

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Ethics Commission, \(ETH\)](#)  
**Subject:** Joanne Lee support letter  
**Date:** Thursday, June 1, 2023 7:09:01 PM  
**Attachments:** [support letter.VBrown\(1\).docx](#)

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Sent from my iPhone

DATE: June 1, 2023

Dear Acting Director Thaikkendiyil and Ethics Commissioners:

As the Director of Grants for the Arts (GFTA), I have the pleasure of working with Joanne Lee, Deputy Director of Programs at the San Francisco Arts Commission (SFAC). Ms. Lee has shown true dedication in supporting arts organizations and individual artists by developing innovative and responsive programs during and after the pandemic. While I will miss working with Ms. Lee, I wholeheartedly support her waiver request to work for the Chinatown Media and Arts Collaborative (CMAC). I can attest that Ms. Lee did not show any favoritism towards CMAC when working on the Storm Relief grant program this spring. I have always found Ms. Lee to be professional and honest in her conduct.

As the two primary City departments overseeing arts and culture programs, our two departments often collaborate on programmatic initiatives and share best practices. Proposition E, passed by San Francisco voters in 2018, dedicated a percentage of the hotel tax revenue to support arts and culture programs. One of the funding programs created by Proposition E is the Arts Impact Endowment to address emerging needs of the arts community. As required by Proposition E, the Arts Impact Endowment is jointly administered by SFAC and GFTA. The Storm Relief grants, an effort to alleviate the financial burden from storm damage to properties used for arts and culture, was one of the initiatives jointly administered by SFAC and GFTA. Our aim was to get grant funds out as quickly as possible.

Ms. Lee, another SFAC staff member, and I individually reviewed approximately 50 applications received to determine whether each applicant met eligibility requirements. We had one meeting to discuss the half dozen or so applicants whose eligibility we were unsure about. None of us had any doubts about CMAC's eligibility; all three of us had individually determined they were eligible.

Nor was there any subjectivity in deciding how much eligible applicants received. Because funding requests exceeded the funds available, we divided the funds across the eligible applicants. Most organizations received grants of \$3,750, which was the maximum amount, unless they had asked for a lesser amount. Ms. Lee and the SFAC staff had no involvement in administering the grant funds. GFTA worked with an arts intermediary organization, Intersection for the Arts, to ensure that the funds were disbursed to each grantee.

I ask that you support Ms. Lee's waiver request to work for a nonprofit arts and culture organization who is a City contractor. Ms. Lee's expertise in arts administration, real estate development and love for Chinatown is exactly what CMAC needs at this early stage of its development. With Ms. Lee at the head of CMAC, I am sure that it will prosper.

Thank you for your consideration.

Vallie Brown, Director  
San Francisco Grants for the Arts

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Ethics Commission, \(ETH\)](#)  
**Subject:** June 9, 2023 Meet - Letter of Support  
**Date:** Friday, June 2, 2023 12:00:11 PM  
**Attachments:** [CCC Joanne Lee Support Letter .pdf](#)

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Hello,

I am submitting a letter of support for written public comment for the June 9, 2023 Ethics Commission meeting, regarding Joanne Lee's request for waiver.

Please see attached.

Thank you,

Jenny

--

*Jenny Leung* 梁凱欣  
*she/her*  
*Executive Director*

[REDACTED]

---

**Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco**  
舊金山中華文化中心  
[REDACTED]  
San Francisco, CA 94108

[REDACTED]



舊金山中華文化基金會

Chinese Culture Foundation of San Francisco

Dedicated to elevating underserved communities  
and giving voice to equality through education and contemporary art.

June 2, 2023

Chair  
Tatwina Chinn Lee

San Francisco Ethics Commission  
25 Van Ness Avenue, Suite 220  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Vice Chair  
Wai Ling Eng  
Alfred Tom  
Rebecca Lee

RE: Joanne Lee – Waiver Request, Ethics Commission meeting June 9, 2023

Secretary  
Cynthia Tongson

Dear Commissioners,

Treasurer  
George Mak

I am writing to support Joanne Lee's request for a waiver so she can work for the Chinatown Media and Arts Collaborative (CMAC) as their Executive Director of Edge on the Square.

Board of Directors  
Debbie Chinn  
Richard B. Evans  
Gin Y. Ho  
Michael Moon  
Jon Moscone  
Sophia Xiao

Chinese Culture Foundation and Center of San Francisco (CCC) was founded in 1965 and is one of the leading cultural and arts institutions in San Francisco. Based in Chinatown, CCC is dedicated to elevating underserved communities and giving voice to equality through education and contemporary arts. As a pillar that boldly uplifts neighborhood identity, CCC harnesses artists' creativity and engages diverse communities to build community. When contemporary artists have opportunities to engage meaningfully with the community, Chinatown becomes visible and celebrated.

Executive Director  
Jenny Leung

Advisory Council

Abby Chen  
Irene Yee Riley  
Sherman Tang  
Norman Yee

I was thrilled to hear that Joanne Lee would be the inaugural Executive Director of Edge on the Square. Joanne has demonstrated a strong commitment to Chinatown through her many years of working in the community. As the Deputy Director of Programs at the SF Arts Commission, Joanne has developed programs that have enhanced access and opportunities to under-resourced communities across the city. I've enjoyed working with Joanne as she has a keen understanding about community issues at the intersection of arts, and has been deeply responsive to community in that role. Furthermore, as someone who is embedded in the arts community, I can attest to the rare opportunity for an arts organization of color to have this opening and the importance of creating an equitable landscape through community-rooted leadership.

XianRui Artists  
Dora Hsiung  
Summer Lee  
Beili Liu  
Cathy Lu  
Adrian Wong  
Stella Zhang  
Chongbin Zheng

Senior Advisor  
Mabel S. Teng

CCC and CMAC/Edge on the Square are aligned community arts organizations in Chinatown. I look forward to collaborating with Joanne to preserve Chinatown's culture and expand art opportunities for the community and for all. I urge you to approve Joanne Lee's waiver request.

Thank you for your consideration,



Jenny Leung  
Executive Director

San Francisco, CA 94108

**From:** [Arvanitidis, Laurel \(ECN\)](#)  
**To:** [Ethics Commission, \(ETH\)](#); [Thaikkendiyil, Gayathri \(ETH\)](#)  
**Cc:** [Canning, Michael \(ETH\)](#)  
**Subject:** Letter of Support - Joanne Lee Waiver Request  
**Date:** Friday, June 2, 2023 11:30:54 AM

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Dear Acting Director Thaikkendiyil and Ethics Commissioners,

I am writing in support of Joanne Lee's waiver request to work for the Chinatown Media and Arts Collaborative (CMAC) after leaving her position at the San Francisco Arts Commission (SFAC). I am the Director of Business Development at the Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD) and have overseen the Nonprofit Sustainability Initiative (NSI) program since its inception in 2017. I know Joanne well and have always been impressed by her knowledge of real estate and community development. When Joanne first told me that she had been offered the position of Executive Director of Edge on the Square (a project of CMAC), I was very excited for her and for CMAC! She is the perfect person to move Edge on the Square to the next phase of development and this position is wholly aligned with Joanne's long-term career directory.

The NSI program provides funding to community organizations, including neighborhood arts and cultural institutions, to protect and expand critical services for residents. The program provides grant funding through an intermediary (Community Vision) for lease stabilization and space acquisition to enable organizations to continue to stay rooted in their communities and contribute to the long-term cultural and economic vitality of San Francisco. The NSI program is led by OEWD, with staff from the SFAC and the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development serving in an advisory capacity and participating on the grant review panels. OEWD also works with staff from other city departments to ensure that we have a full depth and breadth of the city's knowledge and expertise in our program development and methods for reviewing grant applications to ensure that we are applying all best practices in grantmaking. Due to SFAC leadership transitions and Joanne's past experience in real estate and nonprofit administration, she became the NSI delegate soon after she started working at SFAC.

I recall the grant round in early 2022 when the Chinatown Media and Arts Collaborative (CMAC) was awarded funds. There were only three applications in that round, and all three organizations received funding. The projects were reviewed by 6 panelists of both city and noncity staff. All six panelists scored the three applicants independently, and then we met to discuss each applicant's strengths, any concerns about the applicant's ability to successfully close a real estate transaction and the impact the grant and real estate transaction would have on the organizations long-term sustainability. Joanne's assessment of CMAC was consistent with the other panelists, the panel's scores were generally aligned, and all panelists unanimously agreed to award grants to all three applicants. CMAC's application would have been successful regardless of Joanne's scoring.

The decision to award the grant was made almost 15 months ago in March 2022, but CMAC has not yet proceeded to contract. I have been working closely with Community Vision (the intermediary) to close this grant with CMAC, which we expect to happen in the coming weeks. Neither Joanne nor any SFAC staff has been involved with the discussions with CMAC and Community Vision about meeting the final conditions required to successfully execute this sub-grant.

