



So long, soil



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Kelsey Martinsen, owner of Happy Cannabis, explains the flood-and-drain hydroponic system he uses in his marijuana growing operation.

Hydroponics gives new meaning to watering the plants

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

A different style of growing plants is budding in Wrangell, though it might take a while to bloom.

Hydroponics, a technique that doesn't require soil, only water and nutrients, could be a more sustainable approach in places where viable soil and ideal weather are harder to come by.

While some green thumbs on the island have tinkered with the method, one grower took hydroponics to a commercial level. Kelsey Martinsen, owner of Happy Cannabis, has used a flood-and-drain system to grow his marijuana plants since opening more than three years ago.

"The roots always have the availability of whatever kind of nutrient they're fed," he said. "It's always in there. They don't have to go out in search of it in the soil."

With the flood-and-drain system, plants are flooded with nutrient-rich water periodically. The water is then drained back into a reservoir,

giving the roots access to oxygen and resting before being flooded again.

Before using that system, Martinsen used a deepwater culture system, which has been labeled as the easiest to use and the least expensive, making it ideal for gardeners looking to get into hydroponics. An air pump and air stone, which sits in the reservoir and bubbles up to mix oxygen and nutrients, are used to keep the nutrient solution continually oxygenated.

Martinsen has used hydroponics to grow bonsai trees and flowers, but it can also be used to grow tomatoes, lettuce and other popular vegetables.

One of the biggest benefits to hydroponics other than a faster, fuller crop yield is a lack of bugs.

"I think the biggest benefit to hydroponic systems is there's no bugs — unless you accidentally introduce bugs into the system," Martinsen said. "With soil you're always going to have gnats or

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Hospital manages with staffing shortage amid surge in COVID cases

By SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel reporter

Wrangell Medical Center has experienced staffing shortages due to the recent jump in COVID-19 cases, but it has not led to delays in procedures or rescheduling, said Carly Allen, hospital administrator.

"We have been able to maintain full operations thanks to the hard work of our employees and the ... (traveler) nursing staff that are still with us," Allen said.

Wrangell as of Monday was up to 190 COVID-19 infections reported by the borough since Dec. 30, almost three times the community's highest monthly count of the pandemic and representing about one of every 12 residents.

The community is not alone in a record-setting month. State health officials on Monday reported close to 4,500 COVID-19 cases over the weekend, bringing the total to almost 58,000 new infections over the past 30 days — about one-quarter of all the cases in Alaska since the pandemic started almost two years ago.

State health officials attribute the steep increase in new infections to the highly transmissible Omicron variant of the virus, which is putting several communities into record territory, including Sitka, which hit a single-day record Jan. 26 with 70 new COVID cases.

Hospitalizations also are rising in Alaska, with staffing shortages due to COVID infections putting a heavy strain on several hospitals, particularly in Anchorage.

The challenges at the Wrangell hospital "are due to a variety of reasons including COVID infection, close contact, and child care or family support issues related to COVID," Allen said in an email on Monday. "Our staff have been dedicated and flexible in this challenging environment."

Allen last Thursday said she doesn't have a current number of state-contracted traveler nurses on staff, because "assignment details are changing almost daily." The state contract is winding down across Alaska.

"Some have left, and we expect others to depart soon," Allen said.

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Schools energize efforts to turn negative behaviors into positives

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Middle schoolers move in a circle while a woman beats a Tlingit drum, while just outside other students engage in a fierce and fun battle of warrior ball.

Behaviors leading to suspension and other disciplinary actions have led school staff to apply a preventative approach. Activities, celebrations, contests and other methods have been implemented to help curb what appears to be a growing problem some have blamed on the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the 2020-21 school year, there were 13 individual suspensions and one physical altercation between students. In comparison, in just the first semester of the 2021-22 school year, there have been 20 suspensions and six physical altercations.

U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy issued an advisory Dec. 7, addressing the challenges brought on by the pandemic. The advisory stated that mental health challenges were on the rise even before the onset of the pandemic, adding "to the pre-existing challenges that American's youth faced."

The advisory stated, "Before the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health challenges were the leading cause of disability and poor life outcomes in young people, with up to 1 in 5 children ages 3 to 17 in the U.S. having a mental, emotional, developmental or behavioral disorder."

In the decade before the pandemic, high school students reporting persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness increased by 40%, with suicidal

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PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Students from Laura Davies' sixth grade class play basketball and warrior ball on a 15-minute mid-morning activity break last Friday. The movement, fresh air and social interaction are meant to help kids engage in positive behaviors.

Legislature considers restoring, raising fees for sportfishing guides, operators

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

A bill that would restore the state licensing fee on sportfishing guides and operators — which expired in 2018 — is slowly working its way through the Legislature.

An amendment in the House last year to charge nonresidents twice the annual fee as Alaska residents has raised some questions and concerns, most recently at a Senate committee hearing on the bill.

Restoring the licensing fee would raise an estimated \$420,000 a year for fisheries data management work.

Meanwhile, a separate bill to bring back a longstanding surcharge on all sportfishing licenses that expired a year ago also is waiting its turn for legislative action. The legislation would raise an estimated \$5.6

million a year for fisheries enhancement efforts.

Supporters say restoring the annual surcharge on a few hundred thousand sportfishing licenses could help cover salmon enhancement programs such as at the state-owned Crystal Lake hatchery in Petersburg, operated by the Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association, and at the privately owned Douglas Island Pink and Chum hatchery in Juneau.

In an attempt to bring back the licensing fee for guides and operators, the governor last year introduced House Bill 79, with a proposed charge of \$200 a year for guides and \$400 a year for operators — twice the old rate.

The intent is that the Department of Fish and Game would use the money to operate its saltwater fishing logbook program, which collects catch and

fishing effort data.

The logbook program has been ongoing since 1998 but without a designated source of funding.

The data "provides critical information that informs sustainable fisheries management decisions," Gov. Mike Dunleavy said in a letter introducing the bill. The state is required to collect the data to meet its obligations under the U.S.-Canada Pacific Salmon Treaty and for the International Pacific Halibut Commission.

Without the revenue from license fees, the department has been using state general fund dollars to operate the data collection program, Department of Fish and Game Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang told the Senate Resources Committee on Jan. 26.

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Birthdays & Anniversaries

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

Wednesday, Feb. 2: Leslie Cummings, Lindsey Gross, Kaylahni Rose Weddel; Anniversary: Marc and Melinda Lutz.

Thursday, Feb. 3: Aaron Angerman, Oakley Marshall, Aaliyah Messmer, Ingrid O'Hern.

Friday, Feb. 4: Collin Dando, Raymond Hayes, Cody Roberts.

Saturday, Feb. 5: Nadra Angerman.

Sunday, Feb. 6: Natalya Jabusch, Walter Moorhead.

Monday, Feb. 7: Paige Hoyt, Krystal Schultz.

Tuesday, Feb. 8: Ethan Blatchley; Anniversary: Joel and Tis Peterman.

Wednesday, Feb. 9: Dan Roope.

Senior Center Menu

Thursday, Feb. 3

Chicken and cheese sandwich, tomato soup, cabbage, fruit cocktail

Friday, Feb. 4

Halibut burger, potato salad, marinated zucchini and tomato salad

Monday, Feb. 7

New England clam chowder, tomato and tuna sandwich, honey mustard coleslaw

Tuesday, Feb. 8

Tuna casserole, baked sweet potatoes and apples

Wednesday, Feb. 9

Closed for Elizabeth Peratrovich Day

Two meals delivered on Feb. 8.

Beef soup, brussels sprouts, carrot-raisin salad

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, Feb. 4
Matanuska, 3:15 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 8
Matanuska, 2 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 11
Matanuska, 10:45 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 18
Matanuska, 2:15 p.m.

Southbound

Monday, Feb. 7
Matanuska, 4:30 a.m.

Friday, Feb. 11
Matanuska, 7:15 a.m.

Monday, Feb. 14
Matanuska, 6:30 a.m.

Monday, Feb. 21
Matanuska, 7 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		AM		PM	
	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
Feb. 2	01:41	16.8	01:31	18.8	07:18	1.5	07:52	-3.3
Feb. 3	02:22	17.0	02:16	18.0	08:03	1.2	08:31	-2.4
Feb. 4	03:01	16.9	02:59	16.8	08:47	1.4	09:08	-1.1
Feb. 5	03:38	16.5	03:42	15.3	09:32	1.7	09:44	0.4
Feb. 6	04:16	15.8	04:28	13.6	10:18	2.2	10:22	2.0
Feb. 7	04:56	15.1	05:22	12.1	11:08	2.9	11:02	3.6
Feb. 8	05:43	14.3	06:34	10.9	12:06	3.3	11:51	5.0

Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

FREE TAX RETURN PREPARATION every Saturday through April 14 at the Nolan Center. Sponsored by the AARP TaxAide Foundation. Open to everyone, regardless of age. IRS-certified volunteers will prepare and e-file your return for you at no charge. Refunds can be direct-deposited into your bank account. By appointment only. Call Paula at 907-874-3824 or 907-305-0309.

NOLAN CENTER THEATER presents "West Side Story," rated PG-13, at 7 p.m. Friday and 4 p.m. Saturday. Tickets are \$7 for adults, \$5 for children under age 12, for the musical that runs two hours and 36 minutes. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

NOLAN CENTER Community Market this Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Check out the locally grown and handcrafted items.

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

- **GYM WALKERS** on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. for adults 18 years and up at the community center gym for a warm, dry space to move the body. Must bring gym shoes. The fee is \$5, or \$3 for seniors, with punch passes available.
- **JIU JITSU** on Tuesday and Thursdays from 5:30 to 7 p.m. and Saturdays 9 to 10:30 a.m. at the community center gym for 18 years and up.
- **PICKLEBALL** on Wednesdays from noon to 2 p.m. and Fridays from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. for adults 18 and up. Pickleball is a paddle sport for all skill levels. The game is easy for beginners to learn. \$5 drop-in fee or \$3 for seniors.
- **TOT GYM** on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to noon for children to 5 years of age. Program runs through March 3. A parent or guardian must provide supervision; staff are not responsible for child supervision. \$2 for the first child, \$1 for the second child, and the third child is free. Ten-punch passes available.
- **VOLLEYBALL** open gym on Saturdays from 6 to 8 p.m. for 16 years and up. Wear sports clothing and gym shoes. Fee is \$3 for 16-17 years, \$5 for 18 and up.
- **WALLYBALL LEAGUE** runs through March 10, Tuesdays and Thursdays each week 5:30 to 7 p.m. at the community gym. Open to players 18 and older; four players per team; \$100 fee per team. Schedule to be announced.

Want more attendance at your meeting or event? Send information for Roundup to wrgsent@gmail.com or call 907-874-2301. Or go to the Sentinel website, click on the Calendar tab, and submit your entry online.

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 available by appointment and at reduced capacity: 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

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

Feb. 2, 1922

Cliff Wood, of the Veterans' Bureau, will be arriving on Saturday. Many perplexing questions have arisen about ex-servicemen concerning their status or rights. Are you one of the Legion boys who is in doubt at some point relating to your own special case? Mr. Wood is the man who can tell you just what you want to know, and will do so most cheerfully, because he likes the work and is here for no other purpose than to be of service to the boys who wore the colors. There are some ex-servicemen

who seem to have the impression that the only disability that receives any government consideration is that which resulted from wounds or gas. Mr. Wood says impairment of health covers not only battle wounds but diseases arising from accidents or disease during service. Mr. Wood will be glad to help with any other service claim, allotments, unpaid pay deductions, Liberty Bonds, lost discharges and claims for the additional travel pay for all those discharged after the 1919 armistice.

Jan. 31, 1947

Nearly every male resident of Wrangell, and maybe even some female, joined the order of the "Blow Torch and Pipe Wrench" this week when the town woke up Tuesday morning to a temperature of 4 below. Houses, stores and offices without frozen pipes or oil lines were few and far between, and the main topic of conversation - when chattering teeth allowed conversation - was when the last such cold spell occurred. Some pointed to a winter 25 years ago when the temperature plummeted to 17 below, but Walther Shaddesty, who came to Wrangell in 1901, vowed he'd never seen a winter like this one. Total snowfall recorded as of Jan. 24 was 93 inches. The greatest depth of undrifted snow on the ground at one time was 38½ inches. December experienced a heat wave with a high temperature of 45.

