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Wrangell left off list for final federal pandemic assistance funds

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel reporter

“Not happy” was how Borough Manager Jeff Good described his mood last week when he received word that Wrangell was left off the list of Alaska communities sharing in \$27 million in the final round of federal pandemic assistance funding.

Wrangell was not alone in receiving nothing. Juneau, Sitka and Anchorage also came up empty.

The funding formula was based on federal acreage within each borough, with population and economic conditions, such as poverty levels and unemployment, factoring into the formula.

“I think Treasury got it wrong,” Nils Andreassen, executive director of the Alaska Municipal League, said of the U.S. Treasury Department allocations.

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 appropriated \$2 billion for fiscal years 2022 and 2023 to pro-

vide additional payments to eligible counties nationwide — which, in Alaska, are boroughs — and eligible tribal governments “for use on any governmental purpose” except lobbying. It’s the last batch of federal aid payments that started in 2020.

The money comes without any of the limitations that governed much of previous federal relief payments to states and municipalities during the

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Public Works Department urges residents and restaurants to dispose of grease properly

By CAROLEINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

It is tempting to imagine that kitchen sinks, shower drains and toilets are domesticated black holes, transporting our waste to some mysterious nether region outside space and time, where it ceases to exist the moment it is out of sight.

However, Public Works Director Tom Wetor knows better than anyone in Wrangell that the spoiled milk, blackened cooking oil and remnants of last night’s dinner that are flushed into the sewer do not disappear. Pouring oil, grease and fat down the drain can damage essential infrastructure, strain the public works staff and produce the most disgusting dessert of all time — the sewer probe grease cake.

According to Wetor, it’s normal for a thin layer of grease, fat and oil to float on top of the wastewater that flows through the sewer system. Small amounts of oil may enter the system when households wash their dishes, for example. But the volume of grease entering Wrangell’s sewers is far above normal levels.

“Every two to three months’ time, our grease will be up to a foot thick,” said Wetor, describing the pump stations along the sewer line. “That’s way more than it should be.” Clearing the grease from a station is a three-person job — one worker power washes, one is on suction duty, and another mans the pumps. “It’s a significant process for us and it takes some

time for sure.”

Grease buildups don’t only impact the public works staff, they also subject essential equipment to unnecessary wear and tear. When wastewater levels rise past a certain point, probes detect the water and activate pumps that move the sewage through the system. However, when a thick layer of grease floats on top of the wastewater, it coats the probes, creating a “grease cake.”

Grease cakes can trick the probes into pumping over 10 times more often than necessary, wearing down the expensive machinery. “A pump that’s designed to run dozens of times a day will run hundreds of times a day,” Wetor said.

These over-strained sewage pumps do not come cheap. Though they aren’t the most glamorous items, the pumps at stations (called “nodes”) four and six cost about as much as a brand-new Lamborghini. “The pumps at node four are close to \$30,000 a piece,” said Wetor. “At node six they’re closer to \$40,000. That’s over \$200,000 of infrastructure that we are burning up more regularly than we should be.”

In 2021, the Public Works Department implemented “bio blocks” to help manage grease buildups. Bio blocks are slow-dissolving solids that release bacteria into sewage to reduce odor and break grease down.

Unfortunately, they have been insufficient to solve the

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A place to grieve, heal and celebrate



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Jenn Miller-Yancey, president of the Wrangell Mariners’ Memorial board, speaks to a gathered crowd at the Sept. 26 dedication of the memorial at Heritage Harbor.

Dedication ceremony marks completion of memorial

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

No less than 100 people turned out on Sept. 26 right before sunset for the dedication of the Wrangell Mariners’ Memorial at Heritage Harbor.

What some said has been in the works for decades has finally been completed, honoring those who have lost their lives at sea and those who made their lives from the sea.

“It’s amazing (that it’s finished),” said Jenn Miller-Yancey, president of the memorial board. “We stand out here and can’t believe it sometimes.”

Miller-Yancey, who’s late husband Ryan Miller died in 2005 in a commercial fishing accident, told the gathered crowd that the memorial was a healing place.

“Memorials are a very important part of a healthy community as they help link the past to the present and serve as an important commu-

nity history,” she said. “Memorial spaces offer places to grieve, heal and celebrate. That’s what we’re here to do today.”

Although the main structures are completed, board member Jeff Jabusch said there is still some work to do. Landscaping needs to be completed around the perimeter and signs need to be installed. A story about the 1908 shipwreck of the Star of Bengal will be installed, as will a list of members, volunteers and donors.

“But we’ve got concrete and steel and plaques and the big stuff, the expensive stuff done,” he said.

Jabusch said the construction costs to date total \$293,000, with an estimated \$200,000 in donated labor, materials, equipment and freight.

Forty-three names adorn the plaques mounted on the ship-shaped metal sculptures outside the pavilion, honoring deceased seafaring community members. Names with an anchor next to

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Chess club captures interest with students at Evergreen Elementary school

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Josh Fish would like to see kids win at the game of life across the board rather than be pawns, so he took a gambit with a classic game.

The first chess club will start after school next Monday at Evergreen Elementary, with Fish and helpers teaching students the rules of the game, with the hope of developing social skills and critical-thinking skills in the young players.

Fish, 25, learned to play chess in Fayetteville, North Carolina, when he was a freshman in high school. The game turned his life around by changing his thinking and approach to interacting

with other people.

“When I started playing chess, I was pretty shortsighted on most things, most ways that I went about living life. I didn’t think too many moves ahead,” he said. “It was just about having fun and enjoying the moment.”

Rather than encourage Fish to go out and play with other kids, he said his parents encouraged him to stay in and read and play board or video games since the neighborhood they lived in was rough. Fish admits that he’s not a very social person and chess has been a lifeline for interacting with others.

In high school, Fish and a friend quickly outpaced oth-

ers at their school, so they began to travel up to 90 minutes away to other communities in North Carolina, joining their chess clubs and playing new opponents.

“While playing all these different people, not only do you see how critically they think, but you have to fill the silence,” Fish said. “You talk and get to know each other. You might not know each other too well after the first game, but after 20 or 30 games, you consider each other friends.”

He’s found the same strategy works with students to get them engaged in conversation. “It’s hard to talk about mundane

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Josh Fish plays a game of chess. Fish has been playing the game since he was a freshman in high school, and he’s started an after-school club for third through fifth graders.

PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Birthdays & Anniversaries

The Sentinel extends its best wishes to the following people listed on the Wrangell Chamber of Commerce Community Scholarship Birthday Calendar.

Wednesday, Oct. 5: Tony Byford, Kari Massin, Gerrit Southland, Tara Stutz.

Thursday, Oct. 6: Becky Simpson, R. Lee Wiederspohn.

Friday, Oct. 7: Kirk Davidson, Dani Easterly, Jimmy Jabusch, Casey Blaze Nore.

Saturday, Oct. 8: Brian Rooney.

Sunday, Oct. 9: Jake Jabusch, Melinda Messmer.

Monday, Oct. 10: Free Guggenbickler, Kevin Wallace.

Tuesday, Oct. 11: Marty Kaer, Donna M. Kuntz, Kanen Miller, Kurt Young.

Wednesday, Oct. 12: Kathie Angerman, Perry Brink, Darian Meissner; Anniversary: Tony and Sue Ann Guggenbickler.

Senior Center Menu

Open for in-person dining.
Must be fully vaccinated.

Thursday, Oct. 6

Salisbury steak with creamy noodles, peas, pickled beets

Friday, Oct. 7

Crispy chicken, carrots, cauliflower broccoli toss, curry rice pilaf

Monday, Oct. 10

Creole pork steak, cauliflower, sunshine salad, pasta

Tuesday, Oct. 11

Half roast beef sandwich, corn chowder, creamy coleslaw

Wednesday, Oct. 12

German meatballs, broccoli, carrot and pineapple salad, frybread

Please call the senior center at 907-874-2066 24 hours in advance to reserve a seat at lunch at the center or to request delivery. The senior van also is available to transport seniors to medical appointments, reasonable errands such as collecting mail, getting prescriptions or other essential items.

Ferry Schedule

Northbound

Friday, Oct. 7
Kennicott, 7:45 p.m.
Wednesday, Oct. 12
Kennicott, 12:01 a.m.
Saturday, Oct. 15
Kennicott, 2:30 a.m.
Friday, Oct. 21
Kennicott, 6:30 p.m.

Southbound

Monday, Oct. 10
Kennicott, 7 a.m.
Friday, Oct. 14
Kennicott, 9:30 a.m.
Sunday, Oct. 16
Kennicott, 11:30 p.m.
Monday, Oct. 24
Kennicott, 6:15 a.m.

All times listed are scheduled departure times.
Call the terminal at 907-874-2021 for information
or call 907-874-3711 or 800-642-0066 for recorded information.

Tides

	High Tides		Low Tides		AM		PM	
	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
Oct. 6	11:17	15.2	11:19	16.3	04:46	0.0	05:11	2.8
Oct. 7	12:02	16.7	05:39	-0.8	06:03	0.9
Oct. 8	00:11	17.2	12:42	17.8	06:23	-1.3	06:47	-0.6
Oct. 9	00:59	17.6	01:19	18.4	07:01	-1.2	07:26	-1.6
Oct. 10	01:42	17.5	01:54	18.5	07:36	-0.6	08:03	-2.0
Oct. 11	02:23	16.9	02:27	18.2	08:09	0.3	08:39	-1.8
Oct. 12	03:02	16.0	02:58	17.4	08:41	1.4	09:13	-1.2

Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

FLU VACCINE CLINIC will be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday for ages 12 and up, sponsored by SEARHC. Patients are encouraged to pre-schedule a time slot but walk-ins are also welcome. The flu vaccine formulated for age 65+ will also be available. If you are unable to attend but would still like to receive your vaccination, or if you have a child under 12 years of age, please contact the clinic to schedule an alternate appointment date at 907-874-7000.

NOLAN CENTER THEATER presents "Barbarian," rated R, at 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday for the horror thriller film that runs one hour and 42 minutes. Retro movie "Killer Klowns from Outer Space," a 1988 movie rated PG-13, will be shown at 4 p.m. Sunday; the comedy horror sci-fi film runs one hour and 25 minutes. Tickets are \$7 for adults, \$5 for children under age 12. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

PARKS and RECREATION Jiu-Jitsu one year anniversary celebration Saturday and Sunday with guest instructor Alexandra Peterson at the community center gym. Saturday at 10 a.m. intro to BJJ, noon lunch will be provided, 1 p.m. feet-to-finish gi seminar, 4 p.m. open mat. Sunday, 10 a.m. feet-to-finish no-gi seminar; 1 p.m. open mat. Free and open to ages 13 and up. Registration required. Go to <https://bit.ly/WRGPRJ> or email questions to wrangelljiujitsu@gmail.com.

