

Nonprofits brace for 'Mega RFP'

Behavioral Health
putting virtually
all contracts to bid

BY HEIDI SWILLINGER

SAN Francisco's behavioral health care system has taken a pounding under Mayor Newsom in recent months. Funding for services has been slashed by nearly \$4 million since the year began, and he's ordered another \$24 million to be lopped off in his 2009-10 budget.

On top of this, a shakeout of unprecedented proportions is looming, with 161 providers gearing up to answer Community Behavioral Health Services' "Mega RFP" — a request for proposals that essentially puts almost all of their contracts out to bid. There are more than five dozen behavioral health programs in the Tenderloin.

In a letter to CBHS contractors June 11, Barbara Garcia, deputy director of health in charge of Community Programs, said that the 2009-10 budget her department sent to the Board of Supervisors "includes a \$4 million reduction to mental health and substance abuse services to be achieved through the RFP." She said the \$4 million reduction is included in the \$24 million service cuts in Newsom's proposed budget. The reduction, which is annualized, applies to contracts through June 2010. After that it doubles for a total cut of \$8 million in fiscal year 2010-11.

Virtually the city's entire Behavioral Health Services system will be put out for bid when the Mega RFP is issued in early July, says Kavoos Bassiri, chair of San Francisco Mental Health Contractors Association and CEO of Richmond Area Multi-Services, a nonprofit mental health agency.

The Health Department's Community Programs division contracts with 161 city agencies to provide residential and outpatient mental health care, self-help, substance abuse treatment, homeless services, and multilingual and culturally sensitive outreach programs. Sixty percent of the division's contractors, including San Francisco Study Center, are nonprofits. The rest are managed by civil servants.

The Mega RFP is new for the department, according to Garcia. Contracts are limited by City Charter to 10 years at most, but she says DPH follows a "best practices" policy of requiring new RFPs "every three to five years or so." Garcia says they tend to cover broad areas of service — last year, for instance, an RFP was issued for all the city's methadone programs. But she said no other Mega RFP — so named because it covers virtually all CBHS services — has been issued during her 13-year tenure.

Behavioral Health contractors that fail to meet criteria spelled out in the Mega RFP will lose funding; some may have to shut their doors completely. "We don't know what services will come out at the other

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SAN FRANCISCO
STUDY CENTER

JULY
2009

PARK WITHOUT PEOPLE

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usually locked

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CALLING ALL POETS



'Ground Zero'
at the 21 Club

PAGE 3



45-YEAR WAR WITH TOBACCO

Milestones
of government
regulation

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CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

SPECIAL REPORT



PHOTO BY BOB GORDON

Bus poster produced by the LGBT Tobacco Education Partnership, a Tobacco Free Coalition member, helped push passage of the 2008 ban on selling cigarettes in stand-alone drugstores.

S.F. VS. TOBACCO

How city controls
have evolved
in 19-year effort

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

THE queue of 33 people waiting to have their say stretched to the back of the Board of Supervisors chambers. Notes in hand, they prepared to give public comment, pro and con, on file 80438, San Francisco's latest proposed tobacco

control ordinance, which would give people living, working and visiting here more protection from secondhand smoke.

It was a year ago, and the ordinance — still stuck today in legislative limbo 14 months after central city Supervisor Chris Daly introduced it — is a potpourri of bans, some new, others introduced to close loopholes in existing local and state laws.

The ordinance would make it illegal to smoke in all San Francisco businesses and bars, in the common areas of all housing complexes — SROs, apartments, condos and projects — within 20 feet of entrances to privately owned commercial buildings, in tourist hotels and homeless shelters, at charity bingo games and farmers' markets, in restaurants' outdoor dining areas, in waiting areas such as ATM and movie ticket lines, and even in tobacco shops.

"I think you need to leave some locations alone," deadpanned Joe Barron, co-owner of Grant's Tobacconists, a lower Market Street shop that opened during the Gold Rush. Still, Barron told the supervisors at the City Operations and Neighborhood Services Committee meeting in July 2008, that he approves of much of the ordinance.

Others did not. "The 20-foot rule puts our customers out on the street," objected Paul Navarro, a bar owner, who also questioned what he considered a piecemeal approach to legislating smoking. "If you don't want smokers, just ban smoking entirely."

"You're criminalizing [smoking]," said Kay Griffin, who didn't identify her affiliation. "It's a snitch law, with selective enforcement. I can't believe this is what city government has come down to."

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PHOTO COURTESY CHINESE PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION

At a 1997 rally, Chinese Progressive Association advocates pressure the World Health Organization on global tobacco controls.