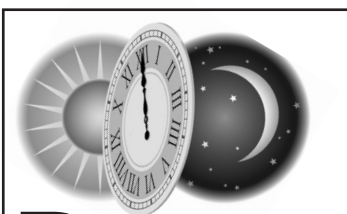
Feb. 4, 1972

A Wrangell-based floatplane

did duty recently as a tow boat and saved the 21-foot cruiser Great from probable destruction on a rocky beach. On Jan. 25, Chuck Traylor, of Stikine Air Service, was aloft when he intercepted a distress call from the cruiser, manned by Art Killian, of Gildersleeve Logging, and two companions. The boat was without power and drifting toward rocks in rough water near Station Island, in Summer Strait about 15 miles west of Wrangell. Traylor determined that help was needed immediately so he landed, worked the plane to the cruiser and fastened a tow line to a float strut. After what he called some "scary" maneuvering, he managed to pull the boat to smooth water. The Coast Guard arrived from Petersburg to take the cruiser in tow.

Feb. 6, 1997

Eighteen Wrangell residents will head to Juneau this weekend for a week's worth of lobbying of legislators, commissioners and state agency heads. The group will take with it a priority projects list of Wrangell's needs for everything from a water filtration plant to a covered playground. A highlight of the trip will be next Thursday's Wrangell reception at the Baranof Hotel, at which the lobbying group (and various Shady Ladies) will showcase local seafood delicacies and - amid posters and graphs detailing Wrangell's economic plight and plans for the future - do some public relations work for local projects.



Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Hours
Feb. 2	7:43a	4:23p	8:40h
Feb. 3	7:41a	4:25p	8:44h
Feb. 4	7:39a	4:27p	8:48h
Feb. 5	7:37a	4:30p	8:52h
Feb. 6	7:35a	4:32p	8:56h
Feb. 7	7:33a	4:34p	9:01h
Feb. 8	7:31a	4:36p	9:05h

Artist preserves Southeast beauty in resin jewelry and crafts

By SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel reporter

Mad Hesler has always noticed the tiny stuff.

The Wrangell artist and business owner of Tongass Resin grew up in northern New Hampshire in the White Mountains, and first came to Alaska in 2015 for a summer job as a camp counselor in Cooper Landing on the Kenai Peninsula when she was a junior at Plymouth State University, majoring in outdoor education.

She had to return to New Hampshire for college, but Hesler, 27, said she “had this huge sense of, ‘This is where I’m supposed to be.’”

Hesler graduated in 2016 and came back to Alaska, working in the communities of Aniak, Chuathbaluk and Crooked Creek in western Alaska to set up summer programming for kids. She came to Wrangell the winter of 2017, after she applied to work at Alaska Crossings as a field guide and got the job offer with a month to prepare. She worked at Crossings for five years, and was exposed to the biodiverse world of Southeast Alaska.

If you’re not really looking, Hesler said, the Tongass all looks green. But you have to look closer. “I’ve always been super fascinated by the microworld that exists beneath our feet.”

The kids she guided in Crossings would show her things, too, like “the tiny worlds that exist on one rock.”

Hesler’s affinity for those tiny worlds nudged her to experiment and do some reading on resin epoxy art. That led her to start Tongass Resin in 2019.

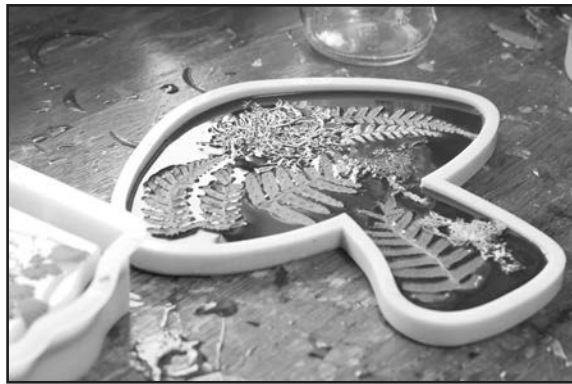
Resin is a difficult and sticky medium, she said. When you pour, you only have a half hour to place the elements before it dries. She wears a respirator mask when she pours the liquid epoxy into moulds holding leaves or other items.

Hesler said she can do a pour a hundred times, and one thing can go wrong and set the pour



PHOTOS BY SARAH ASLAM/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Mad Hesler is the artist and owner of Tongass Resin in Wrangell. She incorporates slices of the natural beauty of Southeast through her artwork, consisting of jewelry, bowls, even outlet covers. Below left: Plants and other natural materials are collected from the land and preserved in art pieces. Below right: Hesler incorporates natural elements of Southeast into her artwork.



awry. Drying the plants long enough is key.

She likes having the option to move slow, so it’s a challenge. “I hate games or tests that are timed.” She’s gotten a lot better at prepping the art and how she wants it laid out before she pours the resin.

Hesler makes earrings, rings, necklaces, trays, light switch covers, combs, bowls and more

— all with little pieces of the Tongass laced through, thinner-than-tissue-paper flower and leaf preservations, even salmon teeth and jawbone.

When people wear her jewelry, she said, they know they are wearing the Tongass. Her customers are located mostly in the U.S. and Canada. Hesler grew up on the East Coast and had never heard of the Ton-

gass, so it’s meaningful to her to know that her customers are aware this beautiful place exists through her art.

“My favorite part of art is sharing it with people,” she said. “I’ve been able to meet people through the community. Art brings joy and happiness.”

What’s also important to her is protecting the Tongass.

“I’m for small-scale logging.

I’m not an idealist,” Hesler said. “People need to make money, but do it in a sustainable way, not by cutting down 10,000-year-old trees.”

Hesler has “Keep the Tongass Roadless” on her business cards. Some people scoff when they pick up her cards at community markets, she said. People have told her she doesn’t know what she’s talking about. But she stands by what she feels.

“I’ve slept under trees that are 500 years old, and I’ve walked through clear-cut. It’ll be another thousand years before (those trees) are back to being what they were.”

After being a small business owner in Wrangell since 2019, and living here since 2017, Hesler is moving to Valdez in April to work at Anadyr Adventures, doing glacial kayak tours.

“It’s difficult being a young woman here who is not married. I always get the most nervous at community markets. I hope people are not judging me,” she said. While she does value the community, and it’s “been wonderful in so many ways,” Hesler said she wants to move somewhere she can see herself making a home, and have more of a community of like-minded young people as well as the infrastructure to go skiing or boating “without having to own a \$60,000 boat.”

Living in Wrangell has helped her humanize people in a politically diverse place, but she wants to live somewhere where she can share what she feels.

The election year was discouraging for her, to think about staying in Wrangell long term. “People threatened me because I had a Black Lives Matter sign in my yard,” Hesler said. The closure of Crossings further solidified she was making the right move.

“It brought people to this town who were young. Wrangell is teetering on the edge of dying and disappearing, or becoming this amazing place. We need life here. We need people with different ideas.”

State asks Wrangell if it wants in on request for vehicle charging station

By SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel reporter

The state energy office is nominating corridors along Alaska’s roadways for electric vehicle charging station funding, including possibly in rural communities, using Federal Highway Administration money. It’s reached out to ask if Wrangell wants to be included in the request.

Borough Manager Jeff Good told the assembly at its Jan. 25 meeting that the Alaska Energy Authority already has earmarked the state highway system for the program, and has asked Wrangell if it wants to be included in the funding request.

Good on Monday said the energy authority sent an invite for a virtual meeting to all the cities that could have an interest in the program, based on being on the electric vehicle corridor or part of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

“The Alaska Energy Authority is in the process of determining their list of segments of the Alaska National Highway System that can be considered for the nomination,” Good said Thursday.

Some of the federal guidelines where the state energy authority is seeking flexibility include expanding the maximum distance between charging stations, being able to use the funds beyond the interconnected national highway system and federally designated “alternative fuel corridors,” and setting aside funds for remote, isolated communities that are not part of the national or state highway systems.

The last point is the one, if approved, would possibly allow Wrangell to be included, Good said.

Mayor Steve Prysunka at the assembly meeting said vehicle “electrification is a coming thing” but the assembly needs more information to make an informed decision, as well as learn about a charging station’s possible draw on the borough’s electricity supply.

Good said he would gather more information and come back to the assembly.

Finance director advises beefing up borough savings, reserve accounts

By SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel reporter

Finance Director Mason Villarma has been on the job for about five months and is proposing changes to the borough assembly that he believes could bolster Wrangell’s financial health.

At a work session Jan. 25, Villarma said the borough’s assets totaled \$39.7 million as of Dec. 31, a mixture of cash, cash equivalents, money market funds, investments and other accounts. Some can be spent, some is in long-term savings, and some is reserved for self-sufficient funds such as the electric utility and port and harbors.

Almost one-quarter of that money is in the borough’s “permanent fund” — similar but much smaller than the Alaska Permanent Fund. The borough’s fund grew 22% from \$8.7 million to \$10.6 million from June 30, 2020, to June 30, 2021.

Over the past six months, to Dec. 31, the fund grew an additional 3.3%.

Like the state’s Permanent Fund, which spins off earnings to help pay for public services, the borough sets aside a portion of its savings account to supplement tax and other rev-

enues in the budget.

“(The permanent fund) pays for the pool, parks and rec,” Villarma said Monday. “The goal is to build that up so investment income can go to the library, Nolan Center, police and fire.”

Moving forward, Villarma said he wants to work with the assembly’s investment committee to grow the fund with quarterly contributions, if the borough can afford it, so that Wrangell can one day use it for larger capital projects.

He also recommended creating an “operating capital account” to invest the borough’s enterprise fund reserves with broader exposure to market risk. That could mean investing reserves from the port and harbors fund, electricity utility fund and others in potentially more profitable investments, but with higher risk.

Any changes in the investment code would require assembly approval.

Investments, other than those housed in the permanent fund, are currently restricted to low-risk treasury bills; federal, state or municipal bonds; or federally insured certificates of deposit at financial institutions.

The larger savings account can be invested into stocks and

bonds. Villarma wants that ability for the other funds, too. The preferred allocation of asset classes for the permanent fund is 50% stocks, 45% bonds and 5% cash and equivalents.

“We want investments other than the Permanent Fund to be exposed to U.S. equities based on predetermined thresholds set by the assembly,” Villarma said in his presentation Jan. 25. “We want to be able to invest a small portion of funds more aggressively.”

When the borough encounters periods of low interest rates, he said, that would allow moving some money out of bonds and money market funds and into stocks.

Villarma also told the assembly he wants to discourage interfund loans, such as an interfund loan from the borough’s general fund to the water utility at zero percent interest for 10 years as proposed to cover a third of the engineering and design costs for a new water treatment plant.

“The lending of money back and forth between funds — when we lend money from the general fund to an enterprise fund — that is an interfund loan. These are not healthy loans to engage in,” Villarma

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Pick a number, any number — just don't bet on it being right

By LARRY PERSILY
Publisher

Alaskans have been anguishing over the price of oil ever since 1977, when the first barrel of crude flowed down the trans-Alaska oil pipeline.

That was the same year Elvis Presley died. And just as people have been speculating ever since about Elvis' death, so, too, have Alaskans spent too much time speculating about the price of oil.

Some advice: Don't be cruel, don't get all shook up about it, and cast aside your suspicious minds. Shake off the fixation, don't let market predictions rattle you, and roll with whatever happens.

Alaska cannot control or even predict the price of oil. All we can do is watch the up-and-down moves in the market, understand why it is happening, and adjust our budgetary lives only as necessary. It's better that way. Just think if legislators had to determine the forecast for global oil prices — it could equal our political debates over the size of the Permanent Fund dividend. Besides, we'd usually get it wrong, cryin' all the time.

As of the start of this week, crude was selling at its highest since 2014, close to \$90 per barrel. That is a fact, but everything after tomorrow is a prediction. In many cases they are educated predictions based on a lot of knowledge, but they are not a bankable fact.

