



Wrangell, Alaska
November 24, 2021

WRANGELL SENTINEL

Volume 119, Number 47

Oldest Continuously Published Newspaper in Alaska

12 Pages \$1.50

Assembly cancels mask ordinance meeting, though community set new COVID record

BY SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel reporter

The borough assembly last Thursday canceled a special meeting called to consider a face mask ordinance, citing a decline in active COVID-19 cases in the community.

The decision to cancel the meeting came a day after Wrangell set a record for new COVID-19 infections in a month.

The meeting, which was to be held virtually, would have reenacted the requirement of face coverings in certain indoor settings. The draft ordinance also included a \$25 penalty in municipal code for non-compliance — which the borough has never used — and strongly urged other mitigation actions to protect the public from the highly infectious virus.

Mayor Steve Prysunka said the special assembly meeting last Thursday, which the borough had announced on Monday, was intended as a contingency. The code requires at least a two-day notice of assembly meetings. If the active case count had not gone down, the meeting could have proceeded as scheduled.

The number of active cases declined between the meeting announcement and the day of the meeting, from 41 on Tuesday to 30 by Thursday.

"When we spoke with the EOC (Emergency Operations Center) — the vice mayor and I, on Monday — we saw an accelerating rate of the daily count," Prysunka said. "The determination was to put the meeting in place as a placeholder."

The borough assembly later felt the high exposure period was over, he said. If the case count accelerates again, the borough could schedule another meeting, the mayor said.

In the meantime, Prysunka said the borough is encouraging voluntary compliance of masking and mitigation measures such as social distancing, and "hopefully we'll hold this at bay."

As of Monday this week, Wrangell was up to 54 COVID cases for the month, surpassing the previous record of 48 set in August.

Jeff Good, interim borough manager, said he was instructed to cancel the meeting because the borough assembly is trying to be adaptable and felt there had been a sufficient drop in active cases.

"For now, the assembly wanted to hold off on putting it up for a vote," Good said.

As of the night before the meeting, one person had signed up to speak under persons to be heard, said Robbie Marshall, acting borough clerk.

"The (case) numbers have steadied and decreased over the past few days, so it was decided to cancel the assembly meeting for tonight," the borough said in a prepared statement the day of the meeting it canceled. "However, our numbers are still at an all-time high and the EOC strongly urges everyone to remain vigilant as we work to get our case count down."

The community has tallied 210 cases since the pandemic count started in March 2020, with 25% of those this month.

Holiday demand could lead to delayed deliveries

BY MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Chris Booker has co-owned C&D Deliveries since April 2019 with his wife, Dixie, putting in up to 50 hours a week delivering packages.

It's commonplace in most communities to see a big, brown delivery van lumbering down the street, or parked curbside with its hazard lights blinking. In Wrangell, the familiar UPS brand is replaced by a white cargo van belonging to C&D Deliveries.

The family owned service puts in a lot of hours, especially during the holidays, to ensure people receive their packages despite adverse weather, unknown addresses or unfamiliar names.

Since April 30, 2019, when Chris Booker and his wife, Dixie, started C&D Deliveries and took over the Lynden UPS contract, the company has averaged between 250 to 400 deliveries per week, sometimes working seven days a week.

Even in a place as small as Wrangell, challenges finding people still exist.

"Wrangell is unique in many ways with being a small community ... where most of the people know everyone by a first-name basis, but it functions as a hub as well," Booker said. "It's nice when packages come in with physical addresses on them,

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Community comes together for Christmas tree decorating

BY MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

It takes a village to raise a tree; Christmas tree, that is.

On Dec. 3, the efforts of people throughout Wrangell will culminate in the lighting of the community Christmas tree, a decades-long tradition.

A "very full and pretty" pine tree located behind the state highway equipment shop on the Airport Loop Road will be cut down next Monday and taken downtown to be set in a stand between the Elks Lodge and L&M gas station, according to Dominique O'Connor, secretary for Wrangell Municipal Light & Power.

