

Safety key in Boeddeker makeover

First meeting to get residents' ideas on \$8 million redesign

BY TOM CARTER

IT was ironic — two dozen people stargazing during a public meeting about how to spend \$8 million on Boeddeker Park when the place had been locked up for more than a week because the city couldn't afford to open it.

The 1-acre park in the Tenderloin has had problems galore over the years related to drug dealing and drinking. But this was the first time a \$438 million city deficit had shut it down. "It's very frustrating — we may have new hours here but then the park's not open at all," Friends of Boeddeker Park Chair Betty Traynor said.

Only a handful of people at the May 13 meeting were neighborhood residents. An Oakland couple, who happened to be in the neighborhood, were former residents. The rest were city employees and staff members of park-related nonprofits.

"People feel like the park is a fortress."

Nearby resident

Ideas surfaced slowly for the coming grand makeover, ranging from an open-space-razed-the-clubhouse brainstorm to a costly clubhouse conversion adding a second story so there could be performances and plenty of storage space. And maybe a roof garden.

Trust for Public Land was guest host for the meeting, first in a series to be scheduled over the next few months. Whatever plan emerges, project leaders said they expect a finished makeover by the end of 2011.

The Trust, which promotes parks in low-income urban areas, has \$3 million for the renovation project that it began fostering more than a year ago. It is confident of getting \$5 million more this year from state Prop 84 funds, a bond initiative California voters passed in 2006 for parks and water conservation.

Boeddeker Park is a prime candidate for the state funds, said Jacob Gilchrist, the trust's project director, because of the Tenderloin's dearth

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PHOTO BY TOM CARTER

Boeddeker Park, recently reopened, as seen from the front entrance.

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Building 49-seat venue next door

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CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

SPECIAL REPORT

THE MANDATE

... each board and commission of the City and County shall be required by ordinance to prepare an annual report describing its activities ...

CITY CHARTER, SEC. 4.103

City agencies are legally obliged to produce an annual report, but many don't and most that do are out of compliance, a Central City Extra investigation shows.

INFORMATION GAP

Annual report obligation gets short shrift at City Hall

BY HEIDI SWILLINGER

IN his bid to become California's governor, Gavin Newsom's main selling point is his record as mayor of San Francisco. His Website touts a long list of accomplishments in education, health care, the environment, public safety, fiscal practices and government accountability.

But voters will have to take his word on that, because his administration has largely stopped producing annual reports, which could give people the information they need to assess the city's progress for themselves.

San Francisco law — spelled out in the San Francisco City Charter and Administrative Code — requires departments, boards and commissions to issue annual reports that describe their activities. To make that information accessible to all, each report must be posted on the Public Library's Website, as well as the agency's.

But a Central City Extra investigation of 69 city agencies reveals that only 6 are in full compliance with annual report mandates — they've produced a current annual report, posted it on their Website, and posted the link to the Public Library's Website —

and 63 are out of compliance in some way:

- 35 do not have a current annual report posted on their Website.
- 13 have not posted an annual report since 2007.
- 49 have no link to their annual report on the Public Library's Website.
- 14 have out-of-date reports on the library's site.

The reports are required to inform the public about the work of each major unit of city government and how much those activities cost. Moreover, annual reports provide an irreplaceable historical record.

Noncompliance with the laws regarding annual reports is a problem Newsom is familiar with: It's been a concern of two civil grand juries during his tenure as a public servant, beginning with his 1998 election to the Board of Supervisors. Despite his stated commitment to improve accountability in government, Newsom has failed to use his powers as mayor to address red flags raised by civil grand juries over the state of the city's annual reporting procedures.

ROLE OF THE CIVIL GRAND JURY

The state Constitution requires each county to have a grand jury. In San Francisco, the Superior Court's presiding judge impanels two each year: the Indictment Grand Jury, which has jurisdiction over criminal indictments, and the Civil Grand Jury, which serves as a watchdog over the functions of government. San Francisco's Civil Grand Jury consists of 19 members who serve for one year, from July through June. They decide for themselves which aspects of government to investigate. At the end of its tenure, the jury issues rec-

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GOOD NEWS for...

CIVIC CENTER With “boarded up” becoming the status quo for more and more central city buildings, it’s really fine news that the old Federal Office Building on U.N. Plaza, shuttered since 2007, will be upgraded with \$121 million in stimulus funds. GSA regional offices housed at 450 Golden Gate will move into the new digs in about six years. The 1936 Beaux Arts building will get a seismic upgrade, and new heating and electrical systems. The plaza itself got a small makeover in 2005 with a \$1 million federal Department of Transportation grant that attempted to resolve some problems uncovered by a U.N. Plaza Working Group — gang activity, garbage pileups, drug sales, a homeless gathering place. The fountain, designed by landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, came in for a lot of criticism, was threatened with demolition, was fenced off, then un-fenced off. Today, crime is down in the plaza, legal activity is up and just plain folks also sit around the fountain, which must please Halprin. In 2004, he told the York Times Times the plaza needed to be saved: “The U.N. needs strengthening all around the block. The first thing is to get the hell out of Iraq. The second thing to do is this.”

TAYLOR STREET Eight laurel trees now gracing Taylor Street were surplus from DPW’s Polk Street Streetscape Improvements project that began May 1. Scheduled to be completed by August and stretching from Turk to Sacramento streets, the Polk Street project will replace 22 unhealthy trees and add another 120 — for a total of 37 queen palms, 72 magnolias and 33 cherry trees, some in planters and some planted in the sidewalks. With funding for the \$1 million project from a federal Department of Transportation grant and matching city funds, the project also calls for replacing all the “cobrahead” streetlights with more historic-looking fixtures.



WOMEN IN THE HOOD Alliance for a Better District 6 has opened applications for its Women of the Year Awards, a new initiative to recognize District 6 women who have a passion for community service and have championed causes in six categories: youth, seniors, health, arts and media, education and community development. Anyone can nominate candidates for the awards, which will be announced in October, by going to the Website womenoftheyear.cfsites.org and submitting a resume, bio and contact information by Aug. 31. Nominees must live in District 6 and have done significant work in one of the six categories. Winners will receive a Certificate Award issued by a state or city office.

THEATER LOVERS EXIT Theatre is poised to expand its innovative, live, year-round offerings: May 1 it signed a lease for the next-door storefront at 156 Eddy, a 1,700-square-foot space where it will build a 49-seat theater, its fifth performance venue in the Tenderloin. Renovations should be complete by the end of 2010. “EXIT Theatre will present 646 performances this season,” said Richard Livingston, EXIT co-founder and managing director since it opened 26 years ago. “That’s up 49% from last year, so we can serve more independent theater companies producing mostly new work.” Besides the 80-seat main stage at 156 Eddy, EXIT operates the 49-seat EXIT Stage Left and EXIT Café, which can hold 35 seats and also serves food and drink. Around the corner is the 66-seat EXIT on Taylor, 277 Taylor. “The new space will double the street frontage, providing more impact on Eddy Street,” Livingston said. Info on EXIT Theatre’s scheduled productions: www.theexit.org.

GREEN THUMBS OF BOEDDEKER PARK Dozens of old-timers from Presentation Senior Community and the Friends of Boeddeker Park were presented a 2009 Community Hero Award May 2 by the Crissy Field Center in the Presidio. The award recognizes groups that protect and restore community environments. Aided by Rec and Park since 2003, the Friends have worked with volunteers from Presentation next door to transform and beautify Boeddeker. They meet on the third Saturday morning of each month and work three hours. The average Presentation volunteer’s age is 80 and most are Chinese. Their enthusiasm for working outside with their hands in flower beds is remarkable. Even some with disabilities work. “Rosemary and sage replace the needles and syringes that once littered the garden beds,” the center’s Website says of their work. “It helps them stay healthy and I hope they’ll motivate others,” said Friends Chair Betty Traynor. For the award ceremony, the center sent two vans to Presentation to drive 18 seniors to Crissy Field. A video exhibit at the center showcases the winners and describes their contributions.



Betty Traynor (left) and Presentation staffers Paul Lam and Abelle Cochico hold awards.

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

Mental Health Gala nets \$60,000

BY A. ALBERTO CASTILLO ABELLO

IT was a wonderful evening at the Mental Health Association’s Annual Awards Gala May 13 — a silent auction, food, drinks and happy faces everywhere. The event raised just under \$60,000 for MHA SF.

Jeff Bell, KCBS radio personality, opened the evening describing his personal experience with mental illness. Bell then introduced MHA Executive Director Belinda Lyons, who presented the Champion Award to James Keys, longtime central city mental health advocate, and the Foundation Leader Award to the van Löben Sels/RembeRock Foundation, recognized for its decades of commitment to mental health. There was a special tribute to late Judge Herbert Donaldson for his lifelong contributions.

way he could work or be in the movie was if he signed a waiver. It stated that if his mental illness kept him from finishing the movie, he would



Gala keynote speaker Joe Pantoliano

The highlight of the evening was keynote speaker Joe Pantoliano, the eccentric mobster Ralph Cifaretto from the “The Sopranos,” a role that won him an Emmy for best-supporting actor.

“I was dazed, confused, addicted to painkillers and alcohol, and I found myself shoplifting,” Pantoliano said, describing his bout with what was later diagnosed as clinical depression. “I didn’t know what was going on and I was angry with myself. I began to blame others for my illness.”

