

# Daylight dope dealing way too blatant

**J**AN Rasmussen, district safety coordinator for the Neighborhood Safety Partnership, recently sent an e-call to District 6 folks, asking them to send in personal — but anonymous — stories about drug-dealing where they live and work.

She planned to use their stories, she said, as addenda to a letter to judges who “are letting drug dealers out after only being in jail for a few hours to explain to [the judges] how the drug dealing and using impacts the community.”

Rasmussen got 13 responses, almost all from the Tenderloin, where dealing is epidemic.

The Extra asked Sgt. Frank Palma of the Tenderloin Police Station to run some numbers to see just how bad things are. He found that in January there were 195 narcotics arrests — almost half of the 426 total arrests in the Tenderloin for the month. No other offenses came close: not the 49 for larceny and theft, the 19 for assaults, the 40 for outstanding warrants nor the 58 “other.”

The January narcotics count varied daily, from a low of two arrests on Jan. 2 to 18 arrests on Jan. 13. The leading drug of choice for the month was crack cocaine; officers made 102 arrests for possessing or selling it.

The hottest spots were in the heart of the Tenderloin, with 47 arrests along Jones Street and 41 on Ellis.

Here are excerpts from people who responded to Rasmussen.

— MARJORIE BEGGS

## A GROCER'S GRIPE

• Many times drug sellers and buyers gather in front of my store to deal and block the entrance. We ask them to leave but they ignore us or come right back. We have even had drug sellers come in and try to hide their drugs behind groceries. . . . Customers have become scared to walk on our block. My business is losing money because drug dealers are being arrested and let out of jail so fast and continue selling in front of my store. *Store owner*

**“It is so bad on Larkin that a lot of people will not walk up or down the street.”**

Resident  
WESTERN TENDERLOIN

## RIGHT IN FRONT OF KIDS

• Plenty of users stand in front of our center and shoot needles into their arms. When our preschool children come in the morning they see the drug activity on the street and sometimes have trouble getting into the center because drug dealers and users are blocking the sidewalk. They leave their needles on the ground. . . . When we confront the users at times they get very angry/aggressive and we have to call the police. *Child care manager*

## LONGER JAIL TERMS WON'T HELP

• I am 35 years old; I work as a community health outreach worker for a mostly peer-run occupational health and safety clinic for sex workers in San Francisco. For almost seven years, I lived in an SRO hotel on Sixth Street, until I moved to Oakland several months ago. For over four years, I have walked the streets of the Tenderloin and SoMa between 10 p.m. and 1 a.m. with other outreach workers on a semimonthly basis, talking to people who do sex work or sex trades and offering harm-reduction outreach supplies to those who request them.

Supplies we hand out include condoms, lubricant, hygiene kits, food, juice, vitamins, socks, underwear, hats, umbrellas, first-aid supplies, rubber spark plug boots (which protect lips and fingers from burns and blood and help prevent the spread of the hepatitis C virus and HIV among crack smokers who share “stems” or glass or metal pipes), safer injection “works” kits (which include clean cookers, water, cottons, rubber tourniquets, alcohol prep pads, our drop-in clinic schedule and a schedule of local needle exchange sites.

Far and away, the most common complaints we hear from our participants . . . are complaints about harassment, intimidation and brutality by police, wrongful arrests, unwarranted hospitalizations, and many more abuses in local jails and prisons. . . . I am strongly opposed to any and all efforts to further criminalize poor people and people of color who have not committed any violent crime.

There is no evidence that longer jail sentences for people who possess or sell small quantities of illicit drugs deter them from going out and selling again.

If my many interactions with people on the streets and in the hotels have taught me one thing, it is this: longer jail sentences for users and dealers will only exacerbate, not alleviate, the harm caused by drugs in the Tenderloin and South of Market. The enormous taxpayer cost of such extended jail sentences could be much more wisely spent on providing community-based health and rehabilitative services, including housing, primary care, voluntary mental health and substance abuse treatment, and job training.

Rather than waste any more county funds on punitive and destructive extended jail sentences, we (should) prioritize prevention and harm reduction by adequately funding and protecting these services so that they can be accessed by many more people. (This) would represent a big step forward in making our central city neighborhoods safer places to live, work and play. *Community health outreach worker for people in the sex trades, from for a four-page e-mail*

## DEALERS WORK IN GROUPS

• I have lived in the western part of the TL for over 25 years. The drug deal is real bad on the 500-700 blocks of Larkin St. They deal almost 24 hours a day there. They hide in the Muni bus shelter on Larkin near O'Farrell. They are in groups of two or three. One is a lookout, one keeps the drugs and the other holds the money. . . . It is so bad on Larkin that a lot of people will not walk up or down the street! Something has to be done! *Resident*

## SELLING OUT IN THE OPEN

• My assistant and I were making a home visit to a disabled woman client who lived in a residential hotel on Turk St. Waiting to be buzzed into the front door, [my assistant] saw two men making a drug deal right by the hotel entrance. She told me about this later, after we our visit. She is a former Tenderloin resident and not easily shocked, but she was surprised by how openly the drugs were being sold, in broad daylight. I'm glad we got our client out of that hotel — I can imagine how frightening it must have been for her to have that going on whenever she went in or out of the building. *A social worker for the disabled*

# Final OK on 38-Geary compromise

BY TOM CARTER

**The busy 38-Geary will make two fewer stops in the Tenderloin starting in April.**

**T**HE Metropolitan Transportation Agency approved the bus stop compromise for the 38-Geary on Feb. 15, a victory for Tenderloin activists who had battled Muni's proposed cuts for a year. Muni wanted to slash five stops; it settled

for three.

The 5-0 final vote also set in motion a companion project, the repaving of O'Farrell and Geary by the Department of Public Works, delayed three months while this controversial aspect of Muni's \$400,000 Inner Geary Plan was resolved.

“We will go ahead with the repaving in March,” said Transportation Director Michael Burns.

Stops that will be eliminated in the next two months, according to Muni, are eastbound on O'Farrell at Polk and Mason, and westbound on Geary at Mason. The stop at Larkin and O'Farrell will be moved from the south side of Larkin to the north side.

Originally, five of the Tenderloin's 19 stops on Geary and O'Farrell were marked for elimination in the multifaceted Muni plan designed to speed up transportation between the Richmond district to downtown. Cutting all five stops would save 1-2 minutes each way, Muni said, but no calculation has been made for the two.

Other aspects of the plan went unchallenged, but to keep the stops activists formed the Committee to Save the Bus Stops, meeting with Muni officials until a compromise was found.

“There may be other transportation changes, too,” Richard Allman, community organizer and consultant who headed the Save the Stops committee, told The Extra. “Muni is paying attention to the Tenderloin's needs. We will keep this coalition together, do positive work and report regularly to the community. We are looking now for better service for people in the middle of the Tenderloin.”

Allman said the committee suggested to Muni that the 27-Bryant could better serve the Tenderloin if its east-west jogs on O'Farrell and Ellis were dropped a block or two south.

“We are looking at dropping it (the southbound) two blocks farther south to Eddy but nothing will be done without community outreach and a public process,” said Muni's Peter Strauss who met with the committee. “It won't just happen.” ■



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO