

Topless club sizzle fizzles

Looks like cover-up order has put kibosh on deal

PHOTO BY CARL ANGEL

34 MASON ST.

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

IS a dancing girl nude if she's wearing pasties and a thong?

Technically, no, said Steve and Dee Moses who wanted to open a bar with buck-naked dancing girls at 34 Mason, but after being told by Tenderloin police that the entertainers couldn't be nude were agreeable to the next best thing.

At Futures Collaborative meetings in December and January — and in a flurry of e-mails since then from TNDC's Katie Mullin — members have been brought up to date on the Moseses' attempt to circumvent the 1,000-foot moratorium on new adult entertainment businesses in the neighborhood. By the end of January, it looked as if that attempt had failed.

In November, the Moseses appalled many Collaborative members by presenting their plan for a bar at the former Polo's restaurant site that would stay open until 6 a.m., and would feature topless dancers.

Officer Mike Torres of the TL police station summarized what happened next: At a December police Permit Department hearing, Steve Moses presented his plan, but new TL Capt. David Shinn recommended that Permits disapprove the after-hours application because of the moratorium.

"The applicants said they would withdraw the plan for topless dancers and just have clothed ones," Torres said. "So we

got the revised application, reviewed it and saw no grounds to disapprove, but we wanted to add conditions so the applicants wouldn't deviate and have topless dancers."

Torres presented the long list of conditions to the Collaborative with a straight face: Dancers "can't expose breasts or buttocks and no see-through clothing"; no nude or topless entertainment allowed on any level of the three-story building.

Nine other conditions discouraged adult pastimes: No soliciting of customers by hostesses; no less than 12 foot-candles of light except during the show; for dancers employed by the bar, no dancing with customers; no private rooms, booths or stalls; the entertainers have to stay on the stage; and the establishment has to serve food, not just snacks, during all hours it's open.

Just as important to neighbors, but less racy, were these conditions: sound tests to ensure acceptable noise levels; 30 off-street parking places available between 6 p.m. and 2 a.m.; security at the front door during all shows; and premises kept litter-free at all times.

Collaborative members listened to the conditions calmly — no one snickered, and all approved the conditions. Torres encouraged group members opposed to the bar to attend the Jan. 8 Permits rehearing "because what you say will count."

"I have to say that I feel that there's not much we can do to oppose this now," said Richard Allman, member of the U.N. Plaza

Working Group. "[The Moseses] will try to change the conditions subtly, because with these conditions, who will come to a place like this? Customers surely won't come to have a good meal. It just doesn't seem like a viable venture to me."

Oh, Allman's prophetic soul!

The Jan. 8 hearing was rescheduled until Jan. 15. There, Steve Moses refused to agree to the exposure and no-see-um conditions, saying that the dancers would wear thongs. Planning said it wanted more time to review the application, and yet another hearing was set for Feb. 12.

The Extra caught up with Torres at the end of January. The gummy mess of a plot had thickened.

"The building owner, Mike Bovo, just told me he was no longer going to lease to the Moseses and that he had a new tenant," Torres said. "But, you know, I'll believe it when I see it in writing. What happens now is that the Moseses will have to withdraw their application, or I'll have to prove that they don't have a lease."

Did that make any sense — an application to operate a business with no lease?

"Well, this IS the Tenderloin," Torres said.

And in another wrinkle: Mullin told The Extra that she got a call from a man named Peter Glickner who was interested in participating in TNDC's Façade Improvement Program for his new restaurant at 34-38 Mason. It would be called 38 Special, he said, and would have Asian fusion food with live jazz on the second floor. Glickner said he didn't know about anyone else having a lease on the space.

This IS the Tenderloin.

TL's new captain: 'So happy to be here'

The Futures Collaborative is about a lot more than busts and bums. The calendar for the December meeting included a short presentation by the new captain of the Tenderloin Task Force, David Shinn, who came on board last August. His career as an officer started in the Tenderloin 19 years ago, he said, and in between he was a patrolman on the Bayview bomb squad, served in the Ingleside district, and was in the police inspector's bureau and the legal division.

"The legal work was my first and last desk job," Capt. Shinn said. "I'm so happy to be back on the street and here in the Tenderloin."

Scrubbing the 'Loin and talking trash

And those streets are a lot cleaner than they were during Shinn's first beat days. Also in December, Tenderloin Sidewalk Improvement Program Executive Director Shawn Collins and Denise Castaneda, District 6 liaison to the Mayor's Office on Neighborhood Services, gave the Collaborative a rundown of TSIP and city efforts to scrub the TL.

Collins passed out TSIP's two-page newsletter, complete with a map of its weekly cleaning route and cleaning times. "Keeping up with the cleaning is a matter of resources," Collins said. "Much of the city's resources are spent on Market Street and much less north and south of Market."

"What we really need is education about what to do with trash," said Ed Evans of the Mayor's Disability Council during the Q and A. "All those refrigerators and sofas on the sidewalk — what do you do with them? It's time to educate and people and, if they persist, get in there and just fine the heck out of them."

Castaneda passed around a bilingual [English and Chinese] flyer from DPW's Bureau of Street Environmental Services. It illustrates with photos what is and isn't "acceptable" for disposing of garbage, the name and section number for code violations, and the fines for scofflaws — up to \$500, for example, if owners don't clean up the sidewalks in front of their homes or businesses.

Capt. Shinn said he "drives the district every morning and night" and sees keeping the streets clean as a quality-of-life issue. "DPW has started steam cleaning, and we do spot checks for graffiti and for things left on the street. Also, we'll start citing people soon who are breaking the law." He encouraged people to support the city's efforts by writing Mohammed Nuru, DPW's deputy director of operations, who oversees street cleaning.

COMEDY CLUB

Much of the January Collaborative meeting was taken up with updates on land use in the 'hood, courtesy of Katie Mullin.

Joel Hunt, the lessee of 50 Mason, is still negotiating with Planning to open a comedy club. Besides agreeing to forgo any adult entertainment at the establishment, Hunt also has decided to drop his application for a liquor license, a move that should speed his application.

TEMPLE HOUSING

The Planning Commission on Dec. 12 approved a seven-story, 53-room project at 380 Ellis, housing for students and visiting lecturers at the Congenital Taoist of America Temple.

HASTINGS UPDATE

And the Hastings Blue Ribbon Committee, reviewing the whys and what ifs of the planned eight-story garage, rescheduled its December meeting until the end of January.

"Is there any way we can turn up the heat on this?" asked S.F. Ministries' the Rev. Glenda Hope. "It's really important that Hastings not drag its feet on this, especially if they're just waiting for John Burton to be termed out of office." Sen. John Burton had cranked up the heat full blast on Hastings last June, giving the school an ultimatum: Listen to community concerns and resolve them or lose your state funding. If the Blue Ribboners can wait until next year. . . .

FUTURE OF THE COLLABORATIVE

At the close of the January meeting, Mullin suggested that in February, members once more take up the question of

whither the Collaborative — will it remain a monthly information-sharing get-together, or formalize itself into an association whose members vote and take positions on controversial issues?



Long-shuttered Polo's Restaurant at 34 Mason St. is now being talked about as a site for chic food and live jazz.

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— Richard Allman