:10 p.m. by Alice Kawahatsu, President.

**II. Approval of Minutes of the Board Meeting on October 21, 2015.**

It was moved by Paul Wermer and seconded by David Ishida to approve the October 21, 2015 minutes as submitted.

Motion unanimously approved.

**III. Consent Items –**

None at this time.

**IV. Special Guests**

None at this time.

**V. Committee Reports**

**A. Land Use / Transportation Committee (Paul Wermer)**

**1. Neighborhood Commercial District (NCD) Zoning**

Paul Wermer reported that the Neighborhood Commercial District (NCD) Zoning legislation was unanimously approved by the Planning Commission. On Monday, November 30, 2015, it will go before the Land Use Committee of the Board of Supervisors. This will be the only chance for public comment on this matter. If approved by LU Committee it will go to the BOS for the final vote. He encouraged members from the JTF and community to attend both meetings.

**2. 1805 Buchanan Street Project**

On this item, Paul reported that the architects supported the recommendation of installing a sidewalk garden along their property to “green” the area. Paul will look into the possibility of The Buchanan continuing the garden along their frontage on Buchanan Street.

### 3. **Face Shop**

In a meeting with the owners of Face Shop Paul reported they stated they have strong support from merchants in the West Mall and their customers. He encouraged them to demonstrate their involvement in the community if they are seeking JTF support, such as becoming a member of the Japantown Merchants Association (JMA). Paul does not expect a hearing at the Planning Commission until January or February 2016. In the meantime he will follow up with the owners about their plans for community engagement and report back any progress.

### 4. **Geary BRT (Bus Rapid Transit)**

Paul reported that comments to the Draft EIR will be accepted until November 30, 2015. The draft letter may need a few more changes before it is ready to submit to the SF Municipal Transit Authority (SFMTA), namely the insertion of the need for Rapid stop at Laguna.

The major issues with the DEIR focus on:

- The need for a Rapid Stop at Geary and Laguna to serve shoppers and visitors to Japantown and Chinese Consulate;
- The preservation of the bridges at Webster and Steiner to allow for an alternative to the proposed crosswalk at Geary and Buchanan;
- The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) does not address concerns about the high density of senior citizens in the neighborhood.

Paul explained that the comments in the letter will put the JTF on the official record but stressed that a strategy needs to be developed where the members of the community to meet with the decision makers.

It was moved by Anthony Brown and seconded by Rosalyn Tonai to submit the draft letter with the recommended revisions to the SF MTA.

The motion was passed by a unanimous vote.

Paul added that the Committee is working on drafting a letter that would cover the concerns of JTF regarding the preservation of the bridges on Webster and Steiner and the need for the need of BRT stops at Geary and Laguna.

In response to his recommendation that a strategy be developed to involve as many individuals and organizations on these issues, David Ishida suggested on the issues concerning seniors, that outreach be considered to Kimochi, Inc. JARF, The Sequoias, SF Commission on Aging as well as any others that would be affected by the Geary BRT plans as they currently exist.

## **B. Japantown Economic Development and Marketing Committee**

### **Holiday Lighting**

Alice Kawahatsu reported that Happy Home has been selected to provide the holiday lighting. The "Torii" gate on Buchanan and Sutter has been decorated with lights. Additional lighting is being worked on for the Peace Plaza and possibly the Pagoda.

She reported that Saturday, November 28, 2015 will be an official lighting ceremony will take place 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. Volunteers are “adopting” some of the “Charlie Brown” trees in Buchanan Mall folding Origami ornaments using waterproof paper. Supervisor London Breed will be invited to attend.

#### **Japantown Communication Update**

Facebook is one of the major ways the “younger” generation finds out what is happening, including in Japantown. Because the Facebook portal belongs to the Japantown Merchants Association JTF does not have access to its own brand management or its own JTF postings.

#### **C. Cultural Heritage Committee**

Rosalyn Tonai reported that the last Cultural Heritage meeting was cancelled.

Tonai reported that the long lost architectural plans for the remodeling of the Peace Plaza in 2000 have been found. They will be forwarded to the Planning Department.

Tonai announced that Governor Jerry Brown on October 7, 2015 signed into law AB 189 California Arts Council signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown. It would require the Arts Council to establish criteria and guidelines for state-designated cultural districts, as defined. It would also require the council to establish a competitive application system for certification, provide technical and promotional support for certified state-designated cultural districts, and collaborate with public agencies and private entities to maximize the benefits of state-designated cultural districts. The bill would provide that a geographical area within the state may be certified as a state-designated cultural district by applying to the council for certification, as provided. The bill would also provide that certification as a state-designated cultural district is effective for 5 years, after which the district may renew certification every 3 years.