"I'm very excited. It's actually been a community event that gone on (many years)," she said.

While the tree is picked out by Rod Rhoades, superintendent of the power utility, along with staff, the decorations are provided by the chamber of commerce and students at Evergreen Elementary.

For at least 25 years, students at the school have created ornaments for the tree, along with their family members, said Jenn Miller-Yancey, assistant principal. The students use recycled materials that are both weatherproof and waterproof to last all month, making snowflakes, presents and candy canes to adorn the tree.

"In years past, we would coordinate it so that we would go downtown, sing carols, and watch the students put the ornaments on," Miller-Yancey said. "That got



Jenn Miller-Yancey, assistant principal of Evergreen Elementary School, holds up a recycled compact disc being used as a decoration for the community Christmas tree.

PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

a little harder over time ... so we haven't been able to do that for a lot of years."

This year, the parent-teacher community club for Evergreen got involved to encourage families to come to the school and create the decorations. Every student from kindergarten through fifth grade was involved, she said.

"We tried to use recyclables or very inexpensive materials to teach the students they can make things out of garbage," Miller-Yancey said. Students marbled plastic jugs to look like light bulbs, beaded old compact discs, and fashioned foam "pool noodles" to resemble candy canes.

One thing that will be missing from

the tree lighting this year is the fireworks that would shoot out of the top when the tree was lit. It was decided that due to the proximity of the tree to the gas station, fireworks weren't a good idea.

"Oh, that was fun. (We) shot fireworks out the top when they threw the switch on the lights! Good times," said Clay Hammer, the former superintendent of the power utility. He said the trick to picking out the tree each year is judging the height. "The main thing is for it to be taller than Petersburg's!"

This year's tree is approximately 40 feet high. The lighting will take place at 6 p.m. Dec. 3 downtown.

Wrangell to conduct survey work on former Institute property

BY SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel reporter

The borough is looking to move forward with its plan to develop residential lots on the site of the former Bureau of Indian Affairs Wrangell Institute boarding school, while also fulfilling the Department of the Interior's mandate that former boarding school sites be inspected for human remains.

The federal push came after the discovery earlier this year of 215 unmarked graves in British Columbia at the site of what was once Canada's largest Indigenous residen-

tial school, and the fear that unknown burial sites could exist at American Indian and Alaska Native school sites around the country, whether the schools were run by the BIA or religious orders.

Interim Borough Manager Jeff Good met with a representative from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and also the State Historic Preservation Office to learn the scope of a site survey that would fulfill the Department of the Interior's initiative to review the troubled legacy of federal boarding school policies.

The borough is going to have an archeological sur-

vey done of the Institute property, Good said, using the same company that conducted the initial survey of the site, R & M Engineering based in Ketchikan.

Good said the company will conduct three-dimensional electromagnetic resistivity, or resistance, surveys that will produce high-resolution images of subsurface contamination zones and local geologic features.

"You put probes in the ground and it lets you see below the ground," Good said. "Ground-penetrating radar doesn't work well here because (of) its high moisture

content, and with all the trees it's hard to get over there."

The borough also discussed search dogs as well, Good said.

Mayor Steve Prysunka said the dogs are specially trained to look for historic remains.

"I have a cadaver dog. They are trained to look for more recent remains. It's two different disciplines," Prysunka said. A canine search team would be volunteer-based, Prysunka said. "The best we can do is pay the expenses. They volunteer their time."

Good said the borough is

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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.

Thursday, Nov. 25: Janet Bunes, Shawn Curley, Clay Hammer, Darin Floyd, Shawn Howell, Terra Hoyt, Bryan Ottesen, Joel Smalley.

Friday, Nov. 26: Alyssa Southland; Anniversaries: Michael and Alyssa Howell, Aaron and Megan Powell.

Saturday, Nov. 27: Gus Brock, Lovie Brock, Kerry Byford, Cinda Stough, Rhiannon Wiederspohn; Anniversary: Dennis and Carmen Pavlina.

