

**Japantown Task Force
Board of Directors Meeting**
Wednesday, June 16, 2021
6:00 pm – VIA zoom Meeting

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

Absent (excused): Richard Hashimoto, David Takashima

Staff: Steve Nakajo, Lauren Nosaka, Brandon Quan, Susie Kagami, Nina Bazan-Sakamoto, Max Nihei

Guests: Grace Horikiri, Emily Nichols, Elena Nielsen, Michiko Yamada, Jaclyn Funasaki

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by President Sandy Mori. A quorum was acknowledged.

Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Lucy Fisher and seconded by Rosalyn Tonai to accept the agenda.

The motion passed unanimously.

II. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the JTF Board meeting of May 19, 2021. (Attachment A)

The minutes were amended to include:

- Under Announcements, there were 2 lectures for Dr. Oda's presentation on April 22 and May 20

It was moved by Benh Nakajo and seconded by Lucy Fisher to approve the May 19, 2021 minutes.

The motion passed unanimously. No public comments.

III. Update from the Executive Director, Steve Nakajo (Attachment B)

Steve Nakajo provided more information for the Nakamoto and Benkyodo buildings. The Nakamoto building includes businesses for Super Mira and Dr. Clint Taura's dentistry. One meeting has occurred between Dr. Clint Taura, and Robert Yick whose son runs Yasukochi's Sweet Stop inside Super Mira. They discussed initiating a meeting with Mr. Sam Mihara, the building's managing representative. Dr. Clint Taura is interested in putting a package together for a community entity to purchase the building. The building has been up for sale for 3 years. As of this board meeting, there are individuals interested, however, no serious offers yet. Sandy Mori, Benh Nakajo and Steve held a meeting with Bobby Okamura on the closing of the Benkyodo building. Bobby Okamura informed them that the building will close at the end of March 2022 and the building and business are for sale. Bobby Okamura reinforced that if an Okamura family member is not interested in taking over the business, the name of Benkyodo will not transfer to the new owner(s). It was also reported that the Ogawa building (location of Waraku) is also up for sale: 3 units, middle and top floors are residential units.

No public comments.

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

Susie Kagami reported the 3 representatives who were chosen for the Japan Business Focus Group are Max Nihei, Stephanie Ichinose, and Satoe Haile. They met with CG and had a conversation. All 3 were participants of the Future of Jtown focus groups.

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 (Co-chairs Glynis Nakahara/Kenta Takamori)
1. Committee Updates

1737 Post Formula Retail Conditional Use

Kenta Takamori reported that the Committee requested the Executive Committee to send a letter to the SF Planning Commission requesting a continuance for the subject Conditional Use Authorization regarding the Yi Fang Taiwan fruit tea shop, 1737 Post St. The applicant is working with the Committee on their concerns such as it's a formula retail and the shop's format does not add to the cultural objectives stated in the Covenants for the Japan Center Malls. The request to delay the hearing is still outstanding. The hearing will go before the Planning Commission on June 24 and they will decide to grant the continuance or not. If the continuance is granted, the earliest it might be heard is July but there may not be enough space in the agenda, in which case, the next hearing will be held in September. If a continuance is granted, the applicant expressed that it's a financial burden since he is paying rent for the space the entire time. Some committee members expressed there to be signage in Japanese. Glynis mentioned this to the applicant who is willing to work with the Committee on this issue. The permit for the signage is on a separate track.

President Mori mentioned that part of the reason this is happening is that JTF does not have protocol or info for new potential businesses that want to open in Japantown. We should plan to put this into effect so this doesn't happen in the future to other businesses. Board member B. Nakajo was concerned with how other businesses in the mall who offer similar products will handle this. Board member J. Chan mentioned that in the past, there have been businesses that have reached out to JTF for support and information on opening their businesses in the Malls and near Japantown. LU chair is concerned that there may be too many places offering sweets and approving the formula retail chain may be steep competition for the already remaining stores that are struggling with the pandemic and their rents. The owner of Yi Fang has expressed interest in being involved in the community.

SFMTA Parking Meter Pilot Program

Kenta reported that the Committee asked SFMTA to do more research on recent studies related to Japantown. SFMTA has agreed to conduct more analysis for the program.

Japantown Community Preservation & Development Plan

Kenta reported that Lori Yamauchi will be leading the Preservation & Development project. It will be a working committee within the LUT Committee.

Pedestrian Safety

Alice Kawahatsu reported that there are pavement issues along Sutter St, down the hill from Nihonmachi Terrace. There have been 3 incidents of elderly residents falling and injuring themselves. Alice is working with 311, the Department of Public Works, and Nihonmachi Terrace to remedy this issue. It has been a week and the only change so far is that the area has been sprayed green.

No public comments.

- B. Cultural Heritage Sustainability Committee (Co-chairs David Takashima/Lucy Fisher)

1. Updates

Lucy Fisher reported that she attended the Japanese American Religious Federation (JARF)'s board meeting, where Gary Barbaree was selected as President. He will be sending a notice to the JARF members to see what kind of cultural collections they have and how it could be of interest to JTF. The CHS Committee members were given a tour of the Hokka Nichi Bei and viewed their Japanese tea house in late May. The Hokka Nichi Bei Kai will be presenting their organization to the CHS Committee at the August meeting. Several members will be going on a tour of the Jikeikai, the Japanese Benevolent Society of California, at Colma. Kenta Takamori and his associate will discuss their proposal for a Japan Prefectural Rotating Antenna Shop (i.e. featuring foods and goods in their area) at the future committee meeting.

No public comments.

