

Fire chief orders new air horn policy

Concedes change partly a response to TL group's threat to protest, file suit

BY MEG DIXIT

Citing mounting complaints from Tenderloin residents, as well as what she called a neighborhood group's "threat" to sue the department, Fire Chief Joanne Hayes-White told *The Extra* that the Fire Department would implement a new protocol to lessen the use of air horns in the area.

"Air horns will only sound if a company officer in the vehicle sees the need for it and orders its use," she said in an interview. "Prior to this, the driver of the vehicle could use air horns at any time. Now, only the company officer on board the vehicle will be responsible for utilizing the air horn. We believe this change will help us be good neighbors in the Tenderloin."

The program started as a 30-day trial, but that has been changed to a bureaucratic UFO, Until Further Order, a policy without an end date. Hayes-White said the protocol will be monitored to determine its impact on residents and response times, and said she hopes that traffic accidents don't increase.

The protocol started Oct. 27 after all 42 fire stations were educated about the order.

Hayes-White acknowledged that the Tenderloin suffers more from fire-truck noise pollution than the Sunset or Richmond districts because there are a lot more calls in a more concentrated area.

But the new order will be applied citywide, said Richard Kochevar, SFFD deputy chief of operations. The 911-dispatch process will not be changed, he added.

The San Francisco Fire Department is made up of 2 divisions, 9 battalions, 42 fire stations and 19-22 ambulances. Jones Street is the dividing line between Battalions 2 and 3. Battalion 3 generally serves South of Market and fire trucks usually take Hyde Street to get there.

Tenderloin residents have been complaining about seemingly incessant fire siren and air horn noise in the area since last year. But in early summer, David Villa-Lobos, director of Community Leadership Alliance, filed a claim against the Fire Department and threatened a protest if the situation didn't change.

"We had redundant meetings about the same thing and I heard a lot of rhetoric from the fire chief," Villa-Lobos told *The Extra*. "We here in North of Market have to yell a lot louder to be heard so I felt filing a claim was the best way to address this issue."

With pro bono help, his group filed the claim, he said, but it was denied Aug. 19 by the city attorney's office, which urged him to try to set-

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CENTRAL CITY

EXTRA

SAN FRANCISCO

BATTLE BEGAN IN 2001



PHOTOS BY LENNY LIMJOCO

Pestec worker Herminio Lopez spray for bedbugs at a Tenderloin hotel.

Bedbug scourge

More than third of central city SROs infested

BY TOM CARTER

The epic battle against bedbugs in the central city has SRO residents writhing and managers scratching for that elusive 100% solution, which in fact may be impossible, experience shows, given the lifestyle of the tenants.

Infestations of the tiny vampires that

erupted in earnest four years ago remained plentiful this year. Experts theorize that in 2001, when pest controllers switched pesticides because cockroaches had developed an immunity to pyrethrin, it opened the floodgates to scuttling hordes of bedbugs. Ever since, SRO property managers and pest controllers have struggled. Last year *The Extra* reported that at best they were in a holding pattern.

The misery continues at an alarming rate. The Department of Public Health, responding to SRO requests, has developed leaflets on bedbugs and increased informational talks at SROs. In September, DPH got 12 SRO bedbug complaints, a one-month record.

The code enforcement program of the Tenderloin Housing Clinic, a nonprofit SRO property manager, wrote Supervisor Chris Daly on Oct. 5 decriing the scourge. THC called for Public Health to create a special bedbug inspector job to hand out citations and do outreach. In a 10-month period ending July 2005, the nonprofit helped fight multiple infestations in 54 buildings, 30% of the central city's 185 SROs. And these weren't the only SROs under siege. Bedbugs randomly lodge in old, new and renovated hotels; the larger ones with the highest transient populations are the most vulnerable to infestation.

Daly responded with an Oct. 11 letter asking Dr. Rajiv Bhatia, director of Environmental Health, "for an analysis of the outbreak and some solutions from your office."

On Oct. 26, THC's Elysabeth Alexander appeared before the supervisors' Land Use Committee to explain the bedbug problems and offer recommendations. THC will likely



The Knox Hotel on Sixth Street has been fighting bedbugs for eight months.

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GOOD NEWS for...