Sunday, Nov. 28: Kaden Comstock, Hailey Cook, Arlee Haggard, Rylan Shilts; Anniversaries: Levi and Kathy Dow, John and Karen Morse, Iver and Diana Nore, Paul and Victoria Southland, Scott and Becky Thomas.

Monday, Nov. 29: None.

Tuesday, Nov. 30: Ben Bowman, Kogen Jeffrey Brown, Warren Edgley Jr., Nala O'Brien.

Wednesday, Dec. 1: Scott Angerman, Ethan Kaer Gassaway.

Thursday, Dec. 2: Lester Kuntz, Chris Royster, Candice Wilsie.

Senior Center Menu

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

Friday, Nov. 26

Baked chicken, peas and carrots, honey and orange salad, oatmeal muffin

Monday, Nov. 29

Beef noodle casserole, steamed zucchini, tomatoes aspic

Tuesday, Nov. 30

Ham and lima bean soup, tomato and cheese sandwich, spinach salad

Wednesday, Dec. 1

Roast beef and gravy, romaine and radish salad, mashed potatoes

Thursday, Dec. 2

Chicken cacciatore with noodles, sweet peas, honey orange 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

November 24-December 31

Northbound

Monday, Nov. 29

Kennicott, 6:45 p.m.

Monday, Dec. 13

Kennicott, 6:45 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 24

Matanuska, 4:45 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 31

Matanuska, 8:15 p.m.

Southbound

Wednesday, Nov. 24

Kennicott, 8:30 p.m.

Thursday, Dec. 9

Kennicott, 2:30 a.m.

Thursday, Dec. 23

Kennicott, 5:15 a.m.

Monday, Dec. 27

Matanuska, 7:30 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

November 25-December 1

High Tides

Low Tides

	AM	PM	AM	PM
	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
Nov. 25	04:34	12.1	03:48	13.3
Nov. 26	05:35	12.0	04:51	12.4
Nov. 27	06:43	12.4	06:18	12.0
Nov. 28	07:45	13.3	07:45	12.2
Nov. 29	08:36	14.6	08:54	13.1
Nov. 30	09:21	16.0	09:54	14.1
Dec. 1	10:04	17.4	10:47	15.1

Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

WRANGELL PARKS & REC annual Turkey Trot - 5K Fun Run will start at the covered basketball court and run along the Volunteer Trail on Thanksgiving Day. Sign-up at 8:45 a.m. The run/walk begins at 9 a.m., with a suggested donation of \$10. Door prices and post-run snacks will be available. Costumes are encouraged. Call 907-874-2444 for more information.

WRANGELL PARKS & REC is offering tot gym for children 6 months to 5 years of age on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to noon. Program runs through Dec. 29. 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. 10 tot gym punch passes available. Call 907-874-2444 for information.

NOLAN CENTER THEATER is not showing a movie this weekend.

WRANGELL HOSPICE is hosting Christmas Tree Lane at the Nolan Center. Bring decorated items to the Nolan Center from noon to 4 p.m. this Saturday, or from 2 to 6 p.m. Monday. Prize categories for 2021 will be tabletop trees, large trees and holiday table runners. Each entry goes up for a silent auction bid. Bids open Dec. 1 and close at noon Dec. 17 so winners can take their items home for the holidays. Half the proceeds go to you and the other half to Hospice of Wrangell (Harriet's Helpers). For more information, call Alice Rooney 907-305-0007.

WRANGELL HOSPICE annual Dove Tree Ceremony is 2 p.m. Sunday at the Nolan Center lobby. A time of special music and remembrance of loved ones during the holiday season who passed away this year. The Dove Tree will remain up through the new year. Anyone may add doves to the tree. For more information, call Alice Rooney 907-305-0007.

WRANGELL BAHAI'S & FRIENDS are offering a viewing of a film about the life of Abdu'l-Baha titled, "The Exemplar." The video can be downloaded and watched anytime at: <https://www.bahai.org/exemplar/>. A Zoom gathering is planned for 4 p.m. Saturday, with a short program and opportunities to reflect on the film. If interested, call Kay Larson 907-209-9117 or email kay.larson@gmail.com for the link.

