

**Japantown Task Force Board of Directors Meeting**  
**Minutes**  
**Wednesday, May 18, 2022**  
**6:00 pm – via Zoom Meeting**

**PARTICIPANTS:**

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

Absent (excused): Scott Hamaguchi

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

Guests: Diana Ponce de Leon, Rafael Moreno, Judy Hamaguchi, Tomo Hirai, Karen Kai, Dixon Li, Larry Marso, Elena Nielsen, Jonathan Rewers, Sheridan Tatsuno, Michiko Yamada, & Ayae Yoshimoto

**I. Call to Order**

President Sandy Mori called the meeting to order at 6:05pm.

It was moved by Lucy Fisher and seconded by Rosalyn Tonai to approve of the agenda. The agenda was adopted unanimously. No public comment.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

It was moved by Glynis Nakahara and seconded by Richard Hashimoto to approve of the minutes (Attachment A.) The minutes was adopted unanimously. No public comment.

**III. Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development Guests:**

**Invest in Neighborhoods Director Diana Ponce de Leon and Staff Member Rafael Moreno**

Sandy introduced Diana Ponce de Leon and Rafael "Rafa" Moreno. Diana provided an update on work of OEWD. Diana reported that OEWD programs to stimulate economic recovery have helped more than 400 businesses, high percentages of women-owned and people of color-owned. She introduced Rafael Moreno, the Program Manager who will be supporting grant agreements, projects, and partnerships with Japantown and works closely with the Cultural Districts in the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD). Sandy recognized that Diana was the first program monitor for the Japantown Task Force and invited

Rafa to a tour of Japantown. Board members greeted Diana and Rafa and thanked them for their years of service. No public comment.

#### **IV. Update from the Executive Director, Emily Murase PhD**

##### **1. Executive Director's Report (Attachment B)**

Questions focused on the Hotel Buchanan renovation plans. Emily Nichols of the Hotel Buchanan explained that Impacts on the community should be minimal. All the work is internal to the hotel. A timeline will be provided to the community. The hotel has their own parking lot so there will be little impact to the residential parking. The residents in the hotel will be transferred to another facility for permanent supportive housing on June 16. The hotel will be renamed.

The Japantenna project has become a standing item within the Culture Heritage Sustainability Committee (CHSC.) The next popup will be focused on Fukuoka projected to be held in the last two weekends of July. There will be a full presentation on the budget, and project at the next CHSC meeting. The Steering Committee is looking for a space in the Japan Center Malls. No public comment.

2. Informational item: Proposed FY22-23 JTF Budget (for action at June 15 board meeting) Emily presented the Proposed FY22-23 JTF Budget document (Attachment C) to the Board and walked them through the document. The fiscal year is from July 1 to June 30. Mark Moriguchi will provide quarterly reports depending on JCYC's schedule. No public comment.

3. Update from the Japantown Cultural District Manager Susie Kagami  
Susie was not present at the meeting so Program Coordinator Melissa Bailey Nihei announced that the Japantown Cultural District's Night Market will take place on Thursday, June 23 from 5pm-10pm at the Japan Center Malls. There will be art installations, vendors, and demonstrations. No food vendors. A Thursday was chosen since it is the slowest night in the Japan Center Malls. The time was selected as the restaurants are open until 10pm.

The team has partnered with Nihonmachi Street Fair to host Obon in the Plaza on August 6. Gary commented that August 6 is the anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. The Friends of Hibakusha and JARF have a small service every year. He inquired if their event could be added to the Obon in the Plaza event. Melissa recommended for him to contact Grace Horikiri, Executive Director of the Japantown Community Benefit District since they are handling the funding and permits.

Public comment:

- The board report states that there hasn't been an Obon on the Peace Plaza for 15 years and that is not accurate. The Japantown merchants and mall merchants have organized numerous obons on the plaza within that time frame.

#### **V. Committee Reports**

## A. Land Use/Transportation Committee

(CO-Chairs Glynis Nakahara/Jeremy Chan)

### 1. Proposition A: Muni Reliability and Street Safety General Obligation Bond (Attachment D)

After hearing a presentation on the Proposition, the Committee decided to forward the matter to the full board without a recommendation on a public position. Instead, the committee passed a motion recommending that the full JTF Board consider a public *support/oppose/take no action* position on the issue and ask presenters additional questions arising from committee discussion be responded to at the board meeting.