I fear if the Ethics Commission were to deny this waiver it could have broader impacts on the City's granting processes and would deter existing staff from supporting sister departments in RFP reviews. Our ability to successfully bring in a diverse array of expertise and opinions from other departments and the community in reviewing grant applications is key to ensuring the city has a fair and just granting process. To hinder someone's career advancement as a result of their supporting another city agency by serving on an RFP panel would have the potential to lead to worse outcomes for the city's grant making.

**I urge you to grant the waiver** so Joanne may work for CMAC and continue to serve the City's broader goals by creating a vibrant cultural space and economic catalyst for the Chinatown community.

Thank you,

Laurel Arvanitidis

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Laurel Arvanitidis  
Director of Business Development  
Office of Economic and Workforce Development

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Ethics Commission, \(ETH\)](#)  
**Subject:** Support Letter for Joanne Lee's Waiver Request  
**Date:** Sunday, June 4, 2023 10:31:51 AM

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This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Ethics Commissioners,

I write to support the waiver request from Joanne Lee, Deputy Director of the San Francisco Arts Commission (SFAC). By granting this waiver, Joanne will be able to work for an exciting new emerging arts and culture organization, the Chinatown Media and Arts Collaborative (CMAC).

CMAC is located in the heart of Chinatown, which is exactly where Joanne's heart and passions lie. It's a community she knows well and adores her. The opportunity to serve as the first Executive Director of CMAC's Edge on the Square is a fitting culmination of Joanne's career. The position draws upon her vast experience in arts and culture, non-profit management, real estate development, and community service in Chinatown.

I first met Joanne when we both served on the Board of Directors of Chinatown Community Development Center (CCDC). As an active board member (after having served on CCDC's staff for 14 years), Joanne was thoroughly engaged in CCDC's work, provided thoughtful insights and analysis, and connected the organization to resources and opportunities. I've also had the pleasure of interacting with Joanne in her position at the SF Arts Commission, where she oversees their public art, galleries, community investments and civic design programs. She has helped steer the agency's programs to be more diverse and inclusive and has worked to develop stronger partnerships with communities across the city.

I am the Founder and Executive Director of the SF Urban Film Fest. We are an interdisciplinary storytelling organization that produces an annual film festival, year-round film-based discussion events, and long-term community storytelling projects to make our cities more healthy, inclusive, and culturally abundant. We just completed our 9<sup>th</sup> film festival! As the Founding Executive Director, I know what it takes to build a new organization, garner resources, deliver services with limited budgets, and collaborate with others. I have no doubt that **Joanne** is wonderfully qualified to take on these challenges and lead Edge on the Square to great heights!

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter, and I hope that you will support the waiver for Ms. Lee. She and CMAC are a perfect fit.

Sincerely,

Fay Darmawi

[REDACTED] (She/Her)  
Executive Director

[REDACTED] Join us at "Our Place in the Park" on May 27, 2023 @ 2-6pm



Help keep our community film events free, please 



**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Ethics Commission, \(ETH\)](#)  
**Subject:** Support for Joanne Lee  
**Date:** Sunday, June 4, 2023 2:14:57 PM

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June 2, 2023

Dear Chair Lee, and Commissioners Finlev, Romano, Florez-Feng, and Salahi,

I am writing to express my strong support for Joanne Lee's waiver request, which will be heard at your commission meeting on June 9, 2023, to enable her to work with the Chinatown Media and Arts Collaborative immediately upon her departure from City employment. I have had the great fortune to work with Joanne since I became Director of Cultural Affairs at the San Francisco Arts Commission (SFAC) in January 2021. Joanne's vast knowledge and experience in and with San Francisco's communities has helped me quickly understand our local arts and culture sector and how the SFAC can best support the sector to ensure that San Francisco remains one of the top cities in the U.S.

While Joanne has only worked for the City and County of San Francisco for under four years, she has stewarded the SFAC during an unprecedented time of change – she has served under four Directors (two were interim Directors), a global pandemic, and a 40% staff turnover rate. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Joanne served on the Mayor's Economic Recovery Task Force as well as coordinating the Arts Commission's Disaster Service Worker deployments and was deployed herself. She has filled in for multiple vacant leadership roles – Director of Galleries, Director of Community Investments, and Capital Programs Manager, as well as supervising many staff. As the Deputy Director of Programs, in addition to overseeing our programs, Joanne serves as our representative to various inter-departmental initiatives, including the Dreamkeeper Initiative, Cultural Districts Program, and the Nonprofit Sustainability Initiative (NSI). Whenever able, Joanne also supports other City departments by serving on grant review and hiring panels, a common practice across City departments. As in all her work, she does so professionally, objectively, and with integrity.

I have nothing but praise for Joanne's work at SFAC. She has always performed at the highest level, with emotional intelligence, professionalism, respect, and integrity. I will miss her immensely, but I know that the position at CMAC is the perfect culmination of her professional experience and passion. She has never been an executive director, but she is clearly ready. The CMAC position is a unique one that draws on all her skills, experience, and commitments. It is for her a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Her service to the City has been remarkable, and I know that she will bring her creativity, passion, and work ethic to CMAC and the Chinatown community.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Best,  
Ralph Remington  
Director of Cultural Affairs

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Ethics Commission, \(ETH\); Canning, Michael \(POL\)](#)  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Support for Joanne Lee's waiver request  
**Date:** Monday, June 19, 2023 5:42:05 PM  
**Attachments:** [CMAC Letter to Ethics Commission.pdf](#)

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This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Chair Lee, commissioners,

The Chinatown Media and Arts Collaborative submits our letter in strong support of Joanne Lee.

Can you acknowledge receipt of our letter?

Yours Truly,  
Mabel Teng  
Interim Executive Director

Sent from my iPhone



**Board of Directors**

Mabel S. Teng | Interim E.D.  
Stephen Gong | President  
Vincent Pan | Vice President  
Tatwina Lee | Treasurer  
Justin Hoover | Secretary  
David Ho  
Buck Gee  
Jay Xu  
Malcolm Yeung

June 8, 2023

Dear Chair Lee, and Commissioners Finlev, Romano, Florez-Feng, and Salahi,  
On behalf of the Chinatown Media and Arts Collaborative (CMAC) Board of Directors, we write to ask that you grant the post-employment waiver request for Joanne Lee.

We would like to provide you with the mission of our organization CMAC, important information about our executive search process, and reasons for seeking the waiver request for Joanne Lee.

CMAC's mission and vision: CMAC was founded in 2017 by six leading Asian American community organizations dedicated to communicating compelling Asian American narratives and building multiracial solidarity from San Francisco Chinatown. It is a first-of-its-kind multidisciplinary organization with deep roots in civil rights, community development, media, community engagement, and the arts. Our dream and first project is to create a cultural hub in the heart of Chinatown to bring together art and activism across past and present to imagine an inclusive America. This new cultural hub is *Edge on the Square* at 800 Grant Avenue, whose programming will embody the American immigrant experience that is shaped by courage, resilience and perseverance. *Edge on the Square* is a place celebrates our collective creativity, culture, and history, engaging residents and visitors alike and serving as an economic catalyst for our community.

CMAC's founding organizations include the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation, Chinese Culture Foundation, Chinese Historic Society of America, Center for Asian American Media, Chinatown Community Development Center and Chinese for Affirmative Action.

CMAC's executive search process: In March 2022, CMAC's Board of Directors engaged Azzani Search Consultants, a well-established executive search firm in San Francisco, to lead and manage the hiring of its first Executive Director for *Edge on the Square*. We were looking for a dynamic leader who was entrepreneurial, inspirational, and possessed the track record to execute our ambitious vision. The inaugural executive director must be both entrepreneurial, inspirational and possess a track record to build



**Board of Directors**

Mabel S. Teng | Interim E.D.

Stephen Gong | President

Vincent Pan | Vice President

Tatwina Lee | Treasurer

Justin Hoover | Secretary

David Ho

Buck Gee

Jay Xu

Malcolm Yeung

a vibrant, innovative creative hub that is engaging and impactful, and most of all, a passion for Chinatown. We felt like we were looking for a unique leader, in search of a “unicorn.”

Azzani Search Consultants managed an extensive national recruitment process and brought forth multiple candidates for the Board’s search committee to consider. Over the course of 9 months, we explored potential candidates including Joanne Lee. In April of this year, we conducted the interviews and Joanne rose to the very top of our candidate list because of her experience in arts administration, nonprofit management, community real estate development, and especially her commitment to Chinatown.

In mid-April our Board of Directors unanimously voted to offer Joanne the position of Executive Director of Edge on the Square. We are delighted that we’ve found our ‘unicorn’ and are eager for her to begin her work.

We cannot overstate how difficult it is to identify and recruit leaders who possess the unique skill sets that Joanne Lee would bring to our organization and community. It is no small matter for us to find leaders who not only can hit the ground running, but who have the arts and community development vision, and connections to San Francisco Chinatown to succeed.