And speaking of banks, they all have analysts who follow energy markets and issue forecasts and predictions about future oil prices. Those range in the past week from Citigroup, which sees \$65 oil by the end of the year as more supply comes to market, to Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs that see \$100 crude in their crystal balls, with Bank of America predicting \$120 oil this year.

As for Alaska, which depends heavily on oil taxes and royalties to pay the bills, though not as much as in years past when taxes were higher and oil production was a lot higher, that wide of a price forecast spread is a challenge for budget writers.

The difference to the state treasury for the fiscal year that starts July 1 between \$65 and \$100 oil is about \$2.5 billion. Revenue at \$100 crude would be more than double the treasury deposits at \$65 crude. And if Bank of America's number comes true, there could be even more on the budget table next year.

Yet don't go telling the governor and your legislators how to spend all that money. First, those revenue estimates apply only if prices average that high for the entire year. Short-term price spikes do not produce nearly as much revenue.

And no matter how much bank analysts, traders, market watchers and others study the data and projections of global supply and demand, their forecasts are subject to change — major change — every time the world changes. Oil prices have been jumping around lately as much as Elvis did on the stage.

Will Russia invade Ukraine?

Will another COVID-19 variant shut down world commerce? Will OPEC+ overcome its production challenges and internal politics to pump more crude? Will U.S. shale producers see a future of record profits and finally decide to drill more wells? Will the world have too much oil or not enough oil when Alaska starts a new fiscal year on July 1?

No one knows for sure or can even promise they will be close. It's good for Alaska's elected officials to think about it, but not get euphoric over what could be temporary dollars.

Cautious restraint is a good thing. Spend some, save more, and don't bet the reelection campaign on high oil prices.

“As of the start of this week, crude was selling at its highest since 2014, close to \$90 per barrel. That is a fact, but everything after tomorrow is a prediction.”

GUEST OPINION

Nothing can change all the good that came from Crossings

By VALERIE MASSIE

Have you ever been awake? Have you ever seen up close the blue in ravens' wings, the green between waves, the lightness at the end of a hard-lived day? Have you ever let the world just be around you? Have you ever heard the clicker-clack of rocks on the beach in the dark when no one else is awake? When your heart is pounding in your throat as you fumble for the warm headlamp against your neck and the cold canister by your sleeping bag? Have you ever tried to harness the ocean with two slim paddles, rain lashing sideways and wind shearing the last pulses of warmth from your skin, with miles and miles to go before you sleep? Have you ever raged inside against the parents or the people or the history, the ignorance or the apathy that create "troubled" teens? Have you ever felt sad, and you don't know why? Have you ever felt the change

in the air when a group of strangers learns to trust each other? Have you ever filled your lungs with air that's almost rain? Have you ever felt that first flush of hot water after weeks of wilderness, when your whole body sighs? Have you smelled a storm coming and knew it was going to be OK? Have you ever seen your campfire glowing amber in the dark? Have you ever found your people? Laughed and danced until your heart was full two times over? Craved nothing more than the steam swirling off a summer morning's cup of coffee? Have you ever seen a jaded 17-year-old finally let themselves be a kid? Have you ever watched a child grow? Realized how good you have it? Each of us has done at least one of these things. We are all the better for it. When Alaska Crossings closed, no one passed away. But there is so much LIFE in those 21

years that it almost feels like it. There will be many more endings and much greater sadness in life. The art is to not let that consume us; the point is to pour care into each other whether it hurts or not. Especially when it is inconvenient. My name was among hundreds of other staff and countless Alaska youth who were not mentioned in the Jan. 20 Sentinel article about the closing of Crossings, though we poured our time, sweat and hearts into the program. But that's the way any kind of care goes — it's a seed that can be hard to see. I am grateful we got to add a drop to that ocean. And I'm sad it's over, for no truly good reason that I've yet heard. Not just because it was where we woke up, but because there is nothing else like it. There are Crossings kids all over now; no one can change that. Valerie Massie had been a guide for Alaska Crossings since 2016 and works for WCA as well.

EDITORIAL

Ranked-choice voting rankles the right people

Those who don't like Alaska's new voting system have a couple of choices.

They can go about their divisive path, appealing only to the far sides of issues, and hope that someday they can convince most voters that their way is the only way to life without taxes, liberty without responsibilities and, of course, larger Permanent Fund dividends.

Or they can see the reality that most voters want a better way — consensus, compromise and solutions.

Regardless of what choice they make, ranked-choice voting is coming to the Alaska ballot starting with this year's August primary election and November general election for governor, the Legislature and members of Congress.

Opponents tried to stop it with a lawsuit, but the Alaska Supreme Court last month said there is nothing illegal about the switch to a new method of counting voter preference, as approved in a citizen's initiative last year.

It's reassuring to see that those most upset at the switch are those at the edge of the political spectrum of Alaska policy debates, along with those who believe that political party loyalty matters more than good public policy. They seem to like the status quo of divisiveness, and upsetting that apple cart at the core of political partisanship is a good move.

Ranked-choice voting eliminates party primaries. Instead, all candidates run together in an open primary and the top four vote-getters advance to the general election. Considering that almost 60% of Alaska's registered voters are signed up as nonpartisan or undeclared, far more than either Democrat or Republican, the switch to a single, nonpartisan open primary is a much more inclusive way to winnow down the field of candidates for the general election.

In November, voters will be asked for the first time to rank their choices in order of preference. If no candidate gets a majority of votes in the tally of everyone's first preference, the last-place finisher will be dropped from the count and anyone who selected that candidate as their first choice will now have their second choice counted as their first choice.

By the second count, or maybe after the next tally when the third-place finisher is dropped and those votes are reassigned, the results will produce a winner acceptable to most voters. Maybe not their first choice, but still their choice.

The intent is to elect public officials acceptable to most voters, not public officials who can shout the loudest in political party primaries.

The intent is to elect public officials more likely to compromise and find solutions, rather than living in fear of their next primary.

The intent is to reach better public policy decisions. If that upsets some people, that's OK. It shows they cared too much about their brand of politics and not enough about the state.

Wrangell Sentinel

Finance

Continued from page 3

said. "We don't want to get in the habit of that. ... You don't want too much cross sharing."

If interfund loans do occur, they should be paid back to the general fund with interest, Villarma said.

Another smart financial move, Villarma said, would be to consolidate water rates in borough code. There are 42 different water rates, from bakeries to grocery stores. The standard rate for resi-

dential unmetered service is \$47.15 a month, last adjusted July 1, 2019.

The finance department recommends a standardized rate structure, and increasing residential water rates from \$47.15 to \$56.07 per month to pay off one of the federal loans to fund the new water treatment plant.

Any change to utility rates would require a public hearing and assembly approval.

Villarma also proposed a rate increase for trash pickup, where rates have not increased since 2015. He recommended the port and harbors department adopt its rate study recommendations to increase fees at the Marine Service Center for short and long-term storage, in order to bring Wrangell in line with other fees elsewhere in Southeast.

Correction

Chamber of commerce assistant Luana Wellons' last name was misspelled in the Jan. 20 issue of the Sentinel.

Oldest continuously published paper in Alaska



ESTABLISHED NOVEMBER 20, 1902

Published weekly by: Good Journalism LLC

PO Box 798, Wrangell, AK 99929

Phone: 907-874-2301

POSTMASTER: send address changes to Wrangell Sentinel, P.O. Box 798, Wrangell, AK 99929

Sentinel staff:

Publisher Larry Persily
Editor Marc Lutz
Reporter Sarah Aslam
Office Manager Amber Armstrong
Production Marc Lutz

Subscription rates:

Local \$46
Other Alaska \$62
2nd class outside Alaska \$70
First Class \$102
Online-only subscription \$40

Wrangell Sentinel (USPS 626-480) is published weekly except the third week of July and the week after Christmas by Wrangell Sentinel, 205 Front St., Wrangell, AK 99929. Periodicals postage paid at Wrangell, AK.

Phone: 907-874-2301; Email: wrgsent@gmail.com; Website www.wrangellsentinel.com. ©Copyright 2022.

Staffing

Continued from page 1

The state's original contract covered 90 days October to December and was extended through January. Allen said WMC has a plan to maintain normal operations as the contract nurses leave.

Atlanta-based SnapNurse sent medical personnel to Alaska, including Wrangell, in a staffing deal with DLH Holdings, a health industry outsourcing company that holds the state contract.

The state's original \$87 million, 90-day contract last fall for as many as 470 contract workers called for DLH and its partners to provide medical personnel for hospitals, long-term care facilities, clinics and schools throughout Alaska.

A subsequent \$20 million 90-day state contract called for medical personnel to support COVID-19 community testing and collection, vaccination and monoclonal antibody therapy.

Both contracts include the option for the state of three one-month extensions.

SnapNurse last fall initially sent eight traveling nurses and certified nurse assistants to Wrangell.

High numbers of staff callouts due to illness or exposure

to COVID-infected individuals are presenting challenges across the state, Jared Kosin, president of the Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association, said in a briefing call with reporters last week. "But as a whole, the health care system is intact and managing at the moment."

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Monday, Alaska's rate of new COVID-19 cases over the past seven days is the highest among the 50 states.

Individuals are increasingly relying on at-home tests, rather than going to state-contracted testing sites, which health officials said means there are likely a lot more infections in communities that are not recorded and reported with the state numbers.

At-home tests are available at the Wrangell Fire Department. The borough advises people to call the fire hall at 907-874-3223 to arrange to pick up test kits.

The borough is advising individuals who show symptoms or are a close contact of an infected person to call the Wrangell Medical Center at 907-874-7000 to schedule an appointment for a free COVID-19 test.

Sportfishing

Continued from page 1

The governor's proposal applied only to saltwater sportfishing operations, but the House amended the licensing and fees provision to cover freshwater guides and operators, too, though the department could decide whether freshwater fishing operations need to maintain and submit logbook data.

The department required logbooks from freshwater guides and operators from 2005 until the program expired under a sunset provision in 2018.

Expanding the reach of the license fees is causing "heartburn" to freshwater guides and operators, Vincent-Lang told senators, adding that the department does not see "an immediate need" to require logbooks for freshwater fishing, while the data on saltwater fishing efforts is "critical" for management decisions.

In addition to adding freshwater guides and operators to the licensing fee provisions, the House amended the governor's bill to cut in half the proposed annual fees for residents while leaving nonresidents at the higher rates. That would charge nonresidents twice as much — \$100 for resi-

dent guides and \$200 for nonresident guides, with the annual fee at \$200 for resident operators and \$400 for nonresidents.

The department reports that in 2019, pre-pandemic, there were about an equal number of resident guides as nonresidents, about 1,200 each.

The bill passed the House by about a 2-to-1 margin last May. It was held over for the second year of the two-year legislative session and had its first hearing in the Senate Resources Committee last week. The committee held the bill for further consideration "at a future date," said Committee Chair Josh Revak, of Anchorage.

At the Jan. 26 hearing, Kodiak Sen. Gary Stevens questioned the legality of charging nonresidents twice as much for the same license as residents. Vincent-Lang said the Department of Law has advised that the price difference "is defensible," based on past court action allowing higher fees for giving nonresidents access to the state's resources.

The Southeast Alaska Guides Organization went on the record last year against the higher fee for nonresidents, saying it is not justified and is legally questionable.

Southeast Alaska's four House members all voted for the bill last year. Reps. Dan Ortiz, of Ketchikan, and Jonathan Kreiss-Tompkins, of Sitka, both said last week they still support the measure and fee structure. But opponents of the measure have been able to stall progress on the bill, Kreiss-Tompkins said.

The governor's other bill dealing with sportfishing licenses (House Bill 80), passed the House by an overwhelming margin last year, moved through the Senate

Resources Committee in four days last May, and now awaits a hearing in the Senate Finance Committee.

The measure would restore a surcharge that expired Jan. 1, 2021, on sportfishing licenses. The surcharge had been \$9 a year for residents and ranged for nonresidents from \$10 for a one-day license to \$45 for an annual license. The money had been used to pay back bonds for two salmon hatchery projects in the state, including the Crystal Lake hatchery in Petersburg. When the debt was paid off in 2020, the surcharge went away.

Dunleavy proposed bringing back the surcharge at a reduced level, knocking off \$2.50 from each of the steps in the expired fee schedule, to establish a "sportfishing hatcheries facilities account" that could fund future maintenance at state-owned facilities.

