WEDNESDAY, Jan. 29, 2020

Virus from China halts local events; masks selling out

BY SARA TABIN
Daily Post Staff Writer

Concerns about the spreading coronavirus have put a halt to two Palo Alto Lunar New Year celebrations.

The Palo Alto Chinese New Year Fair, scheduled for Feb. 16, was cancelled because organizers felt they could not guarantee that the fair would be safe for families. The festival, which started in 2015, is put on by nonprofit group [See VIRUS, page 18]

Murder near Home Depot

BY EMILY MIBACH
Daily Post Staff Writer

A man was shot and killed in East Palo Alto last night, and police pursued the shooter who eventually got away.

At 8:06 p.m., police responded to a report of a gunshot on the 900 block of Mouton Circle, in the neighborhood near Joel Davis Park behind the Home Depot. They found a shooting victim on the ground. The man died shortly after police arrived, police said in a short statement.

The suspect drove away from the scene, then got out of the car and started running.

Police cordoned off the area of Tinsley Street and Clarke Avenue in an attempt to find the shooter. Officers were still looking for him as of 9:30 p.m.

East Palo Alto Police were using Menlo Park’s police dog to try to sniff out the suspect.

This was the first murder in East Palo Alto in four months.

On Sept. 7, Victor Gomez Rios, 24, of Menlo Park was shot and killed during what police say was an “illegal transaction.” His killer is still at large.

In the early 1990s, East Palo Alto was known as the murder capital of the nation, but the murder rate has dropped in recent years. There were three murders in 2018 and only one last year.

Is this enough housing?

Friday is deadline for Senate to OK SB50

BY ELAINE GOODMAN
Daily Post Correspondent

Despite looming state legislation that threatens to override cities’ control of building height and density as a way to speed housing development, cities haven’t substantially stepped up their home production, housing advocates say.

The legislation, Senate Bill 50 by Sen. Scott Wiener, D-San Francisco, faces a critical vote this week: If the Senate does not vote to approve it by Jan. 31, it will die.

SB50 would allow four- or five-story buildings within a half mile of train stations, regardless of city height limits. Density limits and parking requirements would be relaxed near bus routes or “job-rich areas.”

Some cities and local officials have balked at SB50 because it would take away a degree of local control of development projects. So one might wonder [See HOUSING, page 18]

Candidate Masur is focused on education

This is part of a Daily Post series about state Senate candidates in the March 3 primary.

Shelly Masur, currently a Redwood City councilwoman who was previously a Redwood City school board member, wants to take education issues head-on if she is elected to the state Senate, replacing termed out Sen. Jerry Hill.

“My goal is to continue to be a leader on education,” Masur said, adding that she would be one of the few state senators with a back-ground in education policy, and would want to be on the Senate’s education committee.

Masur, 55, was on the Redwood City School Board for 10 years before joining the council in 2015. During her tenure on the school board [See MASUR, page 18]
VIRUS

WizChinese and attracts thousands of people. Lead organizer Lily Chiu said Chinese community members were worried about coronavirus and asked for the event to be postponed or cancelled. Since the Lunar New Year had already happened on Jan. 25, the organiza-
tion decided it wasn’t worth postponing the fair and cancelled it.

Chiu explained that many people travel to China over the Lunar New Year so some of them could have been exposed to the virus. She said many attendees, bringing children to the fair and that one of the high-
lights of the fair is a food tasting.

The fair is normally a way for the Chinese people in Palo Alto to build community and promote their culture and fun. She said some of the event spon-
sors allowed WizChinese to keep donations for the event to use next year.

Avenidas cancels event

The Avenidas senior center also cancelled their event which was planned for Jan. 30 in the Cubberley Community Center.

CEO Amy Andonian said that even if the risk of infection is minimal the center wants to make sure its seniors are safe and healthy. She said some seniors had said they were worried that the event could ex-
pose them to the virus.

Andonian said people have emailed the center to thank them for watching out for the seniors health. Andonian said postponing the event didn’t make sense since the Lunar New Year has passed, but promised a bigger and better celebration next year.

China says 132 people have died and about 6,000 have become sick from an outbreak of a new strand of coronavirus in that country. Many of the people who died were elderly. There have been five cases reported in the United States, including in Southern California, but no deaths.

