Rules over e-rides, taxis different as day, night

28 simple regs for app-hail firms, 71 dense pages for cab companies

By Mark Hedian

E RIDE COMPANIES have decimated the taxi industry in San Francisco and elsewhere while largely operating free from or in defiance of government regulation. A cease-and-desist order the state Public Utilities Commission served on Uber and Sidecar in August 2012, for instance, was shrugged off by the companies. More than a year later, the PUC rolled over and established a handful of regulations for them, thus providing a degree of legitimacy.

But the PUC’s short list of 28 requirements pale in comparison with what the taxicab industry has to comply with. San Francisco taxis operate under a set of Municipal Transportation Agency rules developed over decades and so extensive a Metro car could hardly haul them. The MTA’s “Regulation of Motor Vehicles for Hire” document is 71 pages. It takes 1½ pages to describe the general scope and purpose of the regulations, then seven more to define all the terms in the 68-some pages of regulations that follow. These uncounted hundreds of regs are organized into 20 sections of rules and procedures governing commercial transportation of passengers.

“You would need to be an attorney or someone on the legislative side” to summarize all that’s required of cab operators, Robert Lyles, SFMTA deputy spokesmen, said. There are several layers of regulations that taxis must meet to operate daily. We believe those regulations are in place to create a better experience and ensure the safety of both the operators and the riding public. He drives to begin and end their shifts at their company’s place of business. They must conduct a safety check and communications equipment test prior to starting out. They not only need to be able to accept credit and debit cards, they have to have two ways to do so, should the first way fail.

Taxicabs cannot have 100,000 miles or more when they are placed into service and must be retired when they reach 375,000. They have to be inspected annually by the SFMTA, or more often if the agency decides to. Besides having registration and insurance, they must provide a recent “Brake Certificate” as their legal inspection. Other regulations set standards for the condition of the cabs’ upholstery, tires, hubcaps, and even the size of allowable dents to the body of the cars and details of cleanliness. Taxi companies also must maintain records “for at least six years” that include information on each driver and the shifts he or she works, including GPS-generated origin, incremental, destination coordinates of each trip; the number of passengers, fares, fees, mileage, time of hire and discharge of each trip, and more, such as...
Friends of the Urban Forest is, as on past occasions, organizing a tree planting in the Tenderloin June 15, helping property owners prepare the sidewalk and plant and maintain the trees. How many trees get planted — Urban Forest’s forecast is around 50 — depends on the economics and esthetics of the property owners who must purchase the trees and maintain them, at least until the city finds funds to take that over (see the March Extra or Hoodline.com).

Much of the property in the neighborhood is owned by absentee landlords, so the TF isn’t likely to get much TLC from owners who live elsewhere. But what if the Twitter tax break companies, and other prosperous newbies, pitch in and take this opportunity to make this a real re-greening of the Tenderloin?

It’s $150 to plant a tree through Friends of the Urban Forest. How about 1,000 trees to really make a difference? 20 trees per block. That would transform the sidewalk.

To plant them all at once would be overwhelming and unwise. But make that a goal to be achieved over, say, two years, phasing them in block by block? That’s enough greenery to make trees a pleasant part of the landscape; boost the Tenderloin’s tree canopy significantly, and make trees so common people would come to expect them and respect them instead of picking on the poor isolated few.

Tech at least should step up and make this next tree planting meaningful. Please call Phil Pierce, 268-0773, or email him at phil@fuf.net and place an order. Thank you.

EDITORIAL

Tech could color the Tenderloin green

WITh THE FAIRNESS of the Twitter tax break seriously in question, an error in the firm’s favor appeared in a front-page story in late February in all of the Bay Area News Group’s major papers — every Bay Area daily except the Chronicle and Examiner. Reporter Heather somerville reported that in fiscal year 2013-14, Twitter donated $360,000.

Somerville, reached by phone at the offices of the Oakland Tribune March 19, said she was unaware of the error. She quickly got back to The Extra in an email: “Thanks for catching that. We clearly should have: $360 million would have been an obscene amount of money. It should be corrected online this evening and a print correction running tomorrow or Saturday.”