WRANGELL PARKS & RECREATION is offering pickleball, volleyball and Keep Moving adult activities. More information online at www.wrangellrec.com or call 907-874-2444.

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

Nov. 24, 1921

Mayor Grant this week circulated a petition to the governor setting forth that on account of the great destruction of deer by wolves in Southeast Alaska, more drastic methods of wolf extermination should be employed at once. The petition was eagerly signed by local citizens, and will be forwarded to the governor on the next northbound steamer. An offer was made by the U.S. Bureau of Biological Survey for the free use of the gas boat Regal and services of two trained men to work for wolf extermination, giv-

ing two months service for \$600. The petition says, "The citizens of Wrangell respectfully petition and ask that the governor use his best efforts to secure the amount asked by the Biological Survey and to do so with the least possible delay, so that whatever effective measures for wolf extermination is contemplated can be tried during the present winter."

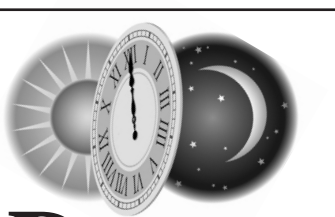
Nov. 22, 1946

The Scouting program for boys 9, 10 and 11 years old took shape here this week in the organization of a Cub Pack to be sponsored by the Elks Lodge, according to Del Hanks, Alaska Scout official. The Elks Club, under the leadership of Olaf Hansen, Exalted Ruler, appointed Lloyd Ripley as committee chairman, and George Gunderson, Dick Sharnbroich, Jim Simmons and Joyce Hay as members. The committee selected Albert Vacurra to serve as Cubmaster and Howard Baltzo as his assistant. Den Mothers for the initial start are Mrs. Cecil Wonders, Mrs. Jim Simmons, Mrs. Ralph Lindsley, and one more to be named at a later time.

Jensen's 6-foot-7 height made all the difference. He controlled the basket and the rebounds for Petersburg throughout the contest. But height couldn't keep Wrangell out of the running, with Al Rinehart chalking up 24 points and his younger brother, Harry, putting up 15. Saturday night the Wolves returned to the floor snapping and snarling and crawled all over the Vikings. Wrangell Coach Carroll Merritt double-teamed Jensen, keeping him away from the basket and allowing him only 5 points. Wrangell's top scorers were Al Rinehart with 12 points. Keith Appleman with 11, and Harry Rinehart and Rob Dailey each 10.

Nov. 28, 1996

Alcohol and drug abuse, child neglect and domestic abuse were identified as Wrangell's top health problems in a mini-survey conducted recently by PATCH (Positive Approach to Community Health). At a community meeting Nov. 14, the survey formed the basis for discussing how best to use a possible \$5,640 grant from the SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium. In the planning stages are a teen health fair, an outward-bound program, culture camp, apprenticeships in the arts and workforce, and a creation of a safe home for teens who need emergency or transition housing. Also planned is a student questionnaire inviting local youth to share their views on the challenges they face and what the community can do to help.



Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Hours
Nov. 25	7:49a	3:23p	7:34h
Nov. 26	7:51a	3:22p	7:31h
Nov. 27	7:53a	3:21p	7:28h
Nov. 28	7:54a	3:19p	7:25h
Nov. 29	7:56a	3:18p	7:22h
Nov. 30	7:58a	3:17p	7:19h
Dec. 1	8:00a	3:17p	7:16h

Nov. 26, 1971

The Wrangell Wolves started off the 1971-72 basketball season last weekend by suffering a mild defeat at the hands of Petersburg in the first game of a double-header, then bounded back to stomp the Vikings. The score Friday was 59-54, Vikings. Saturday's tally was a lopsided 54-32, Wolves. In Friday's game, Chris

WCA blesses tree for Christmas display at Governor's House

By SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel reporter

The Wrangell Cooperative Association blessed a tree harvested from ancestral Native land on Etolin Island and headed to the Governor's House in Juneau for Christmas display.