The House amended the bill to direct some of the money to "fisheries management, fisheries research, invasive species suppression and eradication and habitat restoration," with the rest going to "sportfishing stock enhancement and ongoing maintenance of the department's sport fishing hatchery facilities."

However, bringing back a fee that went away can be a political challenge, no matter how well-intentioned, Kreiss-Tompkins said, noting Alaskans' aversion to fees.

In 2020, the state issued more than 300,000 sportfishing licenses, with almost 60% going to residents. Because of the higher fees, total surcharge revenue from nonresidents was about six times the fees paid by residents.

Hydroponics

Continued from page 1

spider mites or something you're going to have to battle with. As long as you have a clean environment and you don't bring those bugs in, you won't get them naturally."

Other methods are also used but can become more complicated and costly. Aeroponics keeps the roots out of any sort of medium, like rockwool or clay pebbles, suspending them in the open. A series of misters delivers nutrient solution directly to the roots, decreasing the amount of waste and saving on nutrient costs.

Another method, nutrient film technique (NFT), is one of the more popular systems with commercial growers. It uses both flood-and-drain and deepwater methods by keeping roots suspended in a nutrient solution that is continuously circulating between the plants and the reservoir. Roots are only partially soaked in the solution so that they still have access to oxygen.

"NFT drop systems seem to be the most popular now," Martinsen said. "It seems to be where everyone is going for hydroponics now."

As beneficial and sustainable as hydroponic growing can be, it does have drawbacks.

"With soil I can leave a plant for three or four days, no problem," he said. "In my system, if something goes wrong in a day, they'll all die. It's a lot more maintenance involved."

There is also the added cost of electricity to run the air pumps and to keep the water chilled between 68 and 72 degrees. And there needs to be a backup system if a grower loses power.



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

The flood-and-drain hydroponic system will periodically saturate the roots of plants with nutrient-rich water, which is then drained back into a reservoir, leaving the roots to absorb oxygen before the process begins again. It uses pots containing rockwool or clay pebbles that can be soaked, along with a system of pipes and air pumps.

Even though Martinsen has used hydroponics since opening his shop, he is in the process of reverting to a soil-grow system. Part of the reason is, in his opinion, a better product.

"You get less product, but the product is just better. You can't simulate the natural things the roots need in the soil, mainly like the biomes and microorganisms that are growing in the soil. You really can't replicate those," he said. "We had a really sophisticated (hydroponic) system before, so we're kind of going backward. The more plants we get, the (simpler) we make it."

Activity breaks

Continued from page 1

thoughts and planning also having increased, Murthy stated in the advisory.

"Wrangell has been lucky in the fact that we have not had any successful suicide attempts during (the pandemic)," wrote secondary schools assistant principal Bob Davis in a recent letter to parents. "However, we're certainly seeing a worsening mental health situation."

Recognizing the problem, Davis and staff devised a schedule that allows for activity breaks, getting kids up and moving and outside, weather permitting.

Teacher Laura Davies and other staff tried implementing a similar program in the 2020-21 school year, but it was difficult to keep going without a formal schedule.

"Last year, we had mask breaks for the kids," Davies said, adding that staff had come up with a system to get the students active at regular intervals. Since the beginning of 2022, with a set activity schedule, kids

have come to expect the time away from their desks.

"If they think they are going to miss that activity period, you'll hear about that," Davies said. "Based on the fact that they're counting on it and excited about it, that's speaking volumes."

Along with being more active, Davies said she has found students more engaging and sharing.

Though there isn't any hard data just yet on whether the activity breaks are curbing negative behaviors, Davis said he believes it's having a positive effect.

"I think it's helping," he said. "It didn't cost us a whole lot, the way we arranged it, and I do think it's working out fairly well. I wouldn't be surprised if it became a permanent factor in our middle school schedule."

Along with the activity breaks, the school has found other opportunities to help its 64 students bolster their mental and emotional health.

The school year began with a "welcome back" barbecue; a

full-time counselor was hired to work both middle and high schools; a student government program was started to give students a feeling of empowerment; classes were interrupted with a surprise breakfast; photography and decorating contests have been held; and two "character strong" classes have been implemented "to create a more supportive and warm environment at school and in the community."

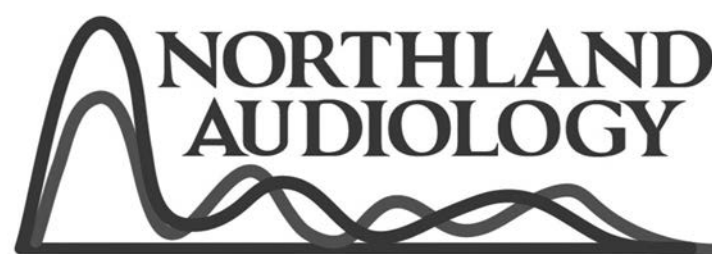
The 15-minute mid-morning activity break isn't the only chance kids have to get moving. An open gym is available to students from 8 to 8:35 a.m. and again during lunch for 35 minutes. There is also a physical education class toward the end of the school day.

"One of the causes of mental health problems was a disruption to youth schedules (during the pandemic)," Davies said. "Wrangell has done a great job of keeping things open. One of the best things you can do with youth when working with them is give them activity and interaction."

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Forest Service expects Anan rebuilding will be done in time for viewing season

By SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel reporter

After a delay pushed work on the Anan Wildlife Observatory to this spring from last fall, the Forest Service said the project timeline is still holding steady.

The upper observation deck is set to be torn down this spring and reconstructed in time for the July 5 to Aug. 25 summer viewing season — weather depending — said Tory Houser, acting district ranger.

“So far, it’s been a hard winter,” she said, but as far as funds and personnel, they are good to go.

The Forest Service last June entered into a \$989,800 contract with Petersburg-based Rainforest Contracting for demolition of the existing observatory deck, construction of a new upper viewing deck, a new shelter with a toilet, new ramp access, a reroute of the access trail, and temporary connector staircase.

The contract expires Dec. 31.

“They’re going to try to start as soon as they can, weather-wise,” Houser said Thursday.

The upper observation deck was originally set for demolition last October. The deck has reached the end of its structural lifetime and needs replacement, according to the agency.

Separate from the work contracted to Rainforest Contracting, the Forest Service is seeking \$700,000 in additional funding under the Great American Outdoors Act to rebuild the observatory’s lower viewing platform. The funding passed the first approval level, but still has more layers before the agency will know if it will be granted, Houser said.

The gravel replacement of a slippery boardwalk trail at the Anan observatory, which the Forest Service said in October would be complete that fall, has been finished, within its budget of \$750,000. It’s “awesome,” Houser said.

Houser anticipates a little over 3,000 visitors during the 52-day viewing season to Anan.

“We heard it’s supposed to be a decent cruise ship year. We have a capacity limit of 60 people a day,” Houser said, and the Forest Service is hop-

ing to fill that capacity this summer.

Anan Wildlife Observatory is on the mainland, about 30 miles southeast of Wrangell. Anan Creek has one of the largest runs of pink salmon in Southeast, which supports a high density of black and brown bears.

Something that has changed about Anan is access.

Non-guided trips during the peak bear viewing season of July 5 through Aug. 15 require advance reservation, and only 12 permits are available for each day for purchase on recreation.gov for individuals who have their own boat or floatplane to get to Anan. Those permits went on sale Tuesday.

“Many visitors are turned away each year because permits are already sold out on the days they would like to go,” the Forest Service advised on its reservations website. “Plan your trip early!”

Authorized commercial guides provide transportation and have their own permits as part of package deals.

“Prior to 2021, individuals could purchase permits on recreation.gov and then find an outfitter and guide company to bring them to Anan. This is no longer allowed. This is a significant change in operations,” according to the Forest Service site. For more information, call the Wrangell Ranger District at 907-874-2323.

Permits are not required outside of the July 5 - Aug. 25 peak season.

Before the pandemic cut into tourist traffic last year, the Anan Creek site drew about 2,400 visitors a year hoping to get a peek at bears during that six-week-long, permit-only viewing season.

As for other projects, the Forest Service said work on the outdoor deck at Chief Shakes Hot Springs up the Stikine River, which consists of two hot tubs — one indoor and one outdoor — is still anticipated to start in June. The first step will be getting the materials out there: wood, and metal brackets to hold the wood together. “We’re not doing any cement work,” Houser said. “It’s going to be the wood and heavy hardware.”

Pinning down a date in June would depend on the river and tide levels. A higher river would mean easier access to the site.

Ranked-choice voting a big change for Alaska this year

By BECKY BOHRER
The Associated Press

Alaska elections will be held for the first time this year under a unique new system that scraps party primaries and uses ranked-choice voting in general elections.

The Alaska Supreme Court has upheld the system, narrowly approved by voters in 2020.

It calls for an open primary in which all candidates for each race appear on the same ballot, regardless of party affiliation, followed by ranked voting in the general election. No other state conducts its elections with this combination, which applies to both state and federal races.

Supporters hope the new system will help ease partisan rancor and encourage civility and cooperation among elected officials. Critics worry it will dilute the power of political parties, or that minor party candidates will get drowned out.

Some are skeptical, too, that the system will work as intended.

A sponsor of the initiative, independent former Anchorage state Rep. Jason Grenn, has said Alaska is a test case for similar efforts being considered in Nevada and elsewhere.

Here is a closer look at what’s happening in Alaska:

In the past, the winners of each party’s respective primary advanced to the general election. Under the new system, there will be one primary ballot, available to all registered voters, with every declared and eligible candidate listed for each race. The top four vote-getters, regardless of party affiliation, will head to the general election.

Voters in the general election then can rank candidates by order of preference.

If no one wins more than 50% of the first-choice votes in the first counting, the last-place finisher is eliminated and general election voters who selected that candidate as their first choice will have their ballots assigned to their second-choice candidate.

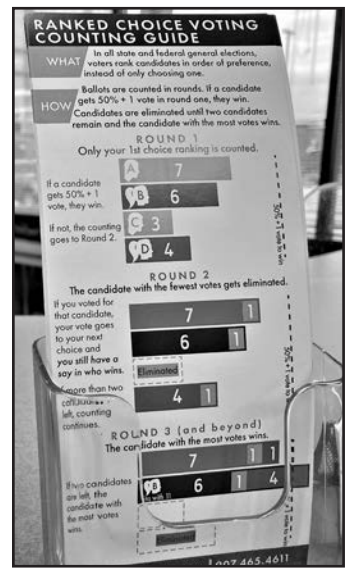
The process of elimination will continue until one candidate of the final two has a majority of the votes. The intent is to elect candidates with a majority of broad support, rather than candidates with less than 50% support in a crowded field.

Another change: Candidates for governor and lieutenant governor will team up at the outset. Previously, candidates for each office ran separately for the primary, and the winners of each party primary were paired for the November general election.

Maine uses ranked voting for state-level primary elections, and for federal offices only in general elections.

Ranked voting is also used in a number of cities for local elections, including New York. All state and federal races are subject to the new rules. That includes this year’s races for U.S. Senate, Alaska’s lone U.S. House seat, its governor and lieutenant governor posts and legislative seats.

Some have seen the system as potentially helping Republican U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, who has a reputation as a moderate and has at times been at odds with Alaska party leaders, including in her



AP PHOTO/MARK THIESSEN

The state Division of Elections has prepared a brochure explaining the changes to Alaska elections which will be held for the first time under a voter-backed system that scraps party primaries and sends the top four vote-getters regardless of party to the general election, where ranked choice voting will be used to determine a winner.

criticism of former President Donald Trump.

Murkowski lost her party primary to a tea party candidate, Joe Miller, in 2010 but won the general election with a write-in campaign. She won her primary easily in 2016, the year Trump was elected.

Trump has backed Republican Kelly Tshibaka for this year’s Senate race, and Tshibaka has been endorsed by state party leaders.

Murkowski, in announcing her reelection bid in November, said the strength she offers is that “for me, it has always been about reaching out to all Alaskans,” not just Republicans. She said she hopes one outcome of the system is that candidates might be more civil toward one another.