This is from the front page of the Feb. 21, Oakland Tribune.

NEWS COMMENTARY

#Oops! Press gives Twitter huge break

NEWS IS A COMMUNITY SERVICE

City and County of San Francisco Outreach Advertising April 2015

Stay Connected To the City through SF311

The SF311 Customer Service Center is the single stop for residents to get information on government services and report problems to the City and County of San Francisco. And now, we have even more ways for you to stay connected to the City with our SF311 App and SF311 Explorer website.

The SF311 App lets you get information on City services and submit service requests on-the-go right from your smartphone. You can track your service requests through the app or through our new website, SF311 Explorer.

SF311 Explorer not only lets you check the status of your own requests, it enables you to see what issues are being reported throughout all of San Francisco and what the City is doing to resolve them.

Download the SF311 App from your smartphone’s app store and visit the SF311 Explorer at explorer.sfgov.org today!

Mayor’s Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD)


The Draft 2015-2016 Action Plan, which includes preliminary funding recommendations for the CDBG, ESG, HOME and HOPWA programs, will be available for public review and comment from March 26, 2015 through April 24, 2015. A public hearing to receive comments on the Draft 2015-2016 Action Plan is scheduled for Tuesday, March 31, 2015 at 6:00 PM at 1 South Van Ness Avenue, 2nd Floor Auditorium Conference Room. For more information, please visit the SFMOHCD.org or call 415-701-5500.

San Francisco Arts Commission

Arts Commission Street Artists Program: Refund of Fees for Honorably Discharged Veterans

If you are an honorably discharged Veteran and a resident of California who participated in the Street Artists Program between January 1, 2009 and July 1, 2014, you may be entitled to a refund of your street artist fees paid to the Arts Commission during that time period. Refund claims must be submitted in person or postmarked by July 1, 2015. Please visit sfartscommission.org/street_artists_program for more information about eligibility and instructions on how to file a refund claim.

Board of Supervisors Regularly Scheduled Board Meetings

April and May 2015

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC – Come see your San Francisco government in action. Tuesdays, 2:00pm, City Hall Chamber, Room 250.

April 7

April 14

April 21

May 5

May 12

May 19

The City and County of San Francisco encourage public outreach. Articles are translated into several languages to provide better public access. The newspaper makes every effort to translate the articles of general interest correctly. No liability is assumed by the City and County of San Francisco or the newspapers for errors and omissions.

ERRATUM

In the February issue of The Extra, the last name of Portland, Ore., research librarian Tony Greiner was misspelled. The Extra regrets the error.
Feen more like your old self.

(Minus the bell bottoms.)

You shouldn’t have to live with joint pain. Our joint care specialists have many ways to help you find relief. And if you need a joint replacement, they’ll go the extra mile to help you get back to doing what you love as quickly as possible.

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Taxi regs encyclopedic, e-ride rules like a brochure

(Taxi companies must document) the number of passengers, fares, fees, mileage, time of hire and discharge of each trip and the driver’s ID and shift start and end times. ... All of this has to be transmitted electronically “with a default setting of every six seconds.”

For the e-ride newbies, Lyles said, “there aren’t significant regulations’ at all.

Uber, Lyft, Sidecar and other app-hailing companies, don’t answer the responsibility of the California Public Utilities Commission, which also oversees charter buses, shuttles and limos.

In September 2013, the CPUC, more than a year after demanding that Lyft and Sidecar cease-and-desist, an order they ignored, issued 28 rules for “TNXs” or transportation network companies, the agency’s name for the new transportation system.

Companies pay but a $1,000 fee to apply for a three-year permit that precludes them from owning the vehicles or fleets of vehicles whose operation they direct, but allows “no limit to the number of drivers that utilize the app under one permit,” according to the CPUC’s 10-page “Basic Information for Transportation Network Companies and Applicants.” So Uber got its multibillion-dollar business started for $1,000.

Three-year permit renewals cost $100.

The CPUC’s rules also call for a 19-point vehicle inspection covering lights, locks, steering, windshield viability and other basics, and a driver training program, useless because it comes with no specifics on what is to be covered. Companies are required to file reports on a regular basis, including one on how they intend to address the gap in making transportation available to disabled clients, something they’ve been slow to get around to while fighting for access to more lucrative fares, such as to and from the airport.