Request for post-employment waiver

The CMAC board is in full support and encourages you to grant the post-employment waiver request that Joanne Lee has submitted.

We are committed to providing the Ethics Commission all the information it requires to ensure that we can contribute to all City contracts and City processes being held to the highest degree of integrity and transparency. In our applications for City funding we have fully abided by City processes as requested and did so without any knowledge that Joanne Lee might be a future applicant for employment with us.

Specifically, cited by the Ethics Commission staff, the application to the NSIF grant was submitted to OEWD, managed by Community Vision well over 15 months ago.



**Board of Directors**

- Mabel S. Teng | Interim E.D.
- Stephen Gong | President
- Vincent Pan | Vice President
- Tatwina Lee | Treasurer
- Justin Hoover | Secretary
- David Ho
- Buck Gee
- Jay Xu
- Malcolm Yeung

To further ensure that there will be no perceived conflict of interest or any impropriety with Joanne Lee’s employment with CMAC, we will condition Joanne Lee’s employment on her not communicating with City and County of San Francisco employees at any agencies from which CMAC receives funding from for twelve months after the start of employment with us.

We voluntarily agree to provide this “firewall” to resolve concerns regarding her Joanne Lee’s request for a post-employment waiver so that she might join CMAC soon to help bring our vision of a stronger Chinatown to reality. Thank you for your service to the people of San Francisco.

Sincerely,



**Stephen Gong, Chairperson  
Board of Directors**



**Mabel S. Teng, Interim Executive Director  
Board of Directors**

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Ethics Commission, \(ETH\)](#)  
**Subject:** Support Letter for Joanne Lee  
**Date:** Saturday, June 24, 2023 4:31:16 PM  
**Attachments:** [Gordon Chin support letter for Joanne Lee.docx](#)

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Dear Ethics President Lee and Commissioners

Attached is my support letter for the waiver request of Joanne Lee

Thank You

Gordon Chin

**GORDON CHIN**  
[REDACTED]  
**SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94114**  
[REDACTED]

June 24, 2023

Dear Ethics Commission President Lee and Commissioners,

I am writing to urge your support for Joanne Lee's post employment waiver request on the July 14 Commission agenda. My name is Gordon Chin. I was employed as Executive Director of the Chinatown Community Development Center from its inception in 1977 through my retirement in 2011. Over my tenure, I hired and worked with hundreds of dedicated professionals in support of our work in affordable housing, community planning, arts and culture, economic development and community leadership building. I believe Joanne Lee was one of the best people I had the honor of working with during my career.

Some of the qualities that I believe Joanne exemplifies include her ability to manage large complex organizations with clarity and compassion, her honesty and integrity, and her ability to communicate effectively with a very diverse universe of stakeholders – a staff of over two hundred, an outstanding board of directors, funders and government leaders.

I think Joanne would be a wonderful leader for CMAC and a great visionary for Edge on the Square. She will be a great communicator from our community to the City of San Francisco, indeed to State and national partners as well.

I urge your support for her waiver request

Sincerely,

Gordon Chin

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Ethics Commission, \(ETH\)](#)  
**Cc:** [Canning, Michael \(POL\)](#); [Thaikkendiyil, Gayathri \(ETH\)](#)  
**Subject:** Ethics Commission Hearing Statement CMAC  
**Date:** Monday, June 26, 2023 9:39:11 PM  
**Attachments:** [CMAC CHSA Board Letterhead .pdf](#)

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Dear Ethics Commission, Michael and Gayathri,

Please find my letter in support of Joanne Lee attached.

Justin

**Justin Hoover**  
Executive Director  
Chinese Historical Society of America (CHSA)

[REDACTED]

[San Francisco, CA, 94108](#)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]





**CHINESE  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY of  
AMERICA**

6/26/2023

Dear Ethics Commissioners,

I am writing in support of Joanne Lee's waiver request so she is able to work for the Chinatown Media and Arts Collaborative (CMAC) when she leaves the SF Arts Commission. I believe her hearing is on July 14, 2023.

I am Justin Hoover, Executive Director of the Chinese Historical Society of America (CHSA). The Chinese Historical Society of America collects, preserves, and illuminates the history of Chinese in America by serving as a center for research, scholarship and learning to inspire a greater appreciation for, and knowledge of, their collective experience. We are located on Clay Street in Chinatown, a mere three-minute walk from CMAC's Edge on the Square at [REDACTED].

I first met Joanne in her current role as Deputy Director of Programs at the San Francisco Arts Commission when I participated in a neighborhood arts tour for Ralph Remington, Director of Cultural Affairs. Joanne was clearly familiar with the community and the community organizations. I have found Joanne to be respectful, responsive and knowledgeable in my interactions with her. As a founding Board member, I interviewed Joanne for the Executive Director position for Edge on the Square. I learned more about her experience in real estate development of community facilities, her work at the Chinatown Community Development Center, her understanding of arts and culture as a place-keeping strategy, and her vision of Edge on the Square as a cultural hub and partner with other cultural institutions like CHSA.

I am very excited to work with Joanne as the Executive Director of Edge on the Square. She's the right person to bring the Board's vision to reality and build upon, preserve and tell the story of Chinatown's rich cultural assets.

Please approve Joanne's waiver request. Thank you for your consideration.

[REDACTED]

Justin Hoover, Executive Director  
Chinese Historical Society of America

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Ethics Commission, \(ETH\)](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Joanne Lee Post-Employment Waiver  
**Date:** Tuesday, June 27, 2023 3:22:26 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)  
[image003.png](#)  
[image004.png](#)  
[image005.png](#)  
[image006.png](#)

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Begin forwarded message:

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Date:** June 27, 2023 at 5:59:26 PM EDT  
**To:** [ethics.commission@sfgov.org](mailto:ethics.commission@sfgov.org)  
**Cc:** [michael.canning@sfgov.org](mailto:michael.canning@sfgov.org)  
**Subject:** **Joanne Lee Post-Employment Waiver**

June 27, 2023

San Francisco Ethics Commission  
25 Van Ness Ave, STE 220  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: Joanne Lee post-employment waiver

Dear Commissioners,

On behalf of the Board and Staff of the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation, I am writing to ask for your support for Joanne Lee's post-employment waiver request. Ms. Lee is currently the Deputy Director of the Arts Commission and has a pending employment offer from the Chinatown Media and Arts Collaborative (CMAC). Your approval of her waiver will enable her to pursue the fitting next step in her professional career as the Executive Director of Edge on the Square at CMAC. And it will enable Chinatown to be served by the candidate CMAC's board deemed the best after a national search.

The Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation (AIISF) is one of the six founding organizations of CMAC. AIISF is celebrating 40 years of service this year, dedicated to preserving Angel Island as a living landmark that symbolizes diverse experiences of detention, racism, exclusion, hope, and determination. The Foundation protects the historic site, elevates its stories, promotes learning, and

celebrates the new beginnings and immigrant contributions that define the strength of the US. We inspire a more equitable and inclusive future; one that embodies how immigrants make nations better.

AISF is aligned with CMAC seeking racial and social justice by promoting the stories and contributions of Chinese and all immigrant communities. CMAC's new project Edge on the Square, located in the heart of Chinatown, is positioned to bring to life our history, stories and share our current struggles with visitors. CMAC is an important new voice for the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities.

Along with Ms. Lee's deep professional experience as a nonprofit manager in Chinatown, arts administrator, and community real estate developer, she brings a personal passion to CMAC. Her grandmother immigrated to San Francisco and was detained at Angel Island in the early 1900's, and later settled in Chinatown. As a granddaughter of immigrants, she brings a personal perspective on the Chinese immigrant experience and the struggles with assimilation and discrimination.

Please support Joanne Lee's post-employment waiver request so she can bring her expertise, experience, and passion to Chinatown.

Thank you for your consideration,

/s/

Edward Tepporn

Executive Director, Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation

**Edward Tepporn**

Executive Director

Pronouns: He/Him/His



---

**Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation**

San Francisco, CA 94102

[www.aiisf.org](http://www.aiisf.org)





A trip to Angel Island Immigration Station involves a ferry ride, then a beautiful hike, bike ride, or tram ride to the Immigration Station. To book a tour, contact California State Parks at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Ethics Commission, \(ETH\)](#); [Canning, Michael \(POL\)](#)  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** July 14 Ethics Commission Meeting re: Joanne Lee Post Employment Waiver Request  
**Date:** Thursday, June 29, 2023 10:30:31 AM  
**Attachments:** [Ethics Commission 7.14.23 Supporting Document - Joanne Lee.pdf](#)

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This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Ethics Commission staff and Commissioners,

Attached and pasted below is my letter of support for Joanne Lee. An item on the July 14 agenda addresses her tenure with the City and County of San Francisco and her post-employment waiver request enabling her to move onto other professional endeavors.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

With thanks,  
Rachelle Axel

June 28, 2023

Commissioners Yvonne Lee, Theis Finlev, Argemira Flórez Feng and Yaman Salahi  
San Francisco Ethics Commission  
25 Van Ness Avenue, Suite 220  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Commissioners Lee, Finlev, Flórez Feng and Salahi,

I am pleased to submit this letter on behalf of Joanne Lee, currently the Deputy Director of Programs at the San Francisco Arts Commission, regarding her post-employment waiver request on the July 14, 2023 Ethics Commission meeting agenda.

