

THURSDAY, February 13, 2025

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Turmoil sparks conversation

BY BRADEN CARTWRIGHT
Daily Post Staff Writer

A resolution that condemns board member Rowena Chiu's social media activity following a heated Ethnic Studies debate has sparked a conversation about how Asians are treated in the Palo Alto Unified School District.

The resolution failed on Tuesday after passionate comments from both

Around school official's repost

sides. It was supported by board members Shounak Dharap and Shana Segal and opposed by Chiu, Josh Salcman and Alison Kamhi.

"The resolution seems to be an attempt to silence dissent," Chiu said at the meeting.

The board voted 4-1, with Chiu against, to reassign her from her current committees — a move she disagreed with but was willing to make.

Dharap said the resolution was meant to restore trust between the board and employees who were affect-

ed by Chiu's repost of Asians Against Wokeness on Jan. 27.

Asians Against Wokeness called out Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction Danae Reynolds following the Ethnic Studies debate on Jan. 23.

The account made it seem like Reynolds was saying Asians can't feel unsafe, Dharap said on Tuesday. "Asians

[See TURMOIL, page 26]

THE UPDATE

Dow -225.09	Nasdaq +6.09	Oil -0.24
44,368.56	19,649.95	71.13

Gold 2,931.30 +2.60	NY COMEX futures
courtesy of Mish Int'l (650) 324-9110	

TRUMP WORKS WITH PUTIN:

President Trump said he and Russian leader Vladimir Putin have agreed to begin negotiations on ending the war in Ukraine. Trump said he spent over an hour on the phone with Putin and "I think we're on the way to getting peace." He also said he later spoke with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, but he was noncommittal about whether Ukraine would be an equal participant in peace negotiations. Trump said he'd "probably" be meeting soon in person with Putin, and suggested that could happen in Saudi Arabia.

GABBARD CONFIRMED:

The Senate has confirmed Tulsi Gabbard as President Trump's director of national intelligence. The vote yesterday came after Republicans who had initially questioned her experience and judgment fell in line behind her nomination.

INFLATION GOT WORSE:

U.S. inflation accelerated last month as the cost of groceries and gasoline rose, a trend that will likely underscore the Federal Reserve's resolve to delay any further interest rate cuts. The

[See THE UPDATE, page 8]



OPEN OR CLOSED?

Students bike along the portion of Santa Cruz Avenue in Menlo Park that is closed to cars that businesses want reopened. See story on **PAGE 6**. Post photo by Amelia Biscardi.

Fire chief to discuss fire truck

BY BRADEN CARTWRIGHT
Daily Post Staff Writer

Fire Chief Geo Blackshire will meet with Palo Alto residents tonight to discuss the absence of a fire engine at Mitchell Park, where residents are afraid a slow response will lead to disaster.

In a community update, Blackshire said firefighters can respond to the neighborhood within the same timeframe as any other neighborhood.

For example, firefighters took eight minutes and 20 seconds to respond to a blaze on Feb. 2, 2023, that burned Philz Coffee, AJ's Cleaners, Bill's Cafe and Palo Alto Fine Wine & Spirits at 3175

[See FIRE, page 26]

FBI asked for info on sheriff's office

BY AMELIA BISCARDI
Daily Post Staff Writer

The FBI obtained a lease from San Mateo County officials about a Redwood City property leased by Sheriff Christina Corpus' office, emails show.

County Executive Mike Callagy

emailed an FBI agent the lease for the property at 686 Broadway on Sept. 27, according to an email obtained by a California Public Records Act request, first reported by the Mercury News.

Callagy yesterday did not say why the FBI wanted the lease.

The FBI did not respond to a request for comment from the Post.

A sheriff's office spokeswoman said Corpus is unaware of any FBI investigations into her office. The building, which costs \$35,688 a month, not in-

[See FBI, page 26]

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FIRE

Middlefield Road. The closest engine came from a station 2.2 miles away in the Barron Park neighborhood at 600 Arastradero Road.

The station without an engine is 0.6 miles away at 3600 Middlefield Road, maps show.

