

**Japantown Task Force  
Board of Directors Meeting**  
Wednesday, January 19, 2022  
6:00 pm – VIA Zoom Meeting

**Attendees:** Sandy Mori, Glynis Nakahara, Benh Nakajo, Alice Kawahatsu, David Takashima, Beau Simon, Gary Barbaree, Jeremy Chan, Jon Osaki, Kenta Takamori, Lori Yamauchi, Lucy Fisher, Richard Jue, Rosalyn Tonai, Steven Santa Maria, Daryl Higashi, Richard Hashimoto, Mark Moriguchi, and Scott Hamaguchi

**Absent (excused):** none

**Staff:** Dr. Emily Murase, Lauren Nosaka, Brandon Quan, Susie Kagami, Melissa Bailey Nihei, and Max Nihei

**Guests:** Elena Nielsen, Grace Horikiri, Greg Vilorio, Judy Hamaguchi, Emily Nichols,

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:04p.m. by President Sandy Mori. A quorum was acknowledged.

**Approval of Agenda**

It was moved by Steven Santa Maria and seconded by Glynis Nakahara to accept the agenda.

The motion passed unanimously.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

Minutes of the JTF Board meeting of November 17, 2021. (Attachment A)

Lori Yamauchi requested that the following amendments be incorporated into the minutes.

1. P. 2 - Committee Reports  
Land Use/Transportation Committee:  
The proposed rule would require any retail shops with 11 or more locations worldwide, excluding Japan, seeking to locate in Japantown to apply for conditional use authorization from the Planning Commission. This would trigger neighborhood notices, hearings and community engagement.
2. P. 3 - Peace Plaza Committee  
1. Committee Updates  
...the Recreation and Park Department are still in the process of completing the structural analysis of the garage and the Peace Plaza. They are concerned that if there is too much weight on the garage, it could trigger a seismic upgrade, which is something they'd like to avoid.
3. P. 4 - Nominations Committee  
2. Vote to approve the Nominations Committee list of names for Board Officers and Positions  
...the Nominations Committee felt that there needs to be a strong experience of board officers to support the new Executive Director.

It was moved by Lucy Fisher and seconded by David Takashima to approve the November 17, 2021 minutes.

The motion passed unanimously. No public comments.

**III. Update from the Interim Executive Director, Sandy Mori (Attachment B)**

Sandy Mori explained that the last meeting of 2021 was in November as JTF focused on the hiring of the Executive Director in December. She introduced Dr. Emily Murase as the new Executive Director and she thanked the board for entrusting her with this important work.

Sandy Mori reported on an effort by the API Council to gather ideas for capital projects such as the Kinmon Gakuen Renovation. The context is that the Board of Supervisors is expected to consider a resolution to

formally apologize to the Asian community for past harm by the City. The API Council intends to advocate for one-time capital projects to be connected to this apology.

Sandy Mori additionally reported that JTF submitted a budget request through the API Council which organizes requests and advocates for city funding of API non-profit organizations. The JTF request is to cover core infrastructure expenses, specifically the staffing costs of the Executive Director and Administrative Manager. The funding request amount to fund the two core positions was \$200,000. Sandy and Emily will be scheduling meetings with OEWD Director Kate Sofis and Project Manager Diana Ponce De Leon to discuss continued funding.

Board Member Glynis Nakahara asked Dr. Emily Murase if she planned to engage with the issue of redistricting of the Supervisorial Districts. Emily is attending Saturday's meeting focused on District 5 stakeholders. Board Member Jon Osaki pointed out that previous proposals for redistricting had split Japantown, excluding JCYC, the Nichiren Buddhist Temple, and the Buddhist Church of San Francisco. He urged that JTF develop a position statement before redistricting lines are drawn to keep the integrity of Japantown. Staff Susie Kagami has been attending several meetings on the redistricting effort.

No public comments.

**Update from the Japantown Cultural District, Susie Kagami (Attachment C)**

Board member GN thanked Susie Kagami for her great work on the KOHO Center.

Melissa Bailey Nihei introduced herself to the Board as it was her first board meeting since joining the Japantown Cultural District.

No public comments.

**Update from Executive Director of Japantown Community Benefit District (Property Owners in Japantown), Grace Horikiri (Attachment D)**

No public comments.

**IV. Committee Reports**

A. Land Use/Transportation Committee (Chair Glynis Nakahara)

1. Committee recommends approval of Jeremy Chan as Co-Chair of Land Use/Transportation Committee effective immediately

It was moved by Beau Simon and seconded by David Takashima to approve of Jeremy Chan as the Co-Chair of the Land Use/Transportation Committee. The vote passed unanimously.

No public comments.

2. Formula Retail Proposal Update

Glynis Nakahara reported that the Planning Department attended the last committee meeting and discussed a proposal on revising the definition of Formula Retail excluding Japan businesses. The committee will relook at this proposal and bring something back to the Board. There is no rush on this proposal as it's still open.

No public comments.

3. Osaka Way

Jon Osaki reported that he is following the allocation of state funds to the Buchanan Mall which will go through the Planning Department. There will be a little bit more time to complete the project. He met with the Asawa family who are interested in engaging in this process.

No public comments.

