

# Topless bar scheme stuns neighborhood activists

## TL captain 'unlikely' to OK permit

By Marjorie Beggs

Steve Moses, new lessee of 34 Mason St., tried hard to put a positive spin on his latest business venture: "We'll light up the street, which has become a blight, and we'll have security," he announced at the November Tenderloin Futures Collaborative meeting. "I'm sure it will be an improvement."

Folks exchanged glances. Hackles rose. The harrumphs around the table were almost audible.

Moses, with his ex-wife Dee at his side, had just said that their business would not only serve beverages and food from 11 a.m. to 2 a.m., and food only after hours, it would also feature . . . dancing girls.

"You mean topless dancers?" asked someone, incredulously.

"Yes, topless dancers," said Moses, former proprietor of Polo's Lounge and Grill at 34 Mason until it closed in 1993, and later of the Chez Paree. Moses currently runs Red's Corner at Mason and Ellis.

Susan Phillips, tenant services supervisor at 201 Turk Street Apartments, sitting just a few chairs away from Moses, expressed disbelief at his proposal, and others shared her reaction.

It would have taken the proverbial knife to cut the tension in the air, but Moses plowed on. "This week, we're applying for the liquor and entertainment licenses and after-hours permits. We'll put 100 people to work and," he repeated, "we'll have security."

Last March, Collaborative members gave 34 Mason building owner Michael Bovo a decidedly warmer reception. At that meeting, Bovo laid out plans for a multilevel, sports-themed bar and billiards for the building, which has been vacant since Polo's shut down. Apparently, no one wanted to open that kind of place, and Bovo leased the site to Moses.

When Katie Mullin of TNDC, who was chair of the meeting, called for questions, members, rendered temporarily speechless, were slow to respond.

Finally, St. Anthony's community liaison Roscoe Hawkins asked: "What kind of clientele do you hope to draw?"

"Tourists, conventioners," Moses replied, "you know, high-class patrons who come in to enjoy the show."

Mullin told Moses that she appreciated him coming to the meeting — that it was a good forum for sharing information — but she wanted to remind him that the Collaborative had recently put the nix on 50 Mason's plans for live lingerie models.

"And we want to express our concern for another liquor license application," Mullin said, "because it has an effect on residential hotels and the residents who live in the Tenderloin."

"I'm not trying to bamboozle anyone," Moses replied. "I just came here to tell you what we're planning — to be up front about it."

Asked by TSIP Director Shawn Collins what Moses planned to pay employees and whether he would hire local people, Moses said average wages would start at about \$10 an hour for doormen, security guards, busboys and cooks. "And we've already talked to Glide's Job Training Program about hiring," he added. (Glide reps later said they haven't spoken with Moses about this project.)

The one voice of support came from Dalt Hotel resident and TNDC board member John Burkitt. "I can say I'd rather have your business than what's there now. The aromas . . . anything's better than an empty storefront," Burkitt said.

Phillips said she felt obliged to explain why Moses' proposed business so offended her: "A lot of people here today have worked hard to stop off-site liquor licenses, and I'm also concerned about the exploitation of females. A lot of us have fought long and hard for women's rights."

Phillips, however, was not without a sense of humor, "If you're going to have strippers, then have male strippers, too."

Moses gave his only smile of the day. "Okay — I'll do that and I'll send you passes."

Hawkins closed the discussion with a disclaimer and a caveat. "We're not a decision-making body, but I think you understand how a lot of us feel about this. For 25 years, we've tried to change the culture of the Tenderloin and change the profile of the Tenderloin for our kids."

A liquor license is probably the least of Moses' problems. The Planning Code for North of Market doesn't permit any new adult entertainment business within 1,000 feet of an existing one. Among several 34 Mason neighbors are the Tea Room at 145 Eddy and the Gaiety Theatre at 80 Turk.

Does a bar with topless dancers fit the adult entertainment profile? According to Mullin, after the meeting, Moses told her that he'd been "in the business 30 years" and knew all about the moratorium and doesn't believe it applies to his proposal.

The *Extra* talked with Officer Mike Torres at the Tenderloin police station in early December about Moses' application to open a place of entertainment and his request for a permit to conduct business after hours, until 6 a.m.

The application, Torres said, claims that the "adult entertainment" at the site will be limited to less than 10% of the 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. entertainment hours, which would put it outside the moratorium restrictions. [The *Extra* calculates that would be less than 42 minutes of toplessness in seven late-night hours — not much bang for the buck.]

"I'm reviewing the applications now — which were signed by Dee Moses — but it really doesn't look

like we'll approve them because of the 1,000-foot limitation," Torres said.

According to Lt. Bruce Lorin in the police's Permit Department, the applications are sent simultaneously to the city's fire, public health, building inspection, electrical inspection, planning, noise abatement, and parking and traffic agencies. Each evaluates the permit requests from its unique p.o.v., then gets back to the police with its recommendation. Planning, and not the police, is responsible for determining whether the business fits the adult entertainment criteria.

"We've already got a Dec. 18 permit hearing scheduled for 34 Mason," Lt. Lorin said. "The hearing notice will be posted on the building 10 days before the hearing, and if there's opposition — from the community — we'll take testimony right at the hearing."

