

U.C. Hastings board rejects officers' plea to be armed

3rd time since '92 campus cops told they can't carry guns

BY JONATHAN NEWMAN

NO Christmas gift awaits the 14 members of the UC Hastings Public Safety Officers Association as the school's Board of Directors voted 7 to 2 to adopt an ad hoc committee's recommendation to maintain the status quo — no firearms for the officers — at its final meeting of the year Dec. 2.

In submitting the recommendation, board member Thomas Gede noted that to make its decision the committee had reviewed an internal Web survey of Hastings' faculty, staff and students conducted in the past year. Input from alumni as well as the Tenderloin community contributed to its decision to take no action "to enhance the presence of firearms on campus." This marks the third failed attempt by Hastings safety

officers since 1992 to gain the right to carry firearms on duty.

After the board meeting, Hastings Chancellor and Dean Frank Wu said the policy decision on firearms "was the result of careful deliberation" that

had taken into account Penal Code section 830.4(d), "the California statute that creates our safety officer force and indicates it is not authorized to carry firearms." Hastings will continue to contract with the SFPD for an armed officer to patrol the campus weekday evenings at an annual cost of \$110,000.

A review of the statistical analysis of the Web survey in which 8 of 10 responders were current law students showed that arming the officers, either with firearms or Tasers, was favored by 54.7%, although surprisingly only 48.9% said that the presence of armed security would make them feel safer in the Tenderloin campus setting. Only 5% of responders had been victims of violent crimes, but 27.9% had been solicited to buy narcotics on their way to and from campus, and a similar segment had been the victim of property crimes, with the theft of laptops, cell phones and auto break-ins the major causes of loss. In 1992 a less detailed survey of faculty, staff and students also found a majority in favor of arming the officers.

John Rueppel, a San Francisco attorney and 2009 Hastings graduate, prepared an extensive report on the firearm question at the request of the school's general counsel, Elise Traynum. The report, cited by the ad hoc committee in its recommendation to the board, suggested that the answer to the firearm question rested in a determination of whether additional campus security was warranted and, if so, did arming safety officers meet the bedrock values of the Hastings community. Nationwide, Rueppel noted, 77% of colleges and universities authorize campus police to carry guns. ■

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Frank Wu

HASTINGS CHANCELLOR, DEAN

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CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

POT TENSION



PHOTOS BY TOM CARTER

Isaac Crumey minds the store while owner Michael Welch fights for survival from his hospital bed. About 1,000 mostly HIV/AIDS, cancer and hepatitis patients are clients.

Sanctuary under siege

Feds threaten neighborhood's last pot shop

BY TOM CARTER

HOSPITALIZED marijuana dispensary owner Michael Welch has the wolf at his door in January while his pleas to the feds for help to spare the Tenderloin's last pot shop go unanswered.

Welch is the owner of Sanctuary on O'Farrell Street and felt the sting of federal threats in November.

U.S. Attorney Melinda Haag sent a certified letter Nov. 23 to O'Farrell Properties LLC, owner of 669 O'Farrell St. where Welch's Sanctuary club occupies the storefront, citing federal law the dispensary violates. It asks that marijuana sales and distribution be discontinued "within 45 days of this letter," or face penalties.

That deadline is Jan. 7.

The letter also says the property is "subject to seizure and forfeiture" to the U.S. government.

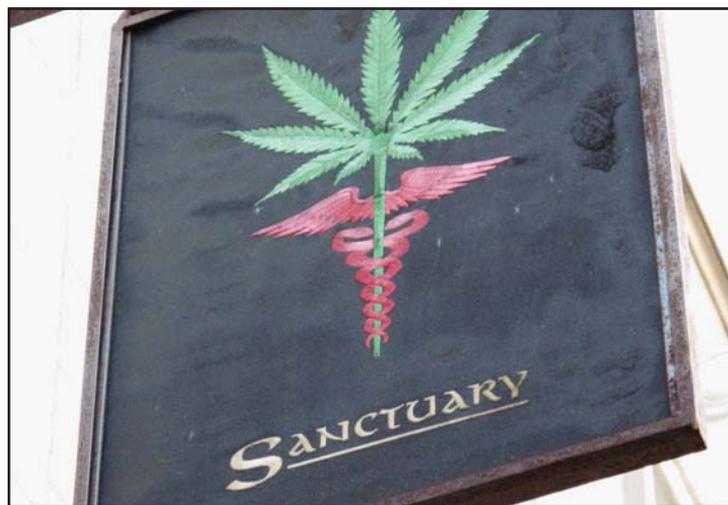
Welch is bedridden at UC Hospital recovering from complications from an aorta blood clot that nearly killed him.

"If they close us down, I think all of us (eight employees) will be homeless," Welch said in a telephone interview. "It's hard to fight from a hospital bed."

Sanctuary is a small, low-key dispensary with fewer than 1,000 patients, the majority of them suffering from HIV/AIDS, cancer and hepatitis. As part of its compassion goal, it has a giveaway program for destitute patients and donates HIV/AIDS medical supplies to hospitals and helps the homeless find housing.

Haag's letter came after others from California's four U.S. attorneys earlier this year to select dispensaries throughout the state that also threatened to prosecute pot club operators and seize the buildings where they operate. California's Proposition 215 legalized the use of medical marijuana in 1996 as have 15 other states, plus Washington, D.C. But growing, selling or using grass is still a federal crime.

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On the building, this 16- by 16-inch sign IDs the shop, where time is running out.