He mentioned a time when he interviewed for a movie and was required to take a physical. Like most of us, he faced general health questions and was asked what medications he was taking. He gave them the list, including his anti-depressant.

The next day, he received a call telling him that he was a high risk for the industry because of his diagnosis of mental illness, and the only

be financially responsible for the movie.

Pantoliano was amazed that the industry was more worried about his mental state than his physical state, he said. “I could have had a stroke, a heart attack or dropped dead. I was taking medication for high cholesterol and other physical conditions and that would have been okay, but when it came to my mental illness, it became an issue.”

Today, Pantoliano is an advocate fighting against the stigma associated with mental illness. He recently started his own nonprofit organization, “No Kidding, Me Too!” When I asked about the name, he said there was no better way to end the stigma. With that, Pantoliano rushed off for another event. You can check out his Website nokiddingmetoo.org and see a preview of his NKM2 documentary on YouTube. ■



NEWS IS A COMMUNITY SERVICE

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PHONE: (415) 626-1650

FAX: (415) 626-7276

E-MAIL: centralcityextra@studycenter.org

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER: Geoffrey Link

SENIOR WRITER/EDITOR: Marjorie Beggs

REPORTERS: Tom Carter, Ed Bowers, Anne Marie Jordan, Heidi Swillinger, Jonathan Newman

DESIGN AND LAYOUT: Lenny Limjoco

PHOTOGRAPHER: Lenny Limjoco

CONTRIBUTORS: Diamond Dave, Mark Hedin, John Burks, Shari Gab, Sara Kwan, Eric Meuser, Rune Sorenson, David Miers, Phil Tracy

DESIGN CONSULTANT: Don McCartney

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EDITORIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE: David Baker, Michael Nulty, Debbie Larkin, Nicholas Rosenberg, Brad Paul, Tariq Alazraie

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Boeddeker makeover meeting stresses safety

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of income and open space. Within a half-mile radius of Boeddeker Park, according to a California State Parks report, are more than 11,000 families who live below the poverty line. The report puts the area's average income (based on 49,000 population) at \$30,800, half the city average. Total park acreage in the area averages only 0.16 of an acre per 1,000 population; the ideal ratio is 3 acres per 1,000 population.

"This qualifies perfectly for that money, and now Rec and Park says Boeddeker has its highest priority," said Gilchrist, accompanied by Meghan Pecaut and project architect Brian Allman. Gilchrist recalled attending his first Friends of Boeddeker Park meetings three years ago, when the trust was scouting for urban areas to improve. Hayes Valley and Balboa parks are also getting trust renovation money.

"We know that the park is not being used to its fullest potential now," Gilchrist said in his introduction, "and it's a tough facility to manage and run programs in."

The awkwardly designed building of less than 4,000 square feet is mostly an open floor with few rooms and is acoustically awful. It has an uninviting ground floor entrance door on Eddy Street and, rising 12 feet higher at its north end, another door opening to inside the park.

"You can't run a program and see what's going on outside," Gilchrist said, "And you can't have two conversations going on in the building at the same time."

The trust staff, referring to easels displaying dozens of interior and exterior park photos and diagrams, pointed out many of the park's shortcomings. Among them: the thick, dark fencing impairing visibility into the park, the staff's lack of sight lines out of the clubhouse, inefficient use of outside space that's divided into many special use sections, and the building's tall west-facing windows that allow in a harsh afternoon sun.

Visibility and safety were key issues.

"I spend 20% of my time on paperwork and I can't see anything outside of my office," said park Director Rob McDaniels, recently reassigned to his beloved Boeddeker after a year at nearby Tenderloin Rec Center. Boeddeker Director Al Wimberly was recently assigned to the Richmond area.

One man who said he has lived near the park for nine years said its north gate on

Ellis Street was permanently closed a few years ago because unruly crowds there scare people away.

"It's a certain element not necessarily in the park but on the perimeter," he said. "People feel like the park is a fortress. They won't walk down the middle because it's a gantlet they go through where there's drug dealing and they don't want to deal with it. Outside, young and old people won't walk on the sidewalk around the fence because they're scared of people who hang out there."

"I see safety as the No. 1 issue."

Some said the nice aspects of the park should be retained. For example, the garden space at the park's high north end was touted as the most tranquil spot in the park. It has been kept spiffy over the years by Rec and Park gardeners and dozens of elderly volunteers from the adjacent Presentation Senior Community who recently were hon-

ored at the Presidio. (See Good News.)

Residents and staff agreed that diversity and flexibility are essential. Residents said they want space for tai chi, hip-hop, ballroom dancing and dominoes, now banned inside the park because the game attracted drug dealers. Some wanted lots of trees, water fountains, a big kitchen, a stage, a track, a full basketball court that would draw youth and seniors in the stands to watch them.

"This park will not meet all your needs," warned Rec and Park's Steve Cismowski, who oversees several parks, including Boeddeker. "And maybe it should be able to operate without a staff, be self-policing, self-regulating."

"Not have a building," said Gilchrist.

"Right."

The meeting adjourned, with particulars of the next meeting on the makeover to be announced later. ■

Boeddeker Park, shown at the Eddy and Jones entrance, is expected to get an \$8 million makeover with all aspects up for grabs, including the clubhouse, hidden by trees at right.



PHOTO BY TOM CARTER

Boeddeker opens with supervision weekday mornings

BUDGET uncertainties that closed Boeddeker Park for two weeks and made a mystery of its operating hours for the neighborhood have been resolved, and a new schedule effective May 26 opens the park to adults for 15 hours a week.

The park and clubhouse are open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday with a director on duty, Boeddeker's Rec and Park Manager Steve Cismowski announced. Director Rob McDaniels, reassigned in May to Boeddeker, told The Extra he will be creating programs for seniors. In the afternoons, he heads to Tenderloin Recreation Center two blocks away to work there.

Kids fare a little better at Boeddeker.

The children's play area — but not the clubhouse — will be open 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., also Monday through Friday. Children must be accompanied by an adult and access is through the playground's Eddy Street gate near the clubhouse. Domino players, banned from the park because their gatherings caused problems inside, sometimes set up on the sidewalk. No director will be present, as is the case with the TL's two other small children's playgrounds.

"It's an experiment and new territory for us," Friends of Boeddeker Chair Betty Traynor said. She sent an email to her contacts asking residents help to monitor the play area during afternoons.

The day after the kids' area opened, though, TL Capt. Gary Jimenez reported the police arrested three "young gang-type

adults" and cited them for being in the posted area requiring that adults be accompanied by children.

In May, during city budget deliberations and negotiations with the Service Employees International Union, Boeddeker was locked for two weeks. Rec and Park made several adjustments to the working hours and confused and irritated people who regularly use the park.

Of prime concern is park supervision when no director is on duty. At the neighborhood's request, police have made regular park checks. Capt. Jimenez holds the park dear.

"It's important we don't have a vacant storefront here," Jimenez said at the May 14 Friends meeting, having arrived late because he confronted four beer drinkers outside and persuaded them to empty their containers. "Boeddeker has always been a priority and we'll make that commitment. But we're looking for volunteers to help out, too. We've had a serious problem with the toilet — it's a shooting gallery and a sex shop."

Paul Blaney, head of Glide Memorial United Methodist Church volunteers, said Glide is ready to help supervise.

Boeddeker on the weekends is another animal because the park is closed. But it's open the last Saturday morning of each month for food giveaways. Rec and Park opens the gate but doesn't staff the park, though police patrol.

This leaves the park available to be rented for special events. About \$200 buys four hours, a day permit and a Rec and Park custodian. Cismowski said Rec and Park is laying off 78 directors and some would be happy to work weekends.

The park opened May 19 because the clubhouse was a polling place. McDaniels, pulling overtime, opened at 5:30 a.m. and stayed until 9 p.m., cleaning up after the polls closed.

That noon, maybe 50 men and half a dozen women sat in the sun in the park, some listening to evangelist Barney Wiget at his mid-park microphone. Afterward, they lined up for a free hot dog and small food bag distributed by Liz Wong of Calvary Street Ministries.

For about 18 years, CS Ministries has been at the park each Tuesday to feed people and the last Saturday of the month, when they also give away sleeping bags, blankets and clothes. Wong is the widow of Rev. Edmond Wong, who started the program. Wong once was a junkie who shot heroin in the park, but kicked the habit to become "a flaming evangelist," Wiget said.

Boeddeker has been open since on weekdays but not holidays or weekends.

To reserve the park, or any part of it, call 831-5500. To report illegal activities, call the police at 553-0123 or Park Rangers 242-6390. To report park issues, call 311 or Cismowski at 831-6358. ■

—TOM CARTER

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be considered Russian Roulette.”

— SF DEPUTY CHIEF GARY MASSETANI

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Bedbugs: The stuff that bad dreams are made on



BEDBUGS are back in the news. Calls to pest control companies across the country about infestations have jumped 70% in the last five years, reports the National Pest Management Association on its Website. Companies that used to get one or two bedbug calls a year now get one or two a week, it says.

But Dr. Johnson Ojo, San Francisco Environmental Health special program manager, says we're controlling the buggers better than others.

"We're much more proactive than other cities in attacking the problem," he said. He cited Supe Daly's March 2006 hearings on bedbugs and, later that year, the city's publication, "Director's Rules and Regulations on How to Control Bedbug Infestation," which added bedbugs to the Health Code list of official public nuisances.

