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Marin Independent Journal

Friday, February 7, 2020 \$1.50 FACEBOOK.COM/MARINIJFAN TWITTER.COM/MARINIJ marinij.com

MILL VALLEY

Two projects to cause traffic misery

Sewer, street repairs to affect merchants and residents

By **Lorenzo Morotti**
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Mill Valley's traffic, already notoriously bad, is on the brink of getting even worse.

Merchants and residents are bracing themselves for two major construction projects that will clog the city's downtown heart and arteries for the next two summers.

"It's always a difficult balance when we have to do infrastructure work like street and sewer repair because it inevitably interrupts business and residential activities," Vice Mayor Sashi McEntee said. "But this is something we have to do to maintain our infrastructure."

The first project, which will repair sewers, sidewalks and pavement in the downtown area, is expected to begin in May and end in September. The \$7.2 million project is nearly out of the design phase and set to be approved by the City Council at its Feb. 20 meeting.

The second project, which will stretch 1.7 miles along East Blithedale Avenue, is anticipated to begin

PROJECTS » PAGE 2



Traffic moves along East Blithedale Avenue at Camino Alto in Mill Valley. Sewer and street repair projects are expected to disrupt traffic and parking in part of the city.

ALAN DEP — MARIN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL, FILE

CALIFORNIA

Earlier vote attracting presidential candidates

State now a player in nomination fight

By **Jennifer Medina**
The New York Times

FRESNO » "There's nothing magical about California," Michael Bloomberg declared after a day flying through the state — or Iowa, for that matter, he added.

But here he was in California, not any of the four early-nominating states, trying to make the magic happen.

So there were free carne asada tacos in front of Fresno City College, along with free Mike 2020 T-shirts, designed to draw a lunchtime crowd to hear the former New York mayor speak in a courtyard lined with citrus trees.

"I have never backed down from a bully or run away from a fight," Bloomberg said, standing in front of dozens of signs urging supporters to "vote early." Then he turned to the core of his appeal: "I'm the un-Trump."

It is simple math — with 415 delegates, California has more electoral power than all four early states combined. And while the political world waited for, then pored over, the partial results from not quite 170,000 voters in Iowa, there are currently about 20 million registered voters in

PRIMARY » PAGE 2



CARLOS OSORIO — THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
Democratic presidential candidate Michael Bloomberg talks to supporters Tuesday in Detroit.

WUHAN, CHINA

'SCARY' SCENE IN VIRUS ZONE



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A medical worker in a protective suit walks by patients diagnosed with the coronavirus at a temporary hospital which transformed from an exhibition center in Wuhan in central China's Hubei province.

Marin man details uneasy life in stricken city

By **Matthew Pera**
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Doug Perez pulls on a mask and gloves before he warily steps outside his home in the virus-stricken city of Wuhan, China, to stock up on groceries.

Perez, who grew up in Marin and now teaches English in Wuhan, had heard rumors this week that grocery stores could soon be shut down in the city, which is the epicenter of the novel coronavirus outbreak. Though the rumors turned out to be untrue, Perez dashed to a nearby market in case he was running out of time to buy food.

"It's a scary experience inside the supermarket," Perez, 28, said in a Skype interview

from his home. "They test everyone's temperature with a temperature gun at the front door before you go in. It's crowded. Everyone's wearing masks. Everyone's rushing."

Perez waited in a check-out line for more than 20 minutes. When he reached the front, "the woman at the checkout starts coughing."

"I back away, get in another line and wait another 20 minutes, because I'm not willing to risk that," he said.

Though many foreigners have evacuated Wuhan, Perez is staying put with his Chinese girlfriend and their Labrador puppy as the death toll from the novel coronavirus continues to rise. The U.S. government has arranged flights to evacuate hundreds of Americans from China in

➕ **Inside:** More on the coronavirus on PAGE A10

recent days, but Perez said he was told that his girlfriend wouldn't be allowed to come with him on a government-chartered evacuation plane.