WRANGELL SCHOOL BOARD will meet at 6:30 p.m. Monday, via Zoom. Go to: <https://bit.ly/3CdLNZv>. The meeting ID is 836 0784 3405 and the passcode is 940054. Community members can email comments to kpowell@wpsd.us or can sign up under guests to be heard at the meeting by emailing the same address before 3:30 p.m. Monday. The agenda will be available online four days before the meeting at <https://www.boarddocs.com/ak/wrangell/Board.nsf>.

STORY TIME AT THE LIBRARY, 10 to 11 a.m. Fridays. Come enjoy the stories, crafts and snacks at the Irene Ingle Public Library. Call 907-874-3535.

DANCE FOR BABIES, TODDLERS and their FAMILIES on Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. through Oct. 27. This free activity is hosted by The Salvation Army. Adults must be present. If you are interested in volunteering as a live musician (guitar, piano, etc.) to play some nursery rhymes, call 907-874-3753.

PARKS and RECREATION is offering multiple activities and programs to get your body moving. For more information on any of the activities visit www.wrangellrec.com or call 907-874-2444.

Want more attendance at your meeting or event? Send information for Roundup to wrgsent@gmail.com or call 907-874-2301.

Continuing Events

PARKS and RECREATION www.wrangellrec.com

Open swim is open by appointment, at reduced capacity. Locker rooms are available.

Arthritis class, 8:30 - 9:30 a.m., Monday, Wednesday, Friday

Lap swim, 6 - 7:30 a.m. Monday, Wednesday, Friday

Lap/tot swim, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m., weekdays, 5:15 - 6:15 p.m. Tuesday, Thursday, and 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday

Open swim, 6 - 7 p.m. Monday and Wednesday; 6:30 - 8 p.m. Friday; 1 - 2 p.m. Saturday

Water aerobics class, 10 - 11 a.m. Monday, Wednesday, Friday

Weight room: 6 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. and 3:30 - 7:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 6 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and 3:30 - 8:30 p.m. Friday; 10 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. Saturday

AA Meetings: North Star Group meets from 7 to 8 p.m. Tuesdays and Fridays, St. Philip's Episcopal Church.

The Way We Were In the Sentinel 100, 75, 50 and 25 years ago.

Oct. 5, 1922

Better Homes Week is to be observed throughout America Oct. 9-14. Twenty-two governors are taking part in the movement. Gov. Scott C. Bone, who early gave his support to the movement, made the following statement today: "Alaska has approximately 55,000 homemakers. It has less than 10,000 homeowners. The Better Homes in America Movement was inaugurated for the avowed purpose of strengthening in the mind of people the desire to own their own homes and spread knowledge of how to improve them. This purpose is so lofty and manifestly in the public good that I bespeak the interest of all Alaskans in the movement.

Oct. 3, 1947

At last night's city council meeting Ralph Devenny reported it was costing taxpayers around \$5 a day for street lights and shades which fall victim to an epidemic of small boys with air rifles. Councilman Lennie Engstrom also pointed out that drains are continually being plugged by youngsters, necessitating the expense of cleaning them out. It was decided that parents could be prosecuted under an ordinance which cites a fine of from \$5 to \$100 for destroying property.

Oct. 6, 1972

Nine Wrangell senior citizens are working this week at jobs provided through a new federal program called Mainstream, according to Mrs. Marleita Wallace, volunteer supervisor. Mrs. Wallace said more workers 55 years old and older are needed and can learn more about the job offers by calling her. The program is funded by \$5,000 offered Wrangell by the federal Officer of Economic Opportunity to try Mainstream on a pilot basis. Mrs. Wallace said Wrangellites employed under the program are Herb Bradley, Matilda Paul and Cowboy and Emily Gotardo, all at the Alaska Native Brotherhood Hall; Elizabeth Murry, at the library; Martha Jager and Amy Paul, as nurses; Lucille Swift, at the Civic Center; and Mary Ferguson, police department.

Oct. 2, 1997

The building where Norris Gift Shop is located will be 100 years old this coming spring, with a history spanning from the Klondike Gold Rush of 1898 until the present. It has housed businesses ranging from bars to a bakery. In the spring of 1898, brewmaster Bruno Grief built the Fort Wrangell Beer Hall on the east side of Front Street to sell brew from his brewery on the west side of Front. He began brewing beer in 1896, and operated his brewery and a saloon for almost 15 years. The building changed owners a number of times and housed a variety of adult recreation businesses until 1952. A. Lemieux operated the building as a billiard hall and rented the upstairs rooms. It continued to be used as a bar and pool hall until Prohibition in the 1920s, when it became a card room and cigarette shop. Fred Cumming purchased and remodeled the building in 1946. The Elks Lodge was on the first floor, he rented out the second and lived on the third. After the fire of 1952, a dentist, Mr. Wheeler, bought the building. The Elks Lodge then became Lee Stella's bakery. Ten years later, Richard Stough purchased the building. It is now occupied by Norris Gift. The building has been significantly altered by some of the owners, including covering the eight-inch shiplap siding with asphalt shingles. However, the building proportions hint at its former unique character as a beer hall.

Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Hours
Oct. 5	7:01a	6:13p	11:11h
Oct. 6	7:03a	6:10p	11:06h
Oct. 7	7:05a	6:07p	11:02h
Oct. 8	7:07a	6:05p	10:57h
Oct. 9	7:09a	6:02p	10:52h
Oct. 10	7:11a	6:00p	10:48h
Oct. 11	7:13a	5:57p	10:43h

Borough to negotiate lease for scrap metal recycling at 6-Mile site

BY CAROLEINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

The borough assembly has granted Manager Jeff Good the authority to negotiate a short-term lease with Channel Construction to use a portion of the 6-Mile mill site for a scrap metal recycling operation.

Juneau-based Channel Construction has been running a regional metal recycling operation at the property, which the borough purchased for \$2.5 million this summer. Owner William "Shorty" Tonsgard Jr. initially applied for a long-term lease that would allow him to continue operating at the site after the borough took over the land.

The port commission unanimously voted down a motion Sept. 1 to recommend granting a long-term lease to Channel Construction. The commissioners requested more information about the assembly's overall business plan for the property before moving forward with a recommendation.

A short-term lease, however, would allow continued operations until the

borough can determine what Wrangell residents want for the land.

"We don't know what the property is going to be yet," explained Good. "We could make it industrial, we could make it light industrial, we could make it tourism. Before we do anything and really commit to a long-term lease for industrial activity, we want to understand what the public wants for that property."

Since tourism and industrial activity do not operate well together, the borough plans to defer its decision on the long-term site plan until after this week's municipal election and until it can hold an economic forum to field questions and comments from the public.

Vice Mayor Patty Gilbert believes the port commission was justified in its request. "The port commission, and rightly so, wanted to know the full picture for the mill site in terms of development," she said on a phone call after the Sept. 27 assembly meeting. "We value the port commission, and

we take direction from them, as well as planning and zoning." The planning and zoning commission approved the proposed lease at its Sept. 8 meeting, citing the "local and regional need and the economic opportunity the business brings to Wrangell."

The port commission will meet again on Oct. 10 to review the supplementary materials it requested. In the meantime, Channel Construction will "(continue) their operation, which has been a benefit to the community," Gilbert added.

In public comment at the assembly meeting, Mark Mitchell shared his perspective on the value of Channel Construction's business. He said that if Tonsgard was not offered a long-term lease or an opportunity to purchase property at 6-Mile, he might take his valuable operation elsewhere. "I guarantee you, you're not going to have anything going there for 10 years," Mitchell said of any potential tourism development at the site. "(Shorty) is bringing in business now."

A long-term lease would allow Tons-

gard to invest in improvements on the property. "He'll have to do a stormwater prevention plan, he'll have to do an oily water separator out there to do the things he's wanting to do," said Good. Tonsgard also hopes to extend the fill out to deep water to allow his barges to load at all stages of the tide, according to his lease application. These improvements would not be feasible under a short-term lease.

Tonsgard did not respond to a request for comment.

The borough's procedures and commitment to solicit public feedback on the site's future have played a role in its decision timeline, but so have environmental concerns. "Part of the reason we're being cautious is we have to go through our Phase I environmental assessment," said Good. Now that the borough owns the former sawmill property, it could become liable for contaminants that enter the site, and wants to ensure that no lead paint, asbestos or fuel will be brought in on barges.

Survey data shows businesses more upbeat than past two years

BY CAROLEINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

After a dismal 2020 and cautiously optimistic 2021, the economic outlook in Wrangell is improving, according to survey data collected by the Southeast Conference.

Economic director Carol Rushmore presented the data at the chamber of commerce's economic forum last Friday. The event was intended to bring Wrangell business leaders, state and municipal government officials, and concerned citizens into conversation about economic problems facing the community.

Rushmore's said her presentation offered a "30,000-foot summary of the economics of Wrangell" using data from a combination of state sources and Southeast Conference surveys. In 2020, she explained, the borough contracted with Rain Coast Data, a Southeast-based consulting firm, to provide a snapshot of how the community was faring before the pandemic hit. "2019 was a good year," she said. "Trends were going up, it was positive for the community, for marine services, for tourism — things were looking good."

Then, the Trident Seafood plant closed, and as the pandemic ravaged the local economy in 2020 business revenue throughout the borough dropped approximately 48%. In 2020, survey respondents laid off 36% of staff on average. Trident has now been closed for three summers in a row.

"What I'm presenting to you is depressing," she said. "But I think everybody realizes that because we know what we went through in 2020 and 2021."

According to survey data, local business leaders' attitudes about the economic future soured as revenue decreased. In 2020 and 2021, only 6% of respondents believed that overall economic outlook of Wrangell was positive.

The 2021 survey was administered between April 9 and April 23, 2021. Representatives of 41 businesses responded.

Wrangell's business prospects brightened in 2022, when 48% of respondents described the current business climate as "good." However, the borough's outlook still lags behind the 13 other Southeast communities that

were surveyed, with Wrangell reporting the lowest percentage of positive responses. Ketchikan had the second fewest positive responses and Pelican had the most.