Dr. Ojo said the city isn't experiencing a "boom" in bedbugs, as reported in a recent Chronicle story, "but we are seeing mild progressive increases." In 2003, there were only nine reports. They rose to 81

in '04, 168 in '05, 290 in '06, 332 in '07, 398 in '08. So far this year there have been 168, putting us on track for about the same number as last year.

For less official stats, the little critters also can be tracked online at bedbugregistry.com. Launched in 2006 by computer programmer Maciej Ceglowski after he was bitten in a San Francisco hotel, the site lets users report when and where they were bitten, info that goes into a national database. The registry lists 50 reports in the city between Feb. 8 and May 11, 20 of them in the Tenderloin. You also can enter an address to check for reports and get email alerts whenever someone within a mile of you reports bedbugs.

So much for science and cybertechnology. Now for art: Poet Ed Bowers writes, "Nobody loves a bedbug or a poet," and he tells us why. ■

—MARJORIE BEGGS

Excerpts from

Bedbug poems written while having anxiety attacks



BY ED BOWERS

*Dedicated to William Burroughs
In charge of the Insect Trust Corporation*

I am just a word tangled with words.
Bedbugs are invisible words.
They hide under mind.

Bedbugs
Fill mind with anxiety.

Prisoners in churches
singing about crimes,

conceal bedbugs in souls,
shipped out, burned out.

Life and death is all that counts.

I am hiding between depression
and ecstasy
between the sheets
of my Tenderloin hotel.

I sleep with bedbugs.
I pay rent.
Oh how boring and stupid i am!

Bedbugs are the boring
insignificant itching and scratching
of body and soul.

I am a poet.

I am a bedbug.

My words crawl inside fear.



I am a bedbug in the United States of America.
Scratch me! I am an American poet!



The last thing in a star-spangled multiple personality universe
I want to do is love anyone other than me.

I am an insect.
I am not you.

I have always been
invisible.

That's the way you wanted it.
And that's the way you got it.

Nobody loves a bedbug or a poet.

Bedbugs don't have money. Neither do poets. I'm broke.
The bank is my enemy.

Bedbugs don't have weapons of mass destruction.
Poets don't have words
of wisdom. Nobody listens to words
or bedbugs.

All bedbugs and poets have is a desire
to live and die!



Postscript:

I wish I could say
one word

that would liberate
you from
this nightmare

But all I can do is bite you.
I'm sorry.
But that's my nature.

City attorney: Supe's neighborhood press law is 'a bad idea'

BY JONATHAN NEWMAN

CITY Attorney Dennis Herrera invited the San Francisco Newspaper Association to his office May 6 for a roundtable discussion on how Herrera's office could work with the "smaller media." One way, he said, was to bring their readers' concerns to his attention. Ten of the 17 association newspapers were represented.

Herrera began by introducing his new press secretary, Jack Song, and catching the newspaper reps up on his latest effort: The previous day he had filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Postal Service for violating its own regulations by refusing to provide safe private mail service to SRO residents as it does for apartment dwellers.

The suit filed in U.S. District Court cites some cases described in Central City Extra stories on SRO mail delivery.

Glenn Gullmes of the West Portal Monthly led the questions by asking what Herrera thought about Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi's proposed ordinance to require newspapers to publish a phone number for complainers to cancel delivery and to impose fines if the newspaper continues to deliver.

Herrera demurred at first, saying the pending legislation had been relegated to the back burner. But, when pressed, he conceded the ordinance "was not a good idea. Ordinances should not have a chilling effect on small business owners communicating with their customers."

Doug Comstock of the Westside Observer chided Herrera, calling the city attorney's office "a major impediment to the enforcement of the sunshine ordinance" because it was doing nothing about Mayor Newsom's failure to publish his daily calendar. The Sunshine Ordinance Task Force found that to be a violation, Comstock said, but the city's Ethics Commission had refused to do anything about it, and he thought Herrera should take legal action.

Herrera disagreed. He said he publishes his daily calendar, and his office is "light-years ahead (of other public offices) in terms of transparency," and difficulties enforcing the sunshine ordinance should be addressed to policymakers. Citing attorney-client privilege, Herrera wouldn't disclose any advice he may have given to the mayor about the calendar issue.

Comstock persisted. Whether the mayor's daily calendar is subject to the sunshine ordinance or the state Public Records Act, it's still a document created by public servants at public expense and should be published, he insisted. Herrera told Comstock he had a right as a citizen and taxpayer to take the issue to court.

"The sunshine ordinance has no mechanism for enforcement — no real teeth," Herrera said.

Asked about the looming city budget cuts, Herrera said he wasn't sure how they would affect the city attorney's office, but when his tenure began in 2001, he had 225 lawyers and now is down to 185, with potential layoffs pending. To help offset

cuts, he's instituted new budget and billing procedures designed to match the efficiency of major private law firms, essential because his office is called upon to advise and counsel more than 100 city agencies and commissions and scores of elected officials, he said.

Herrera noted how that contrasts with his time as a private lawyer, responsible for every aspect of the case at hand, like a chef perfecting a meal. His duties as a public official overseeing myriad legal matters is more like a short-order cook contributing only a little to each dish.

His most rewarding moment as city attorney, he said, was getting a \$1 million Section 8 housing lawsuit settlement in 2004. The city supplemented the settlement with funds from the mayor's office, the S.F. Giants and the 49ers, and used it to build the first Boys and Girls Club in Hunters Point, which opened in 2008.

His most difficult task, he said, was navigating the contentious dispute that erupted between the Civil Service Commission and the Elections Commission over the firing of Elections Director Tammy Haygood in 2002.

And yes, Herrera acknowledged, he is running for re-election and is gathering campaign funds, though he is currently unopposed. He vowed to campaign, opposed or not.

"It's an insult to the public not to campaign. I do my job and give the voters the opportunity to agree or disagree," he said. ■

Only 6 city agencies in full c

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ommendations for reform.

The grand juries of 1999-2000 and 2007-08 took the city to task for a host of issues regarding annual reports, including vague requirements and confusion over laws governing production. Both juries hammered the city for lack of an oversight process to ensure that reports are timely, meaningful, reviewed by decision-makers and accessible to the public.

The 1999-2000 jury report, titled "Neglect of Reporting Requirements," got a nod of acknowledgment from then-Mayor Willie Brown. His office said it would explore the feasibility of establishing an overseer to track the production of annual reports. A decade later, the 2007-08 Civil Grand Jury found that this crucial role remains unfilled.

"One of the rules of the mayor, in the event that this is brought to his attention, is to make sure city agencies comply with the obligation the City Charter and Administrative Code requires of them."

Buck Delventhal
DEPUTY CITY ATTORNEY

Newsom appeared to dismiss concerns outlined in the 2007-08 report, titled "Accountability in San Francisco." He did not respond to Central City Extra's repeated requests for comment on this matter. But in its official response to the jury's report, his office stated that it relies on efficiency plans and performance-management tools, rather than annual reports, to gauge city departments' efficacy.

Efficiency plans, however, unlike an annual report, don't necessarily sum up agencies' services and programs in a way that's easily understandable to the average citizen. Nor are they specifically required to be posted on the library and city agencies' Websites, as are annual reports. But what's relevant here is that the mayor is obliged to uphold City Charter mandates on annual reports, no matter how superior he considers his methods for gauging accountability.

"That city law requires a wide variety of reports from departments does not relieve them of the obligation to prepare a specific report," says Deputy City Attorney Buck Delventhal. "One of the roles of the mayor, in the event that this is brought to his attention, is to make sure city agencies comply with the obligation the City Charter and Administrative Code requires of them."

ACCOUNTABILITY IS US

When Newsom campaigned for mayor, he promised to create better systems of accountability, and he's touting progress in that area in his bid to become governor. "Mayor Newsom has used technology to cultivate an ongoing conversation with San Francisco residents and to put city services online to increase accessibility and transparency," states his Website.

This was also a key motivator for the civil grand juries. "We were very into accountabili-

TOP 5 REASONS ANNUAL REPORTS ARE MISSING

CENTRAL City Extra contacted 69 departments, boards and commissions listed on www.sfgov.org.requirements, the city's Website, to learn why annual reports haven't been produced. Responses fell into five general categories, listed in order of frequency:

1. Agency staff are unaware or unclear about annual reports requirements.

At 17 agencies, staff explanations for missing reports revealed confusion or lack of knowledge about requirements. A spokesman for the Entertainment Commission, for example, said he wasn't aware that he is required to post a report at the city's and the Public Library's Website. A spokeswoman for the Human Rights Commission simply said, "We are a city and county agency and thus don't have an annual report." At other agencies, including the Department of the Environment, staff referred to a 2003 ordinance stipulating that annual reports be posted electronically rather than printed on paper, incorrectly interpreting it to mean that annual reports are no longer required. The Port Commission and Asian Arts Museum appeared to be unaware of the ordinance, each saying their office stopped producing annual reports because they are too expensive. "I miss the annual report," said a Port spokeswoman. "I used to produce it. It was a nice way to inform the public of what we do." Although the city attorney's office distributes a Good Government Guide that mentions mandates on annual reports, it is not required reading, and it doesn't say what to put in the report or when it is due.

2. Agencies produce other reports instead.

At 13 agencies, staff said they no longer do annual reports because they produce efficiency plans, strategic plans or financial statements instead. This was the case at the Elections Department, for example, whose spokeswoman offered to e-mail The Extra a copy of its efficiency report, which is not posted online. A spokeswoman at the Human Services Department also referred us to her agency's comprehensive efficiency plan, which is posted.