C. Peace Plaza Committee

(Co-Chairs Jon Osaki/ Rich Hashimoto)

1. Updates

Jon Osaki reported the Committee is waiting for a number of design reports to come back from the SF Recreation and Park Department. The Committee hopes to schedule a town hall meeting to give everyone an update, timeline and completion of the project. The video outreach project has been started to inform the community on the progress of the Peace Plaza. The first short piece will focus on thanking the community for being a part of the Prop A campaign. The Committee has retained Michael DeGregorio (formally of Rec. and Park) as a consultant to best advise the committee who are working with multiple departments. Michael is being paid from the SF Japantown Foundation grant.

The next meeting will be on June 22, 5pm. (Pls. note: This meeting date has been cancelled, as there are no new information at this time)

No public comments.

D. Finance Committee

(Chair Mark Moriguchi)

1. Quarterly Profit/Loss Reports and Reports Sowing Projected Year End Carryover Amount

Mark Moriguchi reported that there are 3 quarterly reports created by JCYC (Attachment E). Each column shows each of the programs JTF is involved with. JCYC pays for expenses in advance, and a request is made to the city in order for JCYC to be reimbursed for those expenses. Members will see negative net incomes at the bottom of the reports because JCYC has not been reimbursed yet. Mark created the 4th report on a budget projection. The Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development (MOEWD) funds have completely been spent in March. The Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD) funds are projected to have a carryover balance due to the one-time funds and not being able to use funds because of COVID. JTF staff will try to work with JCYC on a timetable for quarterly reports.

No public comments.

E. Nominations Committee

(Chair Benh Nakajo)

1. Recommend Steven Santa Maria to be a JTF Board Member

Benh Nakajo reviewed Steven Santa Maria's resume with the board members (Attachment F). Steven was a participant of the Future of Jtown focus groups and is the co-chair of SF Japantown-based Nakayoshi group. He will be the 19th board member.

It was moved by JTF board member Rosalyn Tonai and seconded by Jeremy Chan to approve Steven Santa Maria to be a JTF Board Member.

The motion passed unanimously. No public comments.

2. General Updates

The Nominations Committee is working on the matrix and plans to send it to the board members prior to the July meeting. The nominations committee thanked by board member A. Kawahatsu for working hard on the nominations committee. Sandy Mori mentioned that Steven's addition to the board makes 19 board members altogether. The board can go up to 21 members.

No public comments.

VI. Update from the President/Executive Committee

Sandy Mori reported on the Buchanan Hotel Homeless Program. There are 117 residents. The city's goal is to transfer the residents from the hotel to permanent supportive housing. The residents will be staying at the hotel until the end of this year. After that, the hotel will take an additional 4-6 months for a reopening.

1. Update on the Ad Hoc Japan Center Malls Technical Committee held on June 14, 2021

Lori Yamauchi gave a planning presentation at the June 14 meeting. The presentation slides were sent to all board members and if anyone would like to view the recording, send a request to Lauren Nosaka, Administrative Manager for access.

2. Approval of Lori Yamauchi being designated by the Ad Hoc JCM Technical Committee as its new chair

It was moved by Benh Nakajo and Beau Simon to approve Lori Yamauchi as the Ad Hoc Japan Center Malls Technical Committee chair.

The motion passed unanimously. No public comments.

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.

No public comments.

VIII. Announcements.

- Benh Nakajo is the new co-chair of the Cherry Blossom Festival.

- Sandy reported that the July board meeting will be held through zoom and then see if we can begin in-person meetings in August. Sandy also needs to consult with Union Bank and their policies for in-person meetings.

- Grace Horikiri announced that Nihonmachi Street Fair (NSF) will have 2 popup events in July. The Our Community, Our Pride event will be held on July 17. The Aloha by the Bay event will be held July 31st featuring Hawaiian musicians. Another 2 popup events will be held in August with partial street closures on Post St. from Webster to Laguna. There will be a resource fair on

August 7. On August 8, NSF will be partnering with NBC11 for the closing ceremony of the Tokyo Olympics.

- Lucy Fisher announced that Friends of the Japanese Tea Garden met with Hoichi Kurisu who presented a plan to recreate the landscape around the pagoda.

- Gary Barbaree announced that JARF will be co-sponsoring an observance on anniversary for the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings with Friends of Hibakusha. It will occur during NSF. JARF is hoping Nihonmachi Terrace or Kokoro could be one of the sites for religious observances.

- Alice Kawahatsu reported that an Asian American elderly woman was attacked near Union Square.

- Alice also announced that the African American spiritual leaders and the newly formed We are One group have been invited to participate in the Corvette and Fancy Car caravan this Saturday, at the African American Cultural Center in celebration of Juneteenth. They will have their opening ceremony at 11:00 am at the African American Cultural Center and will include Chinese Lion dance from Chinatown and Jiten Japanese Taiko Drummers from SF Buddhist Church. Then at 12:00 they will head toward Jtown and drive up Post Street from Fillmore Street. They will also drive through Chinatown. They will drive through slowly and will not be stopping. This will be the first time in history that this group will be driving through J-town and Chinatown. Normally they only go through Fillmore. This group is in solidarity to ending violence and hate crimes against AAPI. Ito Yosakoi dance members were also able to welcome the Corvette Club in Japantown as they performed their dance and gathered a welcome crowd in Japantown. Thank you to JTF board member Jeremy Chan and group Director of Ito Yosakoi Daniel Rolandi for their performance and to Jeff Matsuoka for securing and arranging the Jiten Taiko group.

- Jaclyn Funasaki announced the Consul General Maeda is reopening the Consul General of Japan and is open to having small in-person meetings.

- Grace also announced the Nihonmachi Community Coalition will be holding a zoom town hall with SFPD on June 24 at 5pm. Information and invitation will be sent out through social media.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:04pm.

NEXT BOARD MEETING: Wednesday, July 21, 2021 via zoom meeting.