

**Japantown Task Force
Board of Directors
Minutes
Wednesday, March 16, 2022
6:00 pm – via Zoom Meeting**

Board Members: Chair Sandy Mori, Chair; Vice-Chair Glynis Nakahara, Secretary Alice Kawahatsu, Treasurer Mark Moriguchi, Gary Barbaree, Jeremy Chan, Lucy Fisher, Jaclyn Funasaki, Scott Hamaguchi, Richard Hashimoto, Benh Nakajo, Emily Nichols, Yuki Nishimura, Jon Osaki, Steven Santa Maria, Beau Simon, Rosalyn Tonai & Lori Yamauchi

Absent (excused): Daryl Higashi and David Takashima

Staff: Dr. Emily Murase, Executive Director; Lauren Nosaka, Brandon Quan, Melissa Bailey Nihei, Max Nihei

Guests: Suzanne Medina, Greg Vilorio, & Michiko Yamada

I. Call to Order

Recognition of a Quorum and Agenda Approval

President Sandy Mori called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm. A quorum was acknowledged. It was moved by Richard Hashimoto and seconded by Glynis Nakahara to approve the agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

II. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the JTF Board meeting of February 16, 2022 (Attachment A)

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

1. A correction to the January meeting minutes, on page 3 of the minutes, under the Ad Hoc Japan Center Malls Technical Committee section. On the fourth line of the paragraph for the Ad-Hoc Committee, the sentence on that line should read, "One of the major differences between the JCHESS and the *Better Neighborhoods Plan* plans was the treatment of the height limits for the Japan Center Malls blocks."
2. A correction to the February minutes on page 2, the Land Use Committee Motion re: SF Redistricting had a typo, i.e. "restricting", on the 1st line, "Co-chairs Glynis Nakahara and Jeremy Chan have been attending several redistricting meetings as part of a citywide redistricting process."

It was moved by Lucy Fisher and seconded by Glynis Nakahara to approve the February 16 minutes. The motion was passed unanimously. No public comment.

III. Update from the Executive Director, Emily Murase PhD (Attachment B)

Emily announced that she will be on jury duty from March 28 - April 1, 2022 and will be less available during this time. She will be reachable by cell phone. She and staff will be meeting with MOHCD on March 17 and MOEWD on March 21 to discuss the current year budget and next year's proposed budget. She would like to convene the Finance Committee after these meetings.

In terms of staffing, Administrative Manager Lauren Nosaka will be the central point of contact for distributing committee agendas and managing attendance. Both are available for 15-minute virtual tutorials on Doodle, Google Docs, and other tools. Please contact them at info@japantowntaskforce.org.

No public comment.

Update from the Japantown Cultural District, Susie Kagami

Susie Kagami was unable to provide a report as she was attending the Redistricting Task Force meeting to testify on behalf of the Japantown Task Force.

No public comment.

IV. Committee Reports

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

1. Housing Element Draft 2 – Motion for JTF to Send a Letter of Appreciation and Critique

Jeremy Chan reported that the Land Use and Transportation Committee discussed details of a proposed letter to the Planning Commission about the Housing Element (Attachment C & D).

Lori explained that the Housing Element is revised every 8 years. Planning Department staff has been gathering feedback on the revised plan for a couple of years now. The Japantown Task Force engaged in the community process that shaped the initial draft of the Housing Element. The second draft was released in January. The Planning Department presented it to the committee in early February and asked for input by the end of the month. This did not allow enough time for comprehensive public outreach. The committee decided to focus the March meeting on feedback to the Planning Department about the Housing Element.

The motion was moved by Lori Yamauchi and seconded by Glynis Nakahara for JTF to send a letter of appreciation and critique of the Housing Element. The motion was approved unanimously. No public comment.

2. SF Redistricting – Motion for JTF to Endorse the Unity Map

Glynis Nakahara reported that the committee discussed the SF Rising Community Unity Map and recommended that the full board support the Unity Map (Attachment E). Emily reported on a meeting that was held earlier in the day with Black leaders of the Western Addition and Fillmore District and Japantown representatives Grace Horikiri, Jon Osaki, Susie, and Emily. These leaders were critical for the SF Rising's lack of effective outreach in the Black communities and asked for allyship from Japantown leaders. Emily suggested that the committee chairs withdraw the original motion and, instead, direct her to submit a letter to the Redistricting Task Force to communicate the JTF position: 1) to honor the Japantown boundaries in the JCHESS, and 2) to keep Japantown with the Western Addition and the Fillmore District, especially the Black communities. Jeremy pointed out that JTF is already listed as an endorsing organization, in which Emily will work on correcting this.

