

Tenderloin loses 7 of 17 polling places

Casualties of citywide consolidation to save money

BY RUNE LANGHOFF SORENSEN

WHEN voters go to cast their ballot May 19, some will have to find their new polling place. Citywide, 153 polling places are being eliminated, seven in the Tenderloin — down from 17 to 10.

The cut is a consequence of the city's budget crisis. Mayor Newsom asked the Department of Elections to reduce spending by 12.5%, and this is part of the department's response. The upcoming election will cost the city \$3 million, and consolidation of polling places will save the lion's share of the \$200,000 in overall savings.

"I don't think the voters will notice," Charles MacNulty, voter outreach manager, said. "The only difference is that they have to vote in a different place. All voters that have to vote in a new place have been informed and have received a vote-by-mail application. Voting by mail is already what most voters prefer."

Asked if the Elections Department prefers mail-in ballots because it is cheaper, MacNulty said, "We don't encourage or discourage voters to vote by mail. But the process is easier, it's more accessible, and it's more secure. Also, the decision to vote or not to vote will be a more conscious decision, when you have the ballot in your hand and decline to fill it out or not." He said he doesn't believe the consolidation will affect voter turnout.

Michael Nulty, first vice president of Central City Democrats, disagrees.

"I fear that this could be a problem for elders and people with disabilities if they have to walk longer to vote. And that could ultimately lower voter turnout," he said.

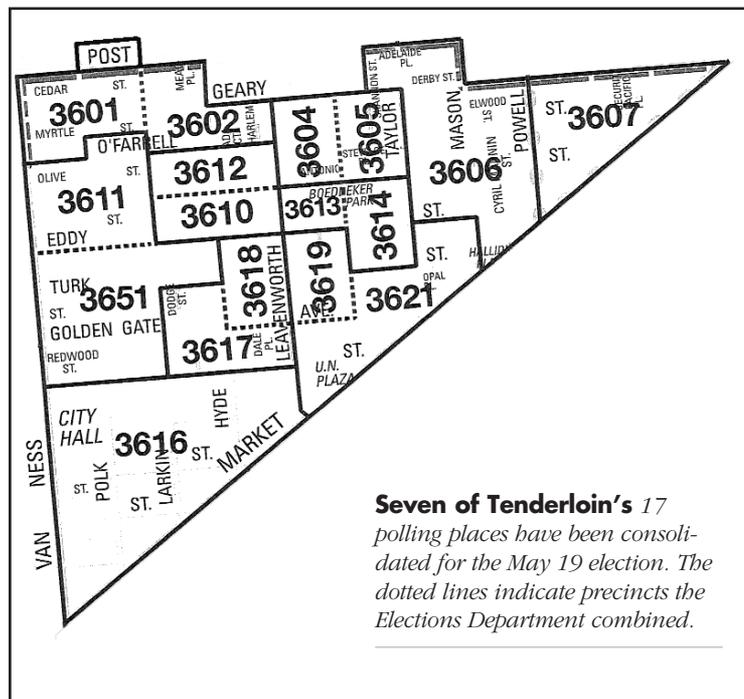
"Also, a lot of people in the Tenderloin count on working in the elections, so this will mean a loss of revenue for Tenderloin residents. For them it's an opportunity to supplement their already low income."

MacNulty said Elections does try to place poll workers near the precinct where they are registered. "But sometimes we don't need any additional poll workers in that area," he said. "At that point, we'd place them outside of their neighborhood or in the standby pool. Also, there are other poll-work staffing requirements such as the language ability of the poll worker."

Each polling place closed saves the city more than \$800. The city pays \$150 to rent each polling place; three or four clerks get \$125 apiece, and the polling place inspector is paid \$165. Total: \$815. The seven polling places eliminated in the Tenderloin will save the city up to \$5,705.

The consolidation of polling places will be kept for the Nov. 3 municipal election, MacNulty said, but all of the normal 561 polling places will be open for the June 2010 primary.

The polling places for May 19 are: Firehouse, 1067 Post; Vietnamese Community Center, 766 Geary; Senior Center, 350 Ellis; Maria Manor, 174 Ellis; Ellis Gardens Social Room, 666 Ellis; Boeddeker Park Clubhouse, 240 Eddy; Lighthouse for the Blind, 214 Van Ness; Hampton Court Apartments, 378 Golden Gate; Dorothy Day Communities, 54 McAllister; Eastern Park Apartments Community Room, 711 Eddy. ■



Seven of Tenderloin's 17 polling places have been consolidated for the May 19 election. The dotted lines indicate precincts the Elections Department combined.

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Tuesday, May 19, 2009

Polls will open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

No on Prop. 1A	Rainy Day Budget Stabilization Fund
Yes on Prop. 1B	Education Funding
No on Prop. 1C	Lottery Modernization
No on Prop. 1D	Children's Services Fund
No on Prop. 1E	Mental Health Services Funding
No on Prop. 1F	Elected Officials' Salaries

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