

GOOD NEWS for...

BOEDDEKER PARK USERS

They will have all summer to bask in the park after all because the complete reconstruction that was to start in January has been pushed way back again. Summer will see many days of music in the park, Betty Traynor, Friends of Boeddeker Park chair, promised at the group's January meeting. She'll seek a grant from the TL CBD, which has been generous in the past, and will try to get on the People in Plazas program to schedule concerts. Meanwhile, tai chi classes will continue at 11 a.m. Thursdays and the park will be open, as usual, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and the playground from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. for children accompanied by adults. Bureaucratic changes have delayed the \$5.5 million remake. "It's the changed permit process that's holding us up," said Alejandra Chiesa, of the Trust for Public Land, the key partner with Rec and Park in landing \$5 million in state grants to redesign Boeddeker. "We hope to have the permits by April," Chiesa said. The bidding process will take four months, putting construction "probably in the fall." And then the park will close for 18 months. ■

TL's top AIDS provider to close

CEO scrambles for others to take the 3,000 patients

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

THE announcement that Tenderloin Health will shut down surprised many and despite raised fears that the closure this spring would jeopardize services to 3,000 central city residents — poor and homeless HIV/AIDS sufferers and those at greatest risk of becoming infected.

Debt, operating deficits and cuts in government funds sealed the fate of the organization and "have made it impossible for us to keep our doors open," CEO David Fernandez said in Tenderloin Health's Jan. 6 press release. He expressed confidence, however, that TLH's counseling, case management and housing services will not be interrupted, and that in the next 90 days he'd develop a plan for other providers to take over TL Health's substantial caseload, the most AIDS patients served by any medical clinic in the neighborhood.

Department of Public Health Director Barbara Garcia and Human Services Agency Director Trent Rhorer, also quoted in the press release, said their agencies won't abandon TL Health's clients, and they'll work to find other providers. TL Health sees 250 clients in its medical clinic, houses 750 clients at four sites, provides HIV/AIDS prevention and testing services to 1,400 and dental services to 500.

Tenderloin Health's history began in 1985 when gay activist Hank Wilson, S.F. Network Ministries Director Glenda Hope and community activist Dennis Conkin used a \$2,500 grant from the Columbia Foundation to create

the Tenderloin AIDS Network. For five years it was a program of Network Ministries, which continued as its fiscal sponsor for another two years as the city gave \$100,000 to the nascent program, at that time called Tenderloin AIDS Resource Center. TARC's services and budget grew along with the burgeoning AIDS funding nationwide, but that funding began to dry up early in the 2000s, and TARC in 2006 merged with Continuum HIV Day Services to become Tenderloin Health.

At the time of the merger, TARC, serving more than 13,000 people annually, had 52 employees and a \$5.8 million annual budget. Continuum had 25 employees and an annual budget of \$2.4 million. Financial problems dogged TARC and, says the press release, "the large amount of existing debt" that Tenderloin Health had assumed was a "major issue" when Fernandez became CEO in 2009.

Tenderloin Health's current budget is \$6.4 million. Its debt, Fernandez told the Bay Area Reporter, includes \$680,000 owed on bank lines of credit, the biggest portion of its \$1.4 million in accounts payable. Despite chipping away at its debt, TL Health had one U.S. Health and Human Services grant of \$400,000 run out in August and another, for \$358,597, ends in March.

"Dennis called me with the news about Tenderloin Health closing," Hope told The Extra. "I was

just stunned — I feel personally distressed about this. It was such a struggle to get the organization open, and now, to see it going down the tubes makes me mad as well as sad."

Hope believes that the city is scrambling to find providers to fill the gap but worries where the money will come from. "If the city doesn't find others to serve Tenderloin Health's very vulnerable clients, they'll get worse and will put more pressure on vital city services that are already being slashed," she said. The nonprofit's closing should be "a rallying cry" for people concerned about essential services disappearing, she added.

Fernandez told The Extra that talks are under way with potential providers, but TL Health's plan to name them by the end of January, a timeline announced in the press release, wasn't realistic.

"Most of them don't want their names out there until negotiations are further along," he said. "What we are

doing is talking with clients and tenants to assure them that we're committed to keeping services in the area and trying to keep staff employed in providing the services." TL Health also held a community forum Jan. 26 to update clients, neighborhood providers and others that drew 50 people, Fernandez said.

"We still hope to have services transferred by April 6 — but that's just a target date," he said. ■

"To see it going down the tubes makes me mad as well as sad."

Glenda Hope
S.F. NETWORK MINISTRIES
DIRECTOR

Public toilet: How to pay for a monitor

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ed slats along the bottom of the walls so the person inside is visible only shin high. In the three years the toilets have been on the streets, there have been no incidents, according to Portland Water Bureau spokeswoman Anne Hill. Grating in the same place could work, too, she said. That idea had some support at the meeting, the second sponsored by Hyphae and the CBD.

The community's suggestions are to be considered in producing a blueprint and master plan for what Bucknum hopes will be the nation's first public toilet for which human waste is trucked away for composting. The first public meeting addressed where to locate a public restroom. Attendees marked their choices on maps, and the answer was, essentially, anywhere.

The project, which fits into the CBD's war on outdoor defecation and urination — using the street for a toilet rather than a toilet on the street — is shaping up to be a three-unit, mobile structure that will squat on a parking space and not be hooked up to the city's sewerage system.

More than a dozen people

were at the meeting at the CBD's 134 Golden Gate Ave. office: representatives from the mayor's office, Department of Public Works, Department of Public Health, nonprofits and the Yerba Buena CBD. Only a couple of Tenderloin residents attended although the meeting was publicized in emails to those who had shown previous interest and particulars were published in a story in the Central City Extra.

Dina Hilliard, CBD executive director, again insisted that the toilet project include a paid monitor, preferably 24/7. Bucknum said for that added expense he hadn't ruled out selling advertising on the toilet. Nick Elsner, from DPW's division on street-use permits, said no ads are permitted in the public right-of-way, a ban that includes parking spaces, and it would apply to a toilet in the street, unless a deal could be struck with the city to issue a waiver.

Maintenance and cleanliness were as much of a concern as safety. It was suggested that Clean City, which does sidewalk cleaning for the CBD's blocks, could help with bathroom cleaning and that biohazard bins for syringes should be placed inside.

A number of topics were discussed with no decisions, leaving questions dangling in the air such as: How much bathroom time is to be allowed to do your business and get out? How should the time's-up warning be given? How much authority should a monitor have to intervene in illegal or inappropriate behavior? Should a monitor be trained as a community guide? When do cops intervene? At what point should consistent abusers be banned, who bans them and how is a ban enforced?

"Ten to 12 minutes inside isn't very long, especially if there's diaper changing," said Hilliard.

Other suggestions included: inside, a red emergency button to push; lights that brighten when the toilet's in use, dim when not; and prominently posting rules outside.

The next topic to be addressed is design. The public is invited to submit written suggestions at the Luggage Store at Market Street during February, Bucknum said. His goal is to have a prototype ready this summer. His small East Bay ecological engineering firm needs \$80,000 more to make the prototype. ■

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