



JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE

日本町の経済発展・計画・保存

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PLANNING & PRESERVATION OF JAPANTOWN

JAPANTOWN PEACE PLAZA COMMITTEE MINUTES

UNION BANK COMMUNITY ROOM

22 PEACE PLAZA

TUESDAY, AUGUST 27, 2019

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

George Yamasaki, Richard Hashimoto, Rosalyn Tonai, David Ishida, Taisuke Suzuki,

OTHERS PRESENT:

Michael DeGregorio, Masahiro Inoue, Alice Kawahatsu, Raymond Woo, Adrienne Shiozaki-Woo

STAFF PRESENT:

Steve Nakajo, Brandon Quan

The meeting was called to order at 5:05 p.m.

I. DEBRIEF OF REC & PARK COMMISSION CONCEPT DESIGN APPROVALS

- A. Viewed the video that Michael prepared for the Recreation & Park Commission meeting. The video is on the website, link has been shared.
- B. Richard noted, that the wave benches seemed ideal for skateboarding. There have been gangs of skateboarders, they can be violent and confrontational, and they damage the slates and causing holes in them; have had to cover some of the slate with rocks and concrete to protect them.
- C. The design is very nice, and highlights the culture. Opposed to the water feature due to the garage, since waterproofing does fail. Richard noted that the concept to integrate historical elements into the design is welcomed but, wanted members in attendance to know there is movement within the concrete structure because of the garage, which can compromise the waterproofing. There was some consensus on opposing the water feature.

II. REVIEW NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE FOR FINALIZING THE DESIGN

- A. Michael noted that the design is being finalized, but it is still quite a ways before completion of all processes. Some questions include what design team to hire for the next and future phases. Who do we work with, DPW or outside source? Depends on the funding. Also need to conduct an RFP. There may be a need to pull in funding from other sources to pay for a certain period of the design process until the bond money kicks in.
- B. Will need to come back to the community multiple times. As we move from design to schematic phase, the design will be tweaked. The schematic phase is the most important time for community input such as how does each festival utilize the space? The wave bench was just a concept but there will be cleats built into the design to discourage skateboarding. In the schematic phase, the

focus is how to proceed with building, and is less creative. This is the time to make changes, with community input. Changes should be minor, maybe even below the surface.

- C. There is no fixed timetable yet. We should keep this on the agenda and update through these meetings.
- D. The timeline from Steve Nakajima is passed out.
- E. Alice asked, how do we curtail the skateboarding? We can use metal cleats or place design features in the way of places they like to grind on. It can be the arrangement of site features, so that they are more integrated and look less like they was just bolted on.
- F. Is there a way to indicate or show that this is a sacred place? Alice has seen a positive response in the past when she approached them this way.
- G. It would be interesting to ask the skaters, what makes the space so enticing to them? Then we can design around that.
- H. Alice noted, the space is open and usually there is not a lot of people in the space so, they can go crazy and use the whole space with different levels. Possible deterrence would be to bring in more people and furniture.
- I. Richard asked, aren't handrails required by ADA? Michael stated, yes they are they were not rendered in the concept phase to make the rendering more beautiful but they are required.
- J. In reference to the timeline from Nakajima, Richard noted we have met the timeline so far, in particular the August 7th Capital Committee meeting and the August 15th full Commission which received unanimous approvals.
- K. The bond process will require most of the work and a lot of advocacy from elected officials and department heads. We want to push for the plaza to be fully funded at the \$22-25mil price tag. It goes before the voters in 2020, and requires a 2/3 vote of the city for approval; getting 2/3 approval is a large step. There may be a homeless bond in competition, depends on the Mayors plan for the homeless project.
- L. There was support on the City's capital committee and we will need to reach out to them.
- M. Michael noted, they need to outreach to different communities for the bond to pass. Will provide updates on his outreach.
- N. Richard asked, when will the City's capital committee allocate funds? It starts in October, when it is finalized and recommended to the Board?
- O. Michael noted, while not in the official loop, he has heard that the full \$255mil is locked in for the full amount. What decisions the Mayor makes is unknown, but the full amount has been allocated by the planning committee. There also may be competing bonds. It will be a question of projects. The process moves from the commission to the Board of Supervisors, then it is placed on the bond, which then has to pass.
- P. Up until that time, anything is possible and another project that can take money away? This is the unknown, but Michael believes the full amount approved, unless the Board of Supervisors wants to change it. Not sure if they can make

changes, but believes the amount is locked in. Noted that in the past, 3 bonds have passed, but today there are a number of things occurring in the city.