Lt. Lorin, Capt. Tom O'Neill and Sgt. Ann Mannix, the three hearing officers, listen to an applicant's presentation, agency recommendations, and public support or opposition; then the officers grant, conditionally grant (if all the city agencies haven't responded) or don't approve the application. If there's public opposition or the officers disapprove, the permit goes to the chief, who must decide to grant or deny the permit within 15 working days. Denials have to be appealed within 15 days to the Board of Appeals.

And the liquor license? Director of the San Francisco office of ABC Andrew Gomez said that as of Dec. 3, no application was on file, though one, signed by a Shauna Marie Smith, had been filed in December 2001 and withdrawn — "with no explanation," Gomez said — in May 2002.

Just before The *Extra* went to press, new TL Capt. David Shinn told Collaborative members at the Dec. 11 meeting that he was "unlikely" to recommend permit approvals.

### Short takes

Having dispensed with matter topless, the meeting agenda turned to previous items, which Mullin updated:

The **Hastings Blue Ribbon Committee** — charged with reviewing all the hoopla and recommending alternatives to an eight-story garage that the law school wants to build at Larkin and Golden Gate — has met twice, Mullin said. The committee expects to report back to the Hastings board of directors in March.

On Oct. 28, **50 Mason St.** lessee Joel Hunt filed with the departments of Building Inspection and City Planning his application to open a 49-seat comedy club and lounge. Planner Jim Miller told Mullin that there's no problem with the use — it's appropriate for the area — but that the application has been flagged because of past problems. (Last year, Hunt did an end run around Planning and tried to

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for. . .

**S.F. Network Ministries** has expanded its kids' after-school and evening computer lab with a \$10,000 grant from Hewlett Packard and jazzed up the room with bright beanbag chairs, a donation from Mancini's Sleepworld. The lab, which opened in 1998, now has 10 computers and is open for 6- to 16-year-olds Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays,



PHOTO: RANIA SUTTON-EBERS  
Jesuit volunteer Matt Trinca helps Andie at Network Ministries' computer lab.

3 to 5 p.m., up from two days a week. Network Ministries also has added a Thursday evening Web design class for older teens. "We used to get four to six kids a day after school," said Associate Director Scott

MacLeod. "Now we're up to 10 to 15, and overall about 25 different kids are using the program." Call MacLeod for more information: 928-6209.

**201 Turk Street Apartments SHIP** (Strategic Humane Intervention Program) has chosen 201 Turk Street Apartments to host its innovative violence-prevention program. Using a two-year grant from the Office of Criminal Justice Planning, SHIP teaches parents and their children, 8 and older, how to get others to cooperate using positive methods rather than punishment. What's novel: Participants work with dogs from the S.F. Dept. of Animal Care and Control. The hope is that a parent who learns how to make a dog sit, stay and come can apply the same rules to a dawdling child, for example. The goal is cooperation, not obedience. SHIP classes, which also give the shelter dogs a better chance at adoption and are a fun family activity, are held in the multi-use room from 6 to 7 p.m. on Thursday evenings. Kids and parents have to commit to three sessions. For more info: Susan Phillips, tenant services supervisor at 201 Turk Street Apartments, 674-1284.

**Alonzo King's LINES Ballet School** is offering up to 10 scholarships to 7- to 10-year-old neighborhood kids in its new digs at 24 Seventh St., the Odd Fellows' building. The classes, Mondays and Wednesdays, 4-5 p.m., start Jan. 13. The scholarship covers full tuition, dance clothes and shoes, says Kendra Chell, volunteer for the acclaimed LINES Ballet, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. Applicants don't need prior experience; this is a professional dance class that guides students from their first pas to the full dance vocabulary. Scholarship winners must be able to attend all classes and make a one-year commitment. Application due date is Dec. 20. For information: Summer Lee Rhatigan, LINES Ballet School director, 863-3040, ext. 239.

### Be a winner next year

Does your nonprofit organization bring in professional artists to run arts and education programs for people with special needs, youth, seniors, the disabled, the homeless? You may be eligible for a grant of up to \$20,000 from from the S.F. Arts Commission's Programs in the Community. Pick up grant applications at 25 Van Ness Ave., Suite 240, or download from <http://sfac.sfsu.edu>. Free application workshops 5 p.m. Thursday, December 12, and 10 a.m. Monday, December 16, 25 Van Ness, Suite 70 (lower level). Application deadline is 5 p.m., January 10, 2003. Information: 252-2598.

— Marjorie Beggs

If you have some good news (no events, please), send it to [marjorie@studycenter.org](mailto:marjorie@studycenter.org).



Central City Extra is published monthly by San Francisco Study Center Inc., a private nonprofit serving the community since 1972. The Extra is published through grants from the S.F. Hotel Tax Fund and the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund. The contents are copyrighted by the San Francisco Study Center, 1095 Market Street, Suite 602, San Francisco, CA 94103. Phone: 626-1650 Fax: 626-7276 E-mail: [centralcityextra@studycenter.org](mailto:centralcityextra@studycenter.org) Editor and Publisher: Geoffrey Link Senior Writer/Editor: Marjorie Beggs

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