The borough plans to continue collecting economic data in future years, Rushmore said, and she anticipates that the increased momentum will continue into 2022. Based on anecdotal evidence, the airport, Marine Service Center and tourism industry have all been more active in 2022 than they were during the past two years. The Southeast Conference predicts that in 2023, the number of cruise ship passengers will return to pre-pandemic levels.

However, not all the trends Rushmore identified were positive. Wrangell has been losing population steadily since the sawmill closed in 1994. "We're under 1980 population levels now," she said.

The percentage of Wrangell community members over the age of 65 is the second largest in Alaska behind Haines, according to the state Department of Labor.

Reversing outmigration will

be difficult since the borough's limited housing capacity prevents new workers — especially young people with families — from moving to the island and making it a permanent home.

About 45% of businesses that responded to the Southeast Conference's 2022 survey said that housing availability was a "significant barrier" for their organization, and 32% described housing as a "moderate barrier."

Despite the sobering statistics she referenced, Rushmore ended her presentation by expressing confidence in Wrangell's ability to regain economic stability as pandemic restrictions abate. "2022 should be much more positive," she said. "We can only go up. We can only get better."

After the mill closed in the 1990s, the community lost 10% of its employment and 30% of its payroll earnings overnight. "We went on a downward spiral," said Rushmore. "But the community worked to figure out how to make a difference" by constructing the Nolan Center, Heritage Harbor and Marine Service Center.

Borough sells first of junkyard lots; two more parcels will come on sale

BY CAROLEINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

The borough assembly unanimously approved the sale of 29,274 square feet of public lands to Helen and Robert Molinek for \$45,000 at its meeting last Tuesday. The sale of a portion of the former Byford junkyard property is part of a longstanding effort by the borough to move public lands into private ownership, where they can be taxed.

The parcel at 4-Mile Zimovia Highway used to be part of the junkyard, which the state Department of Environmental Conservation finishing cleaning up in 2018. Since then, the borough has negotiated with nearby landowners who expressed interest in purchasing portions of the newly available property.

The assembly did not support placing development requirements on the land, which would have specified the type and timeline of any development. Instead, the borough divided the property into three lots — the maximum number before it would be required to install utilities and perform additional construction.

A contracted appraisal

report for the borough described the site as easy to develop and suggested that its south-facing views of the water would make it "very desirable in the Wrangell market."

Molinek purchased the property behind his residence, but the borough will make the other two lots available for public auction. One is valued at \$120,000 and the other is valued at \$96,885.

Anyone interested in purchasing the lots will find them listed on public-surplus.com after the borough completes its listing on the commercial website that sells public property nationwide. The borough used the company to sell the former National Guard armory last year.

Assemblymember Bob Dalrymple expressed his appreciation for the work that borough officials had done to make the sale possible, overcoming "the ownership issues and the access issues to get this property back on the tax rolls." Just before the assembly voted to approve the sale, he called it "a long, long process that has hopefully culminated tonight."



Wrangell Voyage Schedule Change

A reminder for all AML customers: our barge service to Wrangell will begin departing Seattle on Friday (rather than Wednesday) beginning with voyage **S2412** on Friday, **October 7**. Cargo availability in Wrangell will be the following Wednesday.

Please visit www.shipaml.com for our current sailing schedules. If you have any questions, please email amlcsc@lynden.com or call **907-874-3314**.

Thank you for your continued support!



FROM THE PUBLISHER

The bigger problems are harder to solve

By LARRY PERSILY
Publisher

Wrangell is great at helping neighbors in need, at filling holiday food baskets and supporting student activities. The community excels at watching out for each other, watching over our elders and keeping watch over mariners.

There are multiple examples just in last week's and this week's Sentinel and on the Wrangell Community Group Facebook page: Volunteers working to reopen the roller rink after a three-year shutdown; all the effort that has gone into growing the community garden; the dedication, labor and money that have gone into building the

Wrangell Mariners' Memorial as a point of pride and remembrance; the new chess club at Evergreen Elementary School; all the community support and volunteer hours put into last month's Sharing Our Knowledge conference; the food drive and countless programs run by churches in town.

Wrangell excels at all of that, and more. The town pitches in and does what's needed to ensure people are safe and fed, that students have adult supervision and coaching for a long list of activities, and that help is at hand in a crisis.

The harder problems are tougher to solve. How to get past divided opinions; how to put aside disbelief and distrust of government; how to take the initiative to solve the bigger issues such as lack of housing, lack of child care and lack of economic opportunities.

Solving those requires more than helping out at a volunteer event, making a pot of chili or donating clothes. It takes leadership and not grouching, grumbling and griping to no purpose.

History teaches us lessons. Or so my teachers always told me, though it wasn't until I grew into an adult that I realized they were right. And I have a lesson for today.

In the mid-1970s, the sawmill owner, Alaska Lumber and Pulp, donated \$600,000 to the city for a swimming pool, which Wrangell sorely lacked. The city bid out the project, and the price tag came in at about \$695,000. Rather than find a way to finance the \$95,000, the community argued whether the proposed aluminum pool was the right decision after all. Maybe gunite (sprayed concrete) would be better, though it would be more expensive. Maybe the town didn't need and couldn't afford a pool. Maybe there was a way for the state to help pay. Maybe the plans needed to be redone. Maybe the proposed site was wrong.

Maybe, maybe, maybe.

As the company debated the pool over the next several years, the company graciously let the city keep the interest earned on the money, which paid for recreation projects. Very graciously, considering that the community never stopped arguing over the swimming pool and how to spend the gift.

But then, in the early 1980s, as the sawmill business was proving unprofitable and the pool debate proving unending, the mill manager approached the city council to ask for the

money back. Rather than help the town, the \$600,000 gift had become a source of argument and division in the community. It was not the company's intention to start a fight, and it was time to end it.

Healthy debate in a community is good. Different opinions can be productive, if people can get past the arguments to find a compromise. I fear that the debate over repairs to the school buildings and Public Safety Building, the fate of the former hospital property, Wrangell's lack of housing and affordable child care are all similar to the swimming pool fight of more than 40 years ago.

Everyone loses when people can't agree on an answer.

“The harder problems are tougher to solve. How to get past divided opinions; how to put aside disbelief and distrust of government; how to take the initiative to solve the bigger issues.”

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Wrangell cross country runners impress worker at Juneau meet

Last Saturday, Sept. 24, I had the pleasure of helping work the finish line at the Capital City Invitational cross-country meet in Juneau. The previous night's monsoon had passed, and the cool, damp air at the running field throbbed with the pent-up energy of about 225 young runners from all parts of Southeast Alaska. It was high school athletics at its finest.

I must say I was one of many people who were impressed by the grit and toughness of the Wrangell boys team. They've clearly been working hard, and they run like a pack of red hungry wolves. Best of luck to them in the remaining championship meets.

Kurt Iverson,
Juneau

Alaska Marine Highway looks like it's 'headed for the rocks'

I urge your newspaper to raise hell about the fact that the new Alaska Marine Highway System winter ferry schedule provides no service between Juneau and Haines between Jan. 4 and Feb. 4. How are legislators to get their cars and trucks to Juneau from Haines for the January legislative session? How are Greens Creek and Kensington miners who live in Haines to get back and forth?

Don't blame the commissioner of the Department of Transportation — he inherited this mess when the governor started getting rid of vessels. As a result, Southeast Alaska's transportation system is headed for the rocks.

Former Gov. Frank Murkowski

Policy for Letters to the Editor

- Letters should be typed or clearly written and no longer than 400 words.
- All letters must be signed by the writer and include a phone number and any affiliation with a group which pertains to the letter.

The Sentinel reserves the right to edit any submissions.

The deadline for submissions is Friday at noon for Wednesday publication.

Letters are run on a space-available basis.

WRANGELL SENTINEL

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Federal funds

Continued from page 1

pandemic. “Under this program, recipients have broad discretion on uses of funds, similar to the ways in which they may use funds generated from their own revenue sources,” the Treasury Department website says.

The Kenai Peninsula Borough is on the list for \$6 million over the two years; the Ketchikan Gateway Borough's allocation is \$4.1 million; the Kodiak borough will receive almost \$2.4 million; with \$1 million for the Petersburg borough and \$621,000 for the Haines borough.

Andreassen thinks maybe the Treasury Department was confused about the borough designation in Alaska. The communities left off the list are all incorporated as “city and borough,” not simply borough. And Anchorage goes by “municipality” in its name, not borough.

The allocation decision, however, was not consistent. The City and Borough of Yakutat received \$211,000.

There are additional examples of similar inconsistency nationwide, he said.

Andreassen said he hopes the Treasury Department will be willing to redo its allocations in Alaska, though he noted that giving money to the communities left off the list could mean taking some away from others since the national pot of money is limited.

Andreassen estimated that the \$27 million allocated for Alaska boroughs would more than double if the missing communities are added to the list, along with unorganized areas in the state. He acknowledged, however, that adding the unorganized areas of the state that are not part of a borough and do not provide services could be more difficult.

The municipal organization is working with Alaska's congressional delegation and the National Association of Counties to convince Treasury to correct the mistake, Andreassen said. “I think there should be some high-level attention to this,” he said in an email to municipal officials last week.

“This isn't a fair outcome and we would strongly encourage federal legislation

or action to remediate the situation,” he said in the email.

Of the \$2 billion, the Treasury Department will distribute \$750 million a year to municipalities nationwide for each of the two years, and \$250 million each year to tribes nationwide.

The department's website defines eligible municipalities as “any county, parish or borough that is independent of any other unit of local government, and that is the principal provider of government services for the area within its jurisdiction.” That appears to apply to Wrangell.

Good said he is talking with the Alaska Municipal League “to figure out what is going on,” adding that it is unfair for Petersburg to receive \$1 million and Wrangell nothing. Both municipalities are surrounded by federal land and both receive payments in lieu of taxes on federal acreage in the Tongass National Forest that is within borough boundaries, a similar criteria to the pandemic aid allocation.

EDITORIAL

Former hospital property not getting any healthier

It's been almost three years since SEARHC started its move out of the borough-owned hospital building on Bennett Street into new quarters. It's been almost five months since the borough embarked on multiple efforts to sell the unused property.