The motion was moved by Lori Yamauchi and seconded by Scott Hamaguchi to direct Emily Murase, the Executive Director, to send a letter to the Redistricting Task Force communicating the JTF position. The motion passed unanimously. No public comment.

3. Other Committee Updates

Glynis reported on the Buchanan Mall project. On March 8, JTF board members and staff met with the Planning Department and the Department of Public Works on next steps for the Buchanan Mall. The funding for this project will be coming from the SF Planning Department. No public comment.

B. Cultural Heritage Sustainability Committee (Co-Chair Lucy Fisher/Gary Barbaree) 1. Committee Updates

Lucy Fisher reported on the March 7th committee meeting. The committee discussed prioritizing Kinmon Gakuen, the Japanese Benevolent Society, and the Hokka Nichi Bei Kai as cultural assets. New board member Yuki Nishimura who is bilingual and bicultural volunteered to be a liaison for the Hokka Nichi Bei Kai. The Japanese Tea Garden will be merged with the Arboretum and the Conservatory of Flowers as the Golden Gate Park Gardens. All will be free to San Francisco residents. Non-residents will be subject to dynamic pricing. Benh Nakajo shared with the committee news of a bequest of beautiful specimen koi/Japanese carp fish to the Japanese Tea Garden. In terms of landscaping in the Japanese Tea Garden, Lucy reported that there are still differences between the Planning Department and the Historic Preservation Commission that are being worked out. The committee also reviewed the logo for the Japantown Cultural District. No public comment.

C. Peace Plaza Committee (Co-chairs Jon Osaki/Richard Hashimoto) 1. Committee Updates

Richard Hashimoto reported on an in-person meeting with the Recreation and Parks Department General Manager Phil Ginsburg and key staff from the RPD and the Department of Public Works. Phil explained that after considerable analysis the current project will cost \$33 million, \$8 million above the \$25 million in available bond funding. He committed to coming up with \$2-\$3 million of the budget gap but asked that the community come up with the remaining \$5 million.

Board members expressed concern and frustration at the cost increase. Glynis attributed the cost overrun to the slow pace of progress on the part of the City. Alice Kawahatsu expressed concern on the burden on community fundraising. Lori compared the Peace Plaza project with the Portsmouth Square project that has engaged private design architects, not DPW staff. The Portsmouth Square project is progressing in a timely fashion. She suggested an outside review of the City's findings. Richard will come back to the full board with a recommended strategy to deal with the cost overrun issue. No public comment.

D. Ad hoc Japan Center Malls Technical Committee (Chair Lori Yamauchi) 1. Committee Updates

Lori reported on a meeting she had with Paul Osaki and Diane Matsuda of the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California and Robert Sakai, President of the Nihonmachi Parking Corporation and Board Member of the Japantown Community Benefits District. Diane and Robert are co-chairs of the Covenants Committee. They asked that the Technical Committee focus on Japan Center Mall property owners excluding 3D Investments since the Covenants Committee is focused on the covenant with 3D. Sandy explained that there is a small group of Japantown leaders that will meet with Joseph Daneshgar, principal

of 3D Investments. There is a larger Covenants Committee, co-chaired by Diane and Robert, that also includes JTF board members Sandy, Glynis, Rosalyn Tonai, and JTF staff member Emily. Discussions focused on authority of the Covenants Committee and the importance of communication between the three groups.

Steve Nakajo facilitated a meeting of Sandy and Emily with Hiro Kano, General Manager of Kinokuniya North America who is based in New York. Kano-san expressed interest in meeting with the committee at a future date.

Dr. Magdalena Blasko, the owner of medical offices along Geary, has died and her son is seeking a buyer for the property. No public comment.

V. Update from the President/Executive Committee

1. Updates on Board Retreat

Sandy reported that the board retreat is proposed to be held on Friday, May 20. The date has not been confirmed yet. She has spoken to Jan Masaoka who has expressed willingness to facilitate the retreat.

No public comment.

VI. 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 comment.

VII. Announcements

Richard Hashimoto his guest, Suzanne Medina who has succeeded Rodney Chin as Executive Director of the Buchanan YMCA. Suzanne expressed her enthusiasm for partnering with Japantown leaders and organizations.

VIII. Closed Session of the JTF Board: Personnel Matter (No action to be taken)

- A. Public Comment on Closed Session - none
- B. Closed Session
- C. Public Comment on Closed Session - none

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 pm.

* May require board action.