- Q. Richard noted there is concern for a change in the amount of funding, or that funds might be taken away. Must advocate for the funding to make sure it does not get changed.
- R. Nakajo noted, October to June is the crucial crunch time. Must be vigilant, throughout the entire process and seek full funding. Remain vigilant, and advocate clearly our desire for the full \$25mil. Need to keep rapport going with Recreation and Park commissioners, as well as the Board of Supervisors, to make sure the bond is fully funded around June time.
- S. Other organizations, such as labor unions or employee groups, raise money to fund canvassing, staff, demonstrations and outreach to pass bonds. Jtown does not have a campaign except what comes out of this body. Maybe we need a volunteer campaign?
- T. 2020 is an election year, more people come out due to national elections. There may be competing bonds. Need to organize, at the grassroots community level.
- U. When should we start lobbying the Supervisors? Nakajo noted they were lobbying the Supervisors during the design phase, but maybe we should assign Supervisors to various community members to advocate. Should start developing an executive meeting to start to strategize how to handle that.

III. DISCUSS COMMUNITY PROCESS FOR DETERMINING PARK BOND PRIORITIES

- A. This item was previously discussed.

IV. IDENTIFY POTENTIAL SOURCES OF PRIVATE FUNDING SOURCES

- A. Richard noted, if there is a shortfall, we need to find other opportunities. One possible resource is the parking garage for a long term loan or revenue bond.
- B. Maybe include capital improvements for the garage and community.
- C. Nakajo noted, we should steadfastly advocate for the \$25mil. We don't want Recreation and Park to think we have other funding. Reality is, maybe we need a back-up plan. But need to be steadfast in expectation for full funding. Maybe there are other alternatives like at State level but we haven't approached them with a concrete proposal. Maybe we need to address how to strategize at an executive meeting. This is a major plan and how do we approach secondary funding?
- D. Other possible funding sources are a community buy-in? Selling naming rights, on bricks. Memorialize the Peace Plaza on a community grassroots level for fundraising, for the families that used to live here.
- E. Richard asked, in case there is a shortfall, what is our backup plan? We do need to advocate for the full funding, but we need a backup plan. But timing is delicate. We need to give the parking corporation time to approve a loan if necessary which may add another year to find a lender and draw up the papers.
- F. Alice asked, if the amount was \$50mil once? Michael responded, it is \$22mil. Not sure where the \$50mil came from. Cost of construction, \$15mil; soft costs

about \$10mil. This will continue to be refined. Unlikely to go up much, plus or minus \$1mil makes more sense.

- G. Nakajo noted, the \$50mil was the initial estimated figure before the project was costed out.
- H. Alice noted, she likes the community having some kind of brick with names on it like NLFs donor wall. Need an entity to organize around that, which is a big task; Friends of the Peace Plaza, or something like that. This might be a good idea, to raise money over, just in case. Some surplus, for future maintenance. The key is engagement and effort. Best case scenario, we are fully funded and we have a cushion. As for the campaign mode, do we have a budget in mind? Answer is no.
- I. Nakajo noted, as an example, the Fire Union pays about \$3-5mil to campaign for the Easter Bond, which includes office, staff, tv ads etc. The Dignity Fund, less than \$5mil, but grassroots. Different approaches.
- J. Should be aware to avoid confusion with the Tea Garden pagoda.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

- A. Announcement, congratulations went to Mas Inouye on his newborn son.
- B. Nakajo noted, he appreciates the work Michael put into the video. Nakajo was able to send the video to our partners in Japan; the California Club, Osaka, Kintetsu. The video speaks a thousand words. Maybe we can use it in outreach, and have it translated?
- C. Nakajo noted, he will meet with the Consul General next week. He sent the link, but will show him in person as well, makes a difference.
- D. Alice noted, DC wants to promote movies about Japanese American culture to Japan. Foreign Ministry Council has money for translations.
- E. Nothing to add for the next meeting.

VI. NEXT MEETING: SEPTEMBER 24TH, 1700 HOURS, UNION BANK HOSPITALITY ROOM.

Meeting adjourned at 5:49 p.m.