The blessing in front of the Chief Shakes Tribal House on Thursday, Nov. 18, was a partnership of the WCA, U.S. Forest Service Wrangell Ranger District, and U.S. Coast Guard, which provided the Elderberry, a 65-foot buoy tender, based in Petersburg, to transport the 14-foot-tall lodgepole tree.

The Elderberry left for Juneau on Monday, after the crew held off departing until stormy weather had passed.

Esther Reese, tribal administrator for WCA, Aaltséen in Tlingit, spoke ahead of the blessing.

"I am Eagle, Tsaagweidí — Killer whale — and my father was Kaach.ádi, my grandfather was T'akdeintaan," she said. "I grew up in the Xáay hit Yellow Cedar House, in K'éex' kwáan, which is Kake. I am honored to be standing here in front of the Tribal House."

Reese turned the program over to Luella Knapp, or AAnshaawasnook in Tlingit, speaker of the Naanyaa.aayí clan house.

"Welcome to our land," said Knapp/AAnshaawasnook. "The tribal house is the ancestor house of the Naanyaa.aayí. My English name is Luella Knapp. This house was rededicated in 2013, the Chief Shakes house, and it was done by the help and vision of our elders."

Tory Houser, acting district ranger for the Wrangell Ranger District, said she was grateful for the participation of the Wrangell schools' Tlingit class, and the



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

The Wrangell Cooperative Association blesses the tree that will be displayed for Christmas at the Governor's House. After the Nov. 18 ceremony at Shakes Island, the U.S. Coast Guard transported the tree aboard the buoy tender Elderberry to Juneau. The 14-foot-tall lodgepole pine was sustainably harvested from historically tribal lands on Etolin Island.

help of the Coast Guard crew who came to transport the tree to Juneau.

Houser said the tree is known as "Togetherness Tree."

"Like the trees that stand in the forest together, we are all stronger when we all stand together," Houser said. "I am so glad that we are all here."

Richard Oliver, Xúns' in Tlingit, president of the Wrangell Cooperative Association, thanked the tree for giving itself up for the governor.

"It's a very nice gift," Oliver said. "I'd like to thank the Coast Guard for being here. The Tlingit class, and all of you, here to bless this lovely tree."

The tree will be displayed in the Gov-

ernor's House for the holidays. It's a tradition to bring in a tree from a different area of the state each year.

Local storyteller Virginia Oliver, Xwaanlein in Tlingit, acknowledged the presence of elders Sue Stevens of the Naanyaa.aayí, or Eagle clan, and Emma Frost of the Kiks.ádi, or Raven clan.

Oliver led the blessing with the singing of two songs: A Wrangell entrance song, and a paddle exit song.

Tommy Rooney, known by the Tlingit names Kaalyaakw and Xookkwei, rallied the call of "haa hee" during the singing, which the participants echoed.

The story is there was a shaman, Rooney said, who went under the water

on the way to an island. The loons started to call him, he called back to them, and that was the call.

"I was crying while they were doing it," Rooney said. "They were bringing the tree up there (in front of Chief Shakes house) and it was blessed by us. It's really emotional."

Wrangell last provided a tree for the Governor's House in 2018, according to the Forest Service.

Garrett Kravitz, officer-in-charge on the Elderberry, said they were asked by the Forest Service for a ship that could transport the tree to Juneau.

Almost 40% of eligible Wrangell teens fully vaccinated

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

As of Monday, 38% of Wrangell youth ages 12 through 17 had been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, less than the statewide average of 48%, according to state health department statistics.

The national rate is about 60%, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Though children as young as 5 became eligible for the shots earlier this month, the state website does not track vaccination rates separately for 5- through 11-year-olds on the "Sleeves Up for School" online dashboard.

SEARHC started offering vaccinations for children as young as 5 just three days after federal approval of the shots, with the first Wrangell clinic on Nov. 11.

