

Tiburon police ban carotid restraint

Move comes amid community pressure

By **HANNAH WEIKEL**
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After substantial pressure from Tiburon residents — and to follow suit with dozens of other police agencies across the state and nation — the Tiburon Police Department announced last week it has banned a controversial and sometimes lethal stranglehold that cuts blood flow to the brain, effective immediately.

The move comes after Tiburon Police Chief Michael Cronin initially resisted calls to ban the carotid hold under the “8 Can’t Wait” movement guidelines and instead reclassified it as a “deadly force application” in the agency’s policy manual, meaning it

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Candidate filing period opens July 13 for councils and other races

By **DEIRDRE MCCROHAN**
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The candidate filing period opens July 13 for the Nov. 3 presidential election, which includes local races for seats on the Tiburon Town and Belvedere City councils, as well as all the local public school, fire, sanitation and recreation districts serving the Tiburon Peninsula.

The filing period runs through Aug. 7, with an automatic extension to Aug.

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‘I can’t breathe’

After Tiburon Boulevard march, protesters lie face-down for 8 minutes, 46 seconds



DEIRDRE MCCROHAN / THE ARK | TOP: ELLIOT KARLAN / FOR THE ARK

Protesters at Fountain Plaza June 23 knelt and lay on the ground with their hands behind them, as if handcuffed, for nearly 9 minutes in solidarity with George Floyd, who died on Memorial Day in the custody of a Minneapolis police officer who knelt on his neck and chest.

By **DEIRDRE MCCROHAN**
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After marching Tiburon Boulevard from Tom Price Park to Fountain Plaza, more than a 100 protesters knelt or laid on the cement pavement. Face down, hands behind their backs.

Eight minutes, 46 seconds.

It was the amount of time a Minneapolis police officer’s knee

was on George Floyd’s neck as Floyd suffocated and died, handcuffed in the street.

Marin City activist and protest organizer Paul Austin asked attendees to imagine what was going through Floyd’s mind. And asked them to repeat Floyd’s words: “I can’t breathe.”

The June 23 peaceful protest in solidarity with the Black Lives

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Many local businesses in no rush to reopen

Indoor dining, salons, campgrounds could restart June 29 — but Marin pulls back plans for gyms, hotels

Tiburon ‘slow streets’ begins July 3

By **DEIRDRE MCCROHAN**
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With a surge in coronavirus cases and hospitalizations in Marin and across the Bay Area and California, local public-health officials last week dialed back plans to reopen large swaths of the economy on June 29 — though some of the major anticipated indoor and outdoor activities still got the green light, including indoor dining, hair salons and barbershops, as well as campgrounds and picnic and barbecue areas ahead of the three-day Fourth of July weekend.

Despite being allowed to fire up seated dining inside, most restaurants on the Tiburon Peninsula didn’t

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Data show Marin’s struggle to contain coronavirus spread

By **KEVIN HESSEL**
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Marin County on June 25 recorded single-day highs for new coronavirus cases, at 54, concurrent hospitalizations, at 12, and patients in intensive care, at five, the same day California launched a new data page that showed Marin was one of just two counties statewide in which the “spread of COVID-19 is likely increasing rapidly.”

The data led Marin officials to hit pause on a num-

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could only be used in extreme circumstances when an officer had cause to fear for their life.

Typically used to subdue a person resisting arrest, the carotid hold does not cut off airflow, but it does deprive the brain of oxygen. With light pressure on the carotid arteries to slow blood flow in the neck, a conscious neck restraint can be used to control a subject; with more pressure, an unconscious neck restraint will cause a loss of consciousness in a matter of seconds. If applied too long or incorrectly, it can be deadly.

Cronin said that after discussions with Marin County Sheriff Robert Doyle, whose agency banned the carotid hold earlier this month, as well as other local police chiefs and his own staff — many of whom couldn't remember ever having used the neck hold — he decided to ban it altogether.

"Considering that and the community concern about this particular use of force application, it's just better to take it out," Cronin said in an interview, adding that, "the majority of the public would like to see (the carotid hold) abolished."

Tiburon Town Manager Greg Chanis declined to comment on the ban, saying that the Police Department's statement on the policy change posted to the town's website last week should speak for itself.

According to the statement, the department will prohibit carotid holds in its use-of-force policy, "effective immediately."

