

City tosses beleaguered nonprofits \$4.5 million

Human services, arts groups split fund for rent

By MARK HEDIN

IN AN EFFORT “to lift all boats,” as Board of Supervisors President David Chiu put it, the board voted unanimously to release \$4.5 million to fund efforts to help nonprofit social service and arts organizations cope with skyrocketing rents in the Tenderloin and western SoMa. Much of the money is derived from rising property tax revenue in the neighborhood, hence Chiu’s nautical analogy.

“I urge your support of this from the point of view that it’s seed money,” Richard Heasley, Conard House executive director, said in public comments just before the board’s May 13 vote. “This idea, at \$4.5 million, is very undercapitalized to the actual need.”

The board was reviewing a report by a working group the supes convened in December to study the issue of nonprofit displacement due to the red-hot real estate market.

“This is actually the first time we actually have a concrete step that would have a direct impact to mitigate the impacts of displacement on our nonprofits,” said Debbie Lerman from the Human Services Network, which represents more than 110 city nonprofit agencies. “This problem is citywide. For many, at this point, the need has reached emergency levels. We need to get these funds out to the community in as expedited a manner as possible.”

Brian Cheu, director of community development at the Mayor’s Office of Community and Housing Development, and Tom DeCaigny, director of cultural affairs at the Arts Commission, presented the working group’s report to the board prior to the vote.

Most of its 30-plus recommendations, Cheu said, would be left to other city departments to implement. The displacement problem is being attacked in stages. He and DeCaigny are orchestrating stage 1 — the short-term solution to help stop the bleeding.

Their first task is to select an intermediary to administer the funds and help the nonprofits get what they need. An RFP will be issued this month for that role, for which up to 15% of the funding, or more than \$500,000, is allocated.

They’re looking for an intermediary with a lot of experience with nonprofits, big and small, with a solid track record of financial management and capacity-building.

Emergency rent and security deposits, help with tenant improvements, help finding new space and negotiating leases are among the first orders of business for the intermediary.

“We’ll be continuing to work with all the city departments that participated in the creation of this report,” Cheu said, in response to Supervisor Norman Yee’s questions at the end of the presentation. “It’s going to be important to have the Real Estate Department, the controller’s department, the San Francisco Community

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PUBLISHED BY THE SAN FRANCISCO STUDY CENTER

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CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

GREEN MACHINES



PHOTO TOM CARTER

Unidentified passengers leave the sanctuary of their free Apple transportation for weekend adventures at the bus-busy Valencia and 24th Street intersection.

Tech shuttle shuffle

Little of this, bit of that about ‘Google buses’

By TOM CARTER

ON A WINDY FRIDAY afternoon, near 5:30 p.m., a white double-decker bus rolls up to the Muni bus stop on Valencia at 24th. More than a dozen riders scurry out the doors, heads down, bound for their weekend dreams.

“Is this a Google bus?” I asked a passing 30ish woman in black. She stops and looks blankly at me.

“I can’t talk to anyone,” she declares, and rushes off down Valencia.

“Is that company policy?” I yell after her. She doesn’t look back.

One rider lingers, a man who has tossed three backpacks on the sidewalk and is rummaging through one to find a hat. I sidle up, identify myself and say I want to find out about life on the bus. He acknowledges the company’s gag rule on riders but he sees no harm in talking and says it’s an Apple bus.

He is Mason from Santa Cruz. He doesn’t want his last name used because it wouldn’t be cool for any of his girlfriends to read that he spends his entire time on the bus doing social media, “trying to plan my life and get dates,” especially with a woman who lives in the Tenderloin.

He has a 90-minute commute. In the morning, he rides his bike 20 minutes to the pick-up spot, then is on the bus 70 minutes. Apple has three buses leaving Santa Cruz five days a week. Most arrive at work half-filled, he says,

but the return trips are full, like today’s that has brought him to the city for the weekend.

Seventeen Peninsula companies have 131 regional shuttle buses whisking 4,015 regular weekday passengers all around town, according to the city’s 36-page Budget and Legislative Analyst’s March report on the “Impact of Private Shuttles.” Actually, there are more: 20-plus employer-sponsored shuttles from institutions like UCSF and the Academy of Art. The city doesn’t require them to register or report their activities.

Only the state Air Resources Board regulates them.

The boxy behemoths share 200 bus zones with Muni buses in an 18-month pilot program starting July 1. The S.F. Municipal Transportation Agency wants to know whether this has negative effects on Muni operations.

Mason rents a two-bedroom house in Santa Cruz. He has been an Apple employee six months, having moved from Austin where he attended the University of Texas in the 1980s. His drawl is barely discernible.

“About half the people work on the bus, but I don’t,” he says. “I’m trying to get dates all the time.”

He plopped on a rumpled straw hat and pulled it down against the wind, perfect for weekend hiking with friends along the Yuba River where he is headed.

The double-decker bus seats about 80. It was jammed, he said, and people who didn’t get on wait 45 minutes for another bus.

Like mammoths in the wild of yore, the buses’ size alone makes them a spectacle. The shiny white, blue, purple and maroon boxes lord over the urban scene as they glide through the concrete maze like Trojan horses. Some of the leading bus manufacturers are: Motor Coach Industries (U.S.), Setra (German), Van Hool (Belgian) and Prevost (Canadian).

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