

CBA era begins — tech firms pledge aid

Benefits flow under oddly fluid contracts

BY GEOFF LINK

COMMUNITY BENEFIT agreements between the city administrator and the six big tech companies that qualified for the payroll tax break were all signed by Jan. 31.

The CBAs are supposed to ensure that the community gets help and resources to mitigate the changes the wealthy companies are bringing to the long-suffering central city.

Zendesk was first with a CBA in 2012. Now all the agreements are operative and can be renewed annually for up to six years.

The hoped-for largess signals that a new era for the neighborhood has officially begun. The benefits pledged won't themselves be transformative, but if the process evolves into solid working relationships, a lot will change around here.

City officials refuse to reveal the value of the tax breaks, citing city and state laws requiring confidentiality, yet the lack of specifics makes the CBAs' bottom line a moving target.

Glide has already gotten hundreds of hours of volunteer time by Zendesk, Yammer and other firms' employees serving meals and working on Graze the Roof, Glide's commu-

nity garden.

Hospitality House received two grants — from Twitter and Yammer — to pay for arts projects to bolster its prolific community arts program.

Yammer made a show in the Chronicle in early April with 30 employees donning bright orange vests and picking up litter in the Tenderloin, but that same day also provided help to the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, Glide and other groups.

Zendesk patronage is stabilizing Episcopal Community Services' CHEFS program training homeless in culinary skills.

More is happening now, and more is in the works.

The companies within the gerryman-

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PHOTO BY BELINDA WONG, YAMMER

Lines Ballet teacher Dexandre Montalvo leads Yammer employees in an in-house hip-hop dance class.

CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

COMMUNITY BENEFITS



PHOTO BY MARK DONEZA

Del Seymour, Tenderloin tour guide, takes a Zendesk group for a walk on the neighborhood's wild side with a stop at Boeddeker Park. Patronizing neighborhood businesses, such as Seymour's Tenderloin Walking Tours, is partially how Zendesk meets its CBA obligation.

PANEL IN DISARRAY

City administrator purges committee reviewing the CBAs

BY MARK HEDIN

THE CITIZEN'S ADVISORY Committee, a work in progress from the start, is now in complete disarray. The 11-member panel, appointed by the Board of Supervisors to be the community's voice in discussions between the city and tech companies moving into the neighborhood, is out of commission following the purge of four of its remaining eight members last week.

The CAC's chief responsibility has been to establish a framework for and to review the community benefits agreements required of the largest companies requesting the city's so-called "Twitter tax break."

Without at least six members, a quorum, the panel is barred from taking any action.

At the committee's May 2 meeting — which wasn't an official meeting since there were no longer six active members present, even though two of the recently deposed members sat at their usual spots on the dais — Bill Barnes, project manager in the city administrator's office, in his customary rapid-fire delivery, apologized for the surprising turn of events that had just unseated four members. Barnes recommended that they reapply for their seats through the Board of Supervisors Rules Committee, and said he would appeal to its chair, Norman Yee, to help restore order.

Two members, Brad Paul and Jesus Perez, said they intend to do so, but the process will

take some time, Paul said, in part because the positions must be publicly posted before they can be filled. The other two purged members are Felice Denia and Steven Suzuki.

Paul, who serves on a variety of committees in San Francisco, said when he can't make a meeting, typically it's enough to just inform the committee in advance. Barnes pointed out, though, that the city attorney's Good Government Guide regulations stipulate that absences be noted in the minutes of the meeting as approved by the fellow members. Otherwise, it's deemed to be unexcused. So because the unpaid members of the CAC did not follow these procedural rules, he said, the city attorney, which had launched a probe following an inquiry from "the public," had no choice but to deem the four resigned due to unexcused absences. And thus, the community's primary access point in the process has been shut down.

The committee was already short three members since the previously announced resignation, effective April 30, of Chair Dina Hilliard, who's a new mom, plus Daniel Hlad's resignation effective Jan. 24, and seat 11, which has been vacant since 2011.

Lack of a quorum has been a significant impediment to the CAC's work in the past. For instance, Twitter's CBA, the biggest of the six signed this year, slipped through the process from draft form to finalization with only minimal input from the public because the CAC could not manage to get together over the course of six weeks in December and January.

Typically, once the city administrator's office and the firm in question agree on a draft of a CBA, it's presented to the CAC for review. For Twitter, that review began at the CAC's

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