3. It's in the works.

In 10 cases, staff members said their agency's annual report is either being worked on or is finished but hasn't been approved. Staff at the Police Department and medical examiner's office, for example, said they are awaiting additional information. A spokeswoman for the Public Library says its report — which will cover 2007-09 — is due to be posted in the fall.

4. Limited resources.

Three agencies specifically blamed staff cuts and time constraints as a reason for not producing reports. "They're considered a luxury item," said a spokeswoman at the Fire Commission, who told The Extra that it's difficult to compile necessary statistics because the agency is so shorthanded. "Everyone's doing three jobs."

5. Employees consider them meaningless.

Only two agencies gave this as a reason for not producing an annual report, including the Sheriff's Department. "They end up being glorified press releases," said a spokesman at the Public Utilities Commission. However, this sentiment was echoed by a number of city employees during the course of Central City Extra's investigation — including those representing agencies whose annual reports are up to date. ■

ty," said Karen Rose, a 2007-08 juror. "But it was a hard thing to wrestle with. We almost gave up on the subject, because how do you go about proving accountability?"

The jury decided to tackle the issue by applying the standards of a well-run business. It homed in on how city agencies — which spend the city's \$6.5 billion budget — are overseen by the mayor and Board of Supervisors, and it used annual reports as a jumping-off point.

"Annual reports are important for tracking what departments are doing and assessing their effectiveness. What did you do with the money we gave you, and do we want to continue that?" said Rose, adding that a thorough report should answer those questions.

What Rose and her fellow jurors discovered dovetailed with the conclusions of the 1999-2000 Civil Grand Jury: A number of city agencies are failing to produce reports, and no one at City Hall is riding herd on them.

According to its final report, "The [2007-08 Civil Grand] Jury determined that neither the mayor, nor the Board has a process to track the due dates of these mandatory reports; to analyze the reports; or to review by the Board.... This lack of oversight is not simply a mechanical error in the tracking of bureaucratic paperwork. Without scrutiny of their annual reports, the mayor, the Board and the public have lost what could be an effective means to measure the successes and challenges of the city's various commissions and departments."

Earlier this year, The Extra began investigating how agencies comply with annual report mandates. There are 164 units of government on www.sfgov.org. Not all are required to produce an annual report. The Extra winnowed the list to 69 that we contacted to determine the status of each agency's annual report. We also checked the site to find out whether the reports had been posted, and whether a link to the report had been sent to the Public Library, as required by law.

MOST AGENCIES OUT OF COMPLIANCE

Of 69 city agencies studied, 63 were out of compliance in some way. Agency representatives gave Central City Extra a variety of explanations. In general, they reflected confusion over annual report requirements, lack of staff or resources required to produce them, or the belief that annual reports are meaningless (see sidebar). Their excuses, in essence, underscored what the civil grand juries found: There are weaknesses in the city's Administrative Code that need to be shored up.

For one thing, the Administrative Code — which outlines how the City Charter is to be

REPORTING TO THE PUBLIC

The report shall contain a general summary of the department's services and programs presented in terms and format accessible to the average citizen. ... Boards, commissions and department heads ... shall post the reports on the City's official website, and transmit the URL for each report to the Public Library ...

ADMINISTRATIVE CODE, SEC. 1.56:

compliance on annual reports

City agencies' annual report status

The San Francisco Charter and Administrative Code mandate that city departments, boards and commissions prepare an annual report detailing their activities. Some of the 125 agencies listed on the city's official Website — www.sfgov.org — are exempt. The charter doesn't specifically require the mayor's office or the Board of Supervisors, for example, to produce an annual report.

Agencies that are required to produce an annual report must post them on the city's official Website, as well as the Public Library's.

As the 1999-2000 and 2007-08 civil grand juries noted, the mandates are confusing and vague, and no one tracks the production or posting of annual reports. To determine which agencies are required to produce them, Central City Extra reviewed an index produced by the 1999-2000 Civil Grand Jury, and consulted the Board of Supervisors' list of active boards and commissions, as well as the city and county's Index of Records, which specifies how long agencies are required to keep records they produce.

The Extra then checked relevant city agency and Public Library Websites to determine whether reports were up to date. These checks were conducted in February and March; a final status review was made May 18 and 19.

In cases where annual reports, minutes or agendas were significantly out of date, we contacted each department, board and commission to verify our findings and learn why reports hadn't been done.

AGENCY	Latest annual report on agency's Website	Agency's latest report posted at Public Library
AGING/ADULT SERVICES COMMISSION	NONE	NONE
AIRPORT COMMISSION	FY 2008-09	NONE
ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL DEPARTMENT	NONE	NONE
ANIMAL CONTROL & WELFARE COM.	NONE	NONE
BOARD OF APPEALS	FY 2003-04	FY 2002-03
ARTS COMMISSION	FY 2006-07	NONE
ASIAN ART MUSEUM	NONE	NONE
ASSESSOR-RECORDER	FY 2007-08	FY 2007-08
¹ BUILDING INSPECTION DEPARTMENT	FY 2007-08*	NONE
CHILDREN & FAMILIES COMMISSION	2008	NONE
OFFICE OF CITIZEN COMPLAINTS (POLICE)	2008	NONE
CITY ADMINISTRATOR	NONE	NONE
CITY ATTORNEY	2007-08	NONE
CITY HALL PRESERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION	NONE	NONE
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION	FY 2006-07	FY 2006-07
CONTROLLER'S OFFICE	FY 2007-08	FY 2004-05
CONVENTION FACILITIES MANAGEMENT	NONE	NONE
COUNTY CLERK	NONE	NONE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY	FY 2004-05	FY 2004-05
² ELECTIONS COMMISSION	2007*	FY 2005-06
DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT	NONE	NONE
EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM	FY 2007-08	FY 2006-07
ENTERTAINMENT COMMISSION	NONE	NONE
³ DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT	NONE	2004-05*
COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT	NONE	NONE
ETHICS COMMISSION	FY 2007-08	FY 2007-08
FILM COMMISSION	NONE	NONE
FINE ARTS MUSEUMS	NONE	NONE
⁴ FIRE DEPARTMENT	FY 2004-05*	NONE
GENERAL SERVICES AGENCY	NONE	NONE
HEALTH SERVICE BOARD	NONE	NONE
HOUSING AUTHORITY (COMMISSION)	NONE	NONE
HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT	FY 2005-06	FY 2005-06
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION	NONE	NONE
HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT	NONE	NONE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION	FY 2003-04	NONE
IMMIGRANT RIGHTS COMMISSION	Undated	NONE
JUVENILE PROBATION COMMISSION	2008	NONE
PUBLIC LIBRARY DEPARTMENT	NONE	NONE
LIBRARY COMMISSION	NONE	NONE
MEDICAL EXAMINER	FY 2005-06	FY 2005-06
MENTAL HEALTH BOARD	FY 2007-08	NONE
MUNICIPAL TRANSPORTATION AGENCY (Includes DPT/Taxi Com.)	NONE	NONE
PLANNING DEPARTMENT	NONE	NONE
PLANNING COMMISSION	NONE	NONE
⁵ POLICE DEPARTMENT	2006*	NONE
PORT OF SAN FRANCISCO (COMMISSION)	NONE	FY 2004-05
⁶ PUBLIC DEFENDER	2008 (Calendar)	*
⁷ PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT	FY 2007-08*	FY 2007-08
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION (WATER)	NONE	FY 2006-07
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT	FY 2007-08	FY 2005-06
PURCHASING	NONE	NONE
RECREATION AND PARKS DEPARTMENT	2007	NONE
RECREATION AND PARKS COMMISSION	NONE	NONE
RELOCATION APPEALS BOARD	NONE	NONE
RENT BOARD	FY2007-08	NONE
SHERIFF DEPARTMENT	NONE	NONE
SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION	NONE	NONE
SOUTHEAST COMMUNITY FACILITY COMMISSION	FY 2007-08	FY 2007-08
DEPARTMENT ON STATUS OF WOMEN	FY 2007-08	FY 2007-08
STATUS OF WOMEN COMMISSION	FY 2007-08	NONE
SUNSHINE ORDINANCE TASK FORCE	COMB RPT FOR 06-07	2006-07
TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT	NONE	NONE
TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY	2007	NONE
TREASURE ISLAND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY	NONE	NONE
TREASURER/TAX COLLECTOR	FY 2005-06	FY 2005-06
VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION	NONE	NONE
WAR MEMORIAL AND PERFORMING ARTS CENTER	NONE	NONE
YOUTH COMMISSION	FY 2006-07	NONE

¹Report also covered work of Access Appeals Commission, Building Inspection Commission and board of Examiners

²Report also covered work of Elections Department

³Library links only to the annual report of the Department's Urban Forestry Council

⁴Report also covered work of Fire Commission

⁵Report also covered work of Police Commission

⁶Library has hard copy of Public Defender's report, which was issued in the form of a calendar

⁷Report also covered work of Public Health Commission

effected — is vague about what an annual report should contain. Even the most explicit description — found in Section 1.56 — leaves plenty of latitude. It says, "The [annual] report shall contain a general summary of the department's services and programs presented in terms and format accessible to the average citizen, and any highlights and achievements of the prior year that the department wishes to include."

For agencies that produce reports, the lack of specifics of this directive results in annual reports that are all over the map in terms of usefulness to the public.