Since then, there have been no buyers, no serious expressions of interest, not even a prescription to ease the financial pain of maintaining the empty facility. The \$830,000 asking price for a decades-old building with a lot of problems is about as attractive as an old pickup truck that needs new tires, a new transmission, leaks oil and has a cracked windshield. However, the junker truck will usually find a taker if it's free — someone with the skill and initiative could bring it back to better health.

The borough has tried to sell the hospital property itself, talked of turning it over to a real estate agent and then decided to list it on a commercial website of surplus government property from across the nation. The assembly has talked about a lot of ideas to unload the building and land, but still the unused building is costing about \$8,000 a month for minimal heat, insurance and to make sure it doesn't deteriorate further.

It's time to think of the building on almost two acres of land the same as that old pickup truck. Just as the owner would stop insuring the truck, quit renewing its plates and clearing off the snow and ice, Wrangell should apply the same logic to the hospital property. Giving it away for free is the best answer.

Even better, give it away with the requirement that the owner develop the property for housing. Single-family homes, apartments, condos — who cares, whatever works to cover the costs of gutting and rebuilding the hospital, or tearing it down and building new.

Any development plans for the site will be expensive and will cost far more than the \$830,000 asking price. But removing that \$830,000 price tag may help attract a developer to do something with the property that would not otherwise happen. And right now, nothing is happening.

The borough would get out from under the liability and \$8,000-a-month cost of maintaining the building. It would move the property on to the tax rolls. It could create housing, and jobs building the new units.

Of course, even at “free,” no one may be willing to take on the development. They would need a lot of money to rehab or tear down and rebuild the Bennett Street property. However, as the borough is working hard to get its finances in good order and wants to address the lack of housing in town, giving away the property for free is worth a try.

At least come up with a plan and advertise the property and see if anyone submits a reasonable development proposal. If nothing happens, nothing is lost. The old truck can sit there another year.

— Wrangell Sentinel

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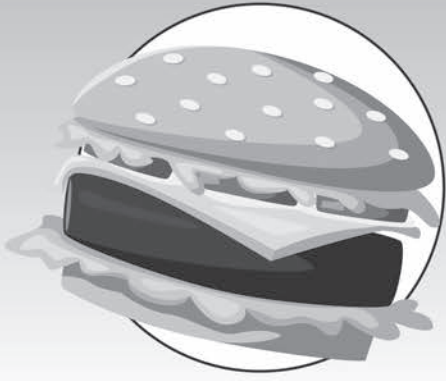
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Forest Service seeks public input for spending \$14.4 million on cabins project

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

A U.S. Forest Service project to build new public-use cabins and refurbish some existing cabins is moving into the next round of public comment.

The agency expects to listen to the public in the coming weeks to find out which areas would be best for new structures and which would be best to fix up within the Tongass and Chugach National Forests, it announced in a press release on Sept. 23.

"As part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's investment in the nation's recreation infrastructure, the (U.S. Department of Agriculture) is investing \$14.4 million to fund a mixture of new and reconstructed cabins and cabin repairs and operations on the Chugach and Tongass National Forests," the release stated. "An October public outreach initiative will provide opportunities to ensure inclusive equitable, diverse and accessible public participation."

That \$14.4 million is part of \$37 million the USDA has budgeted in the infrastructure law for recreation sites within national forests and grasslands throughout the country.

Twenty-three cabins in Wrangell and 19 in Petersburg already exist, but many are not easily accessible, one of the features Forest Service personnel said is a concern for recreational users.

Paul Robbins, Tongass public affairs officer, said the Forest Service Alaska Region has "received about 50 proposals from previous pub-

lic engagements to repair, reconstruct or build new cabins. It is our goal to fund approximately half of these."

The public input process will help narrow down the proposed sites, he said.

In an interview with the Juneau Empire on Sept. 28, James King, regional director of recreation, land and minerals for the Forest Service Alaska Region, said 10 to 12 of the newbuilds could be located in the Tongass and Chugach forests.

Officials with the Forest Service didn't say how many of those could be located in the Wrangell-Petersburg district. King said the agency would hope to have an approved list of build sites by November, with construction beginning next summer once the environmental review process is complete.

Dave Schmid, forester with the Forest Service Alaska Region, stated in the release that there would be emphasis on using local materials and labor where possible.

"We are looking for the cabin strategy to strengthen local relationships and economies by engaging partners, using local businesses, promoting local workforce development and using local wood where feasible," Schmid said. "Local voices sharing thoughts on cabin locations and designs will help to shape the overall plan moving forward."

Public outreach will begin this month. To stay up to date on input opportunities, visit the Forest Service website at bit.ly/3fzdmE4.

Chess club

Continued from page 1

things like, 'How was your day? What did you do after school?' Whereas, as you're playing chess, and you're eight moves in, it's like, 'Why did you do that?' And all the sudden you're talking about personal things and your life."

Fish works as a server at the Stikine Restaurant, a job he took to help him be more social and interact with others. He's also a volunteer firefighter and a paraprofessional at the elementary school, where his little brother Kaden, 8, is a third grader. Since working at the school, Fish thought it would be a good place to develop a club and help students.

"I was very excited and pleased that he'd be able to do this and that he'd be able to engage with the kids further than his job," said Ann Hilburn, principal of Evergreen Elementary. "We had way more students respond in a positive

way than we anticipated."

At first, Fish thought there would be about 10 to 15 third to fifth grade students interested in learning the game. He said all but four students said they'd want to learn the game. As of last Friday, 15 had submitted their forms to sign up.

"I think having a chess club for the kids is going to be amazing for them," Hilburn said. "It teaches so many life skills and for them to start learning at this age, hopefully it will lead to them becoming competitive."

The club will start with teaching how each piece on the board moves before jumping into gameplay and strategies, Fish said. He doesn't foresee games being played until about the seventh or eighth week of the club. He will assess their abilities, eventually matching up students of similar skill levels.

Though the club is starting at the elementary level, Fish is already planning on creating

a high school club sometime during the school year. Eventually, he would like to see players go to statewide tournaments.

Fish is taking donations of chess sets. He has four now with about another four or so promised. If he has enough come the end of the school year, he would like to send sets home with students to encourage them to keep playing during summer. He also hopes his students will join the club he and a friend started at the Stikine Inn, which is held on Sundays at 3:30 p.m. Chess set donations can be made by contacting the school at 907-874-2321.

It's all a part of his wish to give back to the town he's come to love.

"I don't want to miss out on my opportunity to give back to the town of Wrangell," he said. "The amount of volunteer programs I see and how much people want to make a difference, I want to be a part of that."

Memorial dedication —

Continued from page 1

them denote those who died at sea.

"At its core, Wrangell is and always has been a fishing community. The water is our lifeline," said Borough Manager Jeff Good. "The memorial serves as a reminder to those of us departing for the fishing grounds that they're engaging in a dangerous profession and to be vigilant in their decision making."

Good, a retired Coast Guard officer, said the "memorial serves as a landmark and a guiding bearing to a safe haven."

Amid a backdrop of deep blue and black cloudy skies and soft yellow lights along the memorial walkway, music teacher Tasha Morse and four of her students played Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah" and later "Amazing Grace." Board members talked of the effort to see the project go from idea to reality. Middle school student Madeline Davies recited the poem "If You've Ever Lived on

an Island," by J. Earnhart.

The ribbon was cut by commercial fisherman Brennon Eagle, who came onboard the project in 2010 and helped form the nonprofit, and Chris Mertl, a Juneau-based landscape architect who helped design the memorial.

"As a landscape architect designing a place such as this, it is such a huge honor. It's also a huge challenge," Mertl said. "How do I embody the spiritual, the celebration, the sacred space that needs to be made into this memorial? Working with Brennon, the board and the community, you guided me. This is your design."

Mertl said the Wrangell Mariners' Memorial has more meaning than any other project he's worked on and lauded the community for its unity.

"I've never seen a community rally and put something like this together on your own," he said. "This is really a testament to what a great community Wrangell is. It was a great honor to work on this."



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Middle school student Madeline Davies reads the poem "If You've Ever Lived on an Island" at the Wrangell Mariners' Memorial dedication ceremony on Sept. 26.

Grease disposal

Continued from page 1

grease problem on their own. Before using bio blocks, the buildup was the texture of "bacon grease when it's cold," said Wetor. "Bio blocks turn it into a jelly consistency." Though introducing bacteria makes sewage grease easier to work with, the problem won't go away until residents and businesses reduce the amount of grease they're putting into the system, he explained.

Wetor hopes residents will avoid washing grease, fat and oil down their drains as much as possible. To properly dispose of grease, wipe it up and throw it in the trash.

However, Wetor suspects that private residences are not solely responsible for the abnormal amounts of oily sludge in Wrangell's sewers. He believes the likeliest explanation is that

certain area restaurants are not using grease traps.

Grease traps intercept kitchen wastewater before it enters the sewer and remove substances that could interfere with the system. Traps are required in all commercial food establishments in Alaska and throughout the United States. When New York City found that 73% of its restaurants were non-compliant with its grease trap ordinance, it implemented a \$1,000 per day fine for violations around 2012.

Wetor, however, does not plan to take such a punitive approach. He hopes the borough will hire a health and safety inspector to ensure that restaurants have functional traps. He would give businesses time to comply with any regulations they are not meeting.

Local restaurants are "kind of on the honor system right now" for their regulatory compliance, explained Wetor. Though he has no desire to "shame a business," the strain that excess grease is putting on the sewer system and public works staff is becoming too significant to ignore.

His only other option would be to install new sewer pumps that circulate wastewater to break down buildups. New pumps, however, would come with a catalog of new problems like a steep overhead cost, higher upkeep expenses and an additional maintenance step.



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SEARHC offers flu vaccine at a half-day Saturday clinic

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Despite a global COVID-19 pandemic the past two and a half years, influenza — the flu — is still among us.

To that end, the SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium will be holding a flu clinic from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at the Wrangell Medical Center.

SEARHC is asking people to call and schedule a time slot to reduce wait time, however walk-ins are still welcome.

Between 2010 and 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates there were between 9 million and 41 million cases of the flu, with 140,000 to 710,000 of those leading to hospitalization and 12,000 to 52,000 deaths. Studies conducted by the CDC show the flu vaccine reduces the risk of the illness between 40% to 60%.

People unable to attend Saturday's clinic can still schedule an appointment to get the flu shot by calling SEARHC at 907-874-7000.

