JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE BOARD MEETING
WEDNESDAY JANUARY 23, 2016
JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE HQ

ATTENDEES: Alice Kawahatsu, Paul Wermer Anthony Brown, Seiko Fujimoto, Judy Hamaguchi, David Ishida, Mark Moriguchi, Glynis Nakahara, Jon Osaki, Neal Taniguchi, Benh Nakajo

ABSENT: Richard Hashimoto (Excused), Rosalyn Tonai (Excused)

STAFF: Bob Hamaguchi, Greg Marutani, Jeremy Chan

GUESTS: Vas Kiniris, Tomo Hirai, Michiko Yamada, Karen Kai, Rumiko Tauber, Kathie Cheatham, Bob Rusky

I. Call to Order
   The meeting called to order at 6:10 p.m. by Alice Kawahatsu, President.

II. Approval of Minutes of the Board Meeting on DECEMBER 16, 2016.
   The motion to approve the December 16, 2015 minutes was unanimously approved.

III. GUEST SPEAKER: N/A

IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS

   A. Land Use / Transportation Committee (Paul Wermer)

      1. Geary BRT Neighborhood Working Group Update
         The Neighborhood Working Group has three key goals. (1) Keep the pedestrian bridges at Steiner and Webster, for their use and cultural/historical significance. (2) Add ground level sidewalks at Steiner and Webster. (3) Keep the 38R rapid stop at Laguna, due to its heavy use by students, residents, and seniors. For Item (2), the working group proposed a design that would offset the pedestrian crosswalk so that it is not visually blocked by the bridge pillars.

         David Ishida proposed adding a note about the crosswalks, as it is not currently reflected in the Geary BRT minutes.

         Alice Kawahatsu was pleased by large amount of community representation, and noted that the Geary BRT representatives seemed much better equipped to handle community questions.

      2. The Face Shop Update
         Paul made a motion to approve the Japantown Task Force’s endorsement of The Face Shop, seconded by David Ishida. The motion passed unanimously.
3. 1481 Update
   Paul reported that it is very unclear where the project is going, because the EIR has not been ratified. Sandy Mori arranged a meeting with Supervisor Farrell on Thursday, January 28th, at 3pm along Jon, Paul, and Bob to discuss neighborhood concerns such as traffic.

4. Affordable Housing Bonus Legislation
   Paul reported that the legislation is quite controversial. There is vagueness over where bonuses will be given, and it moves them out of the conditional use process, denying the opportunity to approve/disapprove and assess their neighborhood value. However, there is a small likelihood of this happening in Japantown, so JTF does not need to take a position on it.

B. Economic Development / Marketing Committee (Alice Kawahatsu)

1. Holiday Lighting Program Update
   Alice announced the Light Up Japantown Closing Ceremony will be on Saturday, January 23rd, and that the lights will be taken down on Monday, January 26th. Judy Hamaguchi reported that we are within budget, and asked for board members to donate $5 to help pay for additional refreshments.

2. Japantown Communication Update
   Alice Kawahatsu reported on some web statistics for the sfjapantown.org website, provided by Greg Vitoria. News & Events is the most popular section of the website, and people often find the website through the Cherry Blossom website and the SF Japantown Facebook Page.

C. Cultural Heritage (Ros Tonai)

1. Landmarking of Peace Plaza / Pagoda Update
   Bob reported that they are waiting for the preservation group to meet with city agencies.

D. Finance Committee (Mark Moriguchi)
   Bob reported that the documents for the grant work were signed and sent to MOED. He discussed some of the deliverables, including the Visitor’s Center, brochure updates, and feasibility study for a Community Benefit District. Alice thanked the Japantown Foundation for their planning grant of $10,000.

E. Nominating Committee (Alice Kawahatsu)
   Alice reported that the Nominating Committee met on Wednesday, January 13th, and is waiting on responses from the nominees.

V. NEW BUSINESS

1. Paul reported on a working group for adding formula retail. Some challenges include the oversaturation of chains in San Francisco, which makes it hard for stores to not compete
with each other. Because some subsidiary chains are not considered formula retail, Japantown’s building code defenses don’t apply, leaving Japantown vulnerable.

2. Jon Osaki announced that he is the co-chair of the API Council, a citywide coalition of API nonprofits. This year, they are studying the disproportionately low resources of art funding, and why money is not going to API festivals and arts organizations. The end goal is developing a policy agenda to bring to the mayor. Their research is adding on to a report done by Supervisor Mar, which found that low income communities of color receive disproportionately low arts funding.

VI. General Public Comment**

1. Tomo Hirai reported on a suspicious package containing packages of white powder sent to the Japanese Consulate and PLM just before Christmas. It has been deemed an isolated prank unrelated to the comfort women issue.

VII. Staff Reports

A. Crime Report (Greg Marutani)

Greg reported that thanks to the Rumi and the Business Watch Group (BWG), he will be checking with businesses, including with Vas Kiniris and the Fillmore Merchant’s Association, to see if four perpetual petty theft individuals can be identified.

David Ishida suggested posting these pictures in every store. However, Greg noted that the BWG follows specific criterion to determine if there’s sufficient evidence of theft. Greg has spoken with some non BWG organizations who have posted photos of alleged thieves without sufficient evidence. Some businesses have “Right to Refuse Service” signs, but not all do.

B. Japantown Observations (Greg Marutani)

Alice Kawahatsu reported that Gregory Townsend from the Department of Public Works (DPW) came to the JEDM Meeting, and discussed the 311 App for reporting issues.

Greg Marutani reported that over 60 “No Trespassing” signs were distributed.

VIII. President’s Report

Alice referred to the President’s Report in the advanced materials.

The next Board meeting will be Wednesday, February 17, 2016 at the Union Bank Hospitality Room. The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosalyn Tonai
Secretary