I had the privilege of working closely with Ms. Lee at the Arts Commission from the beginning of her tenure in 2019 to the end of my 21 years with the City in 2022. That was a tumultuous period for the City (and beyond, of course), and I can attest with confidence and certainty that Joanne held so much of our department's operations together during that time. Due to her dedication to the City and to the arts community, as well as her incredible professional ethic, she worked well beyond the confines of her job description to ensure that the Arts Commission and its staff contributed as much as possible to the City's emergency response and disaster service work efforts.

Since the department was short-staffed at that time (with no Director of Cultural Affairs, no grants program director and numerous other vacancies) she oversaw the agency's rapid response funding programs to ensure that our city's artists and arts organizations – among the most financially vulnerable groups – were able to stay afloat and moreover, stay in San Francisco. Additionally, she covered numerous other activities that were left unattended during staff's Disaster Service Work assignments. And she oversaw the process of placing staff in DSW assignments with SFAC's HR representative.

In short, Joanne has served the City and County of San Francisco admirably, as an effective leader with great integrity, honesty and professionalism, going above and beyond to support the community and the Arts Commission staff. As a senior level strategist for the department, she helped bridge the transition between directors, and she has the respect and gratitude of the entire staff, commission and community.

To add some additional context to this item today, San Francisco has a small but mighty arts community—we are tight knit and are very aware of what organizations and artists are doing throughout the year. Coupled with the fact that San Francisco, small compared to other municipalities, has the highest per capita City funding for the arts nationwide (much to the chagrin of New York City), means that City arts funding touches virtually every arts organization. The policy that restricts administrative talent from advancing their careers within their chosen field is problematic, especially for the San Francisco arts community.

Enabling Joanne Lee to continue her leadership trajectory will only enhance her immeasurable service to the local arts community, and by default, to the local economy's revitalization. Her sound ethics and risk-averse nature mitigates any concern about her leaving CCSF to apply her expertise to her next employment opportunity.

I am happy to answer any questions on Joanne's behalf. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Rachelle Axel

[REDACTED]  
San Francisco, CA 94110  
[REDACTED]

June 28, 2023

Commissioners Yvonne Lee, Theis Finlev, Argemira Flórez Feng and Yaman Salahi  
San Francisco Ethics Commission  
25 Van Ness Avenue, Suite 220  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Commissioners Lee, Finlev, Flórez Feng and Salahi,

I am pleased to submit this letter on behalf of Joanne Lee, currently the Deputy Director of Programs at the San Francisco Arts Commission, regarding her post-employment waiver request on the July 14, 2023 Ethics Commission meeting agenda.

I had the privilege of working closely with Ms. Lee at the Arts Commission from the beginning of her tenure in 2019 to the end of my 21 years with the City in 2022. That was a tumultuous period for the City (and beyond, of course), and I can attest with confidence and certainty that Joanne held so much of our department's operations together during that time. Due to her dedication to the City and to the arts community, as well as her incredible professional ethic, she worked well beyond the confines of her job description to ensure that the Arts Commission and its staff contributed as much as possible to the City's emergency response and disaster service work efforts.

Since the department was short-staffed at that time (with no Director of Cultural Affairs, no grants program director and numerous other vacancies) she oversaw the agency's rapid response funding programs to ensure that our city's artists and arts organizations – among the most financially vulnerable groups – were able to stay afloat and moreover, stay in San Francisco. Additionally, she covered numerous other activities that were left unattended during staff's Disaster Service Work assignments. And she oversaw the process of placing staff in DSW assignments with SFAC's HR representative.

In short, Joanne has served the City and County of San Francisco admirably, as an effective leader with great integrity, honesty and professionalism, going above and beyond to support the community and the Arts Commission staff. As a senior level strategist for the department, she helped bridge the transition between directors, and she has the respect and gratitude of the entire staff, commission and community.

To add some additional context to this item today, San Francisco has a small but mighty arts community—we are tight knit and are very aware of what organizations and artists are doing throughout the year. Coupled with the fact that San Francisco, small compared to other municipalities, has the highest per capita City funding for the arts nationwide (much to the chagrin of New York City), means that City arts funding touches virtually every arts organization. The policy that restricts administrative talent from advancing their careers within their chosen field is problematic, especially for the San Francisco arts community.

Enabling Joanne Lee to continue her leadership trajectory will only enhance her immeasurable service to the local arts community, and by default, to the local economy's revitalization. Her sound ethics and risk-averse nature mitigates any concern about her leaving CCSF to apply her expertise to her next employment opportunity.

I am happy to answer any questions on Joanne's behalf. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

  
Rachelle Axel

  
San Francisco, CA 94110

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Canning, Michael \(ETH\); Ethics Commission, \(ETH\)](#)  
**Subject:** Support Letter for Joanne Lee's Waiver Request  
**Date:** Friday, June 30, 2023 8:44:02 AM

---

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Ethics Commissioners,

Since the discussion on Joanne Lee's waiver request has been rescheduled to the July 14, 2023 meeting, I am resending my letter of support.

I write to support the waiver request from Joanne Lee, Deputy Director of the San Francisco Arts Commission (SFAC). By granting this waiver, Joanne will be able to work for an exciting new emerging arts and culture organization, the Chinatown Media and Arts Collaborative (CMAC).

CMAC is located in the heart of Chinatown, which is exactly where Joanne's heart and passions lie. It's a community she knows well and adores her. The opportunity to serve as the first Executive Director of CMAC's Edge on the Square is a fitting culmination of Joanne's career. The position draws upon her vast experience in arts and culture, non-profit management, real estate development, and community service in Chinatown.

I first met Joanne when we both served on the Board of Directors of Chinatown Community Development Center (CCDC). As an active board member (after having served on CCDC's staff for 14 years), Joanne was thoroughly engaged in CCDC's work, provided thoughtful insights and analysis, and connected the organization to resources and opportunities. I've also had the pleasure of interacting with Joanne in her position at the SF Arts Commission, where she oversees their public art, galleries, community investments and civic design programs. She has helped steer the agency's programs to be more diverse and inclusive and has worked to develop stronger partnerships with communities across the city.

I am the Founder and Executive Director of the SF Urban Film Fest. We are an interdisciplinary storytelling organization that produces an annual film festival, year-round film-based discussion events, and long-term community storytelling projects to make our cities more healthy, inclusive, and culturally abundant. We just completed our 9<sup>th</sup> film festival! As the Founding Executive Director, I know what it takes to build a new organization, garner resources, deliver services with limited budgets, and collaborate with others. I have no doubt that Joanne is wonderfully qualified to take on these challenges and lead Edge on the Square to great heights!

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter, and I hope that you will support the waiver for Ms. Lee. She and CMAC are a perfect fit.

Sincerely,

Fay Darmawi


[REDACTED] (She/Her)

Founder and Executive Director

[SF Urban Film Fest](#). Join us at "Our Place in the Park" on May 27, 2023 @ 2-6pm





Help keep our community film events free, please donate 

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Ethics Commission, \(ETH\)](#)  
**Cc:** [Thaikkendiyil, Gayathri \(ETH\)](#); [Canning, Michael \(ETH\)](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: support letter for Joanne Lee  
**Date:** Friday, June 30, 2023 12:47:06 PM  
**Attachments:** [Support Letter for Joanne Lee 063023.pdf](#)

---

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Dear Commissioners:

Attached, please find a letter of support for Joanne Lee's request for a waiver so that she can accept a job offer from Edge on the Square.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Kathleen Wah Lee

████████████████████  
Forest Hills, NY 11375

June 30, 2023

Via email

The Honorable Yvonne Lee, Chair  
The Honorable Theis Finley  
The Honorable Argemira Flórez Feng  
The Honorable Yaman Salahi  
City and County of San Francisco Ethics Commissioners  
25 Van Ness Avenue, Suite 220  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing in strong support of Ms. Joanne Lee's request for a waiver from the City's 12 month post-employment ban rule in reference to her being able to accept a position as inaugural Executive Director of Edge on the Square, which is the Chinatown Media and Arts Collaborative's (CMAC) first project.

I have known Joanne since 1995, when I first started working as the Grants Manager for Chinatown CDC. As I was promoted to Director of Resource Development, I had the privilege of serving as part of the organization's senior management team along with Joanne (in her role as first Housing Director and later Deputy Director) and our other colleagues, and we have continued to be close friends up to the present.