The 2007 annual report of the Transportation Authority, for example, clearly states mission and role, provides extensive budget information, details accomplishments, outlines plans, and names all board members, staff and consultants. By contrast, the city attorney's current report consists of perfunctory budget information, a brief mission statement and links to all its press releases over the year. The public defender's annual report is a calendar sprinkled with tidbits about the department's accomplishments in 2008.

The reports are vastly different in terms of form, content and scope, but all technically meet the city's vague mandates, an issue the 2007-08 Civil Grand Jury addressed. "Required reports do not have a standard format, leading to the possible omission of significant information, whether positive or negative," it noted. "The Board [of Supervisors] and the Mayor's Office should standardize the contents of annual reports and other Departmental reports to assure there are objective measures of performance."

Sally Baack, associate professor of management at the College of Business at San Francisco State University, described the role of annual reports in the business world. "The annual report gives the company a chance to 'brag' or explain the previous year — its performance and activities; and it gives the company a chance to explain what it will be working to achieve in the coming year and how it plans to achieve its goals," said Baack in an e-mail to The Extra. "In the case of a city, I don't see any reason for there to be any major differences. In fact, a city doesn't necessarily need to worry about withholding key strategic information, as it doesn't have true competitors.... It may be even more important to outline specific details — including personnel issues; budgets, etc. — all of which a company wouldn't do, due to strategic protections. In addition, in the case of a city, it may offer a great opportunity for the message from leadership to be compared with the actual results."

ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS

Other loopholes in the City Charter and Administrative Code help explain why agencies are lax or lackadaisical about annual reports.

"The Charter doesn't set time limits to file an annual report," says Bob Planthold, a four-time Civil Grand Jury member who served in 1999-2000, as well as 2007-08. "It allows bureaucrats to drag their feet. The fact that there's no timeline also means there's no penalty — no admonishment, no letter of warning or reprimand, no loss of funding for failure to do an annual report."

But the fact that the Charter lacks penalties for a particular stipulation is not unusual, nor is it an excuse for flouting the law, says Delventhal, of the city attorney's office. "The Charter assumes that if agencies aren't doing their job, the mayor can look into it" and compel them to comply, he told The Extra.

In a particularly odd quirk, the Administrative Code does level threats at city officials who neglect to provide a link to their annual report to the public library within 10 days of publication. The links are important because a 2003 ordinance prohibits agencies from publishing hard copies of their reports without approval of the Board of Supervisors — a measure aimed at saving paper and production costs. Section 8.16 reads, "Any violation of the provisions of this Section on the part of any elective officer or any member of any

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

City Hall snubs key findings of 2 civil grand juries

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

board or commission shall be deemed to be official misconduct and any violation of the provisions of this Section on the part of any employee shall be deemed to be inattention to duties and considered cause for suspension or dismissal from service.”

Central City Extra’s investigation shows that 14 city agencies are current on their annual reports but have not sent their link to the library. According to Section 8.16, this is a fireable offense.

The library certainly has no enforcement power, said Greg Kelly, a documents librarian at the Government Information Center, which maintains a too-short list of the annual reports it receives. Kelly says he occasionally chases after city officials if he learns an annual report has been produced, but he’s not required to. “Our responsibility is to put their URLs on our site when they send them, not beg for them to send them.”

Former library Director Susan Hildreth says San Francisco’s problem with delinquent annual reports is longstanding — and adds that it’s just the tip of the iceberg. Hildreth, who was director of San Francisco’s library from 2001-04 and until recently headed the state’s library, says bureaucratic and technical issues in the digital age make it difficult to compel agencies to deposit required documents, where they can be accessed by the public in perpetuity.

“When reports were printed on paper, people sent a copy and that was it,” she says. “Obtaining those documents

when they are digital is a problem. We have a hard time [getting] state departments to do that. It’s a challenging matter on all levels.”

Without leadership from the mayor, mandates like those covering annual reports come to nothing, said Charles Davis, executive director of the National Freedom of Information Coalition, a nonprofit alliance that also includes journalistic societies and attorneys. “Government can make all sorts of laws and proclamations, but if no one’s in charge of making sure they take place, they won’t take place. Or they may take place for a few years and then drop off.”

S.F.’S LAPSE A SURPRISE

Ironically, Davis noted, San Francisco is considered a pioneer in the open government movement, so its failure to ensure annual reports are produced and made accessible to the public is surprising. “The city is not doing what’s necessary to make sure the information flow is guaranteed,” he said. “If they’re going to talk the talk, they need to walk the walk.”

Venise Wagner, Journalism School chair at San Francisco State University, also believes annual reports are essential. “They serve as a vehicle so that people can act as a watchdog,” she said. “You can’t trust [gov-

CENTRAL CITY EXTRA RECOMMENDS:

- That the mayor designate someone to track the production of departmental annual reports and ensure that they are posted on time on the required Websites.
- That guidelines on what to include in annual reports be issued, including goals and outcomes and budget information that reveals cost-effectiveness of the agency’s efforts.
- That agencies be reminded annually of their reporting requirements.
- That the Board of Supervisors pass an ordinance that holds heads of agencies liable for suspension or dismissal if no annual report is produced within 12 months of the end of the year to be reported.
- Requiring an agency’s annual report be posted on the home page of its Website.

ernment officials] to do what they say they are going to do. You can’t just take them at their word.”

Historians, too, have a stake in the city’s annual reports. From 1860 until 1919, they were bound each year into volumes, which now reside in the documents section on the fifth floor of the Public Library; they are also available online.

‘FOUNTAIN OF INFORMATION’

The reports are of inestimable historical value, says Charles Fracchia, founder and president emeritus of the San Francisco Museum and Historical Society. “As a historian, for me they are a fountain of information. If these departments hadn’t put out annual reports, we’d have a real historical gap,” he says. “If that’s not followed on, [future historians] are going to be in a heap of trouble.”

Peter Field, a tour guide whose specialty is the history of the Tenderloin, noted that the minutiae likely to be found in an annual report are particularly important. Details about when a city project or program is high-profile, but those surrounding the city’s everyday inner workings are harder to unearth. “[Annual] reports are important because they’re likely to flesh out historical events,” he said. “If reports don’t exist, it closes the books for historians, especially if no one’s alive who witnessed the events.”

For Francis Yanak, adjunct professor in Golden Gate University’s public administration masters program, the issue boils down to respect for the law. “When we enact legislation, there’s a purpose for it. We want our public officials to carry out the laws,” he said.

Two civil grand juries in the last 10 years have waved red flags to alert the mayor about problems with annual reporting procedures, and provided recommendations for fixing them. So why has nothing been done?

Perhaps in part because the reports garnered little attention from the mass media, which lessened the pressure on public officials to take action.

“It’s really hard to get someone interested, even though it’s really important stuff,” said jury member Nick Gaffney. “Unless you nail subjects of these reports right between

the eyes and there’s no wiggle room, people tend to ignore them.”

Gaffney noted that other reports issued by the jury — particularly one that explored homelessness in the wake of Newsom’s Care Not Cash program — got more media attention than the one that raised concerns about annual reports. He believes the jury’s accountability report was shrugged off by the media partly because the topic “is too obtuse — it’s too hard a story to tell. It’s not dramatic enough — it’s all been reported before ... it shows a systemic problem, which is basically that government doesn’t work.”

“Not much came of it, because that’s typically what happens to the Civil Grand Jury report,” admitted Supervisor Sean Elsbernd, who presided over the Government Oversight and Audit Committee hearing on the 2007-08 jury’s report. “It generates about one press story after it comes out, and one public hearing, and that’s it.”

But accountability and performance management are precisely the focus of the current Civil Grand Jury’s report, titled “The Numbers Have Something to Say, Is Anybody Listening?” Although it doesn’t specifically address annual reports, it does explore methods used in lieu of them that Newsom referred to in his response to the 2007-08 jury. Among the current jury’s conclusions: “The variety of measurement systems used by the City are not easily found or understood by the public. The Jury finds that Citizens cannot easily discover what strategic goals the City is pursuing, nor what progress is being made in reaching them.”

Ironically, Newsom might have less to defend this year had he followed up the concerns of last year’s jury and ensured that agencies reporting to him issue concise, informative annual reports the public can use to ascertain for themselves what city agencies are doing with taxpayers’ money.

The mayor’s office response to the current grand jury’s report speaks volumes. Spokesman Nathan Ballard told a reporter at another San Francisco newspaper, “The grand jury doesn’t know what it’s talking about.”

The mayor, evidently, knows better. Just trust him on that. ■

WHAT’S NEXT FOR CIVIL GRAND JURY

On June 4, the Board of Supervisors’ Government Audit and Oversight Committee holds a hearing on the current Civil Grand Jury report, “The Numbers Have Something to Say, Is Anybody Listening?” The hearing, set for 11 a.m. in Room 250 at City Hall, is open to the public.

VIOLATORS CAN BE FIRED

Any violation of the provisions of this Section ... shall be deemed to be official misconduct and any violation ... on the part of any employee shall be deemed to be inattention to duties and considered cause for suspension or dismissal from service.

