

**Japantown Task Force  
Board of Directors Meeting**  
Wednesday, September 16, 2020  
6:00 pm – VIA zoom Meeting

**Attendees:** Sandy Mori, Glynis Nakahara, Benh Nakajo, Alice Kawahatsu, Beau Simon, Daryl Higashi, Jeremy Chan, Lucy Fisher, Mark Moriguchi, Richard Hashimoto, Rosalyn Tonai, Elena Nielsen, Seiko Fujimoto, David Takashima, Kenta Takamori, Scott Hamaguchi and Jon Osaki

**Absent (excused):** none

**Staff:** Steve Nakajo, Lauren Nosaka, Brandon Quan and Nina Bazan-Sakamoto

**Guests:** Michiko Yamada, Grace Horikiri, Greg Vloria, Judi Nihei, Karen Kai, Lori Yamauchi, Judy Hamaguchi, and Tomo Hirai

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. by President Sandy Mori. A quorum was acknowledged.

**II. Approval of minutes**

Minutes of the JTF Board meeting of August 19, 2020.

It was moved by Richard Hashimoto and seconded by David Takashima to accept the minutes from the July meeting (Attachment A).

The motion passed unanimously. No public comments.

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

Steve clarified CCHP received grant funding for program collaborations between CCHP and other nonprofit organizations in San Francisco. JTF staff, Grace Horikiri and Greg Vloria attended an introductory meeting with CCHP for possible collaborations with Japantown.

**Update from the Japantown Cultural District, Nina Bazan-Sakamoto (Attachment C)**

No public comments.

**Update from the 2020 Census Project, Brandon Quan (Attachment D)**

No public comments.

**Update from Executive Director of Japantown Community Benefit District (Property Owners in Japantown), Grace Horikiri (Attachment E)**

No public comments.

**IV. Committee Reports**

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

1. 1619 Laguna Street Variance

The committee is recommending to the JTF Board to issue a letter stating that the conversion of 1619 Laguna from a commercial to a residential unit should not be approved unless it meets the highest habitability standards and aligns with the Japantown Design Guidelines.

Glynis Nakahara reported the property at 1619 Laguna (on Laguna, between Sutter and Post) is applying for a variance to convert a commercial to a residential unit. The 2 story-property changed hands in 2019. The property is currently an illegal residential unit and used to be a

Korean video store. The SF Planning hearing will occur on Wednesday 9/23. Converting a retail space to a residential space is generally a bad idea in a commercial district. However, because the building is not on a commercial strip, this is the rare exception where such a conversion would be acceptable. That being said, the committee is concerned about the habitability of residential spaces in Japantown. It is inhabitable for a ground level unit to rely on open windows facing the street for ventilation, and the unit should incorporate mechanical ventilation instead. Furthermore, the new residential unit should also abide by the Japantown Design Guidelines.

It was moved by Jeremy Chan and seconded by Richard Hashimoto for the JTF Board to issue a letter stating that the conversion of 1619 Laguna from a commercial to a residential unit should not be approved unless it meets the highest habitability standards and aligns with the Japantown Design Guidelines.

The vote passed with 15 in favor and 1 opposed. No public comments.

## 2. Sutter St. Safety Improvements Update

The committee is recommending in alignment with the affected community organizations, the JTF Board should issue a letter supporting the establishment of the white zones, but opposing any vote or approval on the reduction of lanes until after the white zone remedy is fully understood, including impacts under post-pandemic circumstances.

Nihonmachi Little Friends (NLF), JCCCNC, and Kimochi met with SFMTA, and SFMTA purportedly agreed to first implement the extended white zones and see how that goes, before reducing the westbound Sutter lanes from 2 lanes to 1 lane. The nonprofits raised a concern that the current lane size is not big enough for the bus route. That issue was never quite reconciled. However, during the SFMTA hearing on Friday, September 18 at 10am, both the extended white zones and the lane reduction are up for approval. SFMTA has gone against their promise to community organizations. SFMTA will have another hearing on Friday, September 24.

It was moved by Jeremy Chan and seconded by Beau Simon for the JTF board should in alignment with the affected community organizations, the JTF Board should issue a letter supporting the establishment of the white zones, but opposing any vote or approval on the reduction of lanes until after the white zone remedy is fully understood, including impacts under post-pandemic circumstances.

The motion passed unanimously.

### Public Comments:

- NLF, JCCCNC, Kimochi and JCYC are greatly impacted by this issue. They had agreed with SFMTA to go ahead with the expansion of the white zones. This was their understanding of what was going to be up for hearing. However, on the notices posted on the light posts in and around Japantown, it states the road diet has been approved under the environmental regulations.

## 3. Other Updates

Glynis reported that traffic and pedestrian safety has been a big concern in the neighborhood. Committee members have been participating in walk-through meetings with SFMTA, Supervisor Preston, Supervisor Stefani, SF Walk and JCBD. An upcoming meeting with SFPD Captain is pending.

The Land Use/Transportation committee tentatively scheduled a date with SFMTA for congestion pricing on September 24. However, there is a conflict, so the committee is looking to reschedule to late September or early October.

- B. Cultural Heritage Sustainability Committee (Chair David Takashima)  
1. The Committee will oversee the program aspects of the Cultural District Program from a policy perspective.