According to Randi Yancey, medical office coordinator at the hospital, everyone 6 months and older is eligible for the flu vaccine.

She said those who have a severe allergy to an ingredient in flu vaccine or have had a severe reaction in the past should speak with their medical provider before getting the shot.

Common side effects from receiving a flu shot include soreness, redness and/or swelling where the shot was given, headache, fever, nausea, muscle aches and fatigue. Yancey said the shot, like other injections, can sometimes cause fainting.

Yancey said the medical center has held flu clinics even during the pandemic.

"Prior to COVID, the Wrangell Medical Center would hold annual clinics for high-dose vaccines," she said. "In 2020, a drive-through community vaccine clinic was held to administer influenza vaccines while practicing social distancing. The event was so highly attended that the (hospital) has continued to hold a Saturday clinic on an annual basis."

Anyone who has recently had a COVID-19 vaccination or booster shot can still attend the flu shot clinic as there is no recommended waiting period between the two vaccinations. Only flu shots will be administered at Saturday's clinic.

No injuries in Juneau tree and mudslide



PHOTO BY CLARISE LARSON/THE JUNEAU EMPIRE VIA AP

A tree and landslide debris lie across Gastineau Avenue after falling between two homes and crushing a vehicle in downtown Juneau on Sept. 26. "It looks as though it's predominantly a tree fall, a giant tree came out, took the roots out and as it came down the hill it took mud with it, but it's far more tree debris than mud debris," said Juneau emergency program manager Tom Mattice. "We're digging into it now but it was definitely a big tree fall and not our typical mudslide event." No one was injured in the slide, which came as heavy rains soaked the hillside. The debris damaged three homes.

Alaska's senators want to rename Aleutians volcano for late Rep. Don Young

Anchorage Daily News

WASHINGTON — Alaska's U.S. senators want to rename an active volcano in the Aleutian Islands after the late U.S. Rep. Don Young.

The longtime congressman's former peers, Republican U.S. Sens. Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan, say Young is a fitting namesake for a volcano. The one they hope to rename Mount Young is currently called

Mount Cerberus.

"My goal is that we not only pay tribute to a great man who did so much for our state, but that it ensures that what he has done for Alaskans is not forgotten," Murkowski said in a statement. "Don Young moved mountains for Alaska, it's only fitting we name one after him — even if it is a bit unpredictable."

The 2,598-foot volcanic peak is one of the most active in the Aleutian Islands, accord-

ing to a statement from the senators' offices. It is located on Semisopochnoi Island.

Young died in March at age 88, after representing Alaska in the U.S. House of Representatives for 49 years.

Young's former chief of staff, Pamela Day, said she thought the late dean of the House would have seen the humor in the senators' effort.

"He had a very wicked sense of humor, and I think he would be tickled," Day said.

"He would find it very fitting and funny, and he'd probably have a sparkle in his eye when he talked about it."

The bill would also rename the federal building in Fairbanks as the Don Young Federal Office Building, and the Job Corps Center in Palmer would be the Don Young Alaska Job Corps Center.

Murkowski and Sullivan introduced the bill on Sept. 29 before the Senate adjourned for recess.

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SENTINEL SPORTS

Boys cross country team finishes first at regionals; Harrison wins top spot

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

The Wrangell High School boys cross country team came home from an eventful weekend in Sitka, taking many top spots at Southeast regionals.

Once again, sophomore Daniel Harrison led his team, only this time he powered through to take first place out of 56 runners with a time of 16:50, nine seconds faster than senior Luke Davis of Haines.

"Daniel had an incredible race," said head coach Kayla Rooney. "He did exactly what we have been working on this season, pacing himself with other runners that we've been competing with every weekend and pushing at the end."

Rooney said the runners gave it their all during the meet and it paid off. Wrangell as a team finished first, outpacing Haines, Petersburg, Kake, Craig, Klawock and Skagway.

Senior Elias Decker came in third with a time of 17:23; senior Devlyn Campbell placed fifth at 17:37; senior Ethan Blatchley placed sixth at 17:42; freshman Boomchain Loucks was eighth at 17:55; freshman Ian Nelson came in 12th at 18:42; and senior Randy Churchill was 16th at 19:10.

On the girls team, junior Mia Wiederspohn was the only runner, finishing in the middle of the pack in 16th place out of 32 runners. Her time was 25:11. Teammate Miranda Ridgeway is out with an injury. Ariel Godinez-Long and Grace Long, both of Haines, finished in first and second place, respectively.

Wiederspohn fell short of qualifying for the state competition, which Rooney said is disappointing.

"She (Mia) worked really hard the last couple weeks to prepare for this race, and just missed it," Rooney said. "But she did get a personal record, cutting off another minute and a half from her last race time, which is incredible and I'm very proud of the work she put in."

A Wrangell fire truck ride was held Monday after school to honor the athletes and their achievements.

The team has a weekend off coming up and select runners are debating whether to participate in a trip to Milo McIver State Park, Oregon, to compete in the Lewis & Clark Cross Country Invitational on Oct. 15. The runners would be part of a Southeast club team comprised of the best runners from the region.

Jack Roberts wins first place in 100-yard freestyle in Petersburg

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

The Wrangell High School swim team dove into the competition in Petersburg last Friday and Saturday, with junior Jack Roberts winning the top spot in the 100-yard freestyle event.

Four of the swimmers had nine top 10 finishes at the meet, and three had six personal bests.

Roberts finished first in the 100-yard freestyle, third in the 200-yard individual medley and third in the 100-yard butterfly. Sophomore Max Lloyd finished fourth in the 50-yard freestyle, while junior Alisha Armstrong finished eighth in the 50-yard freestyle, 10th in the 100-yard freestyle and 10th in the 100-yard butterfly. Junior Nate Rooney finished 10th in the 50-yard freestyle.

Coach Jamie Roberts said senior Carter Hammer had a goal to finish ahead of other swimmers in the region, doing so in the 50-yard and 100-yard freestyle events. "He swam the best 100-yard freestyle that I have seen him swim in my eight years of working with it," she said. "It was his career best and he dropped almost seven seconds off his swim from the previous meet."

Jamie Roberts said it was the

first time since the team began in 2018 that every member scored points in a meet. She was also appreciative of the friends and family that who traveled to Petersburg to support the swimmers.

"I want to thank the parents and friends that came out to support the team," she said. "It's nice to have a cheering section."

Results:

Alisha Armstrong: 50-yard freestyle, 31.74 and 32.13; 100-yard freestyle, 1:11.21 (season best); 100-yard backstroke, 1:23.83 (personal best).

Carter Hammer: 50-yard freestyle, 37.07 and 35.92; 100-yard freestyle, 1:16.99 (personal best) and 1:23.51.

Jack Roberts: 100-yard freestyle, 50.63; 200-yard individual medley, 2:09.71 and 2:10.52; 100-yard breaststroke, 1:05.89.

Max Lloyd: 50-yard freestyle, 27.66 and 28.36; 100-yard freestyle, 1:05.36; 100-yard breaststroke, 1:24.88.

Nate Rooney: 50-yard freestyle, 28.92 and 28.34 (personal best); 100-yard freestyle, 1:05.04 (personal best); 100-yard breaststroke, 1:35.62 (personal best).

Men's relay team (Hammer, Lloyd, Roberts and Rooney): 200-yard medley relay, 2:10.39 (team best); 200-yard freestyle relay, 1:56.44 and 1:55.04.

Obituary

William Gregory Aalbertsberg dies at 74

William "Will" Gregory Aalbertsberg, 74, passed away on July 30. He had lived in Wrangell since 2009.

William was born on July 29, 1948, in Mt. Clemens, Michigan.

As a young man, he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps as soon as he could. "He loved telling the tale of how he celebrated his 17th birthday in boot camp," his family wrote. Will was proud of his service, and a lifelong love of the shooting sports and weaponry took hold as he earned his M14 sharpshooter medal, among others.

He is survived by his wife of 33 years, Barbara; son William "Bill" Aalbertsberg; daughter Jenny Davis; and stepdaughter Angie Smith. He has a total of 10 grandchildren and to date nine great-grandchildren. He is preceded in death by his service dog Sassy, who passed in 2014.

"His chocolate lab Sid still looks for him and Loki the cat has claimed his spot on the



WILLIAM "WILL" GREGORY AALBERTSBERG

bed," his family wrote.

Next spring there will be a celebration of his life at the Long Lake Trailhead, his favorite camping spot. For those who wish to honor

his memory, he asked that donations be made to Wounded Warrior Project, woundedwarriorproject.org; or the PTSD Foundation of America, ptsdusa.org.

Borough turns delinquent accounts over to collections

By CAROLEINE JAMES
Sentinel reporter

The borough assembly unanimously approved a motion to write off delinquent harbor and utilities accounts and forward them to a collection agency.

The write-off includes a combined \$8,197 in utilities fees from 30 different accounts and \$50,048 in harbor fees from four different accounts, for a total of \$58,246.

At the assembly meeting Sept. 27, Finance Director Mason Villarma acknowledged that the amount appeared significant, but assured the assembly that the sum was a small percentage of total billing. Writing off "bad debts" like these — debts that will likely never be collected — is common practice in the business world, he explained.

Sending the accounts to collections will not affect the borough's budget in the current fiscal year and is not a form of debt forgiveness. Instead, writing off the accounts is an effort by the borough to "clean up our books," said Villarma.

While the borough will still own the debt, the agency will take 25% to 40% of whatever money it collects on the borough's behalf. The typical return on delinquent accounts is "pretty low overall," Villarma said. "We'd be lucky to get more than \$4,000 out of this batch."

The harbor and finance departments "have been diligently trying to collect payment for several years" in the form of phone calls, mailers and door hangs, according to borough documents. They have also taken money from debtors' Permanent Fund dividends and put liens on certain assets, but "for the (accounts) that are listed here, there's not a whole lot to collect from them," said Villarma.

"A lot of these delinquent accounts are pretty old," added Borough Manager Jeff Good. "We'd like to get these to a collection agency before the timeline lapses for us to be able to do that." The statute of limitations on delinquent accounts is six years.



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Ketchikan assembly member challenges 4-term incumbent for state House

By LISA PHU
Alaska Beacon

A Republican Ketchikan Gateway Borough assembly member is challenging the four-term incumbent to represent Ketchikan, Wrangell, Metlakatla, Coffman Cove and other communities of southern Southeast Alaska in the state House.