It goes on to say Gov. Gavin Newsom's recent directive to the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training to cease law-enforcement training on the carotid hold played a role in Tiburon police's decision. Newsom has also called for the restraint to be banned by all police departments in the state.

"We will continue to promote proactive strategies to achieve peaceful resolutions to conflict and are committed to working with all members of our community to enhance community safety," the statement said.

A bill to legally ban the restraint statewide is currently moving through the state legislature.

The carotid hold was applied by the police officers that killed Elijah McClain, a 23-year-old Black man who was stopped in August 2019 in Aurora, Colo., after someone reported him as a suspicious person walking in the neighborhood.

According to McClain's family, he was walking home from a convenience

store, where he had purchased an iced tea. He was wearing an open-faced ski mask because he had anemia and got cold easily, his family said.

After an altercation, police wrestled McClain to the ground and placed him in a carotid hold. He briefly lost consciousness but reportedly started struggling again when an officer released the hold. Paramedics arrived and administered ketamine to sedate McClain. He suffered cardiac arrest in the ambulance and was declared brain dead and died a few days later. An autopsy report listed physical exertion and a pre-existing heart condition as contributing factors to his death, according to news reports.

The Colorado attorney general recently announced he will investigate whether criminal charges are warranted against the officers involved in McClain's death.

The 8 Can't Wait movement seeks to ban chokeholds, strangleholds and all other neck restraints, including the carotid hold, alongside several other guidelines as free, quick-to-implement policies that can dramatically reduce the number of deaths in police custody. The plan has gained considerable momentum since the Memorial Day killing of George Floyd, with police departments across the country adopting its policy guidelines.

Floyd was killed when a Minneapolis police officer applied a knee-to-neck hold for more than 8 minutes, which an independent autopsy said caused him to suffocate from lack of blood flow to the brain, while the official autopsy said he suffered from cardiopulmonary arrest from restraint and neck compression. Both ruled his death a homicide; the four officers involved have been fired, arrested and charged.

Police departments that have already banned the carotid hold include those in San Diego, San Francisco, Sacramento and Denver.

On June 12, Cronin released a matrix on the Tiburon town website that reclassified his department's use of the carotid hold as a "deadly force application," similar to Los Angeles' reclassification, meaning the hold had the same restrictions as the use of a firearm and could only be used when an officer believes there's an imminent threat to their life.

At the time, Cronin said that while the carotid hold is rarely, if ever, used by officers in Tiburon, he preferred to keep the option available to officers in a "life-threatening physical confrontation" where the officer is unable to access their gun or other weapons.

Following the reclassification, Tiburon residents sounded off on on-

line neighborhood forum Nextdoor.com and wrote letters to Cronin, asking for it to be banned outright.

Nicole Wolf, an Old Tiburon resident, posted on Nextdoor.com saying she didn't think the reclassification was a big enough change and asked Tiburon police to ban the hold.

"The 'modified' policy looks very similar to the existing. This latest 'in-action' coupled with the police chief's recent tone-deaf comments regarding the protest in Marin County certainly don't reflect that of our more progressive neighbors in San Francisco and the Marin County sheriff," Wolf said, referring to a statement issued by Cronin by email and online ahead of a Marin City march June 1. The message included a warning that the peaceful protest against racism and police brutality could result in highway blockages and mayhem aimed at Tiburon.

"This is the very mentality we should demand change of in our public servants," Wolf said.

Cronin issued an apology for the email the following day — an hour after the Marin City protest started — to those who were offended by his message.

Jody Newman, a Round Hill resident, said in an emailed letter to Cronin and Tiburon councilmembers that banning the carotid hold would be "a good message for Tiburon to send" after the chief's warning ahead of the Marin City protest.

"That letter reflected the subconscious stereotypes and racism we all need to be examining within ourselves," Newman said. "I was glad you issued an apology the next day and hope you are weighing all changes that might make our policing safer and fairer for all."

In an interview on June 22, Cronin said the department's stance on the carotid hold was "evolving" and that it could be banned in the coming days. The official ban came two days later.

Cronin said he had discussed the ban with all of his officers, and they all supported it.

"They don't feel like they're being deprived of something," he said. "I've always viewed it as a technique, granted a dangerous one, but a technique that might prevent an officer from using his firearm, which is certainly more lethal and dangerous."

Reporter Hannah Weikel covers the city of Belvedere, as well as crime, courts and public safety issues on the Tiburon Peninsula. Reach her at 415-944-4627.

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