ADMINISTRATIVE CODE, SEC. 8.16

Resources

- List of city agencies and their Websites: www.sfgov.org
- List of the Public Library’s links to annual reports: <http://sfpl.org/librarylocations/main/gic/annualreports.htm>
- Civil Grand Jury reports and official responses to them: http://www.sfgov.org/site/courts_page.asp?id=3680
- San Francisco City Charter and Administrative Code: http://www.municode.com/Resources/ClientCode_List.asp?cn=San%20Francisco&sid=5&cid=4201
- Gavin Newsom’s campaign for governor Website: www.gavinnewsom.com/home/

ESTELITA CATALIG
Social worker

More than 80 mourners attended a memorial at Canon Kip Senior Center for case manager Estelita Catalig who died unexpectedly of a stroke April 2.

The ever cheerful Ms. Catalig had been healthy and working with the frail and elderly and homeless seniors. When she didn't show up for work March 31, a check of her Daly City home found her unconscious on her bed. She was taken to Seton Medical Center where she died two days later. She was 56.

Her death sent a shock wave through the Episcopal Community Services center at 702 Natoma St. where the devoted Ms. Catalig had worked for two years, sometimes seven days a week, friends said.

Jennie Chavez said the Manila-born Ms. Catalig had just completed the state's-38-hour Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program to advise the elderly on Medicare. The group had planned a lunch May 15 to honor the graduates.

"I called her Ate, meaning big sister in Tagalog," Chavez said. "She had just become registered and we were planning a volunteer appreciation. She was very proactive and always trying to resolve problems, and she had great follow-through. This (sudden death) makes you think about your own life."

Korki Lagbao felt the same. He was Ms. Catalig's close friend and called her "Telly," the nickname she used in her email address. They often dined at Filipino restaurants and he took her once to Pacifica, where she had not been. He told the group he had visited the unconscious woman at the ICU ward where a swarm of grieving people had gathered to find out her condition.

"It always amazed me when she would say, 'There's so little time for helping,'" Lagbao, a Homeless Connect volunteer said. "I didn't know what she meant until today. She worked seven days a week. And I promise, in her memory, to do more."

Prayers were said at the memorial, scripture was read. There was group singing with sheet music provided, and songs from the five-piece Canon Kip

Senior Center band plus several soloists. Caseworker James Powell sang a cappella "His Eye Is on the Sparrow" in a rich bass voice and finished in a dramatic falsetto.



"She was a social worker 35 years and started in the Philippines," said Canon Kip board President Pablo Wong. "She worked in Saudi Arabia, too, before she came here. She leaves long-lasting footprints. And she was an inspiration to serve the underserved."

Bobby Bogan said "she walked with her heart in her hand" and was "a very loved entity in this family."

Ms. Catalig, the eldest of nine children, earned a bachelor of science in social work and a master's from the Asian Institute in the Philippines. She held various counseling and development jobs there from 1974 to 2001, including a stint with Habitat for Humanity. She went away for seven years in the 1980s to be a personnel counselor in Saudi Arabia. She came to the United States in 2002 and was a Life Skills trainer in Gilroy for four years before coming to Canon Kip Senior Center.

Afterward, as more people filled the room, a buffet lunch was served in back. In the lobby, the personnel sign-in board still listed her name. ■

—TOM CARTER

LEONARDO DIZON
Filipino WWII vet

Friends of Leonardo Dizon bid the World War II veteran from the Philippines farewell in a lengthy Catholic memorial service March 31 at the Alexander Residence where he lived 16 years.

Mr. Dizon, whose forebearers came from Pampango Province on Luzon, came to the Alexander in 1993. He was taken in failing health Feb. 27 to St. Francis Convalescent Pavilion in Daly

City, where he died less than three weeks later. He was 89.

Mr. Dizon was deeply religious but wasn't Catholic. It made no difference to The Rev. Virgil Bartolome of St. Michael's parish, who had been invited by social worker Betty Duran. He celebrated a Mass during which the 25 mourners — all but four were women — prayed often for Mr. Dizon, took Communion, and sang songs, one of them, "Santo," in Tagalog.

One man said that he had amused Mr. Dizon every time he saw him.

"When I first met him I called him Leo DiCaprio," the man said. "Every time I saw him I called him that and he'd laugh."

But little was learned about Mr. Dizon during the 75-minute ceremony.

Dalisay Calubad, a middle daughter of Mr. Dizon's six children, here from the Philippines, said afterward that her father had not been eligible for the Filipino vets benefits contained in President Obama's Feb. 17 stimulus bill. A section provides \$198 million for one-time pensions to 15,000 Filipino vets who have waited 60 years for promised benefits that were never delivered. Mr. Dizon served in the U.S. Army Forces Far East that was created in 1941, but Calubad did not know exactly when. He hadn't been a prisoner of war, she said.

Duran said the quiet Mr. Dizon had been a model resident and had once initiated an in-house Bible study group. He was also an avid fisherman who went out alone to fish off the pier at Aquatic Park, she said.

"He caught fish and crabs and gave them away to people here," Duran said. "He was very generous."

The mourners ate bowls of arroz caldo, a Filipino porridge of rice and chicken, prepared by resident Carol Moratillo. ■

—TOM CARTER

LOUIS WILLIAMS AND TED CARSON
Tribute to two at the Empress

Displayed at the front of the Empress Hotel's community room were tangible remembrances of two residents who died in April — Louis Williams' cane and Ted Carson's plaid bathrobe, black watch cap, glasses and cane. On the stereo was "Everything I Have Is Yours," a cut from the album of the same name by Billy Eckstein, one of Mr. Carson's favorites.

Both men had known each other when they were homeless and living in a shelter, said Empress Property Manager Roberta Goodman, and both had lived at the Empress for a year before their deaths in their rooms, Mr. Carson on April 6 at the age of 79, and Mr. Williams on April 23 at the age of 41. Their birthdays were within a day of each other — June 5 and June 6, respectively.

Goodman said the men were more acquaintances than pals, but their recent history on the streets and at the Empress, and various physical ailments, including diabetes, gave them some common ground.

Fifteen hotel residents and staff, and medical and social services providers who'd worked with the two men shared stories about them at a May 5 memorial.

"I remember being on the elevator with Louis and one of his sons, a College of San Mateo student," said Martha Stein, support services staff member for the hotel. "You could see how proud Louis was of him. The boy had a really strong handshake, and when I commented on it, he said, 'I learned it from my dad.'" Louis just beamed, she said.

"I'm going to miss Louis so much," said Pan Fisher, a friend and fellow resident. "He's always



Ted Carson



Louis Williams

going to be here with me, but I won't have him to talk to or argue with."

Goodman described how Mr. Williams' East Bay relatives — two sons, a twin sister, another sister, a brother and his mother — visited him often at the Empress to take care of him, and, after he died, came to take his personal effects.

"They went through his things and kept saying, 'I gave him that,' and 'I gave that to him — and he still had it!' It was touching," she said.

Mr. Williams was a sweet man, and one who didn't need much to be content, said a staff member. He'd asked her to help him set up a Netflix account. "He just wanted to sit in his room and enjoy a movie all the way through," she said.

Mr. Carson was a more demanding resident, but in a delightful, intelligent way. When DPH nurse Liane Angus brought him Eckstein and Sinatra CDs, he knew every word to every song, she said. "And we'd dance around the office — when he got excited, he just had to move."

His careful enunciation and gift for words were legend in the hotel. Angus did an imitation of him that had all the mourners at the memorial laughing: "I am most, most gratified, and you look quite wonderful today. Would you like to go to Paris or to Rome with me?"

Several people used less-than-complimentary words to describe Mr. Carson — ornery, grumpy, a hoarder who was kicked out of a hotel for that bad habit.

"Rarely he just made me crazy," said Mike McGinley, Curry Senior Center case management supervisor.

But mostly they recalled his wittiness and generosity. Years on the street had given him the taste for free food and the resourcefulness to get whatever he could find. He'd "do all the routes," an Empress resident said, and come back with lots of extra food, which he'd pass out to anyone who was hungry.

"I'm just so grateful that he didn't have to die on the street," said case manager Jackie Wilson. "He was here, among people who cared so much for him."

Aaron Jones II, an Empress desk clerk, read a poem he wrote, "The Memorial to Two, to Ted and Louis."

gone in their ages	dust
mostly Quiet	Not to be here
laying off	found silent
To the side	in the Rooms

leaving	of God
different	Calling
and like	them
the others	out

this memorial	in the preparation
is 4 2 with	of the times they
the chairs	must now
set up	spend

Both brothers	in His arms
Black men gone	at Home. ■

—MARJORIE BEGGS

Peer Support Line

575-1400

Office of Self-Help

1095 Market St., Suite 202

'The Cosmic Walk' — African tapestries of life

BY ED BOWERS

IMAGINE walking down the streets of the Tenderloin, where hundreds of people at odds with each other are going their own way, and then an anonymous, sneaky creature comes up to you on the corner of Turk and Hyde, and whispers into your ear where you can go to get a real connection with the universe.

He's not selling crack or ice or heroin. This product can be observed for free. The faceless creep tells you to go to 230 Hyde St., home of Faithful Fools, walk in the door, go up the stairs, and observe 31 beautiful tapestries created in South

Africa to educate people to the fact that not only can art be entertaining and provocative, it can also be enlightening and educational, its original function in the first place. Called The Cosmic Walk, the exhibition was commissioned by the Faithful Fools ministry eight years ago.

One of the first tapestries I saw at this exhibition, which closed in early 2009, was called "Huge Unfolding of Energy Fire," full of disembodied smiles, curlicues, and ecstatic, mischievous fires on a black background, black being the basis of all life, which is a mystery beyond religion, politics or mental conception.