In Jeremy Bynum's first time running for state office, he got 44% percent of the votes in the August primary to Rep. Dan Ortiz's 52%. Both live in Ketchikan. About 4% of voters chose Wrangell resident Shevaun Meggitt, who has since withdrawn and will not appear on the general election ballot.

Ortiz said he's feeling good going into the general election but not 100% confident. He noted that he is a nonpartisan independent and most voters in the district usually vote for Republicans.

"And so, the fact that I have a Republican opponent is always a threat in terms of making sure that you do everything you can to put yourself in the best possible position, but then in the end, it's going to be up to voters," Ortiz said.

Bynum said he's running to "bring a different voice."

"We have to have a choice and we also have to have a competitive spirit when it comes to these kinds of races, so that we can elevate the conversation for those important issues that are within our region, whether it's energy, or education, or housing, the marine highway," he said.

Ortiz, 64, has spent 54 years in the state, primarily calling Ketchikan home. Before his time in the Capitol, he spent about 30 years as a teacher at Ketchikan High School. He mainly taught social studies and history and spent his last eight years as a coach for the drama, debate and forensics team. That's what led him to becoming a legislator.

"We were debating things like the Pebble mine or we debated oil taxes, all things that were in front of the Legislature at the time and, you know, by hearing both sides, which you always do in debate, it got me charged up in terms of trying to make a difference in a real, more concrete way in terms of policy at the state level," Ortiz said.

He first ran for the Alaska House in 2014, the year he retired from teaching. He narrowly beat Republican candidate Chere Klein by 104 votes in the general election. Ortiz has held the seat ever since.

Several bills he's sponsored or cosponsored that have passed are related to the fishing industry, one of the main economic drivers in his district, he said. Recently, Ortiz sponsored House Bill 41, which allows nonprofits to pursue mariculture enhancement or restoration projects involving shellfish species, like red and blue king crab, sea cucumber, abalone and razor clams. It became law this summer.

"In Alaska, we have the most coastal area of any other state by far and it's ripe for mariculture and the products that come from mariculture, and the market's not going to go away," Ortiz said. "I'm proud of the fact that my legislation has always come from my constituents, my constituents' needs. They bring me the idea and we go with it."

In an Alaska Beacon questionnaire, Ortiz identified "maintaining vital government services" as a top priority, including the Alaska Marine Highway System. It's important for the state ferry system to "return to a reliable, predictable schedule that residents can come to depend on, businesses can come to depend on," he said



JEREMY BYNUM



REP. DAN ORTIZ

in a follow-up interview.

Ferry service has been significantly reduced for several years due to funding cuts, an aging fleet and, more recently, a lack of employees.

Ortiz served as vice chair of the House Finance Committee this past legislative session, giving him more of an opportunity to watch over funding for district priorities.

Originally from Oregon, Bynum, 47, moved to Ketchikan in 2016 after spending summers in the community. He's acting manager for the electric division of the City of Ketchikan's public utilities and has been on the borough assembly since 2020. Both these experiences will help in state office, he said.

"I'm really involved in my job and I'm also really involved at the assembly level," Bynum said. "Having a really good fundamental understanding of our local governments will give me an advantage when I'm in Juneau, to understand how decisions that we would make in Juneau directly impact the local communities."

Bynum credits his com-

munity involvement for giving him visibility in the election. He goes to or watches almost every city council meeting, referees high school basketball games, is on the University of Alaska Southeast's Ketchikan Campus Advisory Council and has been on the board of the Southeast Alaska Power Agency.

"A lot of people in the community recognize that I care and that I'm engaged," Bynum said.

He listed several items among the district's biggest needs, including improvements to the Alaska Marine Highway System, freight services, housing, and what Bynum called "a people resource problem."

"Our industries that are in our communities are really struggling because of a lack of personnel and qualified people. And I think that the state needs to really evaluate what their role is in helping solve that problem," he said.

His ideas include "incentivizing our secondary education to have a shift in focus on vocations and trades and certificate type programs," Bynum said.

"So that our kids, when they're coming out of high school, have a better vision about what those kinds of jobs offer them, and how they can positively impact our communities."

Bynum, a licensed professional engineer, spent time in the U.S. Air Force as a power generation specialist. In college

at Portland State University, he studied electrical engineering and served in the Air National Guard. He sees his background in engineering and hydroelectricity as something that sets him apart from Ortiz.

"I've been working in, specifically, clean renewable energy the majority of my career, over 20 years in hydropower. It is one of our strongest resources in our region, and one of our paths to enter energy independence in Alaska is water energy systems," he said.

"We all recognize that energy is our future. It's going to spur business. It's going to allow electrification for homes going on to air source heat pumps, buses going to EV, electric ferries, EV cars on our islands, energy produced locally for the local community."

Both candidates are actively campaigning and raising money. As of Sept. 4, Bynum has raised almost \$22,000, the vast majority from personal donations either from him or his spouse.

As of last month, Ortiz had raised close to \$33,000. He's received \$1,000 donations from several labor unions, including those representing building trade workers, teachers and many public employees, and from dental groups.

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205 Front Street

Legislators advised not to block constituents on social media

By JAMES BROOKS
Alaska Beacon

If Alaska's state legislators remove constituents' comments or block them on social media, they may forfeit state-paid legal protection, according to a new social media policy adopted last Friday.

A House-Senate panel voted 8-3 in favor of adopting the new policy on behalf of the entire Legislature.

Anchorage Rep. Matt Claman said the new policy means "that the Legislature is not going to be put in a position of always having to represent representatives who may or may not handle their social

media properly."

Over the past year, three state lawmakers have been sued for blocking comments on their social media accounts. One case, against Senate President Peter Micciche, of Soldotna, was dropped after Micciche lifted the person's ban. Another, against Eagle River Sen. Lora Reinbold, has already gone to trial and is awaiting a judge's verdict.

Voting against the new policy were Republicans Micciche, Palmer Sen. Shelley Hughes and Wasilla Sen. Mike Shower.

The Legislature's existing social media policy dates from 2011, and the lawsuits drove lawmakers' interest in an up-

date. The revised guidance — officially, they're just recommendations — says that lawmakers shouldn't use a personal social media account to talk about legislative matters.

If a legislator does use social media, the policy calls for them to create an official account and instructs them to "not open the account to comments or other interactions with the public."

"If you choose to ignore the above guideline," the policy states, "then do not filter, delete or hide any comments and do not block or ban any persons."

If a legislator does that anyway, "you personally assume all risk and responsi-

bility for legal defense of that action."

Hughes spoke against the new policy, saying it amounts to inviting the public to a town hall meeting, then barring the door before people can enter.

Shower also spoke against the new guidelines, saying that they are a significant tool to push information and shutting down two-way communication is "shutting off what really is the way of the future."

The Alaska Beacon is an independent, donor-funded news organization. Alaskabeacon.com.

Investigation finds Permanent Fund firing process 'deficient' but legal

By SEAN MAGUIRE
Anchorage Daily News

JUNEAU — The Alaska Permanent Fund's board of trustees used a "deficient" performance evaluation process to justify firing CEO Angela Rodell, who said her removal was "political retribution" for opposing Gov. Mike Dunleavy's budget plan to overdraw the fund, but an eight-month independent investigation found no credible evidence that Dunleavy was involved in Rodell's ouster.

Rodell, who served as the corporation's CEO from 2015 until 2021 and led it to years of strong

returns, was abruptly fired during a board meeting last December. There was no explanation given and the board did not anticipate Alaskans would want to know why the firing decision was made, the investigation found.

That lack of an explanation frustrated legislators. In January, a legislative committee approved a \$100,000 contract for an Anchorage law firm, to conduct an investigation into Rodell's ouster. It released its 65-page report Sept. 28.

Attorney Howard Trickey said the investigation led to three main findings: The trust-

ees who voted to fire Rodell gave separate and independent reasons for doing so, but they shared a loss of confidence in her as CEO. The board did not follow an objective process set out in its own charter to evaluate Rodell's performance. And investigators found no credible direct or circumstantial evidence that the governor was involved in her firing.

The board of trustees had threatened to sue over the investigation into its decision to fire Rodell.

Since 2018, the Permanent Fund has provided two-thirds of state government revenue using

a rules-based system to make an annual 5% draw from the fund. Rodell had said her firing was "political retribution" for opposing a budget plan proposed by Dunleavy, which would have overdrawn the fund by \$3 billion beyond that structure, partly to pay for a larger Permanent Fund dividend.

Investigators deposed the six members of the board who served at time of Rodell's ouster, five of whom were appointed by Dunleavy and voted to fire her. They all testified under oath that the dividend had not influenced their decision to fire Rodell. Instead, there was a consensus among those five trustees that they had lost confidence in Rodell as CEO and that there was "a strained relationship."

Several trustees said they fired Rodell after a heated board meeting last October when she and then-trustee Lucinda Mahoney, then commissioner of the Department of Revenue, had a tense exchange about a plan to increase bonuses for investment staff. Mahoney felt that was inappropriate with a \$1,114 dividend being paid earlier that year.

The trustees also said that they were "troubled" by a press release Rodell issued in June last year on the verge of a state government shutdown, which warned about the negative impacts that could have on the fund's investments. Those trustees argued that statement inappropriately pushed the Alaska Permanent Fund Corp. into the political process.

Former trustee William Moran, who was appointed by former Gov. Bill Walker, was the lone no vote against Rodell's ouster, and said he found Rodell's performance to be "exceptional." He testified that he didn't hear complaints from the other trustees about that June press release until October.

Rodell issued a similar press release in 2017 before another potential shutdown and no issues were raised at that time.

Board members also discussed a tweet Rodell posted during legislative debates in August last year on the dividend, which stated what the Permanent Fund's balance would be if Dunleavy's plans to overdraw the fund by \$3 billion were enacted. Richards testified he believed that was a "backhanded critique of the governor" and members of the governor's office privately flagged similar concerns at the time with Mahoney.

The investigation found that Richards spoke to members of the governor's office in the months leading up to Rodell's ouster to say that there were "serious performance issues" and that she might be terminated. There were other discussions described with members of the governor's office, including Dunleavy's then-chief of staff, but the investigation found no credible evidence that Dunleavy had orchestrated Rodell's firing.

The investigation found the board had not used an objective annual appraisal process when evaluating Rodell's performance for several years before she was fired, with her most recent review being the most haphazard. She received "little guidance" on her job performance, whether she was meeting expectations or how she might improve.