ANNIVERSARY GREETINGS to Alliance for a Better District 6, 6 years old in October, and to its messageboard, where 2,000 postings in five years have kept the district's neighborhoods up on what's what.

FOR THEATER LOVERS Rockefeller Foundation has awarded EXIT Theatre \$20,000 for next year's DIVAfest, its Fifth Annual Festival of Women Writers, April 20 through May 6, a week more than previously, thanks to the grant. It also helps underwrite EXIT's commissioning of the premiere of "Beauty and the Breasts" by Liebe Wetzel. "The letter we received from the Rockefeller Foundation states that it supports 'the best from a pool of outstanding applicants,' which is itself a wonderful recognition," said EXIT Artistic Director Christian Augello. At the EXIT from Nov. 5-Dec. 17 is the premiere of an adaptation of "The False Servant" by 18th century French playwright Pierre Marivaux. San Francisco writers Ann and George Crowe, under the sponsorship of Paul Draper's Abydos Theater, explore a world of ambi-sexuality and intrigue.

— PHIL TRACY

SIXTH STREET By Thanksgiving, blighted, dug-up Sixth Street will tweak its character and take on airs suggesting Hawaiian shirts and shades. DPW says by then the Redevelopment Agency will finish its Phase II improvement of the street, topped off with the planting of that international icon for vacationing in the sun — the palm tree. Good old Washington filiferia, also known as the California fan palm with an 18-foot trunk, will adorn the four corners at Mission and Howard at Sixth. Among the other trees earmarked for the project — 63 in all — are flowering pear trees, which will be distributed on both sides of Sixth from Howard to Market. Sewer replacement, street repaving, new street lights and the 1½-foot wider sidewalks will also be completed by turkey day in the \$3.1 million project, DPW promises. Angel Cruz, owner of Club Six, is one of the happy businessmen on Sixth. He just doubled the size of his club by expanding into the old Cannabis Club building next door where he'll feature live jazz. "Everybody's getting a facelift," Cruz says. "I'm happy with the end product." And for people on the newly widened, well-lighted sidewalk, Cruz says he's putting up some eye candy. Above the club's façade, local artists will be displaying their work in eight to 10 panels each 5-by-3 feet, he says.

— TOM CARTER

SOMA BUSINESSES The Redevelopment Agency is expanding its Sixth on Sixth Economic Revitalization loan program to include the South of Market PAC area and adding \$387,000. The PAC area is roughly five blocks from Harrison to Mission and Fifth to Seventh. The program started three years ago with \$750,000 to spruce up two blocks of Sixth from Market to Howard. The loans are to improve façades and attract new businesses to the street. Some \$540,000 has gone for 38 projects while 18 are in the design phase. In October, the Redevelopment Agency Commission earmarked \$190,000 of the remaining money for design assistance grants. Asian Neighborhood Design is the consultant. "We will seek out the owners where facades don't add to the aesthetics of main streets," said Urban Solutions Executive Director Jenny McNulty, who administers the Sixth on Sixth program.

— TOM CARTER

If you have some good news, send it to marjorie@studycenter.org or tom@studycenter.org.

Noise complaint falls silent

Private eye goes public for a sleepy friend

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

Tatyana Polyakova lives at 340 Eddy. But the living isn't easy. Since midsummer, she's been awakened every morning, first by street sweepers at 3 a.m., then at 5 a.m. by garbage collectors, she told the Tenderloin Futures Collaborative in October.

The sleep deprivation is "criminal," she said, asking for help.

Polyakova brought her friend Andrew Solow, a vice president at Gladding & Michel, a private detective agency in Burlingame. Its Web site lists 71 clients, including all major car manufacturers, Chevron, Tiffany's and Wells Fargo Bank. Solow said he was helping his friend pro bono.

"I've been blown off in writing and in person by everyone I've contacted," Solow said. "This is a form of torture — Ms. Polyakova should at least have the same rights as a prisoner of war. But no one in the city bureaucracy cares. Trying to find someone responsible is like hunting for a wild animal." His guess was that few residents complain about the noise because many don't speak English or are wary of making waves.

