

101 weapons turned in at SoMa buyback

School district endorses United Playaz event

By MARK HEDIN

THE GUN BUYBACK United Playaz hosted Dec. 13, the second anniversary of the Sandy Hook School massacre in Connecticut, netted 101 weapons that ultimately will become manhole covers, police said.

While acknowledging that their work is largely symbolic without meaningful antigun legislation, organizers nonetheless celebrated every gun surrendered as a potentially life-saving event.

One unprecedented aspect, however, was the participation of the San Francisco Unified School District. The school board unanimously passed member Matt Haney's resolution in support of gun violence prevention and, in what one of the organizers, in Johnstone, said is the first time a U.S. district has taken such a stand, sent a letter home with every student on Dec. 5 informing parents and guardians of the buyback event and listing an array of risks associated with having a gun in the home: homicide, suicide and accidental death.

"Every 30 minutes a child or teen



PHOTO BY MARK HEDIN

The crew that collected 101 guns on Dec. 13. United Playaz founder Rudy Corpuz Jr. stands at center, arms crossed, in white.

dies or is injured from a gun," the letter read. "Too often the child has obtained the weapon from his/her home."

Police cordoned off the right lane of Howard Street on either side of Sixth and directed people turning in weapons to drive up to the United Playaz center. There they were met by staff, volunteers and police on hand to ensure that the weapons were disabled and give United Playaz founder Rudy Corpuz Jr. the green light to hand over the requisite cash payment. The reward was \$100 for handguns, shotguns and rifles and \$200 for assault weapons.

Corpuz said that people showed up two hours early to turn in weapons at the 9 a.m. event. A Civic Center rally was canceled, Johnstone said, because of the ongoing protests against police killings of civilians.

Sgt. Angela Rodriguez told The Extra that the haul included two assault weapons, 25 semiautomatic pistols, 22

revolvers, 30 shotguns and 20 rifles. Also a BB gun and a pellet gun. One man got \$20 for what he said was a starting pistol for use at sporting events.

"It looked real," Corpuz said. "Anything that potentially could get someone hurt, we're gonna take it."

Other weapons turned in included a .357 Taurus, a Smith & Wesson 9mm semiautomatic handgun, a Sterling .25-caliber semiautomatic pistol, a .32-caliber Beretta and a number of .22 rifles, Rodriguez told The Extra.

"All it takes is a home burglary and those guns are on the street," she said.

Among the sponsors were a trio of cannabis clubs organized by the Hallinan & Hallinan law firm, which collectively contributed \$35,000. The nonprofit gunxgun, organized by Johnstone, whose father was killed on California Street between Larkin and Hyde in 1992 by a teenager using a stolen pistol, raised \$12,000 through a crowd-sourcing Website and \$10,000

more via matching funds granted by tech investor Ron Conway. The mayor's office, through the efforts of Supervisor Jane Kim, chipped in another \$1,000, Corpuz said, for a total of \$57,000.

Some funds paid for United Playaz's outreach to publicize the event, and to feed the volunteers. Corpuz and Johnstone said that how the leftover funds would be disbursed hadn't been decided, but said they could do another buyback. Or, the money could be folded into United Playaz programming. But at \$100 per weapon for most of the guns turned in, there should still be plenty to go around.

Separately, gun buybacks were held in San Jose and Oakland also that day.

"I'm tired of going to funerals," said volunteer Mattie Scott, who lost her son in a shooting. "I want to go to some graduations!" ■

Big 3 tax-break companies get new break

CAC bows to city, locks in pacts for 3-4 years

By MARK HEDIN

THE BIGGEST COMPANIES enjoying the Twitter tax break also got a break from the Citizen's Advisory Committee that represents the neighborhood's interests in the agreements meant to mitigate the gentrification those firms have brought.

On Dec. 4, the CAC gave its blessing to five CBAs, three of them multi-year for the first time.

