

222 Powell gets 2 liquor licenses

Board of Supervisors OKs on-sale, off-sale permits for eclectic gallery

BY TOM CARTER

Sam Sirhed is getting two liquor licenses — on-sale and off-sale — for his upscale Gallery Market at 222 Powell St. Exactly what he applied for. And how he got them illustrates how liquor licenses are added, even in neighborhoods that already far exceed state-mandated license limits.

His applications sailed through the Board of Supervisors on Feb. 14, got signed by the mayor and were sent to the state Alcoholic Beverage Control department to issue the licenses. The ABC bows to local control — the Board of Supervisors — in granting liquor licenses. It doesn't matter how many licenses already exist in a given area — if local government recommends approval, the ABC must issue the license. The supes voted unanimously for them.

One of Sirhed's licenses is new, the on-sale; the off-sale is a transfer from Noe Valley. They are coming into an area that is even more oversubscribed than police reported in January when, in opposing Sirhed's applications, they mistakenly used license data and crime stats that applied to the Tenderloin census tract across the street.

Sirhed later agreed to a number of conditions the police set, including making sure his off-sale liquor doesn't appeal to brown bag drinkers, a questionable concern based on "Market" as part of the business name. Sirhed's eclectic art gallery is a block from Union Square. He wants to attract shoppers and tourists with premium wine tastings and tempt them with gourmet foods, wines, and spirits to buy and take home.

Objections from activists and police stopped the applications at the supervisors City Operations and Neighborhood Services Committee meeting on Jan. 21. They said the store is in a high-crime area that is oversaturated with liquor licenses. Police showed three to four times more licenses operating in Census Tract 123 than allowed.

But Sirhed's marble-floored gallery, in a building he says he spent \$6.5 million renovating, is actually in Census Tract 117, which starts just across the street from the TL tract the police used in their negative recommendation. Triangular-shaped tract 117's southern boundary is Market Street; north is Bush Street, which runs diagonally east to Market. Few people live in these blocks, but there are a good many businesses and apparently quite a few sell liquor.

ABC figures show six on-sale licenses authorized and 79 existing; three off-sale are allowed but 21 exist. Overall, that's 11 times more than authorized.

Both tracts are high-crime areas, meaning the number of police calls there are at least 20% higher than the city average.

Vice police and Sirhed worked out their differences and agreed on 11 conditions to take back to the supervisors. Among them were restrictions on noise, loitering and advertising and one that prohibits Sirhed from selling single jumbo-size beers or hard liquor smaller than a fifth, but allowing 50-ml "miniature collectibles."

On Feb. 6, the license applications again came before the City Operations Committee. With activists dropping their protests in view of the conditions to be imposed, and the Census Tract 123 figures still in the equa-



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

This gallery on Powell Street will have wine tastings and spirits to go.

tion, the three-member committee of Supervisors Fiona Ma, Jake McGoldrick and Bevan Dufty sent the matter to the full board, which approved on an 11-0 vote.

The Gallery Market is within the jurisdiction of the Tenderloin police. Officer Mike Torres, who reviews permits for the station, had objected to the licenses at the first supes' hearing. Torres said he saw "no benefit" to adding more licenses when "the whole idea is to have less."

So, obviously, oversaturation and high crime are not enough to kill a license application, said Vice Crimes Inspector Richard McNaughton, but they do allow the police to add conditions that can mitigate the neighbors' objections. ■

Tenderchamps

Hospitality House honors 2 activists, seniors group

Central City Hospitality House, during its bowling fundraiser on March 2, named children's advocate Midge Wilson, peace activist Father Louis Vitale and the activist group, Senior Action Network, as its 2006 "Tenderchamps."

The 39-year-old Tenderloin drop-in center gives the awards each year to individuals and organizations that have significantly affected the lives of poor people and the homeless. These "Champs" certainly fill that bill.

Wilson helped create the Bay Area Women's and Children's Center at 318 Leavenworth in 1981 and has been its executive director ever since. She spearheaded the creation in 1994 of a Civic Center playground, the Tenderloin Children's Playground at 570 Ellis in 1995 and a second Civic Center playground in 1998. Wilson and BAWCC also led the 10-year crusade to build the K-7 Tenderloin Community School at 627 Turk, which opened in 1998.

Father Vitale, 73, was a pastor at St. Boniface for 13 years before he left last year to work full time for peace and justice. A proponent of nonviolent resistance, the energetic Franciscan friar regularly demonstrates against nuclear proliferation. In January, he and 30 others were convicted of trespass charges stemming from a November 2005 demonstration, an annual protest at the controversial School of the Americas at Ft. Benning, Ga. He is currently serving a six-month term.

Senior Action Network is a 155-member advocacy group representing more than 30,000 seniors. Launched in 1990, it conducts educational programs about Medi-Cal and Medicare, does outreach on traffic and pedestrian safety, demonstrates for seniors' causes, helps homeless seniors find housing, and also offers a Senior University designed to empower seniors and train community organizers. ■

— TOM CARTER

Attend a workshop and give us your feedback on our plan to fix it.

Thursday, March 23rd 6:00pm-8:30pm Sunset Recreation Center 28th Avenue & Lawton Street	Saturday, March 25th 10:00am-12:30pm Southeast Community Facility 1800 Oakdale Avenue Alex Pitcher Conference Room	Tuesday, March 28th 6:00pm-8:30pm Bill Graham Civic Auditorium 99 Grove Street
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Get info, give input at sfsewers.org

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