

Jan. 22, 2021

TECH TESTING ▼

PG&E conducting testing
of new line technology

BELOW



Locals join lawsuit to end dining ban

Eleven Calistoga restaruant and winery owners part of new coalition taking Gov. Gavin Newsom to task over order against outdoor eating

By Pat Hampton

Tribune Publisher

Eleven Calistoga wineries and restaurants have joined dozens of others across Napa and Sonoma counties in filing a lawsuit against Gov. Gavin Newsom and state public health officer Tomas Aragon, challenging their “arbitrary, irrational, and unfair ban on outdoor dining and wine tasting.”

The action, filed Tuesday in Napa Superior Court by a San Francisco law firm representing the Wine Country Coalition for Safe Reopening, calls the ban “senseless” and said it “has no scientific basis, does nothing to protect public safety, and, in fact, likely un-

dermines public health. Its only effect is to ravage the region’s businesses, community members, and workers.”

Carl Dene, owner of Brannan Cottage Inn and its on-site Sam’s General Store café, helped organize the initial group of area business owners last month just before the Dec. 17 stay-at-home order went into effect, he said.

“I wish we’d started earlier,” Dene told the Tribune, “but we weren’t sure what was coming when.” Dene said the push really gained momentum after Newsom pulled the Greater Sacramento region out of the stay-at-home order Jan. 12, allowing outdoor dining in

the affected 13 counties despite ICU capacity reported at 9.4%, below the 15% typically required for an area to reopen. Napa and Sonoma counties are part of the 11-county Bay Area Region, which includes Monterey and Santa Cruz counties, and has an ICU capacity of 3.4%, as of Wednesday.

The coalition’s lawsuit also states that the regulations enacted in December 2020 “arbitrarily and unfairly targeted restaurants, wineries, and tasting rooms by indefinitely and without scientific basis banning outdoor dining and wine tastings in Napa, Sonoma, and else-where while allowing indoor businesses like retail to operate with little regulation.”

Rick Kaiser, co-owner of two Calistoga

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Vaccinations continue but future of new batches vague

By Kim Beltran

Tribune Editor

Inoculations against COVID-19 continued this week in Napa County despite national news reports that federal stores of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines either don’t exist or are in short supply.

Still, states and counties are moving forward with administration of the vaccines they do have, bouyed by newly-inaugurated President Joe Biden’s promise to ramp up resources for more vaccinations.

California reported its second-highest number of COVID-19 deaths Wednesday but also a dip in hospitalizations below 20,000 for the first time since Dec. 27. The total of 694 new deaths is second to the record 708 reported Jan. 8, according to the state Department of Public Health. Hospitalizations stood at 19,979.

Napa County began administering vaccines to people in Phase 1A, Tiers 1-3, in late December. Last week, vaccines were being offered for the first time to Phase 1B, Tier 1 eligible residents: Persons 65 and older, and essential workers in child-



PHOTO BY CLARK JAMES MISHLER

Above, Calistoga resident Elaine Nepsha reads a book as she and other residents wait in line in St. Helena to receive the vaccine. Right, St. Helena primary school teacher Michaela Carter takes a selfie with her vaccination card while observing the mandatory 15-minute rest period after being vaccinated.

care, education, emergency services and food and agriculture.

Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines that have been administered in Napa County require two doses, 28 days apart.

It was reported this week that county health departments across California had received a total of 3.2 million doses of

the vaccine but that 1.9 million doses – 40 percent – have yet to be administered. In addition, the state’s epidemiologist urged a halt to some 300,000 Moderna vaccines because several people were treated for possible severe allergic reactions,

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City Council tackles creation of civics essay contest

Annual audit of finances shows books in order, General Fund balance at \$7.1 million

By Kim Beltran

Tribune Editor

It wasn’t development impact fees, a pedestrian crossing on Silverado Trail or the Audited Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for fiscal year 2019-20 that dominated Tuesday night’s Calistoga City Council meeting.

It was a plan to try to engage more of the community’s youth in governmental affairs

that took up most of the council’s time this week, and for good cause its members agreed, unanimously approving colleague Don Williams’ proposal for an essay contest with cash prizes.

“In my reading I understand that one of the hallmark’s of a community that’s successfully governed is participation. But I’ve found going door to door that understanding of local politics, while we’re deep into it, a lot of people are not, for some very good reasons,”

Williams said in proposing the contest to the council. “The fundamental idea is to encourage participation – especially among those who are entering the political process because they’ll be becoming voters before too long – and inviting them to submit essays on a topic relating to government that will hopefully stimulate their thinking about participation in government.”

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City moving to limit downtown tasting rooms

New resolution goes to City Council next month for approval

By Pat Hampton

Tribune Publisher

A new regulation limiting the number of wine tasting rooms in the downtown area is making its way to the City Council after passage by the Planning Commission Jan. 13 by a 4-1 vote.

The last time a similar policy came before the council in 2015, it was rendered dead to a tie vote. This time it found favor among the commissioners and will be heard by the City Council next month.

Consultant Jason Shiu of M-Group was asked in November to return to the commission with new tasting room standards and, after studying zoning restrictions in other communities such as Yountville, Healdsburg and Carmel, suggested a two-prong approach. First, “winery tasting rooms” would be changed to “tasting rooms” and it would be clarified in the

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Third test of new powerline technology to limit wildfires is next Wednesday

By Kim Beltran

Tribune Editor

Pacific Gas & Electric Company plans to conduct another round of equipment testing in Calistoga this Wednesday.

The Jan. 27 testing of the company’s new Rapid Earth Fault Current Limiter technology will be its third assessment in a week of the new system that can detect power surges during a “fault” condition, such as vegetation contact or a downed wire, and lower the energy below ignition levels so as not to spark a wildfire.

The technology was scheduled to be tested in two different areas of Calistoga yesterday and today.

Thursday’s testing was to have occurred between midnight and 6 a.m. on the circuit that serves customers in the area south of Tubbs Lane, along Myrtledale Road and a portion of northern downtown Calistoga. Today’s tests were scheduled between midnight and 6 this morning on the circuit that serves customers in the areas north of Tubbs Lane and Myrtledale Road, PG&E said.

A company spokesperson said PG&E did not foresee any disruption in customer service during the testing, other than a few planned outages during Wednesday’s trial. However, the spokes-

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