We have requested more information from the SF Arts Commission.

#### **D. Finance Committee**

In Mark Moriguchi’s absence Bob Hamaguchi reported that he and David Ishida met with Diana Ponce De Leon and MOED staff have ensured that the \$100,000 grant budget amendment submitted will remain as is and allow JTF to seek a \$20,000 to conduct a feasibility study for a Community Benefit District (CBD) in Japantown.

#### **E. Nominating Committee**

Alice reported that the Nominating Committee met to discuss candidates to fill the vacancies resulting from the three resignations that occurred this year. She added that the Executive Committee, Judy Hamaguchi, Glynis Nakahara and Bob Hamaguchi are on the Committee. They have a goal of recommending additional board members at the next meeting.

#### **VI. New Business:**

Judy Hamaguchi reported on a meeting led by Supervisor Eric Mar regarding the Comfort Women legislation. (Greg, please review the tapes to document her comments and discussion points. This is important to document for Judy’s sake)

#### **Increasing the outreach of the JTF to the broader community**

The question was raised as to what and how the JTF might be able to expand its outreach to the community on what is happening in Japantown, including JTF-involved

issues: possible landmarking of the Peace Pagoda/Plaza, the holiday lighting event, developing a Community Benefit District (CBD). All important to engage as many interested individuals and organizations as possible.

While the use of the Internet is a major venue for many younger individuals to gather news and information, there is the “older” demographic sector that relies on printed material and may use e-mail, but may be unfamiliar with the continuing development of new programs and apps for gathering information. Thus, there is a pressing need to find a way to disseminate information through more than one medium.

This issue will be placed in the “parking lot” for now but should be re-visited as soon as possible as JTF moves forward on a variety of issues related to Japantown and its future.

#### **VII. General Public Comments:**

Judy Hamaguchi reported that she attended a meeting on the Comfort Women Memorial Coalition. She noted she was the only one of Japanese ancestry on the Coalition. The Coalition has identified four possible sites for the memorial that include, Portsmouth Square, Yerba Buena, Lincoln Park, Golden Gate Park. She added their goal is to complete the project in 2016.

#### **VIII. Staff Reports**

##### **Crime Update**

Greg Marutani reported that the monthly Community Police Advisory Board (CPAB) that usually occurs the same time as the JTF Board meeting was changed to the fourth Tuesday of each month, allowing him to attend both the JTF and CPAB meetings. The next CPAB meeting will take place next Tuesday, November 24, 2015.

#### **IX. President’s Report**

Alice referred the Board to her written report.

Alice announced that Greg Vioria will be leaving his JTF staff position for a full time position with a tech marketing firm on December 31, 2015. He will continue to serve on the Economic Development and Marketing Committee as a volunteer. [On behalf of the board, Kawahatsu applauded and thanked Vioria for his hard work and dedication to JTF and the Japantown community.](#)

#### **X. Announcements**

Alice reminded the Board that the quarterly meeting will be Wednesday, December 9, 2015 at Nihonmachi Terrace starting at 6:00 p.m. The main courses will be provided for the potluck and asked the Board members to bring a side dish.

November 20, 2015 A fundraising event for London Breed at Origin located at 1538 Fillmore Street starting at 5:30 p.m. While Board members and staff of the JTF are prohibited to contribute, they are encouraged to attend the event to show their support. Family members and friends may contribute and are encouraged to attend the event as well.

December 2, 2015 annual World Tree of Hope at City Hall starts at 5:30 p.m. It will be decorated with origami cranes with written notes of hope and peace.

December 5, 2015 JACL-San Francisco Chapter is hosting their annual Spaghetti-Crab Feed fundraiser that will be held at Christ United Presbyterian Church starting at 5:00 p.m. Proceeds will go towards the Asian Women's Shelter.

December 9, 2015 JTF Board quarterly gathering will be at Nihonmachi Terrace starting at 6:00 p.m.

The next JTF board meeting will be Wednesday, December 19, 2015 at Union Bank Community Room.

**IX.** President adjourned the meeting at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rosalyn Tonai". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and "T".

Rosalyn Tonai  
Secretary