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Prostitutes Arrested at Lafayette Massage Parlors

By *Cathy Tyson*

Responding to citizen's complaints, Lafayette Police began an investigation into suspected sexual activity at two massage parlors: Body and Sole and Classic Music Massage - both on Mt. Diablo Boulevard. They found that all of the customers were men, and learned through interviews that many of the customers leaving the establishments were "gang members, convicted felons and other less than admirable characters," said Lafayette Police Chief Eric Christensen in the City Manager's Friday Summary.

Neighbors had voiced their concerns in February about activity they had observed. City officials responded by drafting an ordinance that specifically governs the operation of massage parlors, which was adopted May 29, to cut down alleged illegal activity. Prior to the new ordinance, massage parlors were loosely regulated in the personal services category.

On Wednesday, June 13, detectives from the Contra Costa Sheriff's Office and Lafayette police officers served search warrants at both locations. While the establishments may welcome paying customers, authorities had to force entry. They found condoms, business records, money and customer lists suggesting sexual activity.

"Like a bad cliché from Miami Vice, we follow the money -- the credit card transactions, the employee payroll, the owner's bank accounts, rent payments for the businesses, etcetera - with the goal to break the backs of these businesses and shut them down for good," said the Chief. "Wednesday's raids will probably not be the last we conduct."

Three individuals were arrested: 44-year old Li Liu of San Ramon for prostitution, 25-year old Yang (Jason) Chen of Pleasant Hill for pimping and conspiracy and 41-year-old Xiao Chen of Concord for prostitution. Two other women were questioned, but released after being interviewed.

According to Sheriff's Department spokesperson Jimmy Lee, "The investigation into allegations of prostitution at some massage parlors in Lafayette is continuing." Anyone with additional information is asked to contact the Lafayette Police Department at (925) 283-3680.

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