In another example, firefighters took eight minutes and 18 seconds to respond to a garage fire in the Palo Verde neighborhood at 3482 Janice Way on Jan. 23, Blackshire said.

The station without an engine was 0.9 miles away and the station that responded was 2.4 miles away.

The city has six full-time fire stations, with five engines, one ladder truck and three roving ambulances, Blackshire said.

Strategic for whole city

“Resources (are) deployed strategically to be most effective for emergency response to the city’s needs as a whole — not individual neighborhoods,” Blackshire said. “For example, the city’s single ladder truck is best stationed close to most of the city’s high rises, which are downtown and on Stanford’s campus.”

The engine was removed from the station at Mitchell Park in July 2020 as part of pandemic-related budget cuts, Blackshire told council’s Finance Committee on Nov. 19.

Council will consider a short-term proposal to staff the engine on Feb. 24, Blackshire said.

Union objects

Joseph Penko, president of the local firefighter’s union, said the city’s proposal would assign the same three firefighters to both an engine and an ambulance.

“This would leave either the fire engine or ambulance unavailable whenever a call comes in,” Penko said yesterday. “This model has already failed in the past and puts residents at risk.”

Penko is calling on residents to ask council to man the engine with overtime shifts until nine new firefighters join the department, allowing the ambulance and fire engine to go out at the same time.

“Palo Alto firefighters are ready to serve and protect our community — if the city gives us the resources to do it,” Penko said.

Petition for engine

A petition to restore the engine at Mitchell Park has 412 signatures.

“Residents feel betrayed at this end of town that our Fire Station 4 has not housed a fire truck for at least two years, leaving us incredibly vulnerable. No notice was given to us, breeding immense distrust,” resident CeCi Kettendorf said.

The meeting with Blackshire starts at 5 p.m. at the Mitchell Park Community Center in the El Palo Alto Room.

TURMOIL

were not even being discussed,” Dharap said. “It wouldn’t even have made sense in the context because they were discussing Ethnic Studies. One of the purposes of that course, by the way, is to address anti-Asian sentiment.”

Reynolds was subject to racist comments underneath the post. She wasn’t at last night’s meeting, and Dharap said he’s worried about district employees leaving because they’re afraid their words will be twisted.

“I’ve heard administrators say ‘I’m highly employable.’ That is a scary sentence,” Dharap said.

Public shaming?

Salcman said Chiu made a “grave mistake” and apologized for her repost, and she hasn’t shown a pattern of similar behavior.

“So then I wonder are we engaging in public shaming to some extent? And what really is the value of doing that?” Salcman asked on Tuesday.

Kamhi said she was saddened by the attention on adult behavior

and wanted to get back to serving students. Segal said Chiu’s repost was like a principal singling out a teacher or a CEO singling out an employee, bringing about racist and hateful comments.

“When board members take actions that create the potential for harassment of our employees, we risk fostering a hostile workplace environment,” Segal said.

Chiu gave a 15-minute statement. She said she would meet with and apologize to anyone affected by her repost, including Reynolds.

Chiu said her questions of teachers at the Ethnic Studies debate on Jan. 23 weren’t meant to diminish their commitment and hard work on the pilot Ethnic Studies course.

Made a mistake

Chiu said she made a mistake with her repost and condemned any racist replies, but she was concerned the resolution wasn’t about that.

“It is about censoring a viewpoint that represents a large section of constituents here,” Chiu said, noting that 40% of students in the district are Asian.

Chiu invoked her background as a Harvey Weinstein rape survivor and #MeToo advocate in her repost of Asians Against Wokeness.

“In 1998, Weinstein told me, as he attempted to rape me, that he ‘liked Chinese girls, because they’re discreet.’ In 2025, as an elected official, I spoke up about Asian oppression, and I was suppressed yet again,” Chiu said in her repost.

Chiu said she deleted the repost at the request of the teacher’s union, which revoked their election endorsement of her on Feb. 7.

Call for resignation

The Palo Alto Management Association, which includes principals, assistant principals and school psychologists, called for Chiu’s resignation.

A group of 14 former school board members, led by Ken Dauber, have also condemned Chiu.