Instead of revisiting the agreements to make them more "robust" each year, as the companies pledged in the previous agreements, the biggest firms' benefits are now locked in for three and four years. The people's panel members seemed to bow to the inevitable.

Rather than vote against the CBAs and see them signed by the city anyway, as happened this year, the panel opted to make a good-faith gesture and endorsed the deals between the city administrator's office and five tech firms — Twitter, Microsoft, Zendesk, Spotify and Zoosk.

The CBAs for the first three of those companies will carry them through their remaining years of eligibility for the six-year exclusion from the city's payroll tax.

Spotify and Zoosk, the smallest players in the game, presumably will be back at the table next year, as will One Kings Lane, which had largely

boycotted the CAC's monthly meetings all year and was the only company whose CBA was voted down this time, although City Administrator Naomi Kelly is expected to sign its CBA anyway.

As for the bigger fish, "We won't be renegotiating per se about the terms," CAO representative Bill Barnes told The Extra. "I don't think we have to reinvent the wheel every year."

"We're just there so they can act like the CBAs have some community input," CAC Chair Peter Masiak told The Extra. "A token advisory body. The CAO is going through these processes without consultation from the CAC."

"I feel like we weren't going to get better agreements this year," he said. Addressing his CAC colleagues just prior to the vote, he'd said, "It comes down to faith. As we saw last year, these are going to be signed whether it's yea or nay."

CAC member Robert Marquez questioned the advisability of entering into long-term deals when key information that would inform the process won't be available for months.

The CBAs were originally expected to return about a third of the value of each company's Twitter tax break savings to the community, but this year, as Marquez pointed out to Barnes, with Twitter having gone public in November 2013 and its workers subsequently being eligible to begin cashing in stock options, which are normally subject to the city's payroll tax, the value to Twitter of its tax break will be much greater than in previous years. Although the city tax collector will eventually report on the forgone

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CHAIR, CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

revenue, that report is almost a year away.

Barnes, speaking in his customary rapid-fire manner, replied by pointing out a separate piece of legislation courtesy of then-Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi passed, as was the Twitter tax break, in the spring of 2011 that also could shield Twitter or Zendesk — which went public in May — from stock option-related payroll tax obligations. In other words, he implied, one way or another, the community will never see a benefit deriving from that particular gold mine, as impacted companies could simply opt out of the Twitter tax break that mandates the CBAs, and leave the community high and dry.

"There's nothing in place to tell us how these things will change," Marquez told The Extra. "My understanding is they will go back to the table if the CAO and Twitter feel it's in Twitter's interest to give more. Otherwise, what triggers it?"

"I think the city's position on this is clear," said CAC member Steven Suzuki. "They've gotten what they needed, they don't need anything more."

Asked to elaborate, he said, "The city's original intent was to provide a way for Twitter to stay, which I think they got."

Suzuki was the only CAC member this time around to vote for all six CBAs, even One Kings Lane's.

"The agreements are still worse than they are good, they still get a failing grade," Masiak said in the aftermath. But "the expiration of these tax breaks is on the horizon. Twitter's not going to pick up and move. So you've got to start at some point thinking about what's the game plan trying to affect long-term plans and relationships."

Microsoft's CBA, despite being a four-year agreement, doesn't even discuss what the company proposes to do beyond 2015 to fulfill its commitments.

"Displacement is where we should be going. The No. 1 issue isn't being dealt with," CAC member Steven Tennis told The Extra. "I think it's a shame we went with a four-year plan."

Tennis and Marquez cast the only dissenting votes on Twitter and Microsoft's CBAs.

"What we did was just to appease people who think this is a process that includes the residents. I don't feel that it does it in the way that it could or should. There's gotta be a better way of doing it than it's done now. I'm very frustrated and I don't think my sentiments are any different from the others," Tennis said.

Despite a multitude of efforts to elicit comment from Supervisor Jane Kim on the CBAs or the work of the hamstrung committee her legislation created, the supe was silent. ■