Glynis introduced the topic by providing a recap of the discussion at the Land Use and Transportation Committee. Emily explained that the two sides will have 3 minutes each, followed by discussion.

Dixon Li, Yes on Prop A, spoke on the importance of endorsing Prop A. \$286M of the \$400M will be directed to make MUNI safer and more reliable. Pandemic has crippled revenue for the SFMTA. Many seniors rely on the MUNI to get their destinations. If this does not pass, SFMTA could run out of funding by 2025. The SFMTA has designated Western Addition/Japantown as an equity neighborhood. If passes, it help make San Francisco more competitive for matching federal grants. Prop A is endorsed from many AAPI organizations such as API Council and the CCDC.

Larry Marso, No on Prop A, spoke in opposing Prop A. On the financial aspects of Prop A, this is part of the city's general obligation on programs. In 2022, there is lower property tax rate than have had before because of refinancing of municipal bonds. Transportation 2050 was an ad hoc working group with a pre-pandemic plan of 2030 and 2045. There are new realities of the work from home lifestyle and changes that took place during the pandemic. There are no cuts in expenditures and anticipate no changes in expenditures. The \$400M plan is the same plan as prior to the pandemic. This \$400M can go to any program. No guarantees that the funds will be spent on any of the programs heard tonight. The Coalition of San Francisco Neighborhoods has taken a no on Prop A.

Dixon Li, Jonathan Rewers of SFMTA and Larry Marso are available for questions.

#### Q&A:

Alice Kawahatsu asked Dixon if there are specifics on how the bond will help protect AAPI communities especially violence and security. Dixon answered that the funds will go towards capital improvement maintaining MUNI and securing security cameras on buses. Jonathan added that there will be an increased presence of Transit Ambassadors across all fleets in San Francisco, added 22 Transit Ambassador positions in the latest budget, expand the number of employees monitoring videos across the entire MUNI system, and adding 2 translators for the AAPI community through operating budget. Larry Marso stated that while "safety" is in the title of the bond, there is nothing that states the funds are for hate crime and violence of commuters on SFMTA system.

David Takashima commented that GO bonds cannot be used for operational purposes. GO bonds must be used for infrastructure. He asked why is this bond on the June ballot to Jonathan

and Larry. Jonathan responded that the issues with funding transportation bonds have been long known in San Francisco. The train control system for MUNI is over 20 years old and needs to be replaced. If we bring in the \$400M now, we would be paying back that debt service meaning that we would get value of investment early and sooner. There will be a second transportation ballot, reauthorize Proposition K transportation sales tax in November so that is why this General Obligation bond was chosen for the June ballot. If this bond passes, there will be audible traffic signals and pedestrian countdown signals for seniors.

It was moved by Jeremy Chan and seconded by Gary Barbaree for JTF to support the Proposition A: MUNI Reliability and Street Safety General Obligation Bond for the June 7 ballot. The motion passed unanimously. No public comment.

## 2. Committee Updates

### Environmental Impact Report

Glynis reported that a subcommittee will be reviewing the Environmental Impact Report to the Housing Element. Written comments are due in late June.

### Restoration of MUNI Lines

The committee is also looking into advocating for the restoration of the #3 Jackson line. A representative from SFMTA will attend the June Land Use & Transportation meeting.

Glynis mentioned that the #2 Clement will be restored in July 2022. Richard Hashimoto added that the #2 Clement has been renamed the #2 Sutter and will only have stops from Presidio to the financial district. No public comment.

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

### 1. Informational item: Jaclyn Funasaki's interest to join the committee (vote next month)

Gary Barbaree reported that the committee will review Jaclyn's candidacy for committee membership. No public comment.

### 2. Board of Supervisors Accept & Expend Resolution

Lucy Fisher introduced the motion. The Recreation and Parks Department is seeking community support for a proposed resolution at the Board of Supervisors giving the Department authority to accept and expend cash and/or in-kind grants from the San Francisco Parks Alliance up to \$400,000 in support of restoration projects in the Japanese Tea Garden. The reason this needs to be voted by the BOS is that the amount is over \$100K. Lucy was recently appointed to the Board of the Merger of the Japanese Tea Garden, the Botanical Gardens, and the Conservatory of Flowers. The Parks Alliance is the fiscal sponsor of the Friends of the Japanese Tea Garden.