Scott Kendall, an attorney who helped write the Alaska ballot initiative, said the new system gives voters choices. The reason for ranked voting is to avoid “distorted” outcomes, he said.

If there were four candidates under the prior system, “you can imagine someone winning with 28% of the vote and being a very extreme individual because three moderates over here divvied up the rest of the vote,” Kendall said.

“You don’t want a situation where you get a candidate far outside the norm because a small group supported them. So it’s to get that moderate candidate — prevent the parties from being kind of an artificial gatekeeper to our choices,” he said.

The hope is that more work gets accomplished, particularly in the state Legislature, he said.

The system was unsuccessfully challenged by a group that included a Libertarian candidate who made a failed bid for state House in 2020; the chair of the Alaskan Independence Party; and the party itself. They argued, in part, that candidates for minor parties will “get lost in the shuffle” of names on the ballot.

They also said the open primary forces political parties to accept candidates they “may or may not want” to carry the party label.

State Supreme Court rejects lawsuit over climate change

ANCHORAGE (AP) — The state Supreme Court on Friday narrowly upheld the dismissal of a lawsuit filed by 16 young Alaskans who claimed the long-term effects of climate change will devastate Alaska and interfere with their fundamental constitutional rights.

The lawsuit against the state argued that Alaska’s legislative and executive branches had not taken steps to lower greenhouse gas emissions.

The lower court dismissed the case in 2018, saying these questions were better left to the other branches of government.

The plaintiffs in the case are now 10 to 25 years old. The plaintiffs argued that the state’s fossil fuel policy worsens the climate crisis in Alaska.

“The young Alaskans appeal, raising compelling concerns about climate change, resource development, and Alaska’s future. But we conclude that the Superior Court correctly dismissed their lawsuit,” the Alaska Supreme Court said in its 3-2 decision.

In a dissenting opinion, Su-

preme Court Justices Peter Maassen and Susan Carney wrote that existing state law “requires that we explicitly recognize a constitutional right to a livable climate — arguably the bare minimum when it comes to the inherent human rights to which the Alaska Constitution is dedicated.”

During oral arguments before the high court in 2019, the state urged the court to affirm the lower court’s rejection of the claim. Assistant Attorney General Anna Jay at the time said the climate change issues raised by the plaintiffs must be addressed by the political branches of government.

“With today’s decision, a majority of the Alaska Supreme Court betrayed their duty to safeguard the constitutional rights of these youth and serve as a check on the conduct of the state,” Andrew Welle, a lawyer for the young people, said in a statement after the court’s opinion was released.

“The decision not only allows Alaska’s government to continue destroying the conditions necessary for human life, throwing literal and figurative fuel on the fire

of an already critical climate crisis, it also makes the court complicit in that conduct, further endangering the health, safety and futures of Alaskan children,” Welle said.

The Alaska Supreme Court acknowledged that it’s not within its jurisdiction to balance the compelling interests involved in managing the state’s resources, a statement released from the office of Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy said.

Summer Sagoonick, the lead plaintiff in the cases, was disappointed in the ruling and said it will affect Alaska Natives who count on wildlife and the land for survival.

“Our irreplaceable peoples, lands, cultures, and ecosystems are infinitely more precious than the short-term profits of the fossil fuel industry, which threatens our state economy and our way of life,” Sagoonick, 20, said in a statement. “It will only be a matter of time until the state’s promotion of fossil fuels irreversibly alters the climate we depend on for our lives and culture.”

Alaska joins another lawsuit against vaccination mandate

JUNEAU (AP) — Alaska Gov. Mike Dunleavy has joined Texas Gov. Greg Abbott in seeking to block the U.S. Department

of Defense from mandating COVID-19 vaccines for National Guard members who are under state command.

The Pentagon has required COVID-19 vaccination for all service members, including the National Guard and Reserve. Attorneys for the two governors, in an amended lawsuit dated Jan. 25, say that when National Guard members are serving the state, the federal government has no command authority.

The lawsuit claims the mandate is an unconstitutional overstepping of bounds.

A federal judge last month

ruled against Oklahoma in its separate lawsuit challenging the vaccine mandates for guard members.

The case dealing with Alaska and Texas guard is an amended version of the challenge filed by Texas earlier this month.

About 8% of Alaska Air and Army National Guard members have not received a first dose of any COVID-19 vaccine. Of these, “more than 90% have requested a medical or religious exemption, yet no such exemptions have been granted.”

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SENTINEL SPORTS

Lady Wolves win one, lose one against Miss Chiefs

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Two close games led to one loss and one win by the Lady Wolves in Metlakatla last Friday and Saturday.

Wrangell High School's girls basketball team played the Miss Chiefs in highly competitive matches that left them with a 4-1 record so far this season.

Coming off their first place win of the Rally at Denali in Talkeetna the previous weekend, the Lady Wolves brought their confidence onto the court. Assistant coach Anna Allen said before traveling to Metlakatla that the Miss Chiefs would be the toughest team Wrangell faced so far this year.

And they proved just how tough they are. Friday's game started strong with Wrangell putting the first points on the board, not allowing the home team any points until three minutes left of play. The Miss Chiefs stepped up its game to match the visitors, ending the first period 7-7.

Metlakatla started the second period strong, hustling to take the lead. It wasn't until two minutes left of play that Wrangell regained the lead, finishing the second quarter 14-13.

Despite the Lady Wolves leading for a portion of the third quarter, the home team battled back to regain the lead with a 26-23 lead at the end of the period.

Both teams heated up in the fourth quarter. Wrangell applied the pressure and took back the lead by six points in the beginning. The Miss Chiefs rallied for the rest of the period, closing the point deficit to one. Wrangell only landed one more point in the period and Metlakatla scored four more points to win the game 38-35.

"Metlakatla has a 15-player roster, so their scoring was pretty equal as coach Russell was able to sub at will," said head coach Christina Good. "The Lady Wolves' scoring was fairly equal; we had (four to five players) each night that contributed points for us."

In Saturday's game, the Miss Chiefs garnered two fouls in less than 90 seconds. It took two minutes into the first quarter before any points were added to the board by Wrangell senior Kendra Meissner. In a heated back-and-forth effort, senior Jamie Early stole the ball, passed to junior Kiara Harrison, who promptly sank another goal. It wasn't until 4:27 left that Metlakatla put points

on the board.

Despite Wrangell's strong defense, their opponents tied up the game a minute later. At two minutes left in the quarter, the home team sank another basket and kept Wrangell from scoring the rest of the period, ending the quarter down 4-6.

The second quarter began with Meissner making a three-point basket a minute into play, retaking the lead. The Miss Chiefs tried to answer but came up short with a shot and a rebound. Wrangell drove the ball down the court, shot and missed as well. Like déjà vu, the teams repeated the exact same plays. No other points were put on the board until Metlakatla made a three-pointer with 2:52 left to play, tying it up again.

Early broke the repetitive curse by making a goal, but the home team promptly answered to tie the game again. Another fierce back-and-forth led to another Metlakatla three-pointer to take the lead at half, 14-11.

The second half saw Early making the first bucket at 2:30 into play. Senior Liana Carney followed up with her own basket. In more heated play, Meissner stole the ball, passed to Early, who made

a three-pointer, giving Wrangell a five-point lead. Harrison added to the board with a free throw after being fouled.

Metlakatla added to its second-half points with two free throws. Both teams increased their defensive play to keep either side from scoring the rest of the third period, ending 20-16, Wrangell.

The Miss Chiefs fired up the pressure in the fourth quarter, but the Lady Wolves would not be denied. Both teams pressed on offense while applying a strong defense. Most of the points put on the board were from free throws after each team fouled the other.

Wrangell played just hard enough to garner a 25-20 win.

"Metlakatla is a tough environment to play in, because they always put a good team on the floor, and they have a passionate fan base," Good said. "Both games were pretty physical. We had a lot of shots that didn't fall for us both nights, but we fought for every bucket. The Lady Wolves played excellent defense this weekend, which led to our win on Saturday night."

Wrangell is scheduled to play Craig at home this weekend.

Metlakatla defeats Wrangell in two games last weekend

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Last weekend's games started with fouls and ended in near misses.

The Wrangell High School boys basketball team traveled to Metlakatla for games Friday and Saturday in perhaps their toughest matchup yet, losing both games.

Senior Ryan Rooney was fouled 90 seconds into the first quarter, hitting one of two free throws, putting the Wolves on the board first. Freshman Daniel Harrison rebounded the ball and added to the points. Metlakatla drove the ball into home territory, but Rooney stole the ball and scored another two. The home hit a three-pointer with 5:39 left in the quarter, finally getting on the board.

The Chiefs landed another three-pointer, taking the lead 6-5, followed by another three-pointer and a two-pointer. Wrangell junior Devlyn Campbell answered by driving downcourt and scoring. Metlakatla attempted to follow Campbell's bucket with two baskets of their own, only to be denied by Wrangell's defense.

After some more back-and-forth scoring, the first period ended 15-9, Metlakatla.

The second quarter started with Harrison sinking a three-pointer. Not to be outdone, the Chiefs answered with a three-point attempt, got denied, rebounded and scored.

For the remainder of the period, Metlakatla utilized its dominant height and Wrangell used its speed, coming in low where they could. Campbell drove

again to score another basket. The Chiefs answered in kind, and Tyson Messmer returned to Wolves territory to land two more points.

In what was possibly the play of the game, Ethan Blatchley took a chance with a turnaround jump shot, making the bucket. With 3:40 left in the quarter, Wrangell tied it 20-20. The Wolves were able to get ahead for a moment before Metlakatla came back to tie it again. That dance continued the rest of the quarter with Wrangell coming out on top 26-24.

The fierce action continued into the third quarter, with Wrangell able to keep scoring whenever the home team would catch up and pass them. The third period ended 37-33, Wrangell.

Metlakatla kept a strangle

hold on the lead for the majority of the fourth quarter, jumping ahead of Wrangell whenever the Wolves would get close. The game ended with the Chiefs winning 49-43.

Thirty-eight seconds into the first quarter of Saturday's game, the Chiefs scored the first goal. Rooney tried to answer with a three-point bucket but was denied. It wasn't until three minutes into the game that the Wolves scored, sinking a three-pointer.

Another attempt by Rooney with a tip-in assist from Blatchley put Wrangell in the lead for the first time in the game. Metlakatla answered with a three-point basket to take the lead and kept the pressure on the visiting team. Messmer was unfazed by the pressure and landed a three-pointer, retaking the lead

for his team. Two more baskets put Wrangell in a solid lead to end the first quarter, 12-7.

Metlakatla started the second period with three consecutive baskets, taking the lead. The Chiefs remained relentless in their defense, keeping Wrangell from the basket. Not until Rooney was fouled did the Wolves score in the quarter. They would only add two more points for the entire period, which ended 22-15, Metlakatla.

Wrangell kept at it for the second half, trying to close the point deficit, but Metlakatla retained its lead.

The Chiefs took the W for the second time against Wrangell, 52-41.

Wrangell is 2 and 2 for the season and is scheduled to play Craig this weekend at home.

Assembly approves 3½-year contract for borough manager

By SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel reporter

The assembly has approved a 3½-year contract for Borough Manager Jeff Good, at a starting salary of \$126,000 a year.

The assembly approved the contract Jan. 25, after offering the job to Good on Jan. 14. He has been working as interim manager since Nov. 1, at an annualized salary of \$108,000.

The contract runs through June 30, 2025. The starting salary is a small increase over the \$125,000 salary paid to Lisa Von Bargen, who left the job last October after four years as borough manager.

After six months of employment, Good will be eligible under the contract for a raise to \$132,000 upon review of his performance and depending on borough finances. After one year, the salary will be eligible for another review.

The contract requires that the mayor and assembly members periodically identify their concerns to the manager in writing, or by more formal means,

during assembly meetings.

It also requires that the assembly meet with Good after the first six months of employment, and annually after that, to set goals and priorities. Goals, priorities and performance measures shall be provided in writing.

All assembly meetings held to evaluate Good shall be in executive session unless the manager requests the meeting be in public session, as per the contract and Alaska's Open Meetings Act.

Under the contract, if the assembly fires Good with less than 90 days notice, he would receive six months of severance pay and four months of insurance coverage. With at least 90 days notice, his severance pay would be set at three months of salary.