Over a period of weeks, he said, he'd contacted Mayor Newsom, Supervisor Daly, DPW Deputy Mohammed Nuru and DPH Environmental Health Director Rajiv Bhatia.

"I've been banned from Dr. Bhatia's office because I'm so loud," Solow said.

No one at the meeting had any suggestions for what else Polyakova and Solow might do. But Michael Nulty, who lives at the Alexander Residence, a block east of 340 Eddy, confirmed that some people in his building told him they were bothered by the noise, and that he, too, hears it, though his room is far off the street.

"I suggested to Mr. Solow that his friend move because waiting for the bureaucracy to change can take a very long time," Nulty said.

A week after the meeting, Solow shared with The Extra some of his extensive e-mail correspondence with city officials.

"Sleep deprivation [sic] is a serious health hazard. It is also a form of torture that violates the Geneva Convention," he wrote to Mike Farrah, the mayor's senior aide, on Oct. 11. He demanded reduced garbage pickup and street sweeping and only after 7 a.m.

On Oct. 19, Scott Oswald, deputy director of the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services, forwarded to Solow a carefully worded, footnoted, three-page letter from Dr. Bhatia. He verified that the streets around 340 Eddy were being swept seven days a week between 3 a.m. and 3:30 a.m., but said garbage collection had been changed to after 6 a.m.

And yes, Dr. Bhatia wrote, street noise can result in interrupted sleep that "may cause secondary physical and psychological problems," but his

department gets few complaints about street sweeping noise, which, "we believe... would create less annoyance and sleep disturbance than noise from garbage collection and public safety vehicles... We intend to collect data on street sweeping to verify our judgments."

Solow shot back a general e-mail to more than a dozen city officials: Garbage pickup was still happening in the wee hours on nearby Leavenworth, Jones, Ellis and Turk, and still disturbing Polyakova.

The Extra contacted Robert Jordan, vice president of Alliance for a Better District 6, who also lives at 340 Eddy. Was he bothered by the noise?

Jordan said he can hear it, but is not as sensitive to it. "I live exactly five floors above Ms. Polyakova," he said. "Neither of us faces the street, but the noise comes right down the hallway, especially when the hall window is open."

We called Supervisor Daly's office. He was jammed with "marijuana legislation" and didn't have time to comment on this problem, said aide James Keys. "But Supervisor Daly is concerned. The community has a noise problem that seems to be escalating." Keys wouldn't speculate about what Daly would do about it.

Then Polyakova called The Extra. "I'm a full-time student at City College and I study at night," she explained. "I just can't keep going without sleep, and earplugs don't work."

So she temporarily moved in with her sister in another neighborhood.

Solow phoned The Extra as we were going to press: "I've called off my investigation for now. I don't know what else to do."

BLASTS FROM THE PAST

Two developers presented condo projects. Neither eliminates existing rental units, and both sites have colorful histories.

Brad Dickason is A.F. Evans Development project manager for the condos that will rise behind the Deco facades of three 1930s buildings at 245 through 259 Hyde St. The 115 studios and one-, two- and three-bedroom units are slated for completion in 2008.

The \$18 million project, Dickason said, will retain the ground-floor retail space, currently occupied by Tenderloin Mental

Health Services and Hyde Street Studios, the 1970s recording home of music giants Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, and, later, James Brown, Paul Simon, Merle Haggard, The Dead Kennedys, The Pointer Sisters and Herbie Hancock.

The Extra called Dickason later about the condos' selling price, but he said it is too early to comment. But this is "workforce housing," he said, a reference to providing homes that middle-income workers, who earn from 80% to 120% of the area median income, can afford. The AMI in San Francisco is \$66,500 for one person, \$95,000 for a family of four. In March 2004, San Franciscans defeated Prop J, the workforce housing initiative that would have given developers incentives to build affordable condos downtown and along the central waterfront.

A.F. Evans is doin' it anyway. It's the development partner in the Bay Area Workforce Housing Equity Fund, a program of the Development Fund, a 42-year-old nonprofit that gets banks and other financial institutions to invest in affordable housing.

HOT BATHS

The other condo project presented is at 130 Turk, site of the infamous Bulldog Baths, among the wild venues the city shut down in the 1980s to stem the AIDS epidemic.