Rosalyn Tonai asked about disclosures for Lucy as she is a JTF board member and a member of the Parks Alliance. Lucy stated that she is not on the board of the Parks Alliance and there are

no personal and financial benefits to her. Lucy will be representing the Friends of the Japanese Tea Garden and the Japantown Task Force.

It was moved by David Takashima and seconded by Richard Jue for the JTF to adopt a public position to support the proposed "Resolution authorizing the Recreation and Park Department to accept and expend cash and/or in-kind grants from the San Francisco Parks Alliance (SFPA) valued at up to \$400,000 for restoration projects in the Japanese Tea Garden project for the project term of upon approval of Board of Supervisors until Notice of Substantial Completion." The motion passed unanimously. No public comment.

**A. Peace Plaza Committee**

**(Co-chairs Jon Osaki/Richard Hashimoto)**

There were no updates.

**B. Ad hoc Japan Center Malls Technical Committee**

**(Chair Lori Yamauchi)**

**1. Updates**

Lori Yamauchi gave a report on the April Ad-Hoc Malls Committee meeting since she was not present at the April board meeting. The Committee met with Oliver Mar who owns the property that leases to Pa'ina Hawaiian Restaurant. He expressed an interest and commitment in the Japantown community. He said that he is just a small property owner wedged in between Kinokuniya and the AMC Kabuki Theater, but he is very supportive of expanded economic activity in Japantown. The committee suggested that he could join a committee of property owners with whom JTF and the community could work with on future plans for Japantown.

The May Ad hoc Japan Center Malls Technical Committee meeting was cancelled. Hirotatsu Kano, General Manager of Kinokuniya was unable to join the May meeting but is scheduled to attend the June meeting. No public comment.

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

1. Reminder about Board Retreat, Friday, May 20, 12:30 - 5:30 pm (optional bento dinner), Nihonmachi Terrace, 1615 Sutter at Octavia (Attachment E)

This meeting was postponed due to concerns about COVID. No public comment.

**2. Succession planning**

Sandy announced that she will be resigning as the President of JTF. The next Executive Committee meeting in June will discuss the next steps. In the meantime, Glynis will serve as Interim President and will chair the June board meeting.

Jon Osaki expressed his appreciation to Sandy for stepping in when the organization was in turmoil, following the untimely death of Executive Director Bob Hamaguchi. Rosalyn also expressed her appreciations to Sandy. Alice presented Sandy a framed "Kizuna" calligraphy picture written by Rev. Kawahatsu and staff presented her flowers. No public comment.

## **VII. 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.

## **VIII. Announcements**

- Gary Barbaree announced that the Japanese Benevolent Society of California will be holding their annual Memorial Day Service Program on May 30 11am-12pm. Alice will be representing JTF. Consul General Hiroshi Kawamura will be this year's Guest of Honor.
- Tomo Hirai announced the Rainbow Coalition will be Raising of the Pride Flag in S.F. Japantown on Saturday, June 4 12:00 - 3:00 pm. There will be activities and speakers, including District 5 Supervisor Dean Preston. The Progress Pride Flag will be up in S.F. Japantown from Friday, June 3rd to Monday, June 6th.
- Tomo also announced there is an LGBTQ Nikkei art exhibit at NJAHS co-created by Tomo and NJAHS' new Collections Manager, Lilith Benjamin. It will be on display from May 14 to July 15.
- Emily introduced Ayae Yoshimoto, the new Community Affairs of the Japanese Consulate. She is replacing Taisuke Suzuki. Ayae introduced herself to the board.

## **IX. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50pm.

\*May require board action.

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## **NEXT MEETINGS:**

Wednesday, June 15, 2022

Wednesday, July 20, 2022

Wednesday, August 17, 2022

Wednesday, September 21, 2022

Wednesday, October 19, 2022

Wednesday, November 16, 2022

Wednesday, December 21, 2022