

# Curtain going up

## Mayor's Entertainment Commission nominees finally in

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

**S**O you want to open a pool hall in the Tenderloin? File a permit for an entertainment venue today and the Police Department — technically, the chief of police — has the final say about granting and enforcing it and revoking it if you mess up. File come July 1, and you'll find your permit in the hands of the city's newest civilian-controlled body: the Entertainment Commission.

By late March, the supes had confirmed three of the seven commissioners, and two transition teams were meeting regularly, one to thrash out administration and budget, the other to look at implementation.

The genesis of the new commission was nasty. In the late '90s, South of Market residents and club owners clashed mightily over whose rights had priority, those who wanted to rock 'n roll with amplification into the night, or those who wanted to live more quietly in their lofts and apartments. Noise wasn't the only problem. Drugs, fights, drunkenness, public defecation, illegal parking and more were cited by neighbors.

The struggle came to a head when a civil grand jury in 1999 recommended that the city establish a new commission to handle entertainment permits. Among the grand jury's other suggestions was that the police publish a list of permit violations so club owners would know what could get them shut down. The jury also requested standardized decibel levels based on up-to-date engineering criteria.

Supervisor Mark Leno took the lead on the commission idea. Last July, the full board voted 8-3 to approve Leno's amendment to the City Charter — a new Chapter 90 of the Administrative Code and changes to Article 15 of the Police Code — creating a seven-member Entertainment Commission that will grant and revoke six categories of entertainment permits, all currently under police authority. In November, 56.7% of the voters approved the charter change, Measure F. The commission will grant the permits; enforcement will remain in the police bailiwick.

### ADULT ENTERTAINMENT EXCLUDED

Notably excluded from the transfer of responsibility is adult entertainment. Permitting and enforcement stay with the police, as do many non-entertainments — fish peddling and valet parking, to name a few.

"My goal," said Terrance Alan, one of the three commissioners appointed so far, "is to help usher San Francisco into an era of entertainment with minimum impacts on neighborhoods." Nightlife, he said, should be supported as a revenue-producing industry, not regulated into oblivion.

Commission staffing isn't set yet, but the legislation requires a mayoral-appointed director, an unspecified number of civil service "permit administrators" and a sound technician to check noise levels.

The budget, too, is undecided. The only revenue source is permit and license fees, most of them paid annually. According to the mayor's budget office, this year's permits will bring in an estimated \$250,000, licenses \$450,000. Currently, those fees go into the general fund, and the cost of administering them is paid through the Police Department budget.

The permits and licenses add up. Amending a permit also can carry a hefty tab. A cabaret permit fee is \$908, changing it \$500; a dance-hall keeper pays \$1,108 for a permits and \$500 to amend it.

To earn its keep, the commission will hold public hearings, make permit decisions, coordinate with other city departments, and try to resolve disputes between residents and entertainment entrepreneurs.

The supes appoint three of the seven commissioners — advocates for neighborhood, entertainment and public health concerns. The mayor gets four appointments — representa-

tives of neighborhood, entertainment, urban planning and law enforcement interests.

March 18, the full board of supes confirmed the Rules Committee's recommended trio:

**ENTERTAINMENT:** Alan, chairman of the S.F. Late Night Coalition, a three and a half-year-old political action committee that advocates for the city's late-night culture. Alan owns gay strip joint Club 220 [220 Jones, the former Campus Club] and produces gay porn movies. He helped Leno draft the Entertainment Commission legislation. Alan and Late Night Coalition legal analyst Jim Wood are on the implementation transition team, the group charged with smoothing the process of moving permit authority from the police to the new commission.

**NEIGHBORHOOD:** Jim Meko, leader of the SoMa Leadership Council, which advocates for the neighborhood's mixed-use character of blue- and white-collar businesses, apartments, live-work spaces. Meko led the SoMa Residents Association during the disputes in the 1990s, bringing club owners and neighbors to the table to talk through their conflicts.

"Jim Meko will be a very good representative for our district and for the city as a whole," said District 6 Supe Chris Daly.

