



The City of Seattle

International Special Review District

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649, Seattle WA 98124-4649
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ISRD 207/25

MINUTES FOR THE SPECIAL MEETING OF TUESDAY, November 25, 2025

Time: 4:30 p.m.

Place: Hybrid Meeting

Board Members Present

Heather Hargesheimer (HH), Chair
Kyle Jacobson (KJ)
Adrian Lam (AL)
Gary Lee (GL)
Samantha Wong (SW), Vice-Chair
Jade Yan (JY)

Staff Present

Rebecca Frestedt (RF)

Absent

Eric Chan (EC)

Key

BM Board member
AP Applicant
SM Staff member

Chair Heather Hargesheimer called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m.

ROLL CALL

112525.1 MEETING MINUTES

6/10/25	MM/SC/KJ/GL	Approved	3:0:3	HH, AL, JY abstained
7/22/25	MM/SC/GL/HH	Approved	5:0:1	AL abstained.
8/12/25	MM/SC/AL/KJ	Approved	5:0:1	GL abstained.

112525.2 PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment at the meeting.

112525.3 SPECIAL TAX VALUATION

112525.31 633 Yesler Way – Kobe Park Building/Nippon Kan Theater
Applicant: Eric Hayashi, property owner

SM Rebecca Frestedt provided an overview of the Special Tax Valuation program. She explained that the Special Tax Valuation revises the assessed value of a historic property, subtracting, for up to 10 years, those rehabilitation costs that are approved by the local review board. She went over eligibility criteria, including the building being located within a local or national register district, the work must have been completed within two years of application and the rehabilitation expenses being equal to or exceeding 25% of the assessed value of the building.

She said that the work was on the interior and exterior of the building, although the Board’s review only includes the external work. She said the rehabilitation period was Oct. 1, 2023-Sept. 30, 2025. She went over the rehabilitation costs outlined in the staff report, totaling 37% percent, exceeding the 25% program eligibility threshold.

AP Hayashi went over the scope of improvements. He said he closed on the building in 2023 and spoke of why he purchased it and the history of the building. The building, previously known as the Astor Hotel, was constructed in 1909. It was home to the Nippon Kan theater and was in the heart of Japantown, before the neighborhood was bifurcated by the construction of I-5. Was the cultural and spiritual heart of the Japanese community. Had also housed a Japanese newspaper and grocery store. Single-room occupancy above. The theater had been used for cultural celebrations, kabuki theater, weddings, etc. He said he is also Japanese and has relatives who lived in the area prior to World War II and would have gone to events there, so deep meaning in his family.

AP Hayashi’s company, which runs clinical trials, moved into the site. The building now houses offices for the clinic, as well as the theater/event space. He went over structural assessment which prompted seismic improvements, masonry work (tuck pointing) and electrical and mechanical work, window renovations, installation of a fire alarm and sprinkling systems throughout the building. He presented before and after photos, including a photo of the daughter of the original owner, whose photo when she was a child, is incorporated into a photo mural.

Prior to his purchase the building had been used for offices for a legal firm that was built within the theater space. He said the building was activity used up until World War II, when Japanese were removed from Seattle. He described the building as laying fallow after Executive Order 8066, other than storing people’s belongings, from the late 1940s to the 1970s. The recent work restores the theater’s functionality.

Board questions:

Chair Hagersheimer thanked AP Hayashi for the presentation and for preserving the building.

BM Lam appreciated the labor of love in restoring the building and asked if the public space has been used for events.

AP Hayashi said he hired a coordinator for the space. There have been weddings, comedians and dances. Hoping to host Japanese puppet theater there.

Motion:

I move that the International Special Review District Board recommend to the Landmarks Preservation Board to approve the following property for Special Tax Certification: Nippon Kan, 633 Yesler Way. This action is based upon the criteria set forth in Title 84 RCW Chapter 449; and based on the review and approval of the building exterior renovation by the International Special Review District Board; that the property is a contributing building located in the International Special Review District, and has not been altered in any way that adversely affects those features that identify its significance or contribution to the International Special Review District; and has substantially improved in the 24-month period prior to application, and that the recommendation is conditioned upon the execution of an agreement between the Local Review Board as required by Title 84 RCW, Chapter 449.

MM/SC/AL/GL

6:0:0 Motion carried and passed unanimously.

112525.5 STAFF SUMMARY AND BOARD BUSINESS

SM Frestedt went over the administrative approvals. She provided an update about the ISRD Board election. She explained that there had been an inadvertent error on the ballots that had already gone out in the mail. Two of the nominated candidates were listed in the incorrect seats. She apologized that this error was not caught in time. Staff created a Director's Rule that extended the election date to Dec. 2nd. She explained that postcards were sent out to explain the error and that new ballots, that would be a different color, were sent out. The original ballots would not be counted. She further explained that the timing, due to the challenge period, would mean that the new members would not be able to begin until January.

She noted that there may not be a meeting in December and thanked outgoing members, Eric Chan and Gary Lee, who were not running for a second term, for their service on the Board.

Chair Hargesheimer adjourned the meeting at 5:31 p.m.