Investigators stated that using an objective evaluation process for a CEO, which is set out in the board's charter, could help eliminate the trustees' biases and allegations of political influence. But trustees' lack of confidence in Rodell as CEO "is a sufficient legal reason under the legal standards applicable to at-will employment in Alaska," the attorneys leading the investigation said.

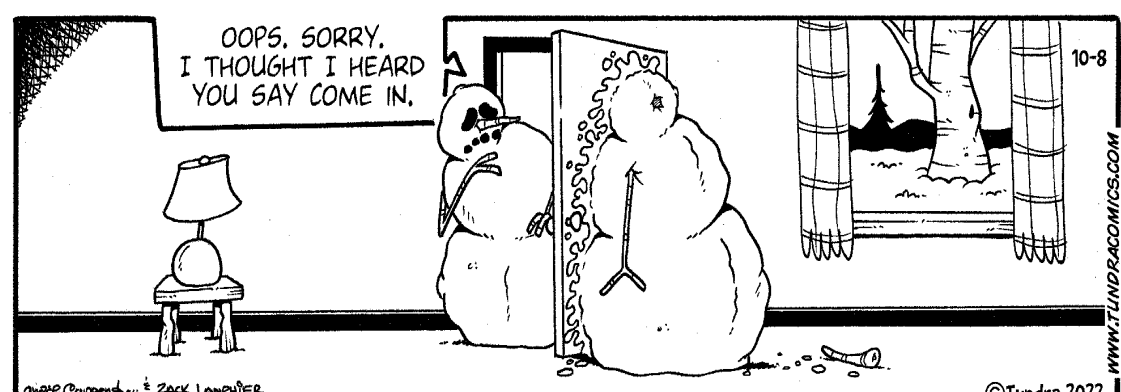
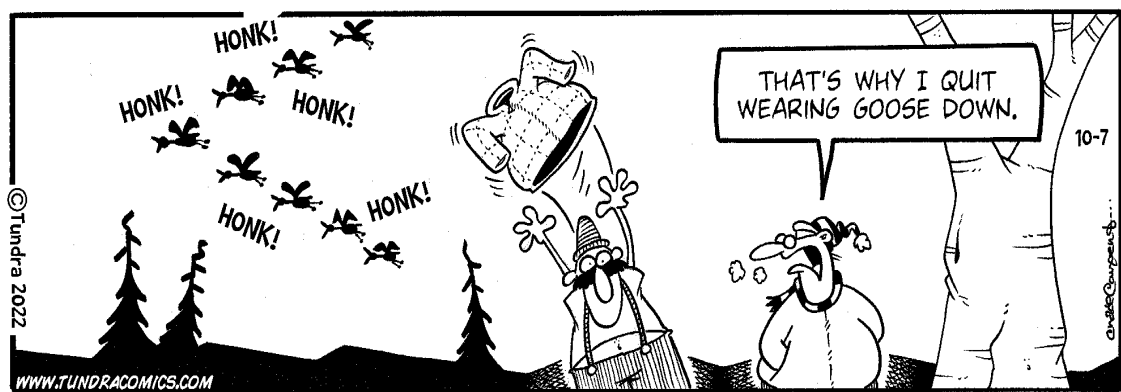
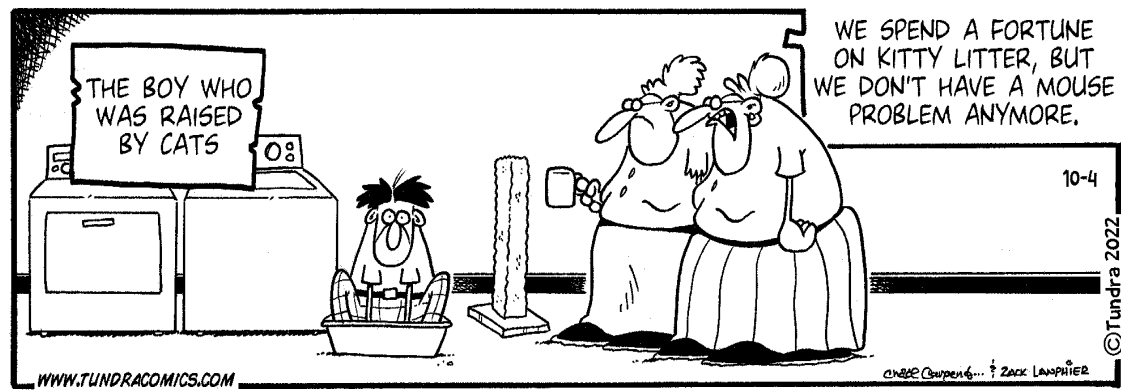
Ritter's River

by Marc Lutz



Tundra

by Chad Carpenter



Police report

Monday, Sept. 26
Dog attack.
Traffic stop: Verbal warning for driving habits.
Paper service.

Tuesday, Sept. 27
Harassment.
Citizen assist.
Welfare check.
Sprinkler alarm.
Subpoena service.

Wednesday, Sept. 28
Citizen assist.
Suspicious circumstance.

Thursday, Sept. 29
Traffic stop.
Traffic stop.
Agency assist: Harbor Department.
Agency assist: U.S. Forest Service.
Agency assist: Ambulance.
Suspicious circumstance.

Friday, Sept. 30
Welfare check.

Agency assist: Harbor Department.

Agency assist: Ambulance.

Traffic stop.

Disorderly conduct.

Assault.

Saturday, Oct. 1

Agency assist: Public Works.

Agency assist: Ambulance.

Hazardous play: Juveniles playing on the roof of the bathroom behind the Elks Hall.

Sunday, Oct. 2

Agency assist: U.S. Forest Service.

Report of drunken driver.

Traffic stop.

There were five traffic stops with citations issued for failure to provide proof of insurance, five agency assists with the Hoonah Police Department, and four dog-at-large reports.

Grant helps turn Sitka troller into hybrid electric fishing boat

By GARLAND KENNEDY
Sitka Sentinel

As part of an effort to push Sitka's fishing fleet away from carbon-emitting propulsion, a Sitka troller has received a \$40,000 grant to add electric power to augment the diesel power of his classic wooden boat.

The award came through the Sitka-based Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association, one of three organizations chosen by the New York-based Acme Smoked Fish Corp. for grants to mitigate the effects of climate change. The other two projects are in Maine.

Eric Jordan said his goal is to reduce his boat's fuel consumption and carbon signature. And he's far from alone in his project to decarbonize. He's worked alongside ALFA and Executive Director Linda Behnken to secure technical assistance and funding.

Reducing his boat's emissions is in line with other climate-friendly actions Jordan has taken — he drives an electric car and heats his home by heat pump rather than oil or gas.

Behnken said cutting the fishing fleet's carbon emissions has been a long-term goal for ALFA.

"We started in a partnership with the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation to understand fuel usage by the fleet and help the fleet understand ways to reduce fuel consumption, increase fuel efficiency through operational changes, as well as structural changes to the boat. And if they made changes, what kind of returns they could find," Behnken said.

"We wanted to go the next step of looking at hybrid or zero-emission propulsion for the fleet, and that led us to the ETIPP award to work with the National Renewable Energy Labs to refine our ideas of what next steps should be," Behnken said. "And we tested — with one boat this summer — electric fishing deck gear that was a way to reduce the electrical needs once we switch propulsion on that boat, and then this winter, we will be switching (Jordan's) boat to actual hybrid propulsion."

The diesel engines that have propelled fishing boats for a century operate most efficiently at specific speeds, she noted, but are less than ideal when trolling at low speeds.

Jordan said fuel efficiency is already a priority in his commercial fishing. "This year so far — and my wife just did the calculations — I burned 1,133 gallons (of diesel), which is about as fuel efficient as you can get in a troll operation," Jordan said Sept. 26.

Jordan is not the first Sitkan to experiment with electric propulsion on a fishing vessel. In 2020, Fabian Grutter converted his longliner, the Sunbeam, to hybrid propulsion, but technical issues and a fire have delayed his project. Jordan and Grutter have discussed their projects with each other, Jordan said.

Acme Smoked Fish Corp., the largest smoked fish purveyor in the country, made its grants as part of its Seafood Industry Climate Award this month.

Behnken said the goal is to

power Jordan's boat electrically when he's trolling, then swap over to the diesel when moving to and from the fishing grounds. The diesel main can charge the battery bank, too.

"With a low-idle operation system, there's a lot of fuel savings. So electric engines, electric motors while you're trolling, while you're longlining, while you are gillnetting really can save a lot of fuel, and then switching to your diesel engine when you need to charge," she said.

In Jordan's case, Behnken estimated that he could cut his fuel consumption by as much as 80% by installing a hybrid propulsion system.

But there's a hang-up — the batteries and propulsion unit cost \$94,000, before installation costs.

"That's where we've been stuck, it's just so expensive to do some of these first conversions," Behnken said.

Jordan highlighted the cost of the conversion, too, and was thankful for Behnken's ability to secure funds.

"The honest truth is that it isn't cost efficient without some kind of grants or funding from various sources, which Linda is just brilliant about finding," Jordan said. "So right now, both her and her husband and I are looking at converting to some kind of hybrid diesel-electric."

All told, he said, he expects the project to cost about \$150,000 when the cost of installation is factored in. His troller, the Gotta, is valued at about \$150,000.

THANK YOU

Library thanks supporters for another successful Summer Reading Program

The Irene Ingle Public Library would like to thank all of the individuals, businesses and organizations who donated prizes for the Summer Reading Program. We appreciate your continued support in assisting us by encouraging children to read during the summer and improve their reading skills.

We would also like to thank; First Bank, for the funds to purchase Adidas Sackpacks for all those who completed the program; Alaska Airlines, for the funds to purchase prizes; the city and borough of Wrangell; Jeff Angerman for his ongoing support; and Friends of the Library for the funds to purchase prizes.

Thank you again for making the Summer Reading Program a great success.

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HELP WANTED

Wrangell Public Schools is accepting applications for the following positions for the 2022-2023 school year:

- Paraprofessionals: These are part-time positions working with students in Grades K-5, 5.75 hours per day in the Special Education Program or Library at Evergreen Elementary School. Salary placement is Column A-C on the Classified Salary Schedule. A high school diploma or equivalent is required. An associate degree, equivalent credits, or the ability to pass the para-pro assessment is also required.