"I'm not going to leave my girlfriend at ground zero of a global pandemic," he said.

According to Perez, who was raised in Greenbrae and has lived in Wuhan for nearly two years, most businesses in the city are shuttered and the streets are quiet. He goes outside to walk his dog or buy food, but mostly stays inside his home.

"It's definitely very scary and kind of a depressing situation," he said. "You're stuck inside all the time, so everyone's

VIRUS » PAGE 2

MARIN LAWMAKER

Levine bill requires all voters to cast ballots

Assemblyman seeks greater participation

By **Richard Halstead**
rhalstead@marinij.com
@HalsteadRichard on Twitter

Assemblyman Marc Levine has introduced a bill that would require every registered voter in California to cast a ballot in elections beginning in 2022.

"We're not compelling anyone to vote," Levine, a Democrat who lives in Marin, said Thursday.

"We're asking them to return the ballots that have been sent to them or come in and cast a ballot. If they don't want to mark a vote on that ballot, if they're not informed about

a particular issue or campaign, then that's fine. This only applies to registered voters, people who have expressed an interest in voting.

"We just want to make sure everyone is participating," said Levine, who introduced the bill on Wednesday. "I believe we will have better outcomes when every Californian participates in elections."

As drafted in its preliminary form, AB 2070 leaves it up to the California Secretary of State how to enforce the proposed mandate. Levine said he has been contemplating ways to address low voter turnout for five years.

"In 2014, we had ridiculously low voter turnout across the state, including the North Bay, which usually votes in very high levels," he said. "I've been working on this issue since then."

According to the Secretary of State's office, just over 25% of the state's registered voters turned

LEVINE » PAGE 2



Levine

TRIAL AFTERMATH

Trump unleashes fury in acquittal 'celebration'

President Donald Trump took a victory lap Thursday, unleashing his fury against those who tried to remove him. PAGE A6



MEDICAID

Governors warn Trump rule could lead to big cuts

Governors are warning that a regulation proposed by the Trump administration could lead to big cuts in Medicaid. PAGE A8

BUSINESS

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TODAY IN HISTORY

1812

Author Charles Dickens was born in Landport, Portsmouth, England.

1817

America's first public gas street lamp was lighted in Baltimore at the corner of Market and Lemon streets.

1940

Walt Disney's second animated feature, "Pinocchio," premiered in New York.

1962

President John F. Kennedy imposed a full trade embargo on Cuba.

1984

Space shuttle Challenger astronauts Bruce McCandless II and Robert L. Stewart went on the first untethered spacewalk, which lasted nearly six hours.

1998

The Winter Olympic Games were opened in Nagano, Japan, by Emperor Akihito.

2015

In a memo released by NBC, Brian Williams said he was stepping away temporarily from the anchor chair of the "NBC Nightly News" amid questions about his recollections of war coverage in Iraq.

Birthdays

Author Gay Talese is 88. Actor James Spader is 60. Country singer Garth Brooks is 58. Actor-comedian Eddie Izzard is 58. Actor-comedian Chris Rock is 55. Actor Ashton Kutcher is 42. NBA player Isaiah Thomas is 31.

Star report

Keanu praised for girlfriend during filming in SF

As has been widely rumored and reported, Keanu Reeves is in the Bay Area filming scenes for "The Matrix 4." Indeed, the 55-year-old actor was spotted Wednesday shooting a scene in San Francisco's North Beach neighborhood, near the corner of Columbus Avenue and Kearny Street. One fan in particular took to Instagram to praise the actor for "dating a cool woman in your age group." In her post, author Erin Carlson is referring to Reeve's girlfriend, Alexandra Grant, a 47-year-old Los Angeles-based artist.

