

**JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 2020
6:00 PM – VIA ZOOM MEETING**

ATTENDEES: Sandy Mori, Beau Simon, Alice Kawahatsu, David Takashima, Elena Nielsen, Glynis Nakahara, Mark Moriguchi, Jacquelyn Chew, Jon Osaki, Kenta Takamori, Lucy Fisher, Jeremy Chan, Richard Hashimoto, Rosalyn Tonai, Scott Hamaguchi, and Benh Nakajo

ABSENT: Seiko Fujimoto, Daryl Higashi

STAFF: Steve Nakajo, Lauren Nosaka, Nina Bazan-Sakamoto, Brandon Quan, Lewis Kawahara, Wes Nihei

GUESTS: Grace Horikiri, Karen Kai, Linda Walsh, Michiko Yamada, Rodney Chin, Steve Nakajima

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by President Sandy Mori. A quorum was acknowledged.

New board member, Elena Nielsen introduced herself.

II. UPDATE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, STEVE NAKAJO

Steve Nakajo reviewed the highlights from the May 20, 2020 ED report (Attachment A). Steve acknowledged JCBD and Greg Vilorias's work checking in with the merchants everyday due to shelter-in-place (SIP). JTF and JCBD collaborated on the Small Business Economic Vitality Mini Grant Program under the Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development (MOEWD). Originally, Former Supervisor Vallie Brown gave JTF the \$25,000 as renovation and maintenance funds for Kinmon Gakuen. During one of the previous focus groups, concerns on underutilized spaces in Japantown arose. The JCD team has been communicating with Richard Hashimoto over utilizing the Kinmon Gakuen Auditorium space for programs and events. Nina wrote a proposal to the Kinmon Gakuen board but have not been able to meet them due to the SIP. JTF sent a proposed budget for FY20-21 to Julia Sabory, the Cultural District Program Manager at the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD) but have not heard an update from MOHCD yet.

However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, MOEWD reallocated the \$25,000 funds to be used for the struggling small businesses. 21 businesses were selected and each are to receive a grant of \$1,000.00. The awards will be announced on June 1st.

No public comments.

UPDATE FROM THE JAPANTOWN CULTURAL DISTRICT, NINA BAZAN-SAKAMOTO

Nina Bazan-Sakamoto reported that the JCD team is working on the Community Wide Draft for the CHHESS (Attachment B). The team submitted the CHHESS draft to Julia Sabory on April 28 for feedback. The draft is 22 pages. The team is preparing for the final Town Hall meeting on June 18 and then submit the final CHHESS draft to the MOHCD department in mid-July. There were 2 final focus groups on Regenerative, Sustainable, Resilient Future and this key area was approved by MOHCD. Each group had 35 attendees and the team will share the notes from the focus groups to the Board. Glynis asked for clearer communication as to how the money will be divided up on the projects for funding. Glynis also

wanted to know how the comments from the Land Use focus groups and the Resiliency Zoom focus group will be vetted.

No public comments.

UPDATE FROM THE 2020 CENSUS PROJECT, BRANDON QUAN

Brandon Quan summarized his monthly report (Attachment C). He is focusing on informing the community through social media and email blast since the majority of in-person events were either postponed or cancelled. Compared to the national average, San Francisco is a little behind in completing their Census forms.

No public comments.

UPDATE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF JAPANTOWN COMMUNITY BENEFIT DISTRICT (PROPERTY OWNERS IN JAPANTOWN), GRACE HORIKIRI

Grace Horikiri summarized her monthly report (Attachment D). The retail stores inside the Japan Center Malls cannot open up for business since they do not have direct access to the curbside pickup. Kristen Fletcher from Kinokuniya inquired about street closure for Post St. JCBD has advised against that because there are plans to open up the Peace Plaza for seating. Grace announced that Board Chair David Ishida has resigned from the JCBD Board. JCBD is in the nomination process and hope to announce the new board chair before the next JCBD meeting.

Various Japantown organizations are part of the Heart of Jtown for COVID-19 recovery. There will be 2 fundraisers that will be coming out of the Heart of Japantown. The first is the SF Japantown Foundation's matching fund of \$100,000 and the second is the JCBD's Small Business Resiliency Fund. JCBD is setting up a gofundme campaign and hope to raise a half of a million dollars. The funds will go directly to the small businesses and the goal is to give at least \$5,000 to each business. It is to be launched on Monday, May 25.

Japantown has seen an 80% drop in car break-ins. Someone broke into Super Mira 3 times. There has been less homeless in Japantown. There is an encampment on the corner of Webster St. and Geary St. JCBD reported it to the Department of Public Works and 311.

No public comments.

IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Land Use/Transportation Committee (Co-chairs, Glynis Nakahara/Kenta Takamori)

1. Recommendation to add Tomo Hirai to the Land Use/Transportation Committee

Glynis Nakahara reported that the committee would like to postpone the recommendation to add Tomo Hirai to the Land Use/Transportation committee as there has been a change in circumstances. The committee will assess the circumstances before bringing the recommendation to the Board again.