The next vaccination clinic for first- and second-dose recipients, and also booster shots, is scheduled for 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. Dec. 1 at the Wrangell Medical Center, according to SEARHC's Facebook page on Monday.

The fully vaccinated rates for 12- through 17-year-olds in Sitka, Skagway, Bethel and Nome are about double Wrangell's percentages, around 70% to 80%, with the Kenai Peninsula and Matanuska-Susitna boroughs trailing the state at about 30% each.

And while SEARHC continues offering shots to boost Wrangell's vaccination numbers and protect its residents from serious illness, the community is nearing the end of its worst month of the pandemic for new cases of the highly infectious disease. As of Monday evening, the community had recorded 54

cases, surpassing the old record of 48 set in August.

This month's number is more than 25% of all the cases recorded in town since the pandemic tally started in March 2020.

All but one of the 54 cases are Wrangell residents, and almost all were close contacts of recent positive cases.

The number of new infections has declined in recent days, and with individuals recovering from the illness the active case count in Wrangell was down to 17 as of Monday evening, the borough reported.

Anyone with symptoms of the illness or a close contact of an infected individual can call the Wrangell Medical Center at 907-874-7000 to schedule an appointment to get a free COVID-19 test.

No-appointment-required free testing is available for individuals without symptoms from noon to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday at the testing trailer in the parking lot at the medical center.

As of Monday, 64% of Wrangell's 5-and-older population had received at least one dose of a vaccine, and 61% were fully vaccinated. Among the 18-and-older group, the percentages were 72% with a first dose and 70% fully vaccinated, according to the state COVID website.

Petersburg continues to struggle with a wave of new cases this month, reporting last Friday 94 active cases in the community and 69 new infections in the past seven days, with almost one in five tests during that time coming back positive.

State statistics show 182 new cases in Petersburg over the

past 30 days, about triple the rate in Wrangell.

Statewide, the number of new infections is declining, averaging 325 cases a day over the past week, the health department reported Monday. That's almost half the daily rate of 600 for the past 30 days, and down

significantly from September's highs of 1,200 new cases on some days.

The death toll from COVID-19 as of Monday was 862 statewide, with 13 each in Ketchikan and Juneau, five in Sitka, three in Petersburg and no deaths reported in Wrangell.

More than 143,000 cases have been reported in Alaska during the 21-month pandemic so far, with more than 3,000 hospitalizations, according to the state. There have been five individuals hospitalized in Wrangell during that time, the state COVID dashboard said.

<p>BLOSSOM TWITCHELL, SITKA SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER</p>	<p>FREDERICK OLSEN JR., SITKA COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCIL MEMBER</p>	<p>VIRGINIA OLIVER, TLINGIT LANGUAGE TEACHER (WRANGELL)</p>
<p>ARCHIE YOUNG, PE/MATH TEACHER/BASKETBALL & NYO COACH FOR MT. EDGECOMBE HIGH SCHOOL. ENROLLED TLINGIT & HAIDA TRIBAL CITIZEN. KEIAN YOUNG, SON - ENROLLED TLINGIT & HAIDA TRIBAL CITIZEN. INUPIAQ NAME IS AVEEDGAN.</p>	<p>CRYSTAL DUNCAN, SITKA ASSEMBLY MEMBER</p>	<p>KATHYHOPE ERICKSON, FORMER CHAIRWOMAN, SITKA TRIBE OF ALASKA</p>

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Shrinking labor force is not good for Wrangell

By LARRY PERSILY
Publisher

I am not an economist, though I like learning and thinking about economic problems. Nor am I a statistician, human resources manager or director of hiring at a business.

But I do think a lot about why so many employers in Wrangell, around the state and across the country are finding it so hard recruiting people to fill vacant jobs.

As of October, while there were 7,300 fewer jobs in Alaska than a year ago, there were three times as many people unemployed, according to U.S. Labor Department statistics.