The contract provides Good with eight weeks of paid time off in his first year. He will be provided a vehicle allowance of \$300 per month.

The assembly selected Good from a pool of eight applicants, after narrowing the list to the finalists that were interviewed Jan. 12-13.



PHOTO COURTESY OF AMBER AL-HADDAD, BOROUGH CAPITAL FACILITIES DIRECTOR

The first phase of fixes to the Wrangell skeet range included tearing down old skeet-throwing buildings, cleaning up overgrown vegetation, and putting down a layer of aggregate surface.

Borough seeks NRA grant for next phase of skeet range rebuild

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

Gone are the encroaching shrubbery and ramshackle structures.

The first phase of a project to improve the Wrangell skeet range has been completed, and steps are being taken to fund the second phase.

Improvements completed in November included cutting down trees and clearing debris and removing two dilapidated skeet-throwing houses and overgrown vegetation to install an aggregate surface for parking areas and the skeet range. The aggregate will also serve as a firm foundation for construction of new upper and lower skeet-throwing houses and shooting stations.

"A gate was also installed to keep vehicles out of the newly prepared skeet range site," said Amber Al-Haddad, the borough's capital facilities

director. The skeet range is part of the community's shooting range, on the Spur Road just past the golf course.

The NRA awarded Wrangell a \$55,030 grant, to which the borough added \$5,065 for completion of the first phase. Al-Haddad said approximately \$6,000 of in-kind staff time was also contributed to the planning and management of the project.

The next phase will include building two new skeet-throwing houses, construction of a new eight-station skeet range, additional parking lot surface capping and the purchase of trap/skeet machines. Al-Haddad said the borough in December requested an additional \$88,429 in NRA grant funding for the second phase.

"We have not heard from them since our December submission but expect to (hear) by the end of March," she said.

Legislators investigate firing of Permanent Fund director

JUNEAU (AP) — A state legislative committee is hiring a law firm to investigate the controversial firing of the head of the Alaska Permanent Fund Corp.

Angela Rodell was fired by the corporation board in December, after the \$82 billion savings account had recorded its best year ever for investment returns.

Rodell, who had been the corporation's CEO since late 2015, has said she believes her firing was "political retribution" for advocating against exceeding draw limits set on the earnings of the Permanent Fund. The governor the past couple of years has promoted his plan to withdraw additional money from the fund — beyond the annual limit set in state law — so as to pay Alaskans a larger Permanent Fund dividend.

The Legislature has declined to approve the governor's request.

Board chair Craig Richards has said that Rodell was an at-will employee who could be fired at the board's discretion, and cited negative evaluations of her performance. He has declined to provide details, calling it a confidential personnel matter.

The Legislative Budget and Audit Committee, comprised of House and Senate members, voted unanimously last Thursday to hire a law firm and to authorize the issuance of subpoenas, if needed, as part of the investigation.

The committee intends to hire attorneys from the Anchorage firm Schwabe, Williamson & Wyatt, with a contract of up to \$100,000, expected to be finalized this week.

The investigation is expected to examine the

"It is this committee's goal that the fund is protected from political intervention or manipulation to ensure the fund's continued growth and sustainability."

*Sen. Natasha von Imhof,
Anchorage*

circumstances surrounding Rodell's firing and whether there were any improper actions or undue political influence by board members or Gov. Mike Dunleavy's administration.

Dunleavy has said he had no knowledge of or influence over Rodell's firing.

"It is this committee's goal that the fund is protected from political intervention or manipulation to ensure the fund's continued growth and sustainability," the committee chair Anchorage Sen. Natasha von Imhof said in explaining the decision to hire the firm.

Von Imhof said she hopes the investigators' report will be completed before the end of the legislative session this spring.

The Alaska Permanent Fund Corp. manages the assets of the state's nest-egg oil-wealth fund, which was valued at \$82 billion at the end of 2021.

Supporters of tribal relations initiative turn in signatures

ANCHORAGE (AP) — Supporters of a proposed initiative that seeks to formalize government-to-government relationships between the state and federally recognized tribes in Alaska have submitted signatures aimed at getting the measure on this year's ballot.

The campaign behind the measure needed to gather 36,140 signatures from across the state. It submitted 56,200 signatures to the state Division of Elections last month, the Anchorage Daily News reported.

The division must review and verify the signatures, and the campaign will be notified within 60 days of submitting the signatures if everything is in order to get the measure on this year's ballot.

Under state law, the timing of when the Legislature adjourns affects which ballot initiatives appear on — either the August primary or the November general election ballot.

Barbara Wáahlal Gidáak Blake, a cosponsor of the Alaskans for Better Government

campaign, called the support for the effort so far "amazing."

Supporters of the measure say formalizing Alaska's recognition of tribal sovereignty will allow for more efficient, effective implementation of measures that benefit tribal members at the local level without substantially altering state laws.

"What this does is codify what's already recognized by the federal government," said state Rep. Tiffany Zulkosky, of Bethel.

Zulkosky has legislation with language nearly identical to the proposed initiative. The measure passed the House 35-4 last May but has not been taken up by the Senate.

Organizers of the initiative campaign are largely agnostic about whether the Legislature acts or the measure goes to a vote of the people.

The Alaska Federation of Natives, Sealaska Corp. and Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska are among the backers of the proposal.

Skagway starts paying unemployment aid covered by cruise line donation

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

Tourism-dependent Skagway has started using one-quarter of the \$2 million gift it received last year from Norwegian Cruise Line to pay out unemployment benefits to eligible residents.

The first round of aid went out this month, totaling \$112,500, the maximum monthly payout authorized by the borough assembly.

The borough received 75 applications for December's jobless aid, paid out in January, Borough Clerk Steve Burnham Jr. said Jan. 26. The next round of applications, for January's unemployment, are due Feb. 7.

Though the program set a maximum of \$2,400 per month, per eligible resident, the first month's payments averaged about \$1,500.

The borough assembly set aside \$450,000 to cover four months of assistance, directing that the payments be prorated as needed to stay within the monthly spending limit.

The cruise line last May announced it would do-

nate \$10 million to communities that had been on the company's itineraries and suffered economically with the loss of cruise ship travelers in 2020 and 2021. The money was allocated as \$2 million each for Skagway, Juneau, Ketchikan and Hoonah, with \$1 million each for Sitka and Seward.

While Skagway directed most of its money to businesses, the assembly also created a new unemployment assistance program to direct funds to individuals.

Before the pandemic, the town received about 1 million cruise ship passengers a year, boosting employment and sales tax revenues in the community of about 1,000 year-round residents. The intent of the municipal aid program is to keep people around until the jobs return with this summer's tourism season.

"The municipality understands the importance of financially supporting seasonal workers affected by the financial emergency," said the borough resolution that created the program.

Applicants must apply each month to qualify for the aid, must be a resident of Skagway, and must pick up their check in person — to avoid the possibility of

non-residents or seasonal residents receiving the aid.

Applicants who are not working due to a COVID-related business closure or illness must provide proof, under the rules established by the borough.

Of the other Alaska communities to receive the Norwegian Cruise Line gift, Seward committed much of its share to help provide child care services.

The city of Ketchikan used its money to cover lost revenues in its ports fund, which has suffered without cruise ship docking fees.

The Sitka assembly reached a consensus to put the funds toward improvements to Lincoln Street, the main thoroughfare in downtown.

Hoonah lost 60% to 70% of its sales tax revenues the past two years due to the lack of cruise ship visitors, and used its \$2 million gift to plug that gap in the city's general fund budget.

Juneau's funding went through the Juneau Community Foundation, which disbursed the funds as grants to 15 nonprofit efforts, and also to the Juneau Economic Development Council and Juneau Chamber of Commerce.

Palin's latest COVID infection delays her trial against newspaper — she then goes out to dinner

By the Associated Press

Jan. 24, forcing postponement of the trial in her libel lawsuit against The New York Times. While waiting for the trial to start, Palin on Jan. 26 went back to a New York City restaurant where she had eaten the week before in violation of the city's dining mandate requiring people to show proof of vaccination.

Palin ate outdoors at the restaurant Jan. 26 on her second trip, contrary to the city's health and safety measures calling for positive cases to isolate. She dined indoors on her first visit Jan. 22.

Her positive COVID test was announced in court on Jan. 24, just as jury selection was set to begin at a federal courthouse in New York City.

Palin claims the newspaper damaged her reputation with an opinion piece penned by its editorial board that falsely asserted her political rhetoric helped incite the 2011 shooting of then-Arizona U.S. Rep. Gabby Giffords. The newspaper has conceded the initial wording of the editorial was flawed, but not in an intentional or reckless way that made it libelous.

U.S. District Judge Jed Rakoff said the trial can begin this week if

Palin, 57, has recovered.

This is the second COVID-19 infection for Palin, a one-time Republican vice presidential nominee, who has urged people not to get vaccinated. She told an audience in Arizona last month, "It will be over my dead body that I'll have to get a shot."

When he first announced that Palin had gotten a positive result from an at-home test, the judge said: "She is, of course, unvaccinated."

Rakoff said that courthouse rules would permit Palin to return to court this week, even if she still tests positive, as long as she has no symptoms. If she does have symptoms, she can be looked at by a doctor who provides services to the courts, he said.

Palin's case against the Times survived an initial dismissal that was reversed on appeal in 2019, setting the stage for a rare case in which a news organization will have to defend itself before a jury in a libel claim involving a major public figure.

It's presumed that Palin will be the star witness in the civil case. She's seeking unspecified damages, saying the Times hurt her budding career as a political commentator.

Palin sued the Times in 2017, citing the editorial about gun control published that year after Louisiana

U.S. Rep. Steve Scalise was wounded when a man with a history of anti-GOP activity opened fire on a congressional baseball team practice in Washington, D.C.

In the editorial, the Times wrote that before the 2011 mass shooting that severely wounded Giffords and killed six others, Palin's political action committee circulated a map of congressional districts that put Giffords and 19 other Democrats under stylized crosshairs.

In a correction two days later, The Times said the editorial had "incorrectly stated that a link existed between political rhetoric and the 2011 shooting."

The disputed wording had been added to the editorial by James Bennet, then the editorial page editor. At trial, a jury would have to decide whether he acted with "actual malice," meaning that he knew what he wrote was false, or with "reckless disregard" for the truth.

In pretrial testimony, Bennet cited deadline pressures as he explained that he did not personally research the information about Palin's political action committee before approving the editorial's publication. He said he believed the editorial was accurate when it was published.

Legislature rejects pay raise linked with cut to living expenses

JUNEAU (AP) — The Alaska Legislature last Thursday rejected a proposal that called for higher annual salaries for lawmakers but an even larger reduction and restrictions on the daily allowance they could receive for living expenses during sessions in Juneau.

The net would have been a significant reduction in pay. Action came quickly: The bill to reject the salary commission's recommendations was introduced in the Senate on Jan. 25, passed unanimously by that chamber on Jan. 26, and passed 37-0 in the House on Jan. 27. The bill next goes to Gov. Mike Dunleavy.

Under state law, the salary and expense recommendations would be adopted unless a bill rejecting them is enacted. The governor can sign the rejection bill into law or veto it, though the House and Senate votes last week provide ample margin to override any veto.

The recommendations were made by the Alaska State Officers Compensation Commission, which is tasked with reviewing salaries, allowances and benefits for lawmakers, the governor, lieutenant governor and department heads. The commission recommended raising the annual base salary for legislators from \$50,400 to \$64,000, plus capping at \$100 a day the allowance they can receive during regular sessions and requiring receipts for any reimbursement of living expenses.

Some legislators said the proposal seemed punitive, or that keeping and tallying receipts would be burdensome. Some said it would limit who could afford to serve in the Legislature.

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State has money left over to help businesses hurt by pandemic

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

The state is working through a couple of challenges in its plan to distribute tens of millions of dollars of federal relief funds to municipalities and businesses. Applications for grants to local governments far exceeded the available funds, while grant applications from eligible tourism-related businesses and others fell far short.

The Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development is looking for answers to both questions: How to decide which cities and boroughs will receive how much of the limited money to replace their lost tax revenues, and how to make changes in the business program before offering a second round of grants.