B. Cultural Heritage Sustainability Committee (Co-chairs Lucy Fisher/Gary Barbaree)

1. Update on Japantenna: Kenta Takamori and CHS committee review process

Lucy Fisher reported that Kenta Takamori sent a report on Japantenna and invited him to the board meeting. Kenta was unable to join the meeting. The co-chairs met with the Japantenna Steering Committee in December. It is difficult to say if the Japantenna project will continue. The committee will be further discussing Japantenna at the next meeting in February.

No public comments.

2. Update on Kinmon Gakuen Renovation

Lucy reported that she attended the Kinmon Gakuen board meeting in December 2021. The group is planning to hire someone to help develop a database of alumni with the goal of starting a fundraising campaign to renovate the building. Board member Steven Santa Maria asked how much will need to be raised for the Kinmon Gakuen renovation. Richard Hashimoto, who serves on the Kinmon Gakuen board and has been very involved in the preservation effort, pointed out that costs will ultimately be twice or three times the original estimate and is likely to end up about \$20 million.

No public comments.

3. Current Status of Japanese Tea Garden Renovation

Lucy Fisher reported on the Japanese Tea Garden Pagoda renovation. A new consortium is being formed between the Botanical Gardens and the Japanese Tea Garden. As a result, the updated landscaping of the pagoda is on hold for now.

Co-chair Lucy Fisher, Co-chair Gary Barbaree and member Benh Nakajo met with Yuki Nishimura welcoming her to JTF and inviting her to join the CHS committee.

No public comments.

C. Peace Plaza Committee (Co-Chairs Jon Osaki/ Rich Hashimoto)

1. Committee Updates

Jon Osaki reported that there was a design charrette with the project team and the committee's design consultants, Masahiro Inoue and Michael DeGregorio. Jon expects to have a full report at the next Peace Plaza Committee meeting next week.

Board Member Alice Kawahatsu inquired about the recent flooding that affected the Japan Center Garage and Nijiya Supermarket during the New Year holidays. Richard Hashimoto reported that a high-pressure water sprinkler line broke in half in the early morning of December 30, the peak of the new year's holiday preparation. The garage and other stores were closed for two days. He is working with the City Attorney's Office and insurance companies to try to recover some of the losses sustained by merchants as a result of the flooding.

No public comments.

D. Ad Hoc Japan Center Malls Technical Committee (Chair Lori Yamauchi)

1. Committee Updates

Lori Yamauchi reported the committee discussed a newly convened Covenants Committee, the need to explore options for a possible major rebuild of the Japan Center Mall, including a community land trust, and a comprehensive comparison between the JCHES and CCHES plans. One of the major differences between the JCHES and CCHES plans was the treatment of the height limits for the Japan Center Malls blocks. If there is a major rebuild of the malls blocks, there will need to be a reevaluation of current height restrictions and an overall strategic plan. Board Member David Takashima noted that the City has been moving towards parking restrictions on new developments. The City is looking at transit solutions so there is a question about how much parking is sufficient. There is a major issue with the implications of

relaxing height limits for the load bearing infrastructure. In the Better Neighborhood Plan, the City proposed height limits along Geary Boulevard of base heights of 55-75 feet plus a tower of 150-250 feet. However, community members opposed the plan and the Better Neighborhoods Plan was never adopted.

No public comments.

#### **VI. Update from the President/Executive Committee**

1. Appointments for Nominations Committee (Benh Nakajo, Richard Jue and Lucy Fisher) by President to be approved by the Board

The motion was moved by Gary Barbaree and seconded by Lori Yamauchi to approve Benh Nakajo, Richard Jue and Lucy Fisher as members of the Nominations Committee. The vote passed unanimously.

No public comments.

2. JTF Board Retreat

The Executive Committee is interested in organizing a board retreat. To gather feedback on length (half a day, full day) and month, the Executive Committee will conduct a brief survey of board members. Board member Alice Kawahatsu expressed support for a board retreat and invited recommendations for a good facilitator.

No public comments.

#### **VIII. General Public Comment**

Members of the public may address the Board for up to two minutes with respect to each item on the agenda, and may speak for up to two minutes regarding matters not on the agenda during general public comment.

No public comments.

#### **IX. Announcements.**

- Jon Osaki announced the SF Japantown Foundation's fundraising campaign. Due to the pandemic, there will not be an in-person fundraising event. The Foundation has been very generous to the JTF in the early days of the Peace Plaza renovation planning process. Jon pointed out the Foundation supports many community organizations. Every donation will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to \$100,000. Jon encouraged the board members to share the SF Japantown Foundation fundraising campaign widely. The next cycle for funding will be released in the spring.

- Grace Horikiri of JCBD reported that COVID testing is available at the Japantown Peace Plaza, 9 am - 3 pm every weekday. She reported that the Dandelion Project, an art installation in the Japan Center Mall dedicated to promoting world peace, will be closing soon. The exhibit has attracted 13,600 visitors.

- Rosalyn Tonai announced that the NJAHS Day of Remembrance is scheduled for February 19, 2022 at 5 pm. Local poet Lauren Ito will serve as emcee. The Clifford Uyeda Humanitarian Award will be presented to the late Robert Rusky and his spouse Karen Kai for their contributions to advancing civil rights.

#### **X. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:21pm.

NEXT BOARD MEETING: Wednesday, February 16, 2022 via zoom meeting.