

# The Sunset Beacon

Serving Residents of the Sunset and Parkside Districts

July 2010

## N-Judah Streetcar Turnaround Cited as Danger for Pedestrians

By Jonathan Farrell

The Muni N-Judah streetcar line ends at 48th Avenue and La Playa, at Ocean Beach. This is where the light rail transit car stops for a change of conductor-operator before slowly making its way eastbound on Judah Street towards downtown. As an end of the line spot, the atmosphere seems leisurely, but residents say there are concerns about pedestrian and bicycle safety.

Sunset District residents gathered at the Java Beach Cafe on June 3 to discuss ways to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety with SF Supervisor Carmen Chu.

"Of the two light rail lines (the L-Taraval and N-Judah) that run through the Sunset and Parkside districts, the N-Judah line is a unique situation," Chu said. "The light-rail train ends its run on Judah Street and then sits in a U-shaped fashion in the middle of a three way intersection."

Judah ends where 48th Avenue and La Playa intersect, making for a congested situation. It is confusing for pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as motorists.

It is easy for pedestrians and bicyclists to be caught in between the streetcars as vehicles try to maneuver past. As well, at times pedestrians and bicyclists cannot be seen fully by motorists or streetcar operators.

At the meeting, some residents wondered if the streetcars might be moved or parked at another location.

But experts said moving the streetcars would not be feasible

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## Girl Power!



Photos: Francis da Silva

Young girls from the Sunset District participate in a tug-rope contest held at the West Sunset Playground.

The San Francisco Public Library kicked off its summer reading program with a "Sunset Kid's Day" on June 5. The free event featured a family-style barbeque, games, stories, crafts, entertainment and more. It was held at the West Sunset Playground, located at 3223 Ortega St. The sponsors of the event were the Friends of the SF Public Library and West Sunset Rec Connect.



Samiah Shabaan gets her face painted by Brittney Tabel.

## Battle Over Stow Lake Restaurant Heats Up

By Ed Moy

In May, Suzanne Dumont, on behalf of members of the Save Stow Lake Boathouse Coalition, filed a complaint against the SF Recreation and Park Department with the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force regarding the secrecy of the names of the persons on a selection panel for the Stow Lake Boathouse concession Request

As of presstime, current Stow Lake Boathouse leaseholder Bruce McClellan has been operating on a month-to-month lease since November 2006, but hasn't put forth money toward major improvements with the rationale that he could get a 30-day evic-

tion notice soon.

Although McClellan stated that he would willingly pay for repairs and make upgrades if he were given a new long-term lease, Rec. and Park has accepted competing bids for vendors hoping to become the new leasehold-

er.

Rec. and Park representative Nicholas Kinsey said the lease must go to the most "competitive, qualified bidder, while preserving the historic character of

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INSIDE

## West Sunset Plgd. to be Rebuilt

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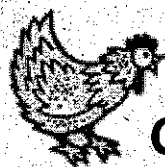
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# N-Judah Streetcar Turnaround

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because the handicapped accessible ramp, installed under the current ADA laws, must be accessible for wheelchairs, making streetcar car parking in the middle of the intersection the only viable option.

"The only way Muni would be able to move the trolley cars to another spot in the vicinity would be to build more track," said Vern Waight, a CalTrans engineer, now retired, and long-time Sunset resident.

"There's no room. Where would Muni expand it too?" he

asked.

At a previous community meeting, held in May, residents discussed with the supervisor ideas for making the intersection safer and discouraging motorists from making "crazy maneuvers," like U-turns, driving in reverse and driving in a lane in the opposite direction of traffic.

Other suggestions mentioned at the meeting included repainting the intersection, making crosswalks bolder and more visible and, perhaps, closing one lane of traffic southbound between Irving and Judah streets.

Officials at Muni would not

respond to repeated requests for comment, saying only that "safety is a number one priority for this agency."

Representatives at the SF Department of Parking and Traffic also did not respond.

Chu said her office is asking for community feedback on the streetcar turnaround issue before approaching Muni with specific ideas on how to improve safety.