Does that sound like a lot? It’s a drop in the bucket compared with what taxi companies handle.

Taxis also must comply with guidelines governing the color schemes, signage and lights that identify taxis. The number of taxi permits issued, too, is subject to a no-more-than-annual revision.

All cabs are required to be equipped with, among other things, a flashlight for night shifts and a security camera manufactured after December 31, 2006. They have to allow passengers to split the tab any way they choose, but cannot charge more than the fare shown on the Taximeter and must issue a receipt if asked.

City Hall has encouraged Uber, Lyft, Sidecar and the others to take over the ride-for-hire industry here, which has lead to frequent stories of public abuse by their relatively unprepared drivers and unregulated vehicles.

The Department of Motor Vehicles in January issued an advisory stating that vehicles used for ride-hailing must obtain commercial license plates. The companies quickly cried foul. Lyft complained that “to get commercial plates would essentially treat peer-to-peer transportation the same as a taxi,” according to a Chronicle report. So the DMV immediately backed down.

Contrast the taxis’ hard-and-fast charges with Uber’s notorious “surge pricing” that saw the company quadruple its rates during a hostage situation in downtown Sydney, Australia, on Dec. 15 until public outcry shamed it into a reduction.

But a few days earlier, in San Francisco, passengers were charged $8.8 times the usual rate during the heavy rains that month, and similar rules go into effect whenever demand goes up, such as for popular concerts in Golden Gate Park.
City’s diversity shines on of the toughest blocks in the Tenderloin

The community is Curran House, a picture of diversity. According to TNDC’s 2014 figures on Curran households, Latinos, Asians and African Americans are each 26.5% of the resident population that toals 150 to 200 whites. 4.6% “other”14% and 1.5% are “unknown.”

Curran’s polygol scene keeps evolving. Listana said that just recently, he met a new family from Honduras in the complex’s communal laundry room.

Listana works with his Curran House neighbors and, by extension, the 3,400 residents in TNDC’s 31 buildings of low-income housing, mostly poor folks whose annual incomes typically range from $5,000 to $20,000. At Curran House, rent is based on income, allowing up to $70,000 for large families. The Listanas pay $1,222 a month.

“WE FEEL SAFE”

The modern building with 14 facade balconies, winner of 10 architectural and affordable housing awards, is a half-block north of Taylor Street Center, a four-story halfway house for 210 men, and a block closer to the supermarket working toward their eventual release. The neighborhood is rife with drug-dealing, too. But the Listanas are unfazed.

Listana’s group won the best-lantern group home for disabled children.

The American Dream

As a young man, Listana imagined the United States as a land of opportunity, where he could get a fine education for his children, education having been in his father’s dreams too.

Listana grew up in Daraga in Albay Province, a 10-hour bus ride south of Manila. He is a small, farming community of 115,000 average temperature 81 degrees, rain year-round. The community had large populations of Filipinos, Chinese, Spanish, some Koreans and Indians, and many intermarried, Listana says. He knew of his people’s pockets of poverty.

His father, an imaginative man of action, was an inspiration.

He sent all of his nine children to school and he helped his siblings, too. “My father was the first of eight children to export out of Daraga in the late 1960s. He opened a shop and sold crafted goods made from abaca fiber. We were the first to export out of Daraga in the late 1960s. He sent all of his nine children to school and he helped his siblings, too.”

Listana grew away to Manila to college. Democracy, affordable education and human rights weighed heavily on his mind. Eventually, after marrying Cecilia, his wife of 24 years, and starting a family, he envisioned a better life in the U.S. where his children could benefit from good schools, and he planned for it.

Cecilia came to the U.S. first. She got a job in SoMa with Aerocinon California Inc., a wet suit maker, and had an apartment there.

In 2005, Listana arrived with his two boys and daughter. He immediately had a stroke of luck that has enhanced his family’s well-being.

“It was like I won the lottery,” he says, still wide-eyed at the memory.