Next was "Cosmic Self-Organizing Connectiveness," a tapestry with a beautiful, radiating spider web inlaid with a wool and weave of precious jewels. I hate spiders. But I can appreciate them now because of this work. The project artists turned something I find repulsive into a symbol I find profound.

Another tapestry was covered with statements such as, "Energy is released to the surface as light and heat."

These creations combine facts, expressed in words, with visual stimulus, possibly the most effective way to make education fun and let intelligence dance.

They document everything from dinosaurs to sexual procreation to

goddess worship to nuclear physics to the expansion of the universe. The Cosmic Walk is, in fact, the story of the universe.

Each tapestry takes an aspect of human consciousness and history, biology and scientific discovery, and plays with it like a Dizzy Gillespie solo on a simple song that can be turned into an epiphany of sound, causing the listener to become curious about what will happen next on the tapestry of life.

South African women in the Kopanang Women's Group in South Africa created the tapestries to communicate their life experiences while acquiring income-generating skills as part of the Sithandizingane Care Project of Geluksdal, South Africa.

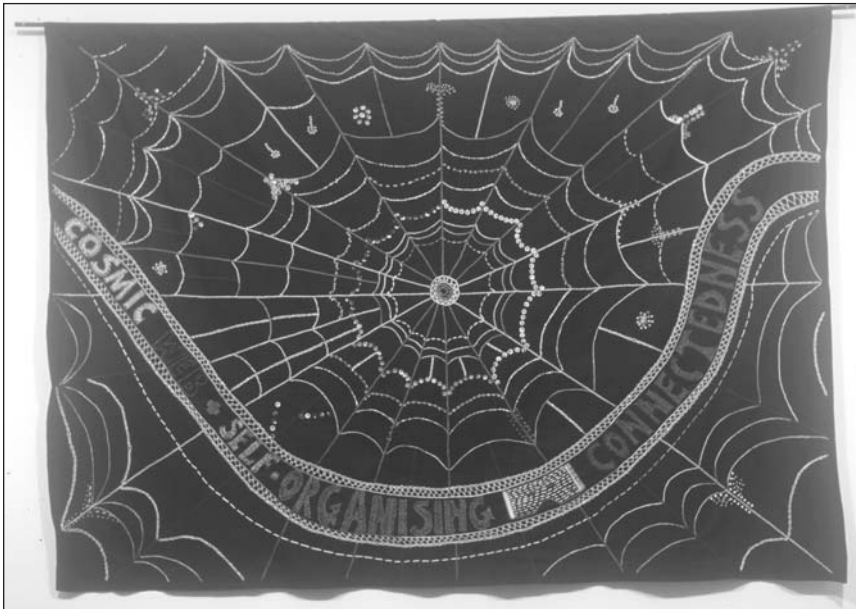
The proceeds from the sale of works like these, as well as quilts and handmade paper items, provide a life-sustaining income to women and families involved in this project and help support children with HIV/AIDS, many of them orphans.

Africa is decimated. It is your mother, the mother of consciousness in the human world. Yet many South African women and their children have to walk five miles to get a jug of water to survive one more day. Then they have to walk back five miles to drink the damn thing.

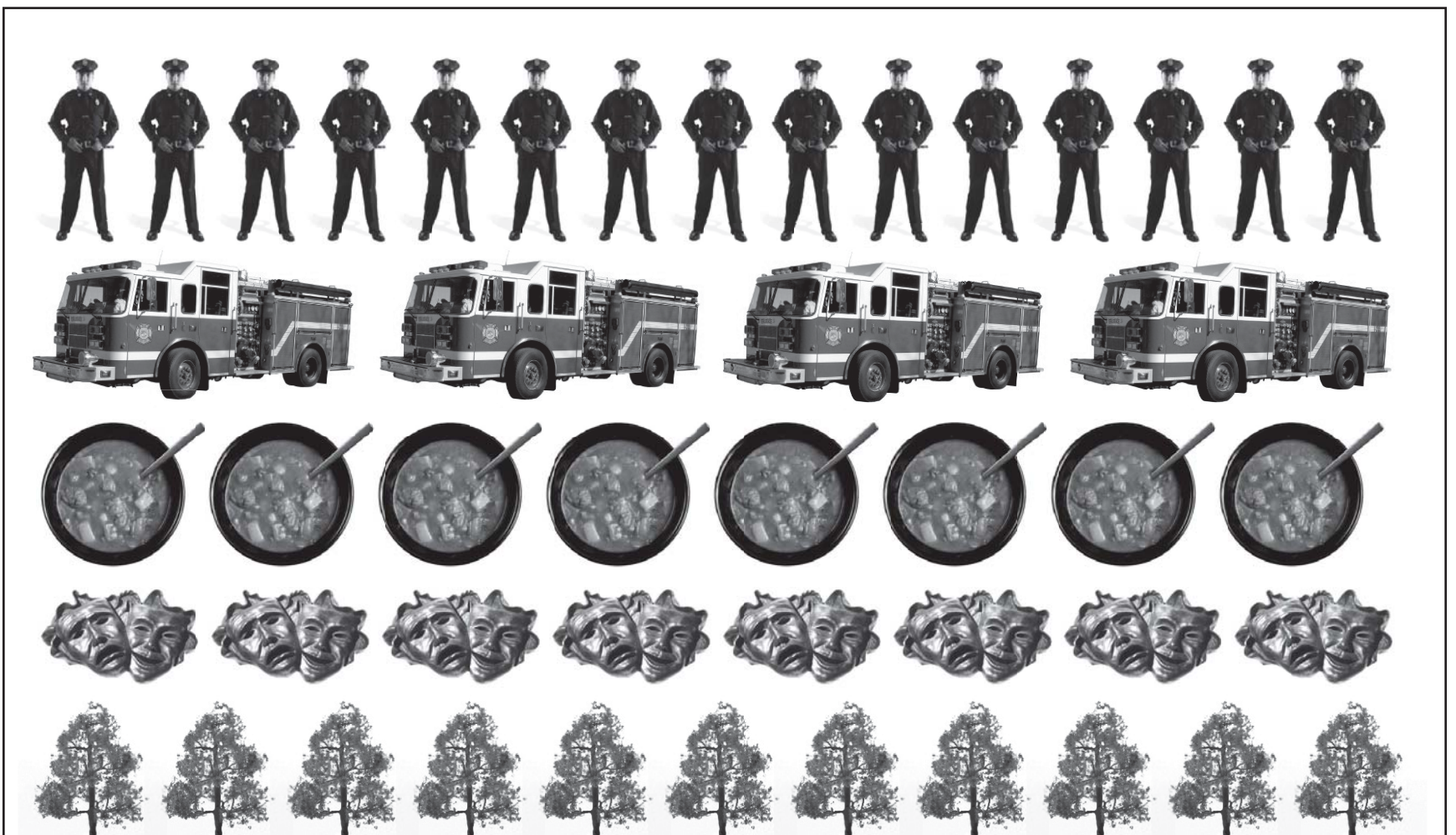
Even if you're homeless in San Francisco, you live like a king compared to them.

The tapestry exhibit has left the Tenderloin, but it tours. I can't think of a better exhibit for teenagers to see, an inspiration for students whose funding is about to be sold out by the banks and the political con artists.

To see more images of the collection, log onto faithfulfools.org/project_kopanang.htm. If you're interested in bringing the exhibition to your site, call the Faithful Fools at 474-0508 or email them at info@faithfulfools.org. ■



"Cosmic Self-Organizing Connectiveness" uses a jewel-laden spiderweb to illustrate its point in exhibit of South African tapestries.



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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

SPECIAL EVENTS

Feisty Feminist Theory Series, June 11, 7 p.m., New Valencia Hall, 625 Larkin St., Suite 202. Educational program on Marxist/Socialist feminism and black revolutionary feminism presented by Radical Women. Vegetarian buffet, \$7.50, served before the program at 6:15 p.m. Info: RadicalWomen.org. For child care, call three days in advance: 864-1278 or baradical-women@earthlink.net.

NEW ART EVENTS

Ujima Artists Collective reception and summer creativity summit, Fri., June 12, Da Arts Gallery Space, 135 Sixth St., 6-8 p.m. Refreshments and music. Info: Harvey Rushing, 563-5695.

Lords of the Samurai, Asian Art Museum, 200 Larkin. Exhibition opens June 12 (through Sept. 20) and features 160 works from the Hosokawa family collection: suits of armor, swords and guns, formal attire, calligraphy, paintings, teaware, lacquerware, masks and musical instruments of provincial lords of the warrior class in feudal Japan (1300s to 1860). Admission to the exhibition is \$5 on the first Sunday of the month Info: asia-nart.org/Samurai.htm,

“Soliloquy for Two” by ventriloquist Ron Coulter and his partner, Sid Star. June 12 and 13, EXIT Theatre, 156 Eddy, 8 p.m.

Two-act recital featuring edgy humor and short plays. Called “a thinking person’s vaudeville act.” Tickets: BrownPaperTickets.com or call 673-3847 to reserve a seat and pay cash at the door.

Krapp’s Last Tape by Samuel Beckett, directed by Rob Melrose, EXIT On Taylor, 277 Taylor, 8 p.m. Thu., Fri., Sat., and 5 p.m. Sun., through June 21. An older man listens to recordings he made when he was young and in love. Tickets: BrownPaperTickets.com

COMMUNITY: REGULAR SCHEDULE HOUSING

Supportive Housing Network, 3rd Thursday of the month, 3-5 p.m., location TBA. Contact: Kendra Fuller, 421-2926 x304.