Contact the district office at 907-874-2347 for more information and a detailed job description. Positions are open until filled. It is the Wrangell Public School District's policy to not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, national origin, sex or disability.

TRUCK FOR SALE

2002 Chevy Silverado 4-wheel-drive, 95,000 miles, new tires. \$8,000. Call or text 907-660-7569.

TABLE FOR SALE

New raised dining table for sale. 36 inches tall, 42 inches across, with an 18-inch leaf. Lower linen/dish cubby. Originally \$1,200. Selling for \$400. Call or text 907-660-7139.

BOAT FOR SALE

32-foot Rawson Volvo Tamo-70. \$40,000 with hand troll permit, or \$35,000 without hand troll permit. 907-305-0901.

FOR SALE

Monitor 441 heater, complete, \$600 obo. Kolstrand power 2-spool gurdy with wire, \$600 obo. Call 907-305-0901.

LAWN MOWER WANTED

Looking for a heavy-duty or industrial-grade lawn mower. Call or text 907-660-7139.

HOUSING WANTED

Looking for a trailer or fixer-upper home. Call or text 907-

738-4883.

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Recycled newspapers. Stop by the Sentinel to pick up.

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Do you have something to sell? Having a garage sale? Looking to buy something? Classified ads for individuals and community groups are free in the Sentinel. Contact Amber at 907-874-2301 or email wrgsent@gmail.com.

CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL NOTICE OF JOB OPENING Harbor Maintenance/Security Harbor Department

The Wrangell Harbor Department will accept applications for the position of Harbor Maintenance/Security through Oct. 14, 2022, at 5 p.m. This is a permanent position with all City and Borough benefits and is part of the IBEW collective bargaining agreement.

The maintenance/security position is the first step of the multi-stage Harbor Department career path.

This position is primarily responsible for the operation, maintenance and inventory of all vessels utilizing the Harbor and Marine Service Center. Works independently or cooperatively with others under the daily direction and supervision of the Port director and Harbor lead. This position is a full-time hourly position with full benefits. Paid at Grade 13 with a pay range of \$19.30 to \$24.26. Employment is based on a successful background check and pre-employment drug screening.

A High School Diploma or GED is required. Must have a valid Alaska driver's license, valid TWIC card, and basic First Aid/CPR certification or the ability to obtain all within 6 months.

For a complete list of duties and responsibilities and job application may be obtained and returned to City Hall, 205 Brueger Street (P.O. Box 531), Wrangell, AK 99929.

The City and Borough of Wrangell is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer.

Jeff Good, Borough Manager
City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska

Publish Oct. 5 and 12, 2022

CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to the City and Borough of Wrangell Code, Sec. 3.04.080, notice is hereby given that the regular assembly meetings of the assembly shall be held on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month and shall begin at 6 p.m.

If any such Tuesday shall fall on a legal holiday as defined by the laws of the State of Alaska, the meetings scheduled for that day shall be held at the same hour on the next succeeding day which is not a holiday. Separate notice for the regular assembly meetings shall not be required. There will be no regular meetings the second Tuesday in July and August and fourth Tuesday in December.

If a work session is scheduled preceding the regular assembly meeting, publication shall be made on the website and posted at City Hall and the post office that the regular assembly meeting shall begin at 7 p.m.

Kim Lane, MMC, Borough Clerk
City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska

Publish Oct. 5, 2022

CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC NOTICE To Lease Borough-Owned Property

Notice is hereby given that an application has been received to lease Borough-owned property at the 6-Mile Deep Water Industrial Site (Old Mill Site), consisting of six acres, for the purpose of the continued effort for scrap metal recycling and barge dismantling.

The Wrangell Planning and Zoning Commission and the Port Commission have reviewed this request and approved the request to move forward with the land lease.

Any person wishing to protest this application to lease the proposed Borough-owned property described as:

Six Acres at the 6-Mile Deep Water Industrial Site (Old Mill Site)

...must file a written protest with the Borough Clerk **no later than October 20, 2022, at 1 p.m.**

Written protests may be emailed to clerk@wrangell.com or delivered to 205 Brueger Street, Wrangell, AK 99929. Any such protest shall state the reason(s) for the protest in detail.

Kim Lane, MMC, Borough Clerk
City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska

Publish Oct. 5 and 12, 2022

Modeling saw the storm but not the surges that devastated coastal Alaska

By YERETH ROSEN
Alaska Beacon

When the remnants of Typhoon Merbok were barreling toward western Alaska to unleash what turned out to be the region's strongest storm in more than half a century, meteorologists knew what was coming. What they could not predict was the exact level and location of flooding - devastation that prompted a federal disaster declaration by President Joe Biden and a whirlwind Alaska tour by Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator Deanne Criswell.

"The large-scale weather models nailed this storm, days in advance. The storm surge models were crap - not complete crap, but a lot of crap," said Rick Thoman, a climate scientist with the Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Policy at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Chalk that up to huge gaps in the knowledge about near-shore areas along the 1,000-mile stretch of coastline holding communities that were inundated by floodwaters.

It's among several long-term lessons that policy experts are already considering in the storm's immediate af-

termath, including infrastructure needs.

There are only four year-round water-level stations maintained in western and Arctic Alaska by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, according to the NOAA-affiliated Alaska Ocean Observing System (AOOS), which aims to use ocean data to improve safety. Only two of those stations, located at Nome and Unalakleet, are found in the wide swath of western Alaska hit by the storm.

It is a glaring deficiency that has been highlighted by the Merbok disaster, Thoman said.

"Certainly, in my opinion, we need to improve our near shore, the community-scale monitoring in real time. And we have to have that tied into a national database. We need to know what those numbers mean," he said.

AOOS, which is part of NOAA's Integrated Ocean Observing System, says neglect plays a role in those knowledge gaps. "Unfortunately, Alaska coasts have historically received less attention than the rest of the continental U.S. in terms of real-world observations, and as a result suffer from a higher degree of uncertain-

ty in terms of understanding coastal water level, current and wind-wave simulation capacity," AOOS says on its website.

NOAA has funded a project, led by the University of Notre Dame, aimed at filling in some of those gaps. NOAA is also playing catchup with its studies of the Alaska seafloor, a science known as bathymetry. Alaska bathymetry knowledge is notoriously sparse. As of early 2021, more than 70% of Alaska's waters remained unmapped, according to NOAA's Office of Coast Survey. Shape and features of the ocean floor affect the way that water moves onto land, Thoman said.

The Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys is another agency trying to piece together information to make local-scale flood forecasts. Much baseline information needs to be gathered for the first time, a difficult task because Alaska's coastline is so extensive, is changing so rapidly and is affected by "some of the highest rates of erosion in the world," according to the division's website.

Repairs and rebuilding efforts spotlight another long-term need: Infrastructure improvements that will be resilient to repeat occurrences of strong storms like Typhoon Merbok.

The flooding and winds ripped houses off foundations, destroyed sections of road, scattered boats and vehicles, wrecked subsistence fish camps and, in some places, exposed sections of permafrost that will now thaw and likely erode quickly.

In the Inupiat village of Golovin, home to about 180 people and one of the hardest-hit communities, the storm has added urgency to

existing plans to relocate infrastructure and homes to higher ground, said Mayor Charlie Brown.

The power plant, bulk fuel tank farm, school and water and sewer system are all in vulnerable locations, including the end of a spit, Brown said.

"Another two to three storms with this magnitude, everything will be washed out there," he said. Water and sewer is particularly worrisome. The community has a 1.2-million-gallon water tank directly in harm's way, he said.

Aside from relocating structures and facilities uphill, there is a possibility of protecting structures "that are still livable" by elevating them, and by also erecting a rock wall to protect the coast, Brown said.

Even before the storm, relocation of houses and community infrastructure to higher ground was seen as a pressing need in Golovin and other communities. It and five other Alaska communities were awarded grants in March by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service to help pay for relocation work.

Rep. Mary Peltola, in a Sept. 19 media briefing, said there are plenty of signs that current infrastructure is too weak to withstand the powerful storms that are likely to become more common as the climate warms. She noted that the storm tossed around huge rocks that were arrayed to protect shorelines. "I'm not sure that we have been building things for storm surges that see 90-mile-an-hour winds," she said.

That appears to have been the case in the Inupiat village of Shaktoolik. In that community of 210, where residents

years ago opted against a relocation plan, estimated to cost \$290 million, in favor of a beach-protection berm constructed with gravel and driftwood at an estimated cost of under \$1 million. Typhoon Merbok obliterated that berm.

The Alaska disaster is tied directly to climate change, Thoman said. It formed over a region in the Pacific that lies well east of the usual birthplace of typhoons, he said. Those waters there have heated dramatically, he said. "We had this water that historically would not have supported tropical storm formation. Now it does," he said. From this new origin site, Typhoon Merbok was able to travel a shorter distance and hold more of its power when it reached Alaska than previous storms, he said.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski, speaking Sept. 24 in an interview with Nome radio station KNOM, acknowledged the role of climate change and said there is a need to prepare for that:

"Is this kind of our new normal here? And if that's the case, we've got to be thinking about the longer-term view of how we provide for the resilience of these communities," she said, mentioning more seawalls and emergency evacuation routes as possibilities.

The bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act signed into law last November - and authored in part by Murkowski - includes money that is specifically for Alaska village relocation and protection against flooding and erosion linked to climate change.

In the immediate term, FEMA and other agencies are racing to beat the arrival of the winter freeze expected in a few weeks and trying to figure out how to assist the people in the region who depend on harvests of wild foods.


Many residents of the storm-hit and largely Indigenous communities have lost boats, all-terrain vehicles, smokehouses and other items needed to conduct those traditional harvests. Some lost entire stockpiles of fish and other wild foods gathered over the summer and intended to last through the coming winter.

It's not the normal category of losses that FEMA tallies in natural disasters occurring in places like hurricane-stricken Florida or the tornado-prone Midwest.

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ATTENTION SALMON FISHERS

The Board of Directors of the Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association, Inc. seeks nominations for the following three (3) year seats:

- Seine - 1 Seat
- Gillnet - 1 Seat
- Power Troll - 2 Seats



Nominations must be in writing and include the permit holder's name, address, vessel name, phone number and a brief statement. Nominees must be "active" Southern Southeast Commercial Salmon permit holders. Permit holders should nominate person from their own gear groups.

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