He did, in fact, win the lottery. But it was for low-income families applying to live at Curran House. His was the eighth name drawn for one of the 14 studios, 15 one-bedrooms, 17 two-bedrooms and 24 three-bedroom units. Ten of these are for formerly homeless families, and 10 are subsidized by the federal government as Section 8 housing.

“I got to choose our unit,” he says. “Otherwise, we couldn’t live in San Francisco, or we’d have to live with relatives.” He has four family members in the city: “I have a nice place compared to people who have been here (San Francisco) a long time and can’t find their way out of poverty.”

At the time, he worked part-time at Aerocinon, as a youth counselor at Barrill Place and as an administrator at another group home for disabled children.

Getting hired to help with the 2010 census led to another piece of luck. Steve Woon, then coordinator of TNDC’s Community Organizing Department, became his supervisor Listana and six other Filipinos traversed the neighborhood, knocking on an estimated 5,000 doors, encouraging residents to fill out the census questionnaire.

“I didn’t know that there were a lot of Filipinos here,” Listana recalls. “I went to different SROs and saw their situations. Some were not fit for human beings. Some didn’t have electricity. I was shocked. It wasn’t my idea of America, that poverty was a part of the city, and rich people just a block away. I knew about poverty. And here it was!”

At one place he saw 10 people living in one room. The grandmother had to sleep across four straight chairs.

That experience led him to organize the neighborhood Filipino American community group. Woon was impressed and hired him as a TNDC community organizer.

He was in charge of the casserollers and he was a hard worker; a good organizer,” said Woon, now a senior planner at Chinese Community Development Center. “He’s a good guy, smart, passionate about helping the community. He’s a good father too. Four children! I don’t know how he balances it all.”

BUSY SCHEDULES

The Listana kids are realizing the family’s education goals. Paolo, 22, the oldest, just graduated from San Jose State with a degree in business administration. Niki, 21, is majoring in computer programming at San Francisco State. Precious, 18, the oldest girl, is valedictorian at Sacred Heart Preparatory school where she’s a three-year veteran of the debate team and on the Student Council. Gabrielle, 7, attends Presidio Knolls, a Chinese immersion school in SoMa, which Precious also attended.

Schedules are so tight that the family doesn’t have much time for outings together. Both girls are involved with the Tenderloin Boys and Girls Club, and Precious has a host of other commitments.

But Sundays find them all walking to SoMa’s St. Patrick’s Catholic Church across from Yerba Buena Park to attend 12:15 p.m. Mass. Precious has been an altar server since 2007 and reads Prayers of the Faithful and parish announcements from the lectern. Afterward they go to lunch, often to Ilaya, a Filipino restaurant in the Metreon food court.

“But my concern is more profound and deep than just for Filipinos, it’s about social justice,” Listana was saying at the table one Saturday after lunch in their apartment. He is for the entire neighbor-
The eight-story Curran House is one of Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corp.'s 31 low-income hotels and apartment buildings in the central city. Built in 2005, it is named after Sister Patrick Curran, a Franciscan nun who was executive director of St. Anthony Foundation in the late 1990s. It has won 10 architectural awards for the design sensibility that it's brought to the concept of affordable housing. The Extra begins its series with the story of Lorenzo Listana and his Filipino family. They live in one of 67 apartments housing people from five continents and dozens of countries. Sharon Hewitt, the building's former tenant foreman, describes them all simply as "beautiful people." She provided introductions to enable the series undertaken by The Extra's longtime community reporter, Tom Carter, and award-winning photographer Paul Dunn.

By Tom Carter

IN THE HEART OF SAN FRANCISCO, amid its 195 U.S. census tracts, the gritty Tenderloin, disparagingly known as the city's armpit, is nonetheless a paragon of diversity. As data from the four census tracts (122-125) that comprise the neighborhood show, diversity is more than race; though that's the common perception.

A good guess why the TL is blessed this way is because it's our poorest neighborhood. If you're impoverished or low-income, the Tenderloin, with its chorus of nonprofits bolstering the city's social safety net, is the place to go for a helping hand.

"We want to be included in making the community better," she says, her half-inch-over-5-foot frame perched on the sofa's arm. "I can step up and be a leader. I did have help from my teachers."