Joanne has always been highly professional, conscientious, thorough, thoughtful, and above board, both in her work life and throughout her personal life. Her long history with Chinatown CDC demonstrates her deep commitment to community building, affordable housing and community and economic revitalization. Given her strong work ethic and leadership trajectory and her many years of working in San Francisco Chinatown, I know that Joanne would be the perfect leader for Edge on the Square at this particular juncture.

Currently, I am an employee of the City of New York and serving as Special Assistant to the Managing Attorney for the Office of Legal Affairs at NYC Human Resources Administration/Dept. of Social Services, so I am very aware of the importance of adhering to legal requirements and being transparent. Additionally, in my capacity as an individual, I am board secretary of ThinkChinatown, a startup arts and cultural organization serving Manhattan Chinatown, so I am careful to recuse myself from any matters relating to City funding or in terms of representing the organization in any City matters.

While I have relocated to New York City and am celebrating 20 years as a New Yorker later this year, I am a native San Franciscan and continue to visit San Francisco on an annual basis and to keep in touch with friends and family.

I believe there are similarities in the challenges and opportunities faced by both ThinkChinatown and CMAC and that I can speak to some of the unique skills and talents as well as values as well as familiarity with San Francisco Chinatown that Joanne would bring to CMAC and Edge on the Square. Both CMAC and ThinkChinatown are using authentic arts and culture as a vital way of bringing the

Chinatown/immigrant community together and as a vehicle for also bringing non-AAPI's into the community, serving as an economic catalyst for small businesses and particularly restaurants in a post-COVID, recession economy.

In addition to her experience gained both as staff and as a volunteer in community based organizations such as Chinatown CDC, Joanne would bring an amazing array of skills and leadership experiences to this new role. She is tremendously talented! I would like to especially highlight her strong administrative and project management skills; her admirable technical assistance skills honed during her work as the Director of Consulting Services and Program Development for Community Vision CA; and finally, her current work experience as the Deputy Director of Programs for the San Francisco Arts Commission, which gives her great insights into both the challenges and opportunities facing arts and cultural groups in this current socio-political and economic climate.

For these reasons, I am proud to call Joanne Lee a close friend and deeply respected former colleague, and hope that you will grant her request for a waiver so that she can accept this new position with Edge on the Square.

Please let me know if you should have any questions for me. I can be reached at

[REDACTED]

Thanks in advance for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely yours,

[REDACTED]

Kathleen Wah Lee

Copies to: [gayathri.thaikkendiyil@sfgov.org](mailto:gayathri.thaikkendiyil@sfgov.org)  
[michael.a.canning@sfgov.org](mailto:michael.a.canning@sfgov.org)

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Ethics Commission, \(ETH\)](#); [Canning, Michael \(POL\)](#)  
**Subject:** Support Letter for Joanne Lee post-employment waiver request  
**Date:** Monday, July 3, 2023 9:30:31 PM  
**Attachments:** [Rose Pak Fund - Joanne Lee Waiver Request Support Letter - 7.3.23.pdf](#)

---

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Dear San Francisco Ethics Commission Chair Lee, and Commissioners Finlev, Romano, Flórez Feng, and Salahi:

My name is Dixon Li. I am the director of the Rose Pak Community Fund. We are submitting a letter ahead of July 14, 2023, Ethics Commission hearing for Ms. Joanne Lee's post-employment waiver request.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

--

Dixon Li  
[Rose Pak Community Fund](#)

[REDACTED]



7/3/2023

San Francisco Ethics Commission  
25 Van Ness Ave, STE 220  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: Letter of Support for Joanne Lee's post-employment waiver request

Dear Chair Lee, and Commissioners Finlev, Romano, Flórez Feng, and Salahi:

My name is Dixon Li, and I am the Rose Pak Community Fund director. Our organization was founded for the late Chinatown community leader Ms. Rose Pak. Our foundation aims to support projects directly affecting the welfare of Chinatown and the Chinese American community in San Francisco. We offer grants to non-profit organizations supporting education, public health, women's rights, small businesses, and civic engagement.

I am writing to support Joanne Lee's post-employment waiver request, which will be heard on July 14, 2023. Our organization strongly believes that Ms. Lee is the most qualified candidate to lead the Chinatown Media & Arts Collaborative (CMAC), and her work at the San Francisco Arts Commission and support for community arts organizations and artists should make her the ideal candidate for the job.

Chinatown is in a stage of transformation; Grant Avenue is becoming a local art and culture hub for the City's art and culture scene. The CMAC project is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and investment for the community, symbolizing the next chapter of Chinatown. This transformation will create new economic opportunities for the hundreds of small businesses and residents in Chinatown.

And in this unprecedented time, as the City looks to the arts to revitalize our local economy, Ms. Lee should be at the helm of CMAC/Edge on the Square to showcase the API community's arts and culture and draw visitors to Chinatown and San Francisco. We need passionate and qualified leaders like Ms. Lee to lead the CMAC/Edge on the Square.

We realize conflict-of-interest questions were raised regarding Ms. Lee's employment at CMAC, but we believe there are ways to address and mediate those concerns adequately. Denying Ms. Lee's employment would be a tremendous loss for Chinatown; denying her employment is denying our community. She is a dedicated art professional and has always



ROSE PAK  
COMMUNITY FUND

白蘭社區基金

operated with integrity and honesty. We hope the Commission will grant Ms. Lee's post-employment waiver request.

Sincerely,



Chak Hang (Dixon) Li

**From:** [Peskin, Aaron \(BOS\)](#)  
**To:** [Lee, Yvonne \(ETH\)](#); [Florez Feng, Argemira \(ETH\)](#); [Finlev, Theis \(ETH\)](#); [Salahi, Yaman \(ETH\)](#)  
**Cc:** [Canning, Michael \(ETH\)](#); [Thaikkendiyil, Gayathri \(ETH\)](#); [Ethics Commission, \(ETH\)](#); [Angulo, Sunny \(BOS\)](#)  
**Subject:** Letter in support of Joanne Lee post-employment waiver request  
**Date:** Wednesday, July 5, 2023 5:34:50 PM  
**Attachments:** [Ethics Commission Letter Yvonne Lee.pdf](#)

---

Dear President Lee and members of the Ethics Commission,

Attached please find my letter in support of a post-employment waiver for Joanne Lee.

Sincerely,

Aaron Peskin





AARON PESKIN  
市參事佩斯金

July 5, 2023  
VIA EMAIL

President Yvonne Lee and Members  
San Francisco Ethics Commission  
25 Van Ness Ave. #220  
San Francisco, CA 94102

**RE: Joanne Lee post-employment waiver request**

Dear President Lee and Commissioners:

I write to express my strong support for Joanne Lee's post-employment waiver request, to be heard at your commission meeting on July 14, 2023. I first met Joanne in the early 2000's when I was serving my first term on the Board of Supervisors. My staff and I have always been struck by her professionalism, integrity, and commitment to Chinatown and to social justice. As the Deputy Director of the Chinatown Community Development Center, Joanne was part of the leadership team advocating for neighborhood improvements, building affordable housing, and advancing tenant protection policies. She served the community for 14 years. Over the past 4 years, she has stewarded the Arts Commission during a global pandemic, budget challenges, three leadership transitions, and tremendous staff turnover.

As the District 3 Supervisor, I am thrilled at the formation of the Chinatown Media and Arts Collaborative (CMAC) as a new leading voice of arts, culture, social justice, and community building in Chinatown. Founded by six established API community institutions, this is an unprecedented collaboration of leadership and vision to make transformative change in Chinatown and across the city. Edge on the Square, CMAC's flagship project, is located in the heart of Chinatown, on Grant Avenue, which was once a bustling tourist destination. Post-pandemic, it now has high commercial vacancy and our small retail businesses are struggling to stay afloat. Edge on the Square is a critical anchor on this commercial corridor, coupled with other nearby arts organizations, that promises to catalyze economic revitalization through engaging programs and exhibitions that draw residents and tourists to Chinatown. By sparking economic activity and serving as a stabilizing force in Chinatown, Edge on the Square's place-keeping strategy will help preserve Chinatown for the people who live and work there.

While Joanne's departure from the Arts Commission is a tremendous loss for the City, she will continue serving San Francisco in her work at CMAC. Joanne brings the unique skills and experience of community development, real estate development, non-profit management, and arts and culture administration, along with her experience working, volunteering, and caring about Chinatown. She is, in short, the ideal person to lead CMAC and Edge on the Square. I cannot envision a more fitting position for Joanne. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for her to become an executive director (after

Ethics Commission

July 5, 2023

Page Two

for Joanne. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for her to become an executive director (after decades as a deputy director), to bring together her broad experience, and to work in, for, and with a community she loves and that loves her.