2. Additional Updates

Glynis reported that the Sutter Street proposed lane closure has been put on hold due to COVID-19. Prior to COVID-19, the committee invited SFMTA to a meeting and expressed concerns the concerns they have heard from the community. Nihonmachi Little Friends and JCCCNC had the most concerns and SFMTA reached out to them. However, both organizations are still very much concerned. There will be street closures from May 22 to May 25 to remove the pedestrian bridge at Geary Boulevard and Steiner Street. Chris Roach was the instructor from CCA who reported to the Land Use Committee on the 2 students projects reimagining what they would like to see in a futuristic Japantown and how to improve Japantown from an urban planning perspective. The first student presented on massive development with large towers and more pedestrian activities. The second student reorganized the malls and integrated microneighborhoods. Both had ideas on

building a bridge across Geary to reconnect the North and South sides of the area. Jon Osaki mentioned at the JTF Board meeting that he advocates strongly that Japantown needs a master plan in place so that in the future, developers will not just push their own ideas on the community.

Public Comments:

- The students had some possible good ideas but a lot of the ideas are concerning. The notion of putting a deck over Geary Blvd. has come up in the past during the JCHESS process.

B. Cultural Heritage Sustainability Committee (Co-chair David Takashima/Jacquelyn Chew)

1. Request for new members to join CHSC

Jacquelyn Chew reported that the committee is looking for more committee members to have impact and proper representation for culture and heritage. If anyone is interested in joining, contact David Takashima and Jacquelyn Chew. David Takashima mentioned that the committee is outreaching to some of the new board members. The committee plans to have their next meeting in June.

No public comments.

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

1. Recreation and Parks Commission Special Meeting of May 7, 2020. Updates and Next Steps.

Jon Osaki reported the committee received notice on May 1 the proposed Mental Health and Recovery Bond was going before the Recreation and Parks Department in less than a week. Richard Hashimoto represented JTF and the proposal successfully passed. JTF is very fortunate to have full funding for the Peace Plaza project in the bond proposal. The committee will be contacting the JTF Board to send support letters and outreaching to more networks. The bond measure was introduced to the Recreation and Parks Commission on May 12. The Budget and Finance Committee will schedule a hearing. The PP committee will be recruiting Board members to actively participate in that process. While waiting for the scheduled hearing, The PP committee will be organizing a letter writing campaign to the Board of Supervisors. The goal is to send at least 100 letters to each member of the Board of Supervisors. The JTF Board will be given a sample letter template with instructions. If the bond proposal gets through the Budget and Finance Committee, it will go before the Board of Supervisors in the end of July.

That is the timeline to make sure the bond proposal qualifies for the November ballot. 2/3rds vote is required for the ballot to pass. JTF's goal is to get all 11 Board of Supervisors to support the Peace Plaza Project. JTF will be reaching out to all individuals, community organizations and churches to submit letters of support. Jon Osaki wrote an Op Editorial on the Peace Plaza Project to share with the community and public. Beside the letter writing campaign, Jon Osaki mentioned that they will be asking people from the community to speak at the hearing. He is seeking more names of people in the press who can support the Peace Plaza renovation project and get the word out to the public. Letters should be received by the BOS before the end of July. Send as soon as possible.

The next Peace Plaza meeting will be Tuesday, May 26 at 5pm. If someone is interested in attending, contact Jon Osaki for the zoom invitation.

No public comments.

V. UPDATE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1. To approve the Exec Committee's recommendation to approve the list of names for the Ad Hoc Japan Center Malls Technical Committee

Sandy Mori reported on the Executive Committee's recommendation to approve the list of names for the Ad hoc Japan Center Malls Technical Committee (Attachment E, F & G). The proposed list of names has 11 members. The Ad Hoc Japan Center Malls Technical Committee and Community Covenants Committee overlap. The Community Covenants Committee is to look specifically at the Covenants document. The Covenants document is connected only to the 3-D portion of the malls. The Ad Hoc Japan Center Malls Technical Committee is looking at the entire malls from Filmore and Laguna to Post and Geary.

It was moved by Alice Kawahatsu and seconded by Richard Hashimoto to approve the list of names for the Ad Hoc Japan Center Malls Technical Committee.

The motion passed unanimously. No public comments.

VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following announcements were shared:

- Elena Nielsen mentioned a Kimochi exercise class will be offered via Zoom starting June 12th. Participants 60 and over are encouraged to sign up. Kimochi is also having their fundraiser and are selling raffle tickets for RT tickets to Hawaii, US, LA. (July 24th is the drawing)
- Jon Osaki and Grace Horikiri announced that they will be holding a Heart of Jtown Town Hall meeting on May 27 3pm. The meeting will be an opportunity for the larger community to understand the different initiatives organizations are planning and how organizations will be helping as many businesses as possible.
- NJAHS announced that they will be broadcasting The Suitcase Project in the Age of Covid-19 on Friday, May 22 with Melissa Ayumi Bailey moderating and Yonsei curator of Canada Kayla Isomura. If anyone is interested in attending, register on www.njahs.org.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40pm.

NEXT BOARD MEETING: Wednesday, June 17, 2020 TBD.