Yet, it seems some days there are more help wanted signs on storefronts than open signs.

The unemployment rate in Wrangell, while half the rate of its pandemic peak in the spring of 2020, was still a full percentage point higher in October than a year ago, according to the state Labor Department. That means many of those who lost their jobs are back at work, but not all.

And yet multiple employers in town are looking for workers: The borough and school district have openings, TSA needs workers at the airport, and the chamber of commerce recently posted about a dozen Wrangell employers that had jobs in need of applicants.

So why aren't people without jobs applying for any of the multiple openings? National research answers a lot of that question.

Some people are reluctant to take jobs facing the public when COVID-19 is still more common, and deadly, than the flu. They are concerned for their own health, and the safety of their family. Maybe, in time, as vaccination rates go up and case counts go down, some will come back to work.

And some would like to get back on the job but find it hard without affordable child care. They can only lean on family for so many hours a week.

Others have decided maybe full-time work just isn't the dominating goal in life as they had assumed. Especially for families, many couples have figured out how to get by with something less than two full-time salaries.

And others have looked at their checkbook and decided state and federal pandemic relief aid has given them enough of a cushion that they will get a job when they need the money — and not before.

“But the interesting number among the charts and tables at the Alaska Department of Labor is that the size of Wrangell’s labor force has shrunk by more than 60 people in recent years.”

But the interesting number among the charts and tables at the Alaska Department of Labor is that the size of Wrangell’s labor force has shrunk by more than 60 people in recent years.

The statistics show that the community’s labor force averaged almost 1,050 people from 2010 to 2019. Then it fell below 990 in 2020 and is holding there this year, so far. “Labor force” is the total number of people working or looking for work. We know unemployment has been up since the pandemic

shutdowns started in March 2020, but Wrangell’s long-term hiring problem is that there are fewer people in the labor force than at any time in the past decade.

No wonder jobs are open — there are not enough people in town to fill them all.

And since there aren't dozens of vacant apartments for rent and homes for sale, I'd say it's a safe bet that some of that missing labor force has decided retirement looks better than working five days a week.

If Wrangell is going to fill its jobs, it needs new residents and more housing. Sounds like a New Year's resolution for the community.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Publisher's column shows political agenda on vaccines

Regarding the opinion column “From The Publisher” in the Nov. 10 Sentinel, “Accuracy and fairness count in headlines, too,” the author, Larry Persily, only presents us with one side of how headlines can be biased.

Yes, the headline, “CDC says go ahead and shoot the kids with Pfizer Covid vaccine,” from the Must Read Alaska website, was slanted, but how about also showing us one with a different perspective.

For instance, there was a headline from the New York Times, dated Oct. 10, 2021, “FDA says Pfizer vaccine’s benefits outweigh risks in children 5 to 11.” This title is slanted to the paper’s overall liberal view that all Americans should be vaccinated. How? If one reads further down in the article, it says “the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine generally outweighed the risks of the most worrisome possible side effect in that age group.” They use the word “generally” here, which has ample wiggle room for accuracy.

And the term “most worrisome ... side effects” makes me wonder about the other worrisome risks.

Also, let's keep in mind that any of these risk assessments do not include the possible long-term deleterious effects from the vaccine for both adults and

children.

My point is that Persily would have better served us if he had presented us with more than one viewpoint on the vaccine issue and how accuracy and fairness count in headlines. He had a political agenda here and it shows through.

John Petersen
Lodi, California

Alaska needs Ocean Rangers to monitor cruise ship pollution

As commercial fishermen traveling to and from the fishing grounds, we saw an increase in air and water pollution by the cruise industry — the summer of 2019 was very concerning.

The mixing zone between Chatham Strait and Frederick Sound where it is legal for the cruise ships to dump their gray water was streaked with blackish, foamy water pollution miles long and hundreds of feet wide. The hillsides were lined with blue smoke from their exhaust scrubbers that clung to the trees all summer long.