David Takashima reported that the committee will review the Japantown Cultural District programs and proposed funding from a policy perspective. The committee is looking for more members. If any of the board members know someone who would like to join the committee, send David a recommendation or referral. The next meeting is Monday, October 5<sup>th</sup> at 6pm.

- C. Peace Plaza Committee (Co-Chairs, Jon Osaki/Richard Hashimoto)  
1. Updates on Proposition A, the \$487.5 million Health and Homeless, Parks and Streets Bond for the November 3<sup>rd</sup> ballot

Jon Osaki reported that there was a Proposition A Press Conference on Monday, September 14. It was the first campaign for Prop A. There will be several other campaigns in different neighborhoods. There will be a city-wide campaign held at city hall to represent a number of different communities for Prop A. Prop A signs can be picked up at Richard Hashimoto's office. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, September 22 at 5pm. A zoom invitation will be provided. Kenta Takamori will distribute a 2-3-minute video on the Press Conference. Let Alice Kawahatsu know if there are any volunteer opportunities for community members to participate in the Prop A campaign.

- D. Finance Committee (Chair Mark Moriguchi)

1. Recommendation to approve the \$230,000 Cultural District Annual Budget and the signing by the President of the Board of Directors of the related service agreement with JCYC

Mark Moriguchi presented the \$230,000 baseline Cultural District annual budget to the Board (Attachment F) and reported that the committee is satisfied with the allocations and the numbers in the budget. The budget largely reflects staff salaries and office related expenses. The Mayors' Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD) has approved of this \$230,000 baseline budget and is flexible with the budget changes.

It was moved by David Takashima and Daryl Higashi to approve the \$230,000 Cultural District Annual Budget and the signing by the President of the Board of Directors of the related service agreement with JCYC.

The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comments:

- There was a budget concern on consultants and part-time staff positions.

2. Recommendation to approve the \$150,000 and \$115,000 Cultural District One-time funding budgets and the signing by the President of the Board of Directors of the related service agreements with JCYC, with both parties understanding that program items may be changed due to the effects of COVID-19

Mark Moriguchi presented the \$150,000 and \$115,000 Cultural District one-time funding budgets to the Board (Attachment F) and reported that these funds have not been confirmed by MOHCD yet. JCYC, the fiscal sponsor, will submit a budget modification to MOHCD if a program item changes. The CHSC committee will review the Cultural District programs.

It was moved by David Takashima and Daryl Higashi to approve the \$150,000 and \$115,000 Cultural District One-time funding budgets and the signing by the President of the Board of Directors of the related service agreements with JCYC, with both parties that program items may be changed due to the effects of COVID-19.

The vote passed 15 in favor and 1 opposed.

Public Comments:

- The recommendation includes COVID-19 wording which, it may limit the grounds on which program items can be changed.
- Concern over the Kiosk being a line item sounds like a done deal.
- No contract so far has been signed for the kiosk.
- Will this budget be able to be modified? Yes.
- Trust in our leadership
- This is an opportunity to begin to utilize our cities resources.

**V. Possible Approval of the Draft Cultural, History, Housing, Economic Sustainability Strategy (CHHESS) Report for the Japantown Cultural District to be submitted to MOHCD**

Nina Bazan-Sakamoto gave a presentation on the latest CHHESS revision (Attachment G & H) and had a discussion with board members for feedback. Each Cultural District is on their own timeline and there is no timeline deadline to submit the CHHESS report to the Board of Supervisors. If the CHHESS is approved by the JTF board, the next step is to submit it to MOHCD for input and feedback. Then the report will come back to the Japantown Cultural District (JCD). The JCD team will have a final town hall for further feedback. The town hall is proposed to be held in November. After the town hall, the report will be up for final approve to the JTF Board of Directors before it is submitted to the Board of Supervisors.

It was moved by Jon Osaki and seconded by Lucy Fisher to approve the CHHESS report for comment by the city, with the caveat that we allow a one-week period for comments and inaccuracies, due next Wednesday, September 23 at 5pm.

The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comments:

- There are still some things that need to be changed including how the JCHESS document treated development and historical accuracies.
- Suggestion to accept or receive the document instead of approving it.
- The purpose of the CHHESS is to promote community and unity.
- Regarding town hall meeting: Hotels, JARF, Kokoro, Western Addition, Hospitals, and JCCCNC should all be asked to participate.
- Edible garden: Suggest asking NLF and Kokoro as consultants.
- NJAHS Digital Images are protected so that they are monetized and used correctly.

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

1. Update on the Ad Hoc Japan Center Malls Technical Committee held on September 14, 2020  
Sandy Mori reported that the Ad Hoc Japan Center Malls Technical Committee had their monthly meeting and invited 2 property owners: Oliver Mar, owner of Pa'ina building and Jerry Ono, general manager of Union Bank. Both individuals reported that their buildings will not be sold at this time. Pat Flannigan, owner of the AMC Theater, will be invited to the next meeting in October. The committee is working on a second individual to also attend.

**VII. Announcements**

No announcements.

**VIII. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:46pm.

NEXT BOARD MEETING: Wednesday, October 21, 2020 via zoom meeting.