I fully understand that 16 months ago Joanne was one of six participants in an OEWD-convened grant-making panel that unanimously voted to award a million-dollar grant to CMAC in a funding round in which all three applicants were funded. And four months ago, she was one of three participants in a grant-making panel that unanimously awarded small emergency storm relief grants of \$3,750 or less to all 47 organizations that met eligibility requirements, one of which was CMAC. Neither of these decisions creates any reasonable appearance of self-dealing or lack of objective decision-making. Everyone who knows her vouches for Joanne's integrity. I know that she understands and will honor the one-year ban on post-employment communication with City officials, and I respectfully urge you not to impose any further restrictions on her ability to lead CMAC's Edge on the Square.

I urge you to grant this post-employment waiver for Joanne Lee. I look forward to welcoming her back to District 3 and witnessing the transformative change that she will help CMAC and Edge on the Square bring to Chinatown and the city.

Sincerely,



Aaron P. ...  
Supervisor, District 3  
San Francisco Board of Supervisors

Cc: Gayathri Thaikkendiyil, Acting Director, Ethics Commission  
Michael Canning, Senior Administrative Analyst, Ethics Commission

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Ethics Commission, \(ETH\)](#)  
**Cc:** [Canning, Michael \(ETH\)](#)  
**Subject:** API Council Support: Waiver Request for Joanne Lee  
**Date:** Wednesday, July 5, 2023 10:12:19 AM  
**Attachments:** [6\\_30\\_23\\_Waiver Request for Joanne Lee.pdf](#)

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Hello,

On behalf of Cally Wong, Executive Director of the API Council, I am submitting a letter of support for a waiver request for Joanne Lee to become the Chinatown Media & Arts Collaborative Executive Director. Please see the API Council's letter attached.

Thank you,

Jenny

--

**Jenny Bach**  
Program Coordinator, API Council

[www.apicouncil.org](http://www.apicouncil.org)

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APA Family Support Services  
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API Legal Outreach  
ASIAN, Inc.  
Asian & Pacific Islander Wellness Center  
Asian Pacific American Community Center  
Asian Pacific Islander Cultural Center  
Asian Law Caucus, Inc.  
Asian Neighborhood Design, Inc.  
Bayanihan Equity Center  
Be Chinatown  
Bill Soro Housing Program  
Brightline Defense Project  
Center for Asian American Media  
Charity Cultural Services Center  
Chinatown Community Children's Center  
Chinatown Community Development Center  
Chinatown Media and Arts Collaborative  
Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco  
Chinese for Affirmative Action  
Chinese Historical Society of America  
Chinese Newcomers Service Center  
Chinese Progressive Association  
Community Youth Center  
Donaldina Cameron House  
Filipina Women's Network  
Filipino American Development Foundation  
Filipino Community Center  
First Voice  
Gum Moon/Asian Women Resources Center  
Japanese Community Youth Council  
Japantown Community Benefit District  
Japantown Task Force  
Kai Ming Head Start  
Kimochi, Inc.  
Kultivate Labs  
Manilatown Heritage Foundation  
National Japanese American Historical Society  
NICOS Chinese Health Coalition  
Nihonmachi Street Fair  
Northeast Community Credit Union  
Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival  
North East Medical Services  
Richmond Area Multi-Services  
Samoan Community Development Center  
Self-Help for the Elderly  
SF Hep B Free  
SOMA Pilipinas  
South of Market Community Action Network  
Southeast Asian Community Center  
Southeast Asian Development Center  
The YMCA of San Francisco- Chinatown  
Visitacion Valley Asian Alliance  
West Bay Pilipino Multi-Service, Inc.  
Wu Yee Children's Services

June 30, 2023

Dear Chair Lee, and Commissioners Finlev, Romano, Flórez Feng, Salah:

My name is Cally Wong, Executive Director of the API Council of San Francisco. The API Council is 56 members strong and serves over 250,000 Asian American and Pacific Islander San Francisco residents through policy/advocacy, research, and network development. The API Council trusts Shon's proven leadership because he has shown up for us throughout the years in our organization's advocacy efforts.

I am writing to support Joanne Lee's post-employment waiver request, which will be heard on July 14, 2023. Our organization strongly believes that Ms. Lee is the most qualified candidate to lead the Chinatown Media & Arts Collaborative (CMAC), and her work at the San Francisco Arts Commission and support for community arts organizations and artists make her ideal to lead the organization.

Chinatown is in a stage of transformation; Grant Avenue will be a future focal point for the City's local art and culture hub. The CMAC project is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and investment for the community, symbolizing the next chapter of Chinatown. This transformation will create new economic opportunities for the hundreds of small businesses and residents in Chinatown.

And in this unprecedented time, as the City looks to the arts to revitalize our local economy, Ms. Lee should be at the helm of CMAC/Edge on the Square to showcase the API community's arts and culture and draw visitors to Chinatown and San Francisco. We need passionate, qualified leaders like Ms. Lee to lead CMAC/Edge on the Square. She is a dedicated art professional and has always operated with integrity and honesty.

We realize conflict-of-interest questions were raised regarding Ms. Lee's employment at CMAC, but we believe there are ways to address and mediate those concerns adequately. Denying Ms. Lee's employment would be a tremendous loss for Chinatown; denying her employment is denying our community, and we hope the Commission will grant Ms. Lee's post-employment waiver request.

API Council respectfully requests your support of Ms. Joanne Lee's waiver request. Please reach out to me if you have any questions at: [cally.wong@apicouncil.org](mailto:cally.wong@apicouncil.org).

Sincerely,



Cally Wong  
Executive Director  
API Council

**From:** [REDACTED] on behalf of [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Ethics Commission, \(ETH\)](#); [Canning, Michael \(ETH\)](#)  
**Subject:** Letter of Support for Joanne Lee's Waiver  
**Date:** Wednesday, July 5, 2023 5:02:25 PM  
**Attachments:** [Joanne Lee.pdf](#)

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This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Please take a look at the attached document.

Thanks,  
Malcolm

---

Malcolm Yeung | Executive Director  
Chinatown Community Development Center

[REDACTED]

**[CHINATOWN IS OPEN  
FOR BUSINESS](#)**



San Francisco, CA 94133  
www.chinatowncdc.org

July 5, 2023

Dear Ethics Commission President Lee and Commissioners,

I urge you to support Joanne Lee's post-employment waiver request which will be before you on the July 14, 2023 Ethics Commission Agenda.

Joanne has a long personal and professional history of working and participating in the Chinatown community. Besides her familial connections and volunteer work starting back in her college days, she spent 14 years working at the Chinatown Community Development Center (CCDC), followed with 6 years serving on the Board of Directors.

As the Executive Director of the Chinatown Community Development Center, I continue to see the impacts of Joanne's work. Chinatown CDC is a 46-year old community development organization based in Chinatown. We serve as neighborhood advocates, planners, community organizers, and developers and managers of affordable housing. As our first Deputy Director, she oversaw the development of many affordable housing developments (including the International Hotel Senior Housing and 665 Clay Street SRO), finance, human resources and administration; created our asset management program to ensure the long-term sustainability of our properties; coordinated our annual work plans across program areas, and worked closely with our founding Executive Director Gordon Chin on governance and strategy.

Up to now, I have only summed up Joanne's experience with Chinatown CDC. I am sure you have received letters documenting Joanne's additional decade of experience in the project management of arts and culture projects while at Community Vision (then called the Northern California Community Loan Fund) and of course the Arts Commission. I can safely state that Joanne possesses a rare and possibly unheard of combination of experience and values. I do not know of and cannot imagine a better person to serve as the Executive Director of Edge on the Square.

And, never has Chinatown needed a project like Edge. Coming out of the pandemic, Edge will engage residents and visitors by lifting up the Chinatown immigrant story. Edge can and will be a new economic and cultural ground zero for Chinatown. I believe that Chinatown's economic recovery and pathway to long term economic vibrancy depends on Edge.

And Edge on the Square, depends on Joanne's leadership. There is no "Joanne 2.0."

While the legal standard requires a finding of hardship to the waiver applicant, I would argue that it would be a hardship to Chinatown's future if Joanne was not permitted to lead this critical project at this critical moment.

I respectfully ask that you approve Joanne's waiver so we can move Edge from an aspiration to a reality.

Sincerely,

Malcolm Yeung, Executive Director  
Chinatown Community Development Center

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Ethics Commission, \(ETH\)](#)  
**Cc:** [Canning, Michael \(ETH\)](#); [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Support letter for Joanne Lee's employment at CMAC  
**Date:** Wednesday, July 5, 2023 4:33:30 PM  
**Attachments:** [Support letter for Joanne Lee's employment at CMAC.pdf](#)

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This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear Ethics commissioners:

On behalf of the San Francisco Chinese Chamber of Commerce, I would like to support Ms. Joanne Lee as a qualified candidate to lead the organization of Chinatown Media & Arts Collaborative (CMAC).