The state received applications from 41 cities and boroughs totaling \$131 million in revenue losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Micaela Fowler, the department's administrative services director, told a state House subcommittee Jan. 27. The Legislature last year appropriated \$50 million for the program from the state's share of the American Rescue Plan Act.

Meanwhile, a separate program of aid to businesses has approved grants totaling only half of its available funds.

The department is "actively working"

on a second round of business aid to give away the \$44 million remaining in the \$90 million legislative appropriation, Fowler said.

More than 1,000 businesses applied for the grant program last fall, with 363 applications approved, totaling \$45.9 million. The state contracted with the Juneau Economic Development Council to manage the program under the department's rules.

The requirements were strict: Businesses had to show at least a 50% drop in net income from 2019 to 2020 to qualify.

The department is looking to see what changes it could make in the eligibility requirements, such as using a different threshold than net income, Fowler told the department's budget subcommittee of the House Finance Committee.

"The intent of the department is for all of that funding (\$90 million) to be expended," she said.

The question will be whether the department can make changes to the eligibility requirements, or whether it will need legislative approval. She said the department hopes it can make changes without needing new legislation.

"We need to get this money into the hands of small businesses," Juneau Rep. Sara Hannan, a member of the subcommittee, told Fowler.

"This is one of the areas we have heard frustrations from local businesses,"

Fowler responded.

The \$90 million program is the most recent of several pandemic relief aid operations managed or allocated by the state with federal funds over the past two years.

As the department makes plans for a second round of grants, Hannan suggested it could start by reconsidering unsuccessful applicants from the first round who "didn't lose enough money" to qualify under the tight standards.

North Pole Rep. Mike Prax, also a subcommittee member, suggested that the application process required too much work, putting small businesses at a disadvantage.

It's the opposite problem with the grants program for cities and boroughs that lost revenue due to the pandemic-induced economic slowdown: Too many eligible requests.

The application period closed in early December, and the department hopes to start sending out grant award notices in early February, Fowler said. But first, officials need to figure out how to share \$50 million among \$131 million in requests.

The challenge will be how to squeeze the requests into the available funds, and to do it fairly, Fowler said the day after the subcommittee meeting. That will involve prorating the grants, though perhaps by different percentages depending on need, she said. Meanwhile, the de-

partment doesn't know if every applicant will get something, or if some of the least-hurt cities and boroughs might get nothing out of the program.

The department "is in the process of ranking and prioritizing funding" for communities hit hardest by revenue losses, Fowler told House members.

The 41 cities and boroughs reported revenue losses of between 10% and 70%, varying by the municipalities' dependence on sales tax receipts, dock fees and other economic activities knocked down by pandemic closures.

Wrangell estimates its revenue loss due to the pandemic could total a couple million dollars by the end of the current fiscal year on June 30, close to 10% of overall borough revenues for two years. That includes lost revenue from lower sales tax receipts, fewer ships tying up at the port and harbors, lower revenues at the Marine Service Center and municipal utilities, and fewer paying visitors at the Nolan Center.

Separate from its application to the latest state program, the Wrangell borough received about \$4.3 million in direct funding under federal pandemic relief legislation in 2020 and 2021. In addition, the school district has received about \$1 million under state and federal funding formulas.

House tables vote to remove Oath Keepers legislator from committees

JUNEAU (AP) — The Alaska House tabled action Monday on a proposal to remove from all legislative committees Wasilla Rep. David Eastman, a member of the Oath Keepers far-right organization.

The House Committee on Committees voted 5-2 to remove Eastman from his committee assignments, said Joe Plesha, communications director for the House's bipartisan majority.

The committee meeting was not widely publicized beforehand, and Eastman expressed concern with the lack of transparency around the decision.

The matter was tabled on the House floor following an objection from Eastman, a Republican, who said a vote affecting his role as an alternate on a legislative ethics committee needed to be handled separately. He is a member of five other standing House committees.

Eastman last week told The Associated Press he joined the Oath

Keepers "a little over 12 years ago. Along with 38,000 others who have committed to honoring the oaths we have taken."

A leader of the Oath Keepers and other members or associates have been charged with seditious conspiracy related to the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. Eastman has said that he does not condone the

storming of the Capitol.

House Speaker Louise Stutes, speaking with reporters about Monday's floor session, said there were issues that needed to be addressed, including the point raised by Eastman, before members would take any action.

"We want to give the minority an opportunity to address the situation from within as well,"

she said. Eastman is part of an 18-member Republican minority.

House Minority Leader Cathy Tilton said it's a "slippery slope" for the Legislature to make determinations about a person's involvement in an organization. She noted there have been no charges against Eastman.

Lawmakers have been discussing whether to sanction

Eastman for his membership in the Oath Keepers, a paramilitary organization.

"I think what we've been learning about Rep. Eastman is extremely concerning. And I think it needs to be addressed. We at least need to look into it as a Legislature and figure out

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Raises

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In addition to their annual salary of \$50,400, legislators, on average, received about \$35,000 for living expenses each year, 2015-2021, according to Anchorage Daily News calculations. The current per diem rate is \$307, and lawmakers are not required to submit receipts.

The compensation commission, in a compromise, boosted the salary by \$10,000 a year but cut the expense reimbursement by two-thirds.

In a 121-day legislative session, a legislator's overall gross income for the job would fall from \$85,853 to \$76,100, assuming expense payments are collected every day. Salaries are taxable and expense payments are not, so their take-home pay would drop even more if the commission's recommendations were adopted.

In speeches before the vote and interviews afterward, senators said the pay plan was unrealistic and failed to account for the cost of maintaining a household in Juneau and one in a legislator's home district.

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Alaska Fish Factor

By LAINE WELCH
Fisheries columnist

Legislators want federal help with seafood exports to China and Russia

Seafood is Alaska's biggest export by far, and state legislators want the federal government to get tougher on trade policies that they say unfairly hurt global sales.

Two resolutions (Senate Joint Resolution 16 and SJR17) were advanced last week by the House Fisheries Committee that address Russia's ban on buying any U.S. foods since 2014 and also punitive seafood tariffs by China since 2018. Meanwhile, the U.S. is importing an increasing amount of seafood from both countries.

Both resolutions were introduced by Kodiak Sen. Gary Stevens and urge the federal government to restore open pathways for fair trade.

The Senate approved both resolutions last year, with House approval required before the statements are sent out to the president and members of Congress.

"In order to remain competitive in the world seafood market, our Alaska seafood processors need some help from our partners federally. These resolutions would attempt to restore focus on negotiations with China to ease this tariff war that's underway and level the playing field with Russia in favor of Alaska," said Stevens' aide Tim Lamkin at the Jan. 27 hearing.

Others said the resolutions don't go far enough.

"Why aren't we asking that we not import any Chinese or Russian fish? Why not turn the tables and put the embargo on them?" asked Fisheries Committee Co-chair Louise Stutes, of Kodiak.

"I can tell you it is frustrating when we go into a grocery store here in the

U.S. and see Russian seafood products sold at a much lower rate. We hear it from the processors we work with, we hear it from the fishermen," said Jeremy Woodrow, director of the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute.

In any given year, between 75% and 80% of Alaska seafood by volume is exported, he said.

The export market is "vital to the economic health of Alaska communities and its seafood industry that we can remain competitive in a global marketplace," Woodrow told the House committee.

"Think crab, pollock, wild salmon, halibut and cod — Russia competes with Alaska's commercially harvested seafood across the global market. And their products are imported and sold at a lower cost, and therefore undercut the value of Alaska seafood products in our most valuable market, the United States," Woodrow continued. "And since 2014, the U.S. has seen Russian seafood imports increased by 173%."

Switching to China, the ongoing trade war since 2018 has increased tariffs as high as 37% to 42% on U.S. seafood entering that country. Overall, the U.S. market share of sales is down 63%, while Chinese imports to the U.S. have doubled and increased by 91% in value.

"The Alaska seafood industry invested over 20 years developing the China market for reprocessing and domestic consumption and grew that into our No. 1 export market reaching nearly \$1 billion in 2017. The retaliatory tariffs in 2018 have dropped exports

to China to record lows," Woodrow said.

"The challenges have been amplified over the course of the COVID pandemic, further stressing the need for fair and balanced foreign trade," he added. "Alaska has seen its export values decline considerably due to shipping disruptions, escalating costs, border closures and rolling closures of markets. Compared to 2019, exports in 2020 were down \$500 million, and approximately \$300 million in 2021."

One of the hardest hits has been taken by Alaska pollock, the nation's largest food fishery, which faces a 500% higher tariff rate than competing Russian pollock going to China.

"It is my belief that the economic and social well-being of Alaska's coastal communities and the entire life of our industry rise and fall together," said Stephanie Madsen, director of the At-Sea Processors Association, who called the retaliatory tariffs "crippling" and the nearly seven-year Russia embargo "outrageous."

"The Alaska seafood industry is proud to serve American consumers, but the truth is the sheer size and scale of Alaska's fisheries means our economic survival is heavily dependent on secure and fair access to key export markets," Madsen said.

"Fair international trade, in turn, increases seafood prices, provides greater revenues to harvesters and promotes economic activity and security to communities throughout our state. Unfortunately, changing international trade rules have reduced our competitiveness in some markets and completely cut off

our access to others," she said.

"We're fundamentally looking for a fair and a level playing field," said Chris Barrows, director of the Pacific Seafood Processors Association.

"Unfortunately, federal trade policies and negotiations have consistently failed to safeguard U.S. seafood producer interests," Barrows said. "This has led directly to sharply unbalanced seafood trade landscapes that we're forced to navigate today, with steep trade barriers imposed by leading trade partners, even while their seafood imports overwhelmingly enters the U.S. duty free."

The Fisheries Committee advanced the China resolution (SJR17) asking for "renewed focus on the plight of U.S. seafood producers," but added tougher talk for Russia (SJR16).

"I do not want to sign my name to a resolution that is asking pretty please to get Russia to stop what they're doing," said Homer Rep. Sarah Vance. "I think that puts us in a position of weakness, asking nicely to change something when we are in the position to say no. We can't stop other imports but we could at least prioritize U.S. fish, specifically Alaska fish."

The Russia resolution was amended from asking President Joe Biden "to immediately seek and secure an end to the embargo" by adding "or place a reciprocal embargo on Russian seafoods entering the U.S. until a reasonable trade agreement restoring Alaska seafood producers' full access to Russia's domestic seafood market is secured."

Fisheries Board sticks with moving Southeast meeting to Anchorage

BY DANELLE KELLY
Ketchikan Daily News

The Alaska Board of Fisheries voted 4-2 last Thursday to uphold its previous decision to convene the Southeast and Yakutat finfish and shellfish regulations meetings in Anchorage

March 10 through 22 rather than in Ketchikan.

Originally, the meeting — already postponed for one year due to the pandemic — was scheduled for Jan. 4-15 in Ketchikan. But on Jan. 1, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game announced the meeting

was being postponed "out of an abundance of caution due to the record-breaking rise of COVID-19 cases in the United States, and a concerning sharp rise in Southeast Alaska."

Then, on Jan. 11, the department announced the meeting was rescheduled for March in

Anchorage. The announcement said the move was "part of a balancing act between allowing the current COVID-19 surge to peak, limited budget, logistics, fishery timing, other board meetings, and COVID-19 testing and hospital capacity."

The Board of Fisheries will allow for remote testimony at selected Fish and Game offices in Southeast Alaska to offer a way for residents to participate in the Anchorage meeting.

The board met last week to reconsider its decision to move the Southeast regulations meeting to Anchorage, and voted to stick with the state's largest city.

Letters of support for moving the meeting back to Ketchikan filled about 50 pages attached to the Fish and Game's website.

Board Member Israel Payton, of Wasilla, voted against moving the meeting back to Ketchikan. He cited the expensive and difficult logistics of shipping meeting materials and equipment to Ketchikan, as well as the increased contacts inherent with so many people traveling during the pandemic.

He also said that if people did contact COVID-19 while in Ketchikan, it would be worse than if it happened in Anchorage.

