

Mayor spares Self-Help Center

Hospitality House funded 6 months; TARC gets 1½-year contract

BY TOM CARTER

AFTER vetoing Supervisor Daly's measure to keep the Tenderloin Self-Help Center at 290 Turk alive through June, the mayor's office two weeks later reversed itself and promised the city would keep the center open until then. It ends the neighborhood angst over the immediate future, but not the life, of the derelicts' haven.

Meanwhile, the program one block away that was to replace the center opened its expanded drop-in services for the poor and homeless men and women Feb. 1 and will soon operate 7 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. daily. The nonprofit Tenderloin AIDS Resource Center at 183-87 Golden Gate Ave. last September edged out Central City Hospitality House's Self-Help Center by winning an 18-month contract with the Department of Human Services.

But a "roller coaster" ride, as TARC's Executive Director Tracy Brown describes it, ensued over the funding. The money for TARC was in the mayor's budget last summer, then out in the fall, then back in the winter. Daly authored a measure to give the money to Self-Help in December, which the board approved 7 to 4 and sent to the mayor Jan. 4. He vetoed it four days later. When it came to the supes on Jan. 25 to vote on the veto, they tabled it, staving off a win-lose situation in favor of win-win, at least temporarily.

"The mayor's office said it would fund both (programs) until June," said District 6's Daly after the board session. How it's going to be paid for "is his problem, not mine."

The Self-Help Center's frequent savior had just helped table his own measure that would have given the program \$283,809, half its 2003-04 budget. Eight votes were needed to override the mayor's veto.

"I had the votes," Daly said.

But Daly's office brokered a deal with the mayor before the Jan. 25 session. And when the item came up on the calendar, Daly quickly seconded the motion to table, an action usually meant to kill.

Deputy Controller Monique Zmuda told The Extra that both programs would be funded out of the DHS budget during the five-month "transition period."

"But what will happen in July will be up to the DHS, the mayor and the board," Zmuda said. "The department doesn't have the money to fund both." Daly's measure would have pulled the dollars destined to support the TARC program out of DHS' budget.

In a Dec. 21 press release, TARC questioned the wisdom and legality of the supervisors pulling the plug on a program the city had approved.

Previously, Brown had discreetly supported the Self-Help Center. At a supervisors' Finance and Audit Committee meeting in early December, he had even spoken in favor of allocating other city funds to save the center.

"But not," Brown said on Dec. 21, "at the expense of our legitimately selected project. Our community needs all the help it can get."

TARC, having missed the mayor's axe and dodged the Daly ordinance, now emerges as the central resource for the homeless in the Tenderloin. The change is subtle, but significant. The Self-Help Center's funding for 19 years came from the Department of Public Health. The new center will be under DHS, which aims to get the 3,000 hard-core homeless off the streets and into living quarters through Mayor Newsom's Care Not Cash program.

TARC's center is open 7 a.m. to noon weekdays now. By March, with more staff, it will stay open until 8:30 p.m. seven days a week. The Self-Help Center, by comparison, is open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The Self-Help Center originated with a pioneering peer-based approach to serving the homeless in the Tenderloin. In 1986,

Hospitality House was the only organization that answered an RFP from Public Health. It was awarded the contract and went on to create a safety net of services for the often disoriented, suspicious and untrusting homeless. Staff and volunteers were peers, most of them formerly homeless themselves, who offered the drop-ins help and referred them to services, from shelters to medical attention, but only at the client's pace.

The program became a model and the center a haven — a roof to be under that had coffee, toilets and showers. It attracted 6,000 people a year, Jackie Jenks, executive director of Hospitality House, estimates.

It had never had to compete for funds for its niche in the Tenderloin until DHS, responding to a new emphasis to solve homelessness, sent out an RFP for a drop-in center in July 2004. In September, in a field of two, Hospitality House finished second to TARC.

Operating under a number of grants since 1990, TARC aims to reduce HIV infection, disease progression and homelessness. It serves about 6,000 people a year, 20% of them living with HIV/AIDS. It, too, sees the most marginal residents in the neighborhood, chronically homeless, substance abusers, transgender persons.

A three-person panel from outside DHS judged the proposals. A Dec. 8 board analyst report indicated that of a possible 100 points, the panel gave TARC 85.3 and Hospitality House 73.7. TARC scored slightly higher in three categories — budget, background and organizational plan — and 26% higher in program design. Another difference was that TARC proposed holding community meetings every other month, initiating crises intervention services and putting in a minimum of 75 lockers for clients.

TARC's center will have toilets, showers, hygiene kits, telephones (with voicemail), a clothing bank, medical help, a pharmacy, shelter access, counseling services and case management.

On Jan. 28, Brown said he had negotiated the lease at 191 Golden Gate held by Lutheran Social Services of Northern California, which will move South of Market. The two floors and a basement add 3,500 square feet to TARC's 5,000, all of which will be reconfigured.

"I'm glad Hospitality House was funded," Brown said. "We can never do what it does and they can never do what we do. There is more than enough work in the Tenderloin for us."

TARC will be part of the emergency shelter reservation system called CHANGES. It requires

finger imaging of anyone who wants a bed for the night, and raises the sticky question of identifying skittish people who don't want to be.

Brown doesn't think it's the best method for tracking clients. Invasive systems and rules, he says, are "fundamentally unjust." But opposing it, he said, should not be a reason to not offer shelter services in the Tenderloin, the community with the city's largest number of homeless.

Jenks said she would meet with Brown in February to discuss TARC services. She told The Extra she didn't think TARC would be able to reach down far enough to help some Self-Help Center clients, and that she intended to try to serve them after her funding runs out.

"We hope to continue our model after June 30," she said. "Our effort has been the self-help model for people who can't access traditional services. The need won't go away after five months — it's still going to be there, even with the new model. It's the mentally ill, the ones who won't be computerized, the low-threshold people who have barriers to access."

"We don't require anything (for identification) and we feel it's important to build that trust so they can move forward. Some won't do shelters because they have to enter the computer. They don't want to be processed or told what to do."

"We want to support them in doing that, and we have been successful in doing that." ■

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Monique Zmuda
DEPUTY CONTROLLER



TENDERLOIN AIDS RESOURCE CENTER Outreach and Community Events February 2005

Health Education Forum

Topic: Harm Reduction Among Transgenders in the Tenderloin

Speaker: Gwen White

Date/Time: Wednesday, February 23, 2005, 6:00pm - 8:00 pm

HIV Education Forum

Topic: HIV and Hepatitis

Speaker: Andrew Reynolds, Treatment Advocate

Date/Time: Wednesday, February 16, 2005, 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Location for Forums: 175 Golden Gate Ave. (St. Boniface Marion Group Room);
light meal will be provided

Client Advisory Panel (CAP)

Come talk with Alexander Fields, Consumer Representative; Tracy Brown, TARC's Executive Director and program managers about plans for TARC. Also provide input on new services and how we can improve.

Date/Time: Wednesday, February 23, 2005, 11:30 am - 1:00 pm

Volunteer for TARC

Orientation: Wednesday, February 9, Thursday, February 10, Friday February 11; 9:20 am - 11:30 am and Sunday, February 13, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

You must pre-register for volunteer trainings. Stop in and see Ned Howey at TARC or call Ned at (415) 934-1792

National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day February 7, 2005

For more information or a schedule of TARC events call 415.432.7476 or go to www.tarc.org

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