For more information, call Chu's office at (415) 554-7460 or send an e-mail to Carmen.Chu@sfgov.org.

# Bids Out for Stow Lake Boathouse

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the boathouse."

An announcement concerning the awarding of the contract is expected to be made by the Planning Commission in mid-August.

Earlier this year, Dumont, who describes herself as "a frequent walker at Stow Lake, long time San Franciscan and an unlicensed historic preservationist," claimed that the Save Stow Lake Boathouse Coalition, a group including more than 1,900 individuals, multiple neighborhood groups and the San Francisco Chapter of the Sierra Club, had requested SF Supervisor Eric Mar's help with transparency, fairness and fiscal responsibility in regard to Rec. and Park's Stow Lake Boathouse RFQ.

"We want fairness and transparency in this process. We have been ignored, dismissed and deceived by Rec. and Park and we know they do not have the public's best interests at heart," Dumont said. "We want an EIR. We want community oversight and involvement in the selection... we cannot know if that is occurring because of the selective secrecy taking place."

Although Mar has acknowledged problems with Rec. and Park and promised to advocate for transparency and fairness with the boathouse selection process, Dumont claims that he failed to do so.

In his defense, Mar, replied to Dumont and other coalition members with the following written statement concerning the importance of his neutrality:

"Members of the community have asked me to draft a resolution supporting the Stow Lake Boathouse, and have cited our resolution supporting the wonderful institution of Louis' Restaurant, near the Cliff House, as an example. Louis' Restaurant sits on federal land, and deci-

sions regarding that site will not come before the Board of Supervisors for a vote, which is why it was not a conflict for me to author a supportive resolution. In the case of the Stow Lake Boathouse, writing a resolution interferes with the RFQ process, which is prohibited by the city charter, and furthermore would be grounds for me to be recused from participating in discussions or voting on this contract."

Dumont was not satisfied with the stance.

"The coalition was led to believe they had found an advocate in Supervisor Mar to stand up against the secrecy and deception at Rec. and Park surrounding this process," Dumont stated. "We are very disappointed in the mixed messages he gave us and his inability to even ask Rec. and Park to describe their proposal for the boathouse for the public to read."

Dumont claims Rec. and Park intends to remove the historic boating operations from the top level of the boathouse and place them down the hill at the parking lot level in the basement of the

building.

These changes to operations at Stow Lake would make way for an approximately 2,200-square-foot cafe/restaurant that would take up the entire top floor of the boathouse, and would include outdoor seating.

Another major complaint from Dumont and the Boathouse Coalition against Rec. and Park's RFQ is that the plan would have boats put on trailers and hauled up and down pedestrian walkways with gas-powered trucks throughout the day, which would create noise and pollution.

"This drastic change of use renders the historic Stow Lake Boathouse into a restaurant with boat storage in the basement," Dumont wrote in her letter to the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force. "There are several safety, environmental and historic preservation issues and concerns that Rec. and Park repeatedly refuses to address."

For more information about Boathouse proceedings, go to the websites at www.parks.sfgov.org and www.savestowlake.org.

## Letter to the Editor

Editor:

Now that the SF Board of Supervisors have passed the \$7 "non-resident" Strybing Arboretum fee, will the San Francisco Botanical Garden Society be given carte blanche to do what they like with "their" botanical gardens? Will members enter free? Will prudent cost controls be implemented? Or, will the Society be able to run wild with taxpayer funds (as they already have with the new roads inside and the just-installed feudal-style banners)?

Hopefully, someone at City Hall is paying attention to the terms of the forthcoming Memorandum of Understanding

between the SF Recreation and Park Department and the Society. However, given the execrable performance of our legislators and bureaucrats this may well be a false hope.

Hopefully, supervisors such as Sean Elsbernd and Carmen Chu, who both voted for the privatization, will take the professional responsibility to ensure that Society members will also be subject to the "non-resident" fees and that the Society's commercial excesses at the Arboretum are in check under the new regimen.

Hopefully,  
Harry S. Parisier

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