— Martha Ross, Bay Area News Group

LOTTERY

WINNING NUMBERS

Daily 3 Afternoon: 2, 8, 7

Daily 3 Evening: 7, 4, 4

Daily 4: 8, 6, 0, 8

Fantasy 5: 6, 7, 18, 33, 37

Daily Derby

1st: 9, Winning Spirit

2nd: 8, Gorgeous George

3rd: 5, California Classic

Race Time: 1:46.35

SUPER LOTTO PLUS

Wednesday's drawing: 7, 12, 18, 37, 42

Mega Number: 17

Saturday's estimated jackpot: \$12 million

MEGA MILLIONS

Tuesday's drawing: 32, 48, 50, 51, 64

Mega Number: 10

Today's estimated jackpot: \$187 million

POWERBALL

Wednesday's drawing: 23, 30, 35, 41, 57

Mega number: 2

Saturday's estimated jackpot: \$60 million

Projects

FROM PAGE 1

in the summer of 2021, said Ahmed Aly, Mill Valley project manager. Open trenching to replace aged sewers in the area will disturb the flow of traffic and reduce parking spots at different days and times.

"There is a possibility of some temporary street closures, about two hours max," Aly said, referring to the downtown project. "But most of time there will be partial closures, at least one lane open with flagmen directing traffic."

Over the course of the multi-phase project, 45 parking spots will be temporarily impacted in downtown, Aly said. The council will consider opening the City Hall parking lot to the public and renting other private lots for the public's use.

To address this concern, a community workshop was held by the city and the Chamber of Commerce last

week. Jim Welte, the chamber's director of community engagement, said the two main concerns are that the project is completed before September, when merchants begin to order inventory for the holiday season, and that any changes in the timeline or street closures be communicated in a timely fashion.

"It's an aggressive timeline, but they seem confident they can get it done," Welte said. "The most critical component to all of this is communication. I think everyone in the downtown community understands the city of Mill Valley is not in charge of the weather. But they have a reasonable expectation that the city will inform them when there are changes in the project timeline."

Larry Lautzker, owner of the Famous4 boutique, said at the meeting that most downtown merchants are concerned the traffic and parking problems will drive customers away.

Lautzker said merchants already have a tough time

staying afloat with high rents and competition from online retailers and shopping malls.

"This only adds to that, so we will be losing some business," he said. "The challenge is how to keep people coming to Mill Valley when their shopping experience has been altered by a traffic problem."

He suggested the city work to advertise free parking in downtown at adjacent parking lots and that property owners consider the strain these projects will put on small local businesses.

"We are going to take a hit," he said. "The property owners should take interest in the well-being of their tenants and sit down to work out a deal to help ease the pain. It's going to be a painful time."

Linn Walsh, a city spokeswoman, said officials aim to keep the public informed about project plans and changes through social media, the e-newsletter, email notifications and word of mouth.

Virus

FROM PAGE 1

kind of experiencing cabin fever."

The novel coronavirus outbreak has sickened more than 24,000 people in 25 countries, according to the World Health Organization. A total of 636 people have died from the virus in mainland China, and one in the Philippines. There have been 11 confirmed cases of the virus in the U.S., including six in California, but no cases have been reported in Marin, according to the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Our health care providers and community partners are prepared in case anyone in the community becomes ill with this new virus," said Marin County Public Health Officer Dr. Matt Willis. "With no coronavirus cases in the region, the risk is low at this time, but we're ready."

The county Public Health Department has recommended that anyone arriving in Marin from mainland China after Feb. 3 should "remain at home in a self-quarantine," Willis said.

In a letter sent Tuesday to Marin County schools, the health department said that "any adult or child traveling from mainland China

should be excluded from school for 14 days after they left China."

"Travelers returning from China are being advised to avoid public activities and gatherings, and self-monitor at home by remaining alert for fever, cough, or difficulty breathing," the letter says.

Willis noted that the flu is a bigger health risk for Marin residents than the new coronavirus.

"There's no evidence of transmission of coronavirus in Marin County, but we have very clear evidence of active circulation of influenza, which can also be a very serious illness," he said.

Levine

FROM PAGE 1

out for the general election in 2014. Statewide turnout among registered voters jumped to just over 75% in the general election of 2016 before receding to 64.5% in the November 2018 election.