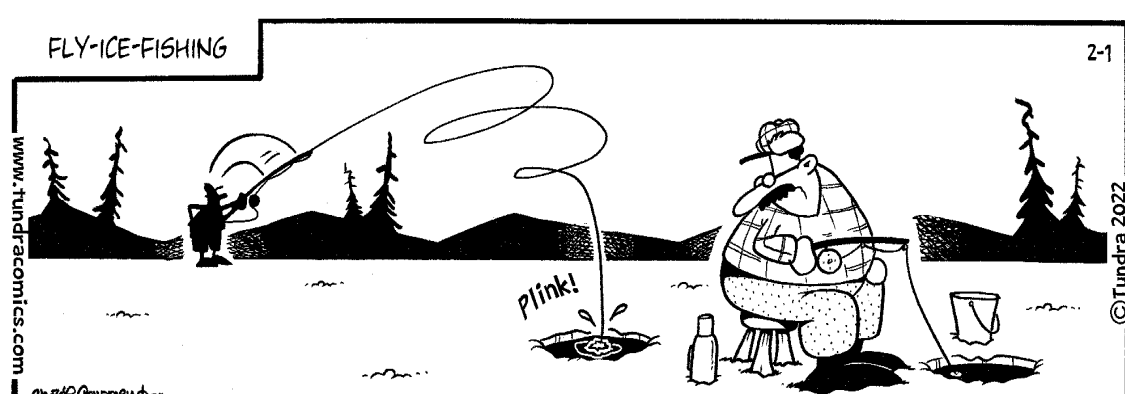
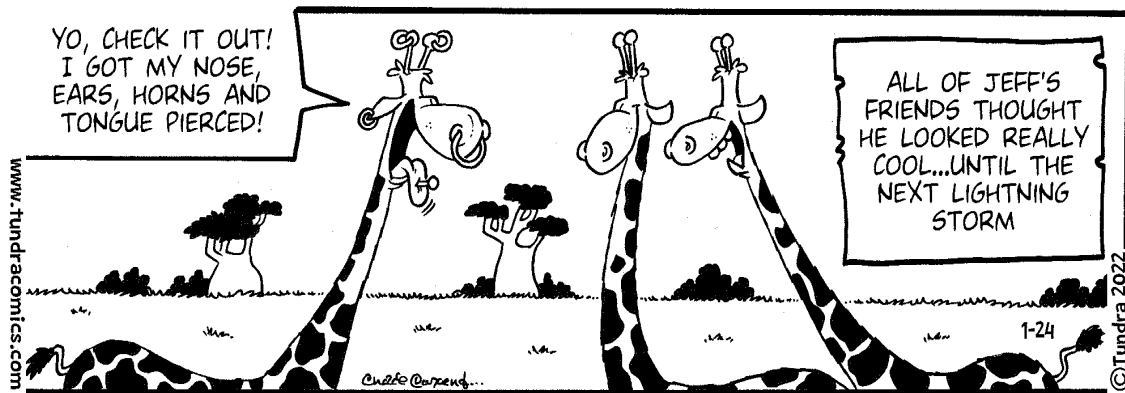
"I certainly wouldn't want to be quarantined off the road system," he said.

"I'm deeply disappointed by the Fish Board's decision," Ketchikan Rep. Dan Ortiz said in a prepared statement the day after the board decision. "Based on the board members' comments before their vote, it seems like their primary concerns with meeting in Ketchikan were based on lack of convenience with their own personal schedules rather than prioritizing the board's tradition of being accessible to the Alaskans who are most impacted by their decisions."

"Keep politics out of the Board of Fish," Payton said during the board meeting. "I feel a tremendous amount of political pressure from those same politicians to get in the board business and try to augment what we view is best for the board and the process, so I don't take kindly to that."

Tundra

by Chad Carpenter



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Eastman

Continued from page 9

what action is warranted," Rep. Calvin Schrage, an independent from Anchorage, said last week.

"We have truly reached the stage of Doublethink when pledging loyalty to the Constitution is now a revolutionary act worthy of condemnation and punishment from the Left today," Eastman said in an email to The Associated Press last Thursday when asked for comment.

Eastman has said he attended the Jan. 6 rally in Washington, D.C., for outgoing President Donald Trump held before people stormed the Capitol. However, he said he did not take part in the riot.

Eastman said he does not know any of the Oath Keepers who were charged in the insurrection and that he does not condone the storming of the Capitol.

"This membership in the Oath Keepers is troubling," said Rep. Matt Claman, an Anchorage Democrat who confirmed to the Anchorage Daily News last week that sanction options were under consideration.

Legislators in the state House are discussing whether Eastman's involvement in the Oath Keepers would be in violation of the Alaska Constitution's disloyalty clause, which prohibits from holding public office anyone who "advocates, or who aids or belongs to any party or organization or association which advocates, the overthrow by force or violence of the government of the United States or of the State."

There also has been public pressure on Eastman, a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy. More than 70 West Point alumni signed a letter urging him to resign. A public petition is being

circulated seeking his removal, along with social media posts and letters to the editor.

Eastman in 2017 became the first House member to be censured by the body for comments he made suggesting there are women in Alaska who try to get pregnant to get a "free trip to the city" for abortions.

Minority Leader Tilton, also a Wasilla Republican, told the Anchorage Daily News last week that she is reluctant to take action against her colleague.

"Representative Eastman has a right to represent his constituency in the manner that he feels is representative of the district," Tilton said. "I really feel like it's up to the members of that district to show their concerns at this point."

Eastman has filed documents saying he intends to run for reelection this year.

WRANGELL COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION TRANSPORTATION PLAN PUBLIC NOTICE

Wrangell Cooperative Association Transportation (WCAT) is updating its Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The draft LRTP is available for questions and comments at the WCAT office at 1002 Zimovia Highway, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The deadline for comments is March 1, 2022, at 1 p.m. Call Lizzy Romane at 907-874-3077 for more information.

Publish Feb 2, 9, 16 and 23, 2022

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

In the matter of the estate of Helen Francis Decker, notice to creditors is hereby given that Julie Decker has been appointed personal representative of the above named estate. All persons having any claims against the decedent are required to present their claims within four months after the date of first publication of this notice or said claims will forever be barred. All claims must be presented to:

Case No. 1WR-21-27PR
Julie Decker
PO Box 2138
Wrangell, AK 99929

Alternatively, a claim can be filed directly with the Wrangell Superior Court.

Publish Feb. 2, 9 and 16, 2022

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

In the matter of the estate of Sigurd Vernon Decker, notice to creditors is hereby given that Hitomi Marsh has been appointed personal representative of the above named estate. All persons having any claims against the decedent are required to present their claims within four months after the date of first publication of this notice or said claims will forever be barred. All claims must be presented to:

Case No. 1WR-21-28R
Hitomi Marsh
2417 Tongass, Suite 111-176
Ketchikan, AK 99901

Alternatively, a claim can be filed directly with the Wrangell Superior Court.

Publish Feb. 2, 9 and 16, 2022

CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL NOTICE OF JOB OPENING Police Officer

Wrangell Police Department is accepting applications for Police Officer. This position is open until filled.

Wrangell Police Officers must be capable of all aspects of law enforcement to include patrol and emergency response, interviewing and investigations, evidence collection and processing. Applicants must possess problem-solving abilities and have the written and oral communication skills. Applicants will need to learn, understand and apply criminal laws and effect arrests if warranted. Applicants need to have the ability to work under pressure and be able to maintain control in combative situations. Applicants must have the ability to work flexible hours and shifts and be able to work with minimal supervision.

Applicants must successfully complete and pass a background investigation, medical and psychological examinations, and drug screening. Applicants must be at least 21 years of age, possess a High School Diploma or GED equivalency. Applicants must be a U.S. citizen and possess a valid Alaska Driver's License or the ability to obtain one within 10 days of hire.

Applicants must meet the minimum standards for Police Officer per the Alaska Police Standards Council (APSC) and must possess an APSC certificate within 12 months of hire. Officers holding an APSC basic certification or higher is preferred, however the Wrangell Police Department encourages applicants who are motivated, friendly, self-starting and a team player to apply and we will assist you in obtaining the required certification.

Benefits include accrued vacation time, accrued sick leave time, state PERS retirement, optional deferred compensation plan, medical coverage for employees and family with a small copay, paid holidays and a quarterly uniform allowance. Further details can be found in the City & Borough of Wrangell Personnel Policy located on the City & Borough of Wrangell website.

To be considered, submit a cover letter, resume and completed employment application via email to rmarsshall@wrangell.com, or submit in person to City Hall, 205 Brueger Street, Wrangell, AK 99929.

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

Publish Jan. 20, 27 and Feb. 2, 2022

Police report

Monday, Jan. 24

Agency assist: Ambulance.
Agency assist.
Citizen assist.
Found property.
Civil issue.
Traffic stop: Citation issued for failure to provide proof of insurance and expired registration.
Gunshots.

Tuesday, Jan. 25

Suspicious circumstance.

Wednesday, Jan. 26

Agency assist: Alaska Department of Transportation.
Welfare check.
Citizen report of driving under the influence.
Dog complaint.
Domestic dispute.

Thursday, Jan. 27

Civil issue.

Friday, Jan. 28

Hit and run.
Noise complaint.

Saturday, Jan. 29

Harassment.

Sunday, Jan. 30

Disorderly conduct.
Civil issue.

Agency assist: Library alarm.
Citizen assist.

CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL INVITATION TO BID Barge Ramp Floatation Tank Repairs

Notice is hereby given that the City & Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, will receive sealed bids for the Barge Ramp Floatation Tank Repairs project. Work consists of all activities and equipment necessary to sandblast and paint approximately 4,000 square feet of the entire steel structure, including both tanks, the uprights, and the inside of the main air tank. Work also consists of approximately 600 feet of end-cap welding and doubler-plate welding for four areas on the main tank. The owner's estimate for the project is approximately \$90,000.

Sealed bids will be received by the City & Borough of Wrangell, PO Box 531, Wrangell, Alaska 99929, or at the Borough Clerk's Office, 205 Brueger Street, Wrangell, Alaska 99929, until 2 p.m. prevailing time on Feb. 16, 2022.

Complete bidding/contract documents for this project are available in electronic format only and can be downloaded from the City & Borough of Wrangell website (www.wrangell.com) under the Bids and RFPs Section.

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

Publish Feb. 2 and 9, 2022

CLASSIFIED/LEGALS

HELP WANTED

Looking for a new career for the new year? Interested in working with youth in the community? Residential Youth Care is looking to hire multiple positions at our Ketchikan location including: Residential BHAs Day and Night Shift, Education BHAs, Mental Health Clinicians, RN, and KAP Director. Check out job descriptions, updated benefits and apply online today at www.rycalaska.com.

HELP WANTED

School bus driver. Qualified applicants with AK CDL with school bus endorsement will receive a \$1,000 hiring bonus. Non-CDL applicants will be trained. Email resume to taylorbuswrg@gmail.com.

BOAT FOR SALE

2013 29-foot Bentz USCG-inspected passenger vessel Glacier Run. 14 passengers plus 2 crew. Twin Yanmar turbo-charged 6LP diesels driving twin Hamilton jet drives. 2,200 hours on engines. Cruise at 30 knots, top speed 42 knots. All electronics and radar, marine head, 200-gallon fuel, life raft and all safety gear. Spare parts and fuel/oil filters included.

\$319,000. Trailer included. Call Ron at 907-518-1180. or Alice 907-305-0007.

LOAN CLOSET

Hospice of Wrangell Community Loan Closet has a variety of durable medical equipment items for free loan. Walkers, wheelchairs, braces, beds, bath and toilet items. Contact Don 907-305-0063

FREE ADS

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 & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to the City & 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 & Borough of Wrangell, Alaska

Publish Feb 2, 2022

HELP GUIDE VISITORS TO **WRANGELL**

The Sentinel's 2022 Wrangell Guide will be available in print and online in April. Reserve your ad space now.

***25% off our regular rates
for ads reserved
by March 1.***

In addition to sharing the annual guide online, we will print more than 5,000 copies for the community to mail out, hand out and spread the word of Wrangell as a great visitor destination.

Call or email Amber today to ask about advertising in the guide.

907-874-2301
wrgsent@gmail.com



WRANGELL SENTINEL