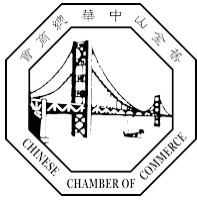
Attached please find a support letter.

Sincerely,  
Wade Lai  
President, SF Chinese Chamber of Commerce

--

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# CHINESE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

San Francisco, CA 94108

July 1, 2023

Dear Chair Lee, and Commissioners Finlev, Romano, Flórez Feng, Salahi:

My name is Wade Lai and the president of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of San Francisco. We have been the voice of merchants in Chinatown for decades and has dedicated itself to maintaining the economic vitality of Chinatown.

I am writing to support Joanne Lee's post-employment waiver request, which will be heard on July 14, 2023. Our organization strongly believes that Ms. Lee is the most qualified candidate to lead the Chinatown Media & Arts Collaborative (CMAC), and her work at the San Francisco Arts Commission and support for community arts organizations and artists make her ideal to lead the organization.

Chinatown is in a stage of transformation; Grant Avenue will be a future focal point for the City's local art and culture hub. The CMAC project is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and investment for the community, symbolizing the next chapter of Chinatown. This transformation will create new economic opportunities for the hundreds of small businesses and residents in Chinatown.

And in this unprecedented time, as the City looks to the arts to revitalize our local economy, Ms. Lee should be at the helm of CMAC/Edge on the Square to showcase the API community's arts and culture and draw visitors to Chinatown and San Francisco. We need passionate, qualified leaders like Ms. Lee to lead CMAC/Edge on the Square. She is a dedicated art professional and has always operated with integrity and honesty.

We realize conflict-of-interest questions were raised regarding Ms. Lee's employment at CMAC, but we believe there are ways to address and mediate those concerns adequately. Denying Ms. Lee's employment would be a tremendous loss for Chinatown; denying her employment is denying our community, and we hope the Commission will grant Ms. Lee's post-employment waiver request.

Please support Ms. Joanne Lee's waiver request.

Thank you,

Wade Lai  
President, Chinese Chamber of Commerce of San Francisco



July 5, 2023

Members of the Ethics Commission  
City and County of San Francisco  
25 Van Ness Avenue #220  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Ethics Commissioners:

I am writing in support of Joanne Lee's post-employment waiver request, which will be heard on the July 14, 2023, Ethics Commission agenda. I believe that Joanne's stellar work at the SF Arts Commission in support of community arts organizations and artists should not be a barrier for future employment that supports the cultural well-being of the city. Joanne is a dedicated arts professional and has always operated with integrity and honesty.

My name is Stephen Gong, and I am the Executive Director of the Center for Asian American Media. I am also the Board Chair of the Chinatown Media and Arts Collaborative. CMAC is now creating Edge on the Square, a site-specific visitor's destination, with programs that leverage the power of art and culture for social change and economic recovery. Embedded in its mission is the aim to spark discourse and foster greater public understanding of Chinatown's significance as an immigrant gateway, and historical landmark of cultural resilience.

Many City officials and staff and community members recognize that CMAC is a vital new organization primed to do important work. And Joanne's deep experience as a non-profit manager, community real estate developer, and cultural worker, along with her experience working in Chinatown, makes her the ideal leader of CMAC's Edge on the Square. In this unprecedented time, as the City looks to the arts to revitalize our local economy, Joanne should be at the helm of CMAC/Edge on the Square to showcase the arts and culture of the API community and to draw visitors to Chinatown and San Francisco.

Please support Joanne Lee's waiver request.

Sincerely,

Stephen Gong  
Board Chair

FILED  
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SAN FRANCISCO  
ETHICS COMMISSION  
By *Am* 7.06.2023

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Ethics Commission, \(ETH\)](#); [Thaikkendiyil, Gayathri \(ETH\)](#); [Canning, Michael \(ETH\)](#)  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Letter from the Sutton Law Firm on Behalf of Joanne Lee Re: Waiver Request  
**Date:** Thursday, July 6, 2023 4:27:06 PM  
**Attachments:** [SLF Response Letter.pdf](#)

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Dear Acting Director Thaikkendiyil and Ethics Commissioners:

Please find attached the Sutton Law Firm's response letter to the Ethics Commission Staff's June 5 memorandum for inclusion in the agenda for the July 14<sup>th</sup> Ethics Commission meeting on behalf of our client, Joanne Lee.

Sincerely,

Eli B. Love

Associate | The Sutton Law Firm

[REDACTED], San Francisco, CA 94108

[REDACTED] | [www.campaignlawyers.com](http://www.campaignlawyers.com)

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# THE SUTTON LAW FIRM

July 6, 2023

VIA EMAIL ONLY

Ms. Gayathri Thaikkendiyil  
Acting Executive Director  
San Francisco Ethics Commission  
25 Van Ness Avenue, Suite 220  
San Francisco, CA 94102

RE: Joanne Lee's Waiver Request

Dear Ms. Thaikkendiyil:

This letter responds to the June 5, 2023 memorandum prepared by Ethics Commission staff regarding our client Joanne Lee's request for a waiver from the prohibition in City law on City employees accepting employment with a City contractor within 12 months after the award of the contract ("Staff Memo"), focusing on some legal issues raised by the Staff Memo and the waiver request.

1. The 12-month "buffer" contemplated by section 3.234(a)(3) has already elapsed.

As part of Ms. Lee's job at the Arts Commission and in collaboration with the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development and the Office of Economic and Workforce Development, she participated in a selection panel for a Nonprofit Sustainability Initiative ("NSI") grant to the Chinatown Media and Arts Collaborative ("CMAC") towards the purchase price of the building in Chinatown which will house the new "Edge of the Square" project. Ms. Lee and the other five panelists met to consider the grant request on March 16, 2022, and the City sent CMAC its award letter one week later, on March 23, 2022. For reasons which had nothing to do with the selection panel's work, the City and CMAC did not end up formally executing the contract until just last week, on or about June 28, 2023; the City and CMAC spent the 15 months between the City's award of the contract and the final execution compiling the necessary back-up documentation for the grant and hammering out the details regarding this relatively complex financial transaction.

Importantly, Ms. Lee's role in the process ended as soon as the selection panel decided to award the grant to CMAC in March, 2022. She was involved in neither compiling or reviewing the back-up documentation after the award of the contract nor in the post-award

Ms. Gayathri Thaikkendiyil  
July 6, 2023  
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discussions between the City and CMAC. All of this post-award work was done by employees in the Office of Economic and Workforce Development.

Section 3.234(a)(3) contemplates the City awarding a contract and the contract being executed at the same time. The law uses the phrases “award of the contract” and “entered into a contract” interchangeably, prohibiting City employees from going to work for an entity which has “entered into a contract” within 12 months of when the City employee participated “in the award of the contract.” Similarly, the law focuses on the amount of time which has elapsed since the City employee participated in the award of the contract, and wants to make certain that the City employee does not go work for the entity within that 12-month period.

As the Staff Memo points out, the underlying purpose of this law is to create a “buffer” between the time when a City employee participates in the award of a contract to an entity and the time the employee may go work for that entity to ensure that the City employee’s decision on the contract is made in the best interests of the City and so that the public has confidence in the government contracting process. Although the Staff Memo correctly notes that the applicable Ethics Commission regulation says that the 12-month period starts when the entity “enters into” the contract (SFEC Reg. 3.234-3), it is not correct to assert that the law calculates the 12-month period from this date, because – as mentioned above – the law itself refers to the 12 months following the moment when the City employee “participated in the award of the contract.” Moreover, when discussing the underlying purpose of the law, the Staff Memo itself actually refers to the 12 months following the award of the contract, stating that, “This rule is intended to create a buffer between the time a contract is awarded and when a City official involved in the award of that contract may become employed by the contractor.” It goes on to state that the rule “furthers the goals of the Campaign and Governmental Conduct Code by ensuring that City officials cannot help award a City contract and then become employed by the contractor who has recently benefitted from the actions of the City official.”

The fact that Ms. Lee did not receive the job offer from CMAC until April, 2023, over a year after she participated in the NSI grant panel, and will not go to work for CMAC for at least 15 months after the panel met, justifies the Commission granting Ms. Lee’s waiver request. In short, these unique facts mean that the purpose of the 12-month “buffer” has been met. Not only has Ms. Lee confirmed that she of course focused solely on whether CMAC and the other two applicants had met the purpose of the grant funds while sitting on the panel, but sufficient time has elapsed for the public to have confidence that the grant was awarded solely in the best interests of the City. Only three organizations submitted funding applications and the selection panel recommended funding for all three organizations. Ms. Lee should not be penalized just because the grant to CMAC was stuck in limbo for almost a year and a half. The statutory language is clear that a 12-month buffer period is sufficient to serve the rationale

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July 6, 2023  
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behind the statute, and here 15 months have already transpired. In addition, following this overly technical reading of the law could lead to absurd results if it takes several years for the City and an entity to finalize the terms of a contract.