Levine said he received immediate feedback after introducing the bill "from people who are afraid of more people going to the polls and others who are extraordinarily encouraged by the idea of more people exercising their ability to vote."

Tom Montgomery, vice chairman of the Marin Republican Party, said he exchanged text messages with Levine on Wednesday evening.

"This is extreme government overreach," Montgomery said. "I'm not worried about more people voting. I'm worried about the government taking our choices away from us. The Democrats place such an emphasis on a woman's right to kill her unborn child, but they want to take away my choice of whether or not I cast a ballot."

In announcing the bill, Levine noted that 30 countries have made casting a ballot mandatory and that the first to do so was Belgium in 1893.

In Belgium, people 18 and older face a moderate fine if they fail to vote, and if they fail to vote in at least four elections, they can lose the right to vote for 10 years.

In Bolivia, people are issued a card when they vote and if they cannot produce this proof-of-voting card

during the three months following the election, they can be prevented from drawing their salary from the bank.

In Australia, people can be fined up to 80 Australian dollars for failure to show at the polls. Elections there are held on Saturdays and are often accompanied by community barbecues.

"I don't think there is a perfect approach in any of the countries that have these laws," Levine said, "though we could borrow and learn from them. We know that jury duty is compulsory and can result in fines or even jail time. We're not focusing on enforcement. We're really focused on changing the culture around voting."

Laura Stoker, a professor of political science at the University of California at Berkeley, said, "The

Walsh said work will usually start between 8 or 9 a.m. and go until 5 p.m., and there is the consideration of night work.

"If you ask the business owners they'll say, 'Yeah, night work sounds great,' because construction in front of their stores can happen faster and there is less of an impact on them," she said. "On the flip side, as a resident who lives a block away from downtown, that doesn't sound so great."

"It's all unknown right now, but we will put it out to the community to allow this anticipated project to succeed and go as quickly as possible."

She said there will be another community meeting in April to flesh out details with the design advisory committee and the community.

Welte said the other project won't start more than a year from now, but people are still concerned about how it will affect Mill Valley. "East Blithedale is on the medium back burner, but people still have extremely

strong opinions because it's one of two arteries for the entire community," he said. "So it's going to be a balancing act to address some concerns and get it right. Especially given the fact it's a one lane each direction road."

East Blithedale Avenue will undergo a \$7.9 million repair of its pavement, sidewalks, traffic lights and sewers in a multi-phase, three-year project. It will stretch from Highway 101 to Sunnyside Avenue.

"East Blithedale is a major arterial and there is need for some maintenance on the road part and sewer part for some time now," McEntee said. "But because it's a main arterial it is very disruptive to work on it. We've been waiting to do it for years now."

At its meeting on Monday, the City Council approved a \$1 million contract with Mark Thomas Group, an engineering consultant firm based in San Jose, to start the design of the project. The firm should be finished with the design in a year.



PROVIDED BY DOUG PEREZ
Marin native Doug Perez has lived for nearly two years in Wuhan, China, epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak.

Primary

FROM PAGE 1

California, and roughly 15 million of them received mail-in ballots this week.

Typically a late-spring afterthought in the nominating contests and largely ignored in the general election because their state is so reliably blue, the voters of California aren't accustomed to culling national candidates.

But this year, state officials moved voting day to Super Tuesday, the earliest the California primary has been since 2008.

California matters now. And the earlier primary means that presidential candidates are spending time and money in parts of the state that rarely see big-name politicians of any kind. Democratic Senate candidates and would-be governors often skip over the Central Valley, the agricultural heart of California, reasoning there are far more votes to be had outside the relatively rural and conservative part of the state.

"The Appalachia of California," is how Antonio Villaraigosa, the former mayor of Los Angeles, referred to the Central Valley as he traveled with Bloomberg on Monday in Fresno, the region's largest city by population, after offering his endorsement and becoming a national political co-chair for the campaign.