Chiu said she’s been subject to racist name-calling and questions about her background.

“My personal integrity is constantly being called into question,” she said.

Anti-Asian hate is “very real and present” in the district, and parents are afraid to speak up, Chiu said.

“They do feel belittled, diminished, minimized and negated,” Chiu said.

Chiu said Dharap and Segal failed to list the breadth of public support for her, including a petition that more than 2,200 parents have signed.

Chiu received the most votes in the November election. A group of her supporters rallied outside the District Office before Tuesday’s meeting, including former Palo Alto Mayor Lydia Kou.

Committees changes

Chiu will leave the Fiscal Advisory Committee, the Early Childhood Programs Committee and the Special Education Committee.

She will no longer be assigned as a liaison to Hoover and Nixon Elementary Schools, Gunn High School, the PTA and preschools.

Chiu will become a liaison to the Los Altos Hills Town Council and join the Santa Clara County Committee on District Organization and Santa Clara County School Boards Association.

Dharap said the reassignments are practical because the committees Chiu is leaving work directly with the same employees who are troubled by her repost. Dharap said Chiu could go back to her old committees when the tension has reduced.

“We generally are in small spaces with many staff members, and the committee work requires close relationships with those staff members,” Dharap said. “So there are practical, logistical issues... with the current tension between district administrators and teachers and Ms. Chiu.”

Dharap said Chiu and Reynolds are both on the



SEGAL



CHIU



DHARAP



SALCMAN



KAHMI

Early Childhood Programs Committee and neither have been attending meetings.

Eventful month for new board

It’s been an eventful opening for the new school board, starting with a 3-2 vote to eliminate Honors Biology on Jan. 21.

Two days later, the board had a five-hour meeting to require freshman to take Ethnic Studies starting in the fall on another 3-2 vote.

Dharap and Segal were aligned on both issues with Chiu on the losing side. Kamhi was the swing vote on Honors Biology, and Salcman was the swing vote on Ethnic Studies.

FBI

cluding utilities, was supposed to become a substation and daycare center. But the sheriff’s unions say former chief of staff Victor Aenlle, a former realtor, didn’t follow the county’s property acquisition rules.

The email between Callagy and the FBI agent occurred about a month after the unions filed a complaint with the Public Employment Relations Board, which was largely focused on Aenlle and included information on the Broadway property.

Empty property

Corpus’ office signed off on the lease in 2023, and the property has largely sat empty since.

The sheriff’s office has used the space for large meetings, community events, and Sheriff’s Activities League activities, spokeswoman Gretchen Spiker said.

Corpus and her team held a ribbon cutting for the Broadway property on Sept. 19.

In a social media post, the sheriff’s office said a construction contract to convert the building into a child care center would be considered during the Oct. 8 Board of Supervisors meeting.

Plan halted

However, that contract never made it to the Board of Supervisors. Callagy halted the project because there was no budget plan, according to documents obtained by the Post in a previous California Public Records Act request.

In an Oct. 31 email to Corpus, Callagy said her office did not follow county protocols related to the acquisition of the property, resulting in \$750,000 being spent on a vacant building.

Corpus responded to Callagy, saying his assertions about her office’s budget are incorrect and unfairly penalize her employees who would benefit from the center. She also said her office followed county protocols, even hiring the project manager he suggested.

Callagy’s email said the sheriff’s office’s budget surplus has shrunk from “a healthy \$33 million reserve to a reserve of only \$3 million.”

A report by retired Judge LaDoris Cordell, released on Nov. 12, found Aenlle has shown a paranoid obsession with loyalty and made unilateral decisions that violated county policies and potentially broke the law.

When Cordell interviewed Aenlle on Sept. 25, Aenlle said the reason the county did not approve the project was because of a “small statute that had to do with notice.”

Ballot measure

Corpus is currently facing a possible ouster in Measure A, which is on the March 4 ballot. If voters approve Measure A, it will temporarily amend the county charter to give the Board of Supervisors the ability to fire Corpus.

Corpus has said that Measure A is a power grab because others in county government are resistant to the changes she is making in the sheriff’s office.

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