David Nale, agent for the current building owner, and architect Yakuh Askew said they'll restore the 1923 building's façade and replace the guts with ground-floor retail, three market-rate condos on the second floor, four on the third floor and a shared roof garden. Most units will have two bedrooms; each third-floor condo will have its own mezzanine, either enclosed like a loft or two-story. Retrofitting and façade work is scheduled to start in a few months, Askew said.

Seven months ago, a different architect had told the Collaborative about plans for 130 Turk: 21 units, each 300 square feet. A followup call to Nale confirmed that only the plans had changed, not the owner, but he was unwilling to name that owner. In March, the owner of record was RLM Development LLC.

The bump up to condos may prove that the old bath site — like real estate everywhere in the city — is still steaming. ■

CENTRAL CITY



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Mid-Market value up 40% over 10 years

Redevelopment area blight no barrier to growing assessments

BY TOM CARTER

Blight and crime have not stopped Mid-Market Redevelopment area properties from rising 40% over the 10-year planning process, with a \$12 million jump in 2005, according to assessor's office figures.

The assessor pegged mid-Market's 2005 valuation at \$609 million, up \$12 million from the year before, characteristic of the area's steady increases for the last decade (see graph). The "raw data" the assessor furnished The Extra covers roughly 2,100 properties, not counting city and state properties.

"You don't have to have a decrease in property values" to be a Redevelopment area, said Mike Grisso, the agency's liaison to the Mid-Market Project Area Committee, whose plan awaits Board of Supervisors consideration on Nov. 22. "You just have to have crime, vacancies and deteriorating buildings. You can walk down the street and see the blight and underutilized parcels."

The \$247 million increase in 10 years demonstrates the indomitable strength of property values throughout the city, Grisso said, conceding that the "trajectory is probably higher in other areas." Redevelopment properties in other neighborhoods appreciate in value during planning as well, he said.

Redevelopment's figures for the project area, using assessor's data but adding government property, were slightly different and showed a 3% decline for the same period. The 2005-06 value was \$621 million, down from \$623 million the year before, possibly reflecting a decrease in government property value.

The \$621 million is key to the Mid-Market Redevelopment plan and is the amount to be used as its base year when the plan is adopted. Future taxes paid on the area's increasing valuation — on Market to Mission streets from Fifth to Tenth streets — is expected to generate \$189 million in tax increments over 30 years, of which \$99 million will go from extremely low-to moderate-income housing. Taxes on the \$621 million base amount will go to the city.

The first year tax increments are expected to total \$181,000, the Redevelopment Agency said in its September 2005 Mid-Market report. Second-year tax increments are estimated to raise \$900,000 and the third year \$2 million.

New taxes start flowing in 2006 if the Board of Supervisors approves the plan before Dec. 2. It has been scheduled for a Nov. 22 hearing. The Redevelopment Agency Commission's approval Oct. 18 made a 2006 tax delivery possible. But, given the opposition, including Supervisor Chris Daly's dissatisfaction, the supervisors may tweak it. If so, the plan would go back to the commission, and the redevelopment staff would meet with the PAC to consider the changes. If the supervisors don't approve the plan until after Dec. 2, taxes couldn't be collected until 2007.

State redevelopment law calls for not less than 20% of the tax increment to go for low-income housing, but the Mid-Market plan requires not less than 50%. The agency's report estimates the tax increment over the first five years will raise \$7.8 million for housing.

"The No. 1 issue is housing," says Carolyn Diamond, executive director of the Market Street Association and PAC vice chair. "Get the housing built and things will follow — the creation of a neighborhood, getting arts organizations in there so it's a destination for people."

The plan anticipates 3,300 units of housing will be built in the area over 30 years: 865 studios, 1,040 one-bedrooms, 1,000 two-bedrooms and 300 three-bedrooms. About two-thirds will be market-rate, having 12% inclusionary affordable housing, and the existing 1,221 units that are affordable will be replaced or rehabilitated. Any such units that are demolished or removed have to be replaced within four years for persons with the same or lower incomes, according to the report.

"The agency has the option of creating fewer units but with an equal number of bedrooms," a report footnote reads. "For example, if the Agency destroys three one-bedroom apartments, it has the option of creating one three-bedroom unit."