While the coastal cities of Los Angeles and San Fran-

cisco have long been treated as political ATMs, the less wealthy Central Valley and Inland Empire have often struggled for attention and power.

But now California's Inland Empire, as the region about 50 miles east of Los Angeles is known, is a must-stop. Sen. Bernie Sanders and Bloomberg, the candidates who have devoted the most resources to California, have both come to campaign in person and opened up field offices in the area as well as in the Central Valley.

"People here have been beaten down for so long that they feel like their vote doesn't matter," said Michael Gomez Daly, executive director for Inland Empire United, a left-leaning political advocacy group.

Smaller communities in other parts of the country have gotten attention from politicians for years, he said. "Now it's our turn to say, 'These are the issues, and what are you going to do about it?'"

Like many other local leaders, Gomez Daly lists homelessness, poverty, immigration and the environment as some of the most pressing concerns for the region. In an area packed with warehouses used to distribute imported goods all over the country, activists in the region have been focusing their ire on Amazon, blaming the behemoth for stagnant low wages and pollution.

When Sanders visited, he too spoke out against Amazon by pitching the Green New Deal, which would



MARY ALTAFFER — THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders greets Tuesday in Milford, N.H. Sanders and Michael Bloomberg have devoted the most resources to California's presidential primary.

crack down on truck emissions that pollute the region.

Just as in other Super Tuesday states, Bloomberg is spending lavishly to get on the airwaves here — so far paying nearly \$34 million to advertise on television across the state, including roughly \$1.8 million on Spanish-language stations, according to Advertising Analytics.

His money is by far eclipsing other candidates who remain focused elsewhere. Only the other billionaire in the race, Tom Steyer, has come anywhere close, spending nearly \$15 million since last summer. Sanders' campaign has spent roughly \$3 million on television in California so far and has said it plans to spend over \$2.5 million more, spread between California and Texas, another delegate-rich Super Tuesday state. (None of the other top

first question I would have for Assemblyman Levine would be, 'Why the stick, not the carrot?'"

Stoker said such approaches as increasing the number of polling places and making elections holidays or holding them on weekends might be more effective.

She said if Levine is introducing the bill for partisan reasons in the hope of increasing the number of Democrats who vote, he is going about it the wrong way.

"The vast majority of registered voters vote," Stoker said. "When you have lower voting rates, it's because people don't register in the first place."

While turnout among California registered voters in the 2016 general election was more than 75%, the turnout among all peo-

ple eligible to vote was only about 59%.

"If you really wanted to boost the number of Democrats voting," Stoker said, "you would work at getting people registered, not getting the registered to vote."

For example, she said, young people, who tend to vote Democratic in higher numbers, don't vote at high rates in large part because they don't register.

Levine, however, said California has already taken dramatic steps to lower barriers to voting and increase voter participation by passing the Voter's Choice Act, expanding early voting opportunities and making all vote by mail ballot envelopes postage paid.

"We want to continue that push," he said, "and encourage voting throughout California."

specifically targeting the Inland Empire and Central Valley, two of the only regions in the state that still send Republicans to Congress. While Bloomberg's supporters believe he can attract moderate voters from the area, Sanders' staff is focusing on voters who backed Barack Obama and then switched to Donald Trump in those regions — especially white, working-class men.

"Riverside is our Des Moines," said Anna Bahr, a California spokeswoman for the Sanders campaign, describing efforts in the Inland Empire city.

Other campaigns seem to be taking a more traditional approach, waiting for more results to shake out in the early states before pouring money into California.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren has held several large rallies in the state but so far has a smaller staff operation. Advisers to former Vice President Joe Biden said that their internal polling shows that he consistently meets the 15% threshold — the number needed to secure delegates — in each of the state's congressional districts.

Current polling shows Sanders leading, ahead of Biden and Warren. Both Pete Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, and Bloomberg have yet to break into the top tier in the state.

A candidate needs to capture at least 15% of the vote in a congressional district or statewide in order to win delegates in California.