



NOTES FROM THE JAPANTOWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE COMMUNITY ROOM OF UNION BANK WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2017

BOARD MEMBER PRESENT:

Richard Hashimoto, Alice Kawahatsu

STAFF PRESENT:

Kaori "Coco" Tando, Greg Marutani

OTHERS PRESENT:

Merry Nishimura, Penny Lam

Alice Kawahatsu called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m.

Alice Kawahatsu reported the passing of the San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee on December 12, 2017. She asked that the committee take a moment of silence in his honor.

I. INTRODUCTIONS: BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE

- Richard Hashimoto reported some changes in the businesses in Japantown. A new sushi restaurant, Hikari will open. Isobune in the Japan Center West Mall closed.
- Penny Lam reported that the Ichiban-kan had many customers on the second Saturday of the Japan Center Malls Santa Claus event, which was also the day that the Visitor Center Kiosk was out to guide visitors to restaurants and stores. She also reported that she has been receiving positive feedback from the customers about the Dollar Section. The Dollar Section will be in the store temporarily.

A comment was made that having customer reviews on the Ichiban-kan website may help the sales of the store.

- On behalf of Adam Straus, Coco Tando reported that the Santa Claus and the Little Hands Craft Workshop held during the first two weekends of December was a successful event with more than 2,000 people visiting. Visitors were able to have free photos with Santa using their own camera, and the children enjoyed getting balloon animals and participating in card and gift-making craft workshops.

II. ONGOING BUSINESS

- A. Community Benefit District (CBD) Update.....(Coco Tando)
Coco Tando reported that the Japantown Community Benefit District (JCBD) had their first few Board meetings in November. Legal documents for the formation of JCBD have been processed, and the JCBD staff is currently reaching out to Japantown property owners, merchants, and community members to conduct surveys and hear the expectations, concerns, and project ideas of JCBD. The responses collected from the initial phase of outreaching were presented during the last December 7th JCBD Board meeting, in addition to a presentation of an idea for the JCBD webpage.

Alice Kawahatsu encouraged JEDM to have close communication with the JCBD Board, and to share ideas with the Board members for marketing enhancement projects. A possible idea was discussed to present the works and projects done by JEDM during one of the JCBD Board meetings.

- B. Holiday Lights Update.....(Richard Hashimoto)
Richard Hashimoto reported that the lights for the Holiday Lights Project were installed in November with the help from the Japanese Community Youth Council (JCYC) volunteers. Some of the lights and extension cords have been vandalized and stolen, and the stringing of the lights usually needs some fixing every week.

Donations for the Holiday Lights Project are currently being collected. A possibility to have JCBD take on the lighting project was mentioned, and therefore JEDM should inform JCBD about the cost and coordination required to run the lighting project.

The Peace Pagoda would shine blue for the next couple of days to honor the passing of Mayor Ed Lee. On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, the Peace Pagoda will shine green.

- C. Santa's Workshop Event Update.....(Merry Nishimura)
Merry Nishimura reported that the Japan Center Malls Santa Claus and Little Hands Craft Workshop was well attended. The JTF Kiosk information booth was located outside in the Peace Plaza, and one wishing-tree activity booth and one origami craft booth were located inside the East Mall. The two booths inside the mall were next to where the visitors lined up for Santa Claus photos, so many participated in the activity booth as they waited in line.

It was discussed that these booths did not have enough volunteers, and a kiosk Volunteer Coordinator should be hired to gather many volunteers and train them to have a welcoming attitude toward visitors. Ideas that may improve the marketing of the Japan Center Malls businesses were also shared, such as: instead of concentrating all activities to the first floor during the Santa Claus event, spreading out the activity booths to the second floor may increase foot traffic throughout the mall; having the kiosk out throughout the week; and always changing the kiosk location, to bring foot traffic to different businesses in Japantown.

- D. Japanese Cultural & Trade Center 50th Anniversary Celebration Update.....(Richard H.)
On behalf of Adam Straus, Coco Tando reported that Adam is working on getting a final approval from 3D for a budget for a series of programs to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Japanese Cultural and Trade Center. The programs pending for approval include: a public celebration, a community celebration, an annual social media program, a replacement of the Japantown street banners, and a historical installation inside the mall.

III. GENERAL COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

- A. Union Bank Window Display.....(Alice Kawahatsu)
Alice Kawahatsu reported that the Union Bank window currently displays the wishes and cranes that were collected during the Santa Claus event, in addition to merchandise from Ichiban-kan decorating the space. The window space is designated for non-profit organizations, so it was inquired whether it is allowed for merchants to include

merchandise items in the window. Union Bank will be contacted to confirm whether these items could be displayed in the window.

It was encouraged that the display window should be used more frequently since it is available for the community to use.

A concern was shared regarding the rising crime statistics recorded on the monthly Japantown crime reports. It was noted that although crime rates in both the neighborhood and throughout the city are rising, there are also more individuals who report crimes recently. The crime report's data suggesting an increase in crime may also be due to the fact that more crimes have been reported this year.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Upcoming Events

- January 6, 2018 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.: 47th Annual Oshogatsu Matsuri Year of the Dog at the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California. Free to the public.
- January 11, 2018 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.: Japantown Foundation 2018 New Year's Celebration with Osechi Ryori at Hotel Kabuki in Japantown (\$200/person for general admission). <https://japantownfoundation.org>
- January 20, 2018 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.: Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California Dessert Mochi Workshop at JCCCNC (\$65/person and \$55/JCCCNC member). <http://bit.ly/dessertmochi>

Alice Kawahatsu adjourned the meeting at 12:30 p.m.