

Tenderloin station's public room brouhaha

Group gets space for private use — a policy breach?

By MARJORIE BEGGS

IT'S BEEN LIKE CLOCKWORK for 13 years: Every third Wednesday each month at 11 a.m. the Tenderloin Futures Collaborative has convened at the police station community room on Eddy Street across from Boeddeker Park.

Last fall, scheduling for the room hit a snag — and the collaborative had to shift its Wednesday meetings to Thursdays — hinting, perhaps, at administrative problems at the Tenderloin Police Station since Capt. Teresa Ewin took over the reins last summer.

Capt. Ewin, the station's ninth commander in its 15 years, has kept a low profile, notably forgoing the

informative, often downright chatty, weekly email newsletter featuring local crime stats, fraud alerts and community activities produced by three captains who preceded her — Jason Cherniss, Joe Garrity and Gary Jimenez. They, and others before them, were a presence in the neighborhood and often showed up at community meetings, or at least sent a station rep.

Right after Capt. Ewin took over the post in June, she attended one Futures Collaborative meeting, introducing herself and mentioning a few of her interests, such as Community Police Advisory Boards, but there's been nary a sign of her or an emissary since. Capt. Garrity, by contrast, was a regular at the collaborative, answering questions from the floor and offering police news and perspectives.

Attending the forum would be a useful part of community policing. Residents, nonprofit agency and business reps meet for an hour to hear about changes in the TL that run from potentially dire — a planned 10-story housing complex that would shade Boeddeker Park or a proposal to reverse a decades-old moratorium on new massage parlors — to moderately affecting, such as a new cafe moving into a long-vacant storefront.

Volunteers have chaired and administered this strictly informational forum since its inception in 2001, when it picked up where the Lower Eddy/Leavenworth Task Force left off scrutinizing neighborhood improvement plans.

The collaborative first met at a large, dim, reverberant room at St. Anthony's, then

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VIDEO STILL: SF CITY WATCH, YOUTUBE

TL Capt. Teresa Ewin insists: "All meetings are open to the public."

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Kim opens door Leland Yee shut

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CENTRAL CITY



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DIVERSE CITY



PHOTO: TOM CARTER

Ron Byers and son, Jason, have lived at Curran House one year. Single father and teen son is a rare household in the Tenderloin. The Byers' story and how they fit into the social tapestry of the neighborhood is another in The Extra's series that shows the TL as a Diverse City unto itself.

A place to call home

What a strange, long trip it's been to Tenderloin for single dad and son

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TOM CARTER

THE LONG ROAD HOME can be arduous, mixed with animosity and kindness, deceptions and generosity, good weather and blizzards, even shared with wild animals, or so it's been for single dad Ron Byers and his teenage son. They've seen it all, up close, and they've arrived.

Byers, standing in front of Curran House where he and son Jason live in a one-bedroom apartment, rolls a cigarette from a blue pouch of sweet-smelling Wildhorse pipe tobacco, a nasty habit for which the ever-polite Byers quickly apologizes.

"I know it's not good for me," he confesses. "Jason wants me to stop. He's right."

Yet he enjoys smoking and there haven't been many lasting pleasures in Byers' life. He's been homeless four times, on occasion with Jason as a young boy. But this is the end of it. Now, judiciously, he takes one day at a time.

"People tell me," he says, describing his journey, "that I have a fascinating story to tell."

A big man, 6 feet 2, his long, thinning hair falls well past his shoulders. Byers has soulful eyes and a soft voice like his son. At 52, his life has seldom lingered on a best-case scenario. Three times he chose the wrong woman for a wife, he has tremors from a disabling on-the-job injury, a chronically aching leg from his Navy

days that can give out and send him sprawling, and, from the pressures of his aggregate misfortunes, he hears voices that he has to fight off, diagnosed, as he was last year, with post traumatic stress disorder.

Just so, there is much to like and admire in Ron Byers.

"Raising a kid and being a single man, I've had to learn that," he says. "I changed (Jason's) first diaper and all the rest to the last."

It's a rare situation in a neighborhood characterized by older single adults and not many families. In 2014, the latest figures from the American Community Survey Census, as provided by Department of Human Services research, show 789 married couple households with children under 18 in the Tenderloin's census tracts, but just 167 single dads.

"I've been working since age 13. I remember dipping ice cream at the Muncie Mall for \$2 an hour. It was a lot of money. I bought a brooch for my mother. It was her favorite, the one she was buried with."

At 14, he was contributing \$100 a month to his parents after his dad lost his longtime job as a meat cutter when the company folded.

"I've been a manual laborer all my life, hundreds of jobs. I'm a jack-of-all-trades, master of none."

Hundreds may not be a stretch as he ticks off weed-pulling; shoveling cow shit; slaughtering chickens and turkeys; mining coal (for a week); operating carnival rides and sideshows; short order cooking. The list goes on. But disabilities have prevented him from working in recent years.

He and Jason, 18, have been at Curran House a year following a desultory existence chasing a better life in a half-dozen states. They are still adjusting to the sanctuary of stability.

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