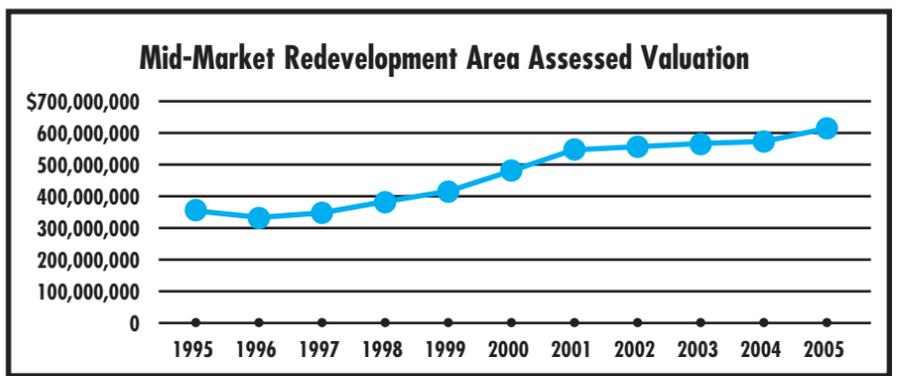
Key criticisms from the Coalition to Take Back Mid-Market are that there is too little inclusionary housing in the plan, and that income qualifications to rent and own low-income units are too high. The coalition, spearheaded by Randy Shaw, executive director of the Tenderloin Housing Clinic, held three public meetings on the plan. On Oct. 18, the day the Redevelopment Agency Commission approved it, the coalition rallied on the City Hall steps, demanding that the median income for qualifying to rent or buy 75% of the inclusionary housing be lowered to \$26,000.

Daly, one of nine speakers at the protest, said he would do "everything I can" to prevent passage of the plan in its present form.

Right up until the plan went to the supervisors, people were trying to finalize a preference from the Mid-Market PAC. For example, Karl Olson, a Hearst Corp. lawyer, wanted the Chronicle's parking lot exempted from the plan's eminent domain clause. He said at one point the Chronicle didn't want its "hands tied" by eminent domain. His plea didn't work, and he was criticized by several members.

PAC member Craig Adelman said he hadn't heard that the Chronicle had contributed to the Mid-Market planning, as the committee hoped everyone in the Redevelopment area would do.

"We look for positive changes," he told Olson. "Not wanting our hands tied" is not a compelling argument. And coming to the table so late in the game



is unfortunate."

The committee turned Olson down and he later attempted to get the change approved at the commission hearing, but failed.

The plan went to the supervisors without the Tenderloin included on the affordable housing preference list. During the summer, the Mid-Market PAC decided to add TL to the list. The Redevelopment Agency suggested including two TL census tracts. But the committee insisted on all four Tenderloin census tracts, and passed the amendment unanimously against the advice of Grisso.

Grisso called the move "political" and warned that it was likely illegal because, by singling out the Tenderloin, it violated the federal Fair Housing Act. But the PAC approved it unanimously anyway.

At the September meeting, Grisso presented a staff memo stating the Tenderloin was not eligible for affordable housing, only "residents of the Project Area and surrounding lower income areas impacted by gentrification."

The committee groused that "lower income" is vague and "gentrification" is "subjective, undefined and ambiguous." But they approved it on a voice vote anyway. ■



TENDERLOIN AIDS RESOURCE CENTER

Outreach and Community Events November 2005

Health Education Forum

Topic: Transgender Services Update

Speaker: Martin King, Peer Advocate

Date/Time: Wednesday, November 23, 6:00 - 7:30 pm

Social Services Education Forum

Topic: Housing and How it Works

Speaker: Tyrone Payne, Housing Program Manager

Date/Time: Wednesday, November 30, 6:00 - 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 Board 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, November 9, 11:30 am - 1:00 pm;

Wednesday, November 23, 11:30 am - 1:00 pm

Volunteer for TARC

Orientation: Saturday, November 13, 10:00 am - 5:00 pm (lunch provided);

Sunday, November 27, 10:00 am - 5:00 pm (lunch provided)

183 Golden Gate Ave.

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

For the current groups' schedule or more information, call 415.432.7476 or go to www.tarcsf.org

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