**PUBLIC HEALTH:** Joseph Pred, a certified emergency medical trainer and former captain of EMT services for San Mateo County and now the emergency medical services director for Burning Man, the 15-year-old extravaganza in the Nevada desert. Pred also is a consultant for various dance events in venues such as Maritime Hall in the city and HomeBase in Oakland.

### MAYORAL DELAYS

The mayor asked for two two-week extensions to get his four nominees together. On April 1, as *The Extra* went to press, he officially named them. For the neighborhood seat, Mayor Brown wants Dr. Jordan Schlain, director of S.F. On-Call Medical Group, which provides free medical services in the neighborhoods through a mobile clinic. Schlain also is on the board of directors of the San Francisco Medical Society and is a medical ethics lecturer at U.C. Berkeley.

The mayor's urban planning nominee is Bowman Leong, a financial analyst and partner in Founders Real Estate Services, who sits on the city Elections Task Force on Redistricting and the Taxi Cab Commission, and is board president of the nonprofit Pets Unlimited where he oversaw a \$5.4 million facility renovation.

For the law enforcement seat, the mayor nominated recently retired SFPD Lt. Bruce Lorin, a 32-year veteran of the force who for the last eight years was chief hearing officer in the police permit department and also was in charge of the taxi detail.

Audrey Joseph, operator of Club Townsend at Townsend and Third Street for the last 10 years, was nominated to represent the entertainment community. Her high-profile club was in the news recently when Yoko Ono stopped by to preview her remixed single "Kiss Kiss Kiss." Joseph has 20 years' of experience in nightclub management and event productions.

The mayor's press secretary P.J. Johnston confirmed that Michael Brown, the mayor's son, had been considered as the entertainment rep, but that his name was withdrawn last month for unknown reasons. Mayor Brown's nominees are expected to go to the supes' Rules Committee next week and, if approved, to the full board for confirmation.

When Leno was elected to the Assembly last year, he asked colleague, Supe Aaron Peskin, to oversee the Entertainment Com-

mission's creation.

With just three months to go before the commission begins operating, Peskin is optimistic.

"We've been working to ensure that there's an orderly transition among departments, and also that [the new commission] is budget-neutral," Peskin said. "Mostly, it's been the normal issues of bureaucratic transferring. There haven't been any large problems — if there had been, I assume I'd have heard about them."

Essential to smoothing the way are the transition teams, he said. The financial team includes staff from the Controller's Office and the mayor's budget office, Alan and Wade Crowfoot, Peskin's aide.

The larger working group team includes reps from city departments now involved with the police in determining which entertainment permit applications pass muster — Fire, City Planning, Public Health, Building Inspection and ISCOTT [Inter-Departmental Staff Committee on Traffic and Transportation].

Under its tutelage, the new commission will be responsible for okaying "extended-hours premises" and a mixed-bag of permits, some of which sound downright 19th century: "amusements," which include amusement parks, ball- and ring-throwing games, billiards and pool, circuses, masked balls, mechanical amusement devices, recreational equipment vendors and rodeos; dance halls, itinerant [traveling] shows; loudspeakers and loudspeaker vehicles; and places of entertainment.

The last includes just about every imaginable venue where someone sets out to entertain an audience — puppets to poetry slams — but specifically excludes porn and other possibly prurient pleasures.

"The feeling was that adult entertainment involves vice, and permits for that properly remain with the police," Alan said. "The police, by the way, are being very supportive and cooperative."

To follow up on that rosy spin, *The Extra* tried repeatedly to contact Capt. Tom O'Neill, who heads up the police's permit division that hears permit disputes. His phone message — "I've been detailed out of the office and am not sure when I'll return" — was no surprise. It was the week of the anti-war demonstrations.

But we did manage to catch up with Officer Ed Anzore, who investigates noise levels for the permit office and says he'll probably return to regular patrol once the commission is operational.

"I'm probably the only full-time policeman in the country doing sound tests," Anzore said. "I've been doing it for five years, but my job is over as soon as they take over."

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Aaron Peskin  
S.F. SUPERVISOR

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