Precious now awaits a result that could complicate her commission commitment. Precious thinks she did well and, if...
SEE OUR PROGRESS
in San Francisco

Jesse Cottonham
Human Performance Senior Specialist

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SEE THE FACTS
IN SAN FRANCISCO

- Replaced approximately 28 miles of gas distribution pipeline
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PATRICK MURPHY
Controversial pioneer blogger

Patrick Murphy, onetime tenant activist, pioneer City Hall blogger and 20-year resident of the Alexander Resi- dence, died Jan. 26 at age 65.

Mr. Murphy worked as a general as- signment reporter for the Richmond In- dependent and its successor, the Berke- ley Daily Gazette. After he arrived in San Francisco in 1981, he filled that same position at the San Francisco Chronicle.

Mr. Murphy is often remembered for his role in preserving low-cost hous- ing in the Tenderloin.

In 1996, the private owners of the Antonia Manor, Maria Manor, Marlton Manor and Alexander Residence an- nounced they intended to sell and would terminate the federal subsidy for Section 8 housing to entice buyers, threatening rents affordable to the low-income. Hun- dreds of Tenderloin units would become market-rate.

Murphy and others began organizing the Alexander’s residents, urging them to file a pending displace- ment and petition local politicians to step in and prevent the sale.

Mr. Murphy began publishing an in- house broadside, The Alexander Sentinel. Neighborhood tenant forms formed, redevelopment funding materialized and nonprofits steered stepping up with long-range plans to stabilize housing.

Mr. Murphy sold the sentinel, with the proceeds of the sale going into the nonprofit Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corp.’s purchase of the Alexander helped en- sure the building would remain a low-income.

Patrick Murphy, a champion of low-cost housing and pioneering blogger, had a polarizing personality.

JOURNALISTIC MENTOR

Chris Roberts, editor of SF Ever- green, a new monthly magazine de- voted to the business and culture of marijuana, recalled meeting Mr. Murphy in the early 2000s: “I saw the city as a place to find a tribe, find a community. I wanted to break into journalism and Pat showed me the ropes, told me who was who, and hired me as a journalist and photographer for the Sentinel, al- though I know he was as broke as me. He was real San Francisco.”

Fellow Alexander resident Michael Nuby remembered how Mr. Murphy “lived his media,” always in the hunt for tips and efforts to bring changes to Tenderloin housing. “What he wrote got people to see the problems the Alex- ander’s tenants and of other neighbor- hood tenants, too. He knew how to ac- tivate people politically and that led to good things like redevelopment grants and tenant councils,” Nuby said.

It brown, a neighborhood activist and onetime mayoral candidate, re- membered that immediately after the attacks of 9/11 he sent Mr. Murphy a hastily written diatribe calling on the U.S. to make war. “He posted it. I was floored. He never edited me, but he was my mentor,” brown said.

Lindsey Lee, who knew Mr. Murphy for 53 years, called him “my special friend. He helped me with my prob- lems. He called me Truman Capote and I called him Norman Bates — I thought he resembled the actor Tony Perkins.”

After the memorial, some people stayed, talking in small groups, most- ly about politics. A reporter reminded Mr. Murkoff Mirakurmi of old gossip that he and Mr. Murphy had fallen out during Mirakurmi’s years as a supervisor. “Never happened,” Mirakurmi said.

“Pat and I always stayed friends. He used to hang out in my office for hours. It was very collegial,” When he convert- ed, I told him I was proud of him. — Jonathan Newman
ARTS EVENTS


Music at the Main, Main Library, Koret Auditorium, noon–1 p.m., April 4, Dreaming of L-F-O, concert to strengthen music improv performed by Footsore. Tickets and times: eventbrite.com.


“Untitled (This is a metaphor, No. 3),” a 20-foot inflatable dancing figure by Jeremy Mendel, S.F. Conservatory of Music students. Free for soldiers and veterans with military ID or in uniform. Tickets and times: concertgratitude.eventbrite.com.

ON LOCATION

SoMa Police Community Relations Forum, 4th Tuesday of each month, 3–5 p.m., location varies. To receive monthly email info: 538-8100 x202.

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