2. The law must be interpreted reasonably in a way which does not unnecessarily infringe on the rights of City employees to enter into employment contracts.

Although section 3.234(a)(3) serves an important policy interest, it also impacts the ability of City employees to pursue their professional goals and earn a living. These types of “revolving door” laws therefore implicate the constitutional rights of City employees. (See, e.g., Conn v. Gabbert (1999) 526 U.S. 286, 291-292 [courts have recognized general due process rights of individuals to choose their field of private employment]; Truax v. Raich (1915) 239 U.S. 33, 41 [“The right to work for a living in the common occupations of the community is of the very essence of the personal freedom and opportunity that it was the purpose of the [Fourteenth] Amendment to secure.”].)

City law acknowledges these legal issues by limiting the ban to a 12-month period. I.e., the law implicitly acknowledges that a City employee going to work for a City contractor 11 months after participating in the award of a contract may raise the appearance of corruption, but a City employee going to work for a City contractor 13 months after this date does not. This legal concern is present in Ms. Lee’s case: concluding that the 12-month period did not start until last month when the contract was finally signed by the City and CMAC, 15 months after she sat on the NSI panel, would effectively impose a 27-month prohibition on her ability to go work for CMAC.

We hope that the Commissioners take these legal issues into account when ruling on Ms. Lee’s waiver request. More specifically, the Commissioners should use their discretion to interpret section 3.234(a)(3) in a way which does not more than double the buffer period for Ms. Lee, and in a way which protects both the sanctity of the government contracting process and Ms. Lee’s rights to pursue her professional goals.

3. Any potential violation of section 3.206(c) is mitigated by the unique circumstances of the Storm Relief Program.

The Staff Memo also mentions that Ms. Lee may have implicated section 3.206(c) by participating in the award of a small “Storm Relief Grant” to CMAC at the same time that she had her preliminary interviews about the job with the Edge of the Square project. It also notes that Ms. Lee has acknowledged this potential issue, and has already been in contact with the Commission’s enforcement staff.

Ms. Gayathri Thaikkendiyil  
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Ms. Lee had an interview with a recruiting firm on February 8, one week after applications opened for the Storm Relief Grant program, and an initial interview with CMAC's search committee on February 17. After these two preliminary interviews, there was a six week gap during which time Ms. Lee did not know whether she was still in the running for the job.

Though these preliminary interviews may have technically implicated section 3.206(c), the unique circumstances surrounding these grants are important mitigating factors. The City adopted the Storm Relief Program as an emergency response to last winter's storms, which created havoc and caused severe financial hardship for many small businesses, artists and nonprofits. CMAC applied for the grant in order to repair leaks in their basement. The program was developed, applications submitted, and decisions made all within a five-week period. In the face of this emergency situation, which required incredibly quick action by City Hall, Ms. Lee unfortunately did not realize when she signed off on CMAC's application that her actions could come under the City's ethics laws.

Other aspects of the program also mitigate against any public harm. All but five of the approximately 50 nonprofits and artists which applied for the grants received the money, and all of the decisions were made unanimously by the three panelists. In essence, Ms. Lee and the other panelists were simply signing off on small aid money and not making any discretionary decisions. Moreover, the size of the grant was very small, only \$3,750 per grantee. Under these unique circumstances, there is absolutely no reason to believe that Ms. Lee voted to award the small grant to CMAC for any reason other than CMAC met the grant criteria.

#### Conclusion

In sum, granting a waiver to Ms. Lee to allow her to accept the position of Executive Director of CMAC's Edge of the Square project would not hinder the purposes of section 3.234(a)(3) and would avoid any negative impact on Ms. Lee's legal rights. We will attend the Commission's July 14 meeting in case any Commissioners have questions about these legal points.

Sincerely,

  
James R. Sutton

cc: Joanne Lee  
EBL/emm  
#2394.01

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Ethics Commission, \(ETH\)](#)  
**Cc:** [Thaikkendiyil, Gayathri \(ETH\)](#); [Canning, Michael \(ETH\)](#)  
**Subject:** Letter to Ethics Commission In Support of Joanne Lee Waiver Request  
**Date:** Thursday, July 6, 2023 12:11:57 PM  
**Attachments:** [V Pan Ethics Commission Letter July 6 2023.pdf](#)

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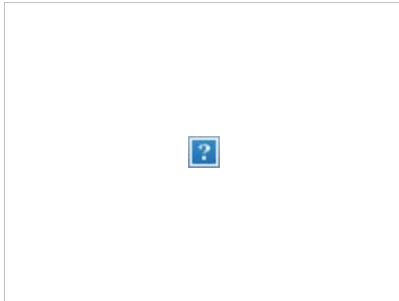
Hello,

Please see attached letter in support of the post-employment waiver request by Joanne Lee to be heard by the Ethics Commission on July 14, 2023.

I would appreciate it if you can confirm receipt.

Best,  
Vincent Pan

--



**Vincent Pan**  
**Chinese for Affirmative Action**  
**Co-Executive Director**

he/him | ([REDACTED])

[REDACTED]

*CAA has multiple open positions.* [REDACTED]



July 6, 2023



Ethics Commission  
City and County of San Francisco  
25 Van Ness Avenue, Suite 220  
San Francisco, CA 94102

via [ethics.commission@sfgov.org](mailto:ethics.commission@sfgov.org)

Dear Chair Lee and Commissioners,

I am writing in support of Joanne Lee's request for a post-employment waiver to be heard by the Ethics Commission on July 14, 2023. Approval of this waiver will enable Joanne Lee to work for the Chinatown Media and Arts Collaborative (CMAC) as the Executive Director of Edge on the Square. Denial of this waiver would impose an extreme hardship to Joanne Lee as well as a devastating blow to CMAC and its historic efforts to protect and strengthen the vitality of San Francisco Chinatown at a time when Chinatown's future continues to be at risk.

Like other parts of San Francisco, Chinatown faces headwinds in its efforts to remain economically, socially, and culturally viable. Some of these challenges were dramatically worsened by the pandemic and included mass layoffs in the service industry, decimated tourism, and the escalation of anti-Asian hate. These difficulties compounded long-standing underinvestment in Chinatown that has for decades wrought displacement pressures on immigrant, working-class residents as well as the cultural character of Chinatown itself.

To help address this crisis, CMAC was founded by six leading Chinatown and Asian American organizations including Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA) to leverage the power of arts and media to anchor creative and cultural spaces in San Francisco Chinatown. To date, CMAC has secured more than \$25 million to launch Edge on the Square -- a new, major cultural facility to be located on Clay Street stretching from Grant Avenue to Walter U. Lum Place at the corner of Portsmouth Square Park. Edge on the Square is a core component of critical post-pandemic efforts to ensure that Chinatown remains a vibrant place for residents, welcomes tourists and regional visitors, and evolves in a manner that is culturally relevant and economically sustainable.

There are literally no other organizations like CMAC and Edge on the Square in the country let alone San Francisco Chinatown. CMAC and Edge on the Square has the momentum of six leading community and national organizations behind it, a physical site in the heart of Chinatown with resources to develop it, and a window of time that recognizes the need to uplift Asian Americans at the intersection of culture, community development, and social justice.

Denying Joanne Lee the ability to lead at CMAC as Executive Director of Edge on the Square would impose upon her an extreme and irreparable hardship. There simply will not be an opportunity like this again for her or anyone else. At the same time, CMAC and the Chinatown community would also be harmed. CMAC extended an offer to Joanne Lee after an exhaustive national search in which it became obvious that her unique professional and life experiences made her singularly qualified to lead

our organization and our important mission.

Joanne Lee has been completely transparent about her role in the two City processes that have involved CMAC funding. It is this transparency that undergirds the philosophy of the Ethics Commission itself and her disclosures should be weighed in favor of granting her waiver request. It is also clear from this transparency that Joanne Lee at all times acted appropriately, and in the two decisions involving CMAC funding she abided by larger processes and panels in which she was only one participant among many parties and people, and which ultimately arrived at unanimous conclusions.

Going forward, the CMAC Board of Directors is aware of and would work with Joanne Lee to adhere to all post-employment restrictions that will impact her representation or communications on behalf of CMAC with the City. This includes having the CMAC Board directly manage certain City communications to build a “firewall” between Joanne Lee and her former colleagues at the Arts Commission, as well as absolving her of any advocacy responsibilities with the City for a full year or longer as may be required by City rules.

Lastly, I want to thank the Ethics Commission in advance for adhering to the highest standards of cultural sensitivity and competence as you fully consider the perspectives of Joanne Lee, CMAC and Edge on the Square, the San Francisco Chinatown community, and their agency to define what hardship and opportunity mean to them.

Sincerely,



Vincent Pan  
Co-Executive Director, Chinese for Affirmative Action  
Vice President, Board of Directors, Chinatown Media and Arts Collaborative