Symptoms of the illness includes fever, coughing and shortness of breath.

Questions about the virus

The Santa Clara Public Health Department held a press briefing yesterday about the disease with Health Officer Sara Cody.

Cody said it is still a lot that isn’t known about the disease, including how it is spread, but there is no
evidence of the disease spreading in the United States.

People who have travelled to China are most at risk. They should monitor their health for 14 days af-
ter returning to the United States, and should call a

doctor and wear a mask to protect others if they get
sick.

Cody said people who aren’t sick don’t need masks.

It looks like residents are buying masks anyway.

A clerk at the CVS on University Ave. said yester-
day that the store is out of face masks and has been
advising people to buy them at Home Depot or ACE
Hardware.

Hospital prepares

Stanford Hospital has also been preparing for a possible outbreak.

Stanford Health Care spokeswoman Julie Greicius said Stanford is working with the National Centers for Disease Control and local county health offices to monitor the disease and make sure Stanford is ready to care for patients.

HOUSING

if cities have tried to show they can ramp up housing production on their own, without the need for state intervention.

That hasn’t necessarily been the case, some say.

“We still see significant opposition to new homes and apartments in many suburban cities and towns, and the existence of SB50 in the state legislature has made real estate developers feel that fact at the local level,” said Michael Lane, deputy director of Silicon Valley at Home. Also known as SV@Home, the group advo-
cates for Affordable Housing, but has been postponed or cancelled.

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or low-income households, SV@Home said in a blog post.

“Cities in Santa Clara County continue to fall far short of affordable housing goals, while on track to exceed their targets for market-rate housing,” the group said.

Housing quotas

Targets for affordable and market-rate housing production are set for cities through a state-mandated process called the Regional Housing Need Assess-
ment (RHNA). The latest RHNA covers a nine-year period from 2014 to 2022.

At the same time, jobs are being created faster than the Bay Area’s new housing is.

By 2021, the area added 531,400 new jobs but only permitted 123,801 new housing units, the Building Industry Association Bay Area reported.

Palo Alto approved 447 new housing units from 2014 to 2018 — only 22% of the RHNA quota of 1,988 units for 2014 to 2022, according to the state Department of Housing and Community Develop-
ment. Palo Alto entitled 206 housing units last year, including 62 grumpy units, city officials told the Daily Post.

Mountain View approved 1,711 new homes last year, while Redwood City entered 559.

“I think they should be ashamed,” Matthew Lew-
is, communications director for California YIMBY, said of the cities’ housing numbers. The group is a co-sponsor of SB50.

A change in the winds

But Lewis said he’s seeing “a change in the politi-
cal winds” when it comes to housing. He said more elected officials are now on board with SB50. Those include Palo Alto Mayor Adrian Fine, who issued a statement of support of the bill this month.

Wiener amended SB50 this month to try to give cities more leverage in how they address housing. Un-
der the amended version, cities would have two years to craft their own housing plans that would accom-
modate a similar amount of housing as under SB50’s “default” provisions.

The amount of housing cities must allow under these “local flexibility plans” isn’t yet known, but would be determined by the state Department of Housing and Community Development.

In a press release on Monday, Wiener said the flex-
ibility added to SB50 has drawn many new support-
ers. He listed 28 local officials who now support the bill, including Fine of Palo Alto.

But the changes to SB50 weren’t enough to satisfy the League of California Cities, which said many other options are lacking.

“For a long time, the city agencies have been waiting to take advantage of the so-called flexibility in SB50,” the league wrote in a Jan. 14 letter to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

SB50 moves to Senate floor for a vote

SB50 was shelved in May by Sen. Anthony Por-
tantino, who chairs the Senate Appropriations Com-
mittee. He said at the time that he prefers giving local
governments incentives when it comes to addressing the
state’s housing crisis, rather than legislating man-
dates.

The bill, as amended this month, was able to by-
pass the Appropriations Committee when Senate Presi-
dent pro Tempore Toni Atkins moved it to the Rules Committee. On Monday, it was moved from committee to the Senate floor for a vote.

MASUR

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Her view on charter schools

Masur is backed by multiple teachers unions and education leaders, and during her time on school board

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