Tenant Associations Coalition of San Francisco, 1st Wednesday of the month, noon, 201 Turk, Community Room. Contact Michael Nulty, 339-8327. Resident unity, leadership training, facilitate communication.

HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

CBHS Consumer Council, 3rd Tuesday of the month, 3-5 p.m.,

CBHS, 1380 Howard, room 537. Call: 255-3695. Advisory group of consumers from self-help organizations and other mental health consumer advocates. Open to the public.

Health & Wellness Action Advocates, 1st Tuesday of the month, 5-7 p.m., Mental Health Association, 870 Market, Suite 928. Call: 421-2926 x306.

Healthcare Action Team, 2nd Wednesday of the month, Quaker Center, 65 Ninth St., noon-1:30 p.m. Focus on increasing supportive home and community-based services, expanded eligibility for home care and improved discharge planning. Light lunch served. Call James Chionsini, 703-0188 x304.

Hoarders and Clutterers Support Group, Mental Health Association, 870 Market, Suite 928. Call for dates and times: 421-2926 x306.

Mental Health Board, 2nd Wednesday of the month, 6:30-8:30 p.m., City Hall, room 278. CBHS advisory committee, open to the public. Call: 255-3474.

National Alliance for the Mentally III-S.F., 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Family Service Agency, 1010 Gough, 5th Fl. Call: 905-6264. Family member group, open to the public.

SAFETY

Safety for Women in the Tenderloin, every 3rd Wednesday, Central City SRO Collaborative, 259 Hyde St., 4-6 p.m. Informal, friendly environment, refreshments, gender sensitive to LGBTQ community and sex workers. Discuss how to make Tenderloin SROs safer for women. Information: Alexandra Goldman, volunteer campaign coordinator, 775-7110 x102.

Neighborhood Emergency Response Team Training (NERT). Central city residents can take the S.F. Fire Department’s free disaster preparedness and response training at any neighborhood location. See Website for schedule and training locations, www.sfgov.org/sffdnert, or call Lt. Arteseros, 970-2022.

SoMa Police Community Relations Forum, 4th Monday of the month, 6-7:30 p.m. Location changes monthly. To receive monthly information by e-mail, contact Meital Amitai, 538-8100 x202 or mamitai@iisf.org.

Tenderloin Police Station Community Meeting, last Tuesday of the month, 6 p.m., police station Community Room, 301 Eddy. Call Susa Black, 345-7300. Neighborhood safety.

NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT

Alliance for a Better District 6, 2nd Tuesday of the month, 6 p.m., 230 Eddy. Contact Michael Nulty, 820-1560 or sf_district6@yahoo.com, a districtwide improvement association.

Boeddeker Park cleanup, 3rd Saturday of the month, 9-noon, organized by the Friends of Boeddeker Park. To RSVP to work or for information, call Betty Traynor, 931-1126.

Central City Democrats, meets four times a year, 301 Eddy St. Community Room. Addresses District 6 residential and business concerns, voter education forums. Information: 339-VOTE (8683) or centralcitydemocrats@yahoo.com.

Central Market Community Benefit District, board meets 2nd Tuesday of the month, 989 Market St., 3rd Fl., 3 p.m. Information: 882-3088, http://central-market.org.

Friends of Boeddeker Park, 2nd Thursday of the month, 3:30 p.m., Boeddeker Rec Center, 240 Eddy. Plan park events, activities and improvements. Contact Betty Traynor, 931-1126.

Gene Friend Recreation Center Advisory Board, 3rd Thursday of the month, 5 p.m. Board works to protect SoMa resources for children, youth, families and adults. Gene Friend Recreation Center, 270 Sixth St. Information: 538-8100 x202.

North of Market Planning Coalition, 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6 p.m., 301 Eddy. Call: 820-1412. Neighborhood planning.

North of Market/Tenderloin Community Benefit District. Call District Manager Elaine Zamora for times and dates, 292-4812.

SoMa Leadership Council, 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6 p.m., The Arc, 1500 Howard St. at 11th. Emphasizes good planning and good government to maintain a diverse, vibrant, complete neighborhood. Contact: Jim Meko, 624-4309 or jim.meko@comcast.net.

South of Market Project Area Committee, 3rd Monday of the month, 6 p.m., 1035 Folsom, between 6th & 7th sts. Health, Safety and Human Services Committee meets monthly on the first Tuesday after the first Monday, 1035 Folsom, noon. Information: 487-2166 or www.sompac.com.

Tenderloin Futures Collaborative, 2nd Wednesday of the month, 10 a.m., Tenderloin Police Station community room, 301 Eddy. Call 358-3956 for information. Network of residents, nonprofits and businesses taking on neighborhood development issues.

SENIORS AND DISABLED

Mayor’s Disability Council, 3rd Friday of the month, 1-3 p.m., City Hall, room 400. Call: 554-6789. Open to the public.

Senior Action Network, general meeting, second Thursday, 10 a.m.-noon, St. Mary’s Cathedral. Monthly committee meetings, 965 Mission #700: Pedestrian Safety, third Wednesday, 10 a.m.; Senior Housing Action, third Wednesday, 1:30; Information: 546-1333 and www.senioractionnetwork.org.

400,000 books, magazines wind up as landfill

BY TOM CARTER

WORKMEN tossed the dregs of famous McDonald’s Bookshop at 48 Turk St. into two curbside debris bins in April – an estimated 400,000 used books and magazines bound for the city dump — clearing the way for the next tenant, the Central City SRO Collaborative.

Landlord TNDC had given bookstore owner Itzhak Volansky several months to clear out his inventory built over 80 years before evicting him Dec. 3 for failing to pay rent for a year. Volansky’s hired neighborhood friends began removing the ocean of used books later in December. They couldn’t complete the job by late January and Volansky asked for an extension. But TNDC’s patience was exhausted.

“We’d ask him to get his things out before his lease terminated June 25,” said Bailey Williams of Ventura Partners, a property management firm TNDC hires. “He could’ve been evicted then but we gave him a lot more time. He wanted more time in January. I don’t know what else we could have done.”

The Central City SRO Collaborative will move into the empty bookstore “within two months,” Director Jeff Buckley announced in an April 7 email. The tenants rights nonprofit is temporarily at 449 Turk St. after losing its Hyde Street space when the building was sold.

Volansky has estimated his legendary eclectic stash at one million books and magazines. For years half has resided in a two-story building Volansky owns in the next

block at 116-118 Turk St. TNDC had removed the McDonald’s inventory seven years ago for a renovation of the Turk Street building, which also houses the Dalt Hotel and Edwards Tailor Shop and Cleaners. Workers stored half the load South of Market and the rest in Volansky’s building. When the upgrade was finished March 2005, movers returned only the South of Market material.

April 6, Volansky stood dejectedly outside the locked bookstore door — sipping from a large paper cup — with two of his neighborhood pals. Volansky said he only heard about the dumping three days before and had come from his home in the Sunset District to watch. Sheets of black plastic inside covered the door and windows.

Two boxes of books lay in the gutter between the massive-lidded bins. On top of one box was a pristine 1951 hardbound edition of ballerina and choreographer Agnes DeMille’s autobiography “Dance to the Piper.”

Two TNDC employees, each carrying a stack of books, emerged from the store about 15 minutes apart and disappeared with them down the sidewalk. One was Patsy Gardner, property manager at TNDC’s Turk Eddy Preservation Apartments a block away. She said later, she got TNDC’s approval to go in and look for possible items to enhance the lobby’s library.

“Mostly it was Life magazines,” Gardner said. “I’ll leave some here and take a couple home — one is from 1949, the year I was born.

“I wanted to go back for some books but I won’t. The owner was standing there

looking very sad. I just felt too uncomfortable to go back. I don’t know why he didn’t get them out of there.”

“It’s sad,” Volansky said. “Good books — average books — being dumped for landfill. TNDC couldn’t even take them to the next block and leave them. Maybe I got 20% (of the inventory) out.”

Volansky didn’t hesitate when asked what his priority commercial pick had been. “Porn,” he said.

The bookstore was founded by Jock McDonald in 1924 and was bought in the 1950s by Volansky’s father, who ambitiously added to the inventory. The father died in 1979 and left it to Volansky and his sister. For years the dusty labyrinth of overflowing shelves on two floors was high and low literary adventure for street people, students, bibliophiles, even celebrities and movie-prop researchers.

April 8, the police threw up a barricade across the storefront, which Edwards Cleaners requested to keep idlers out of the doorway.

The day after, in front of the Winston Arms Hotel next door, Volansky was sitting on a chair squinting into the sun and waiting for opportunity to knock. Three hand trucks leaned against the building and three men stood by trying to recall the final and sixth role-name of actors who played the Three Stooges. Volansky was paying the men to relieve workers of boxes of books they carried out, then to cart them to 116-118 Turk where he dreams of one day reopening his store.

“I really want the shelving, too,” he said.

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Chinatown, Tenderloin, Downtown, SOMA, Potrero, Treasure Island, Mission Bay	94103, 94107, 94130, 94111, 94105, 94108, 94104, 94102, 94158	June 5, 6, 7
Castro, Noe Valley, Diamond Heights, Miraloma Park, Cole Valley, Haight	94117, 94114, 94131	June 12, 13, 14

Check the complete schedule on www.calacademy.org or call 415.379.8000 to confirm your Neighborhood Free Days.

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