The Department of Environmental Conservation office in Juneau told us they had many complaints of the same thing. The state has a responsibility to protect the environment for the public and for the land, waters and wildlife of our extraordinary state.

The Ocean Ranger program is funded by a \$4 per-berth fee

paid by cruise ship passengers. No state general funds are used to support this program.

The voters created the Ocean Ranger program because they wanted a level of monitoring to ensure that the laws and regulations are followed.

Jason Brune, commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation, wants to remove the program. Both he and the governor oppose the Ocean Ranger program, and have stated they consider the program targeting the cruise industry as inappropriate and offensive.

The program still exists in state law, and all Alaskans should be concerned that these floating cities could go unchecked.

Alaska cruising is huge in the industry; there will be more than ever after the pandemic recovery. They need to know they are being watched so that they adhere to environmental standards. We can welcome tourism and still protect our beautiful state and resources.

Email jason.brune@alaska.gov. Let him know Alaskans want to keep the Ocean Ranger program.

Mark and Karen Severson
Petersburg

Sen. Murkowski recalls the magic of the Wrangell library

Congratulations on the 100th anniversary of the Irene Ingle Public Library. Bring-

ing the joy of reading and love of learning to the people of Wrangell for a century is certainly worthy of celebration.

The Wrangell library holds a special place in my heart as it was there that I was first introduced to the magic that a library holds. As a young child, I remember sitting on the floor of the library on rainy days, flipping through picture books. My first library card ever was from the Irene Ingle Public Library and was likely issued by Irene Ingle herself. I was thrilled when the librarian let me punch the checkout card for the books I took home.

My older sister Carol recalls sitting by big windows to read and “knowing that I could check out any book I wanted, all by myself, was a very powerful feeling.” Both of us are voracious readers to this day, and having unlimited access to books helped instill that love for learning.

However, our community libraries are no less important with the advancement of technology. They are still a place of learning, connecting and sharing of resources. They are still centers of our communi-

ties. They are still places where young people can go on rainy days to escape to the world of reading books.

Thank you to the residents of Wrangell for your support of lifelong learning opportunities housed at your public library.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski

Baha'is invite all to learn about the prophet-founder

On Saturday, Baha'is and their friends in Wrangell will commemorate with millions in communities across the world, the 100th anniversary of the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

'Abdu'l-Bahá was the eldest son of Bahá'u'lláh, prophet-founder of the Bahá'í faith. He is regarded as the Perfect Exemplar and living embodiment of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, which impressed upon society that religion is a cause for well-being through balanced spiritual and material advancement. He announced that the long-awaited time for humanity to unite had arrived.

As a 9-year-old child, 'Abdu'l-Bahá underwent religious

Continued on page 5

EDITORIAL

State defends its right to cut non-existent taxes

There is an inescapable irony to the fact that Alaska joined with a dozen other states in suing the federal government over their right to cut taxes.

This from a state that has no property tax on homes or businesses, only on the oil industry.

No state sales tax.

No personal income tax since 1979.

The lowest motor fuel tax in the nation, by a long shot.

There were few federal strings attached to the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act, which handed states hundreds of billions of dollars earlier this year to help pay the bills of the pandemic, cover for lost revenues and rebuild their communities. But one string added in the Senate prohibited states from using their share of the federal pandemic relief aid to cut taxes.

Unusual for the Senate, the provision made sense: Here's a gift of close to \$200 billion from the U.S. Treasury to help states pay the bills, assist with housing, food, schools and public services, whatever you want, just don't use it to cut taxes to gain favor with voters.

Justice Department lawyers argued before the court that the federal money should be used for its intended purpose — pandemic recovery. States can “cut all the taxes they want, as long as they do not use the federal aid” to cover it, Justice Department lawyers told the court.

But that string tied to the federal aid violated the states' constitutional rights, said the lawsuit filed by 13 states, including Alaska.

A federal judge in Alabama in a final ruling on Nov. 15 said Congress went too far. He decided in favor of the states and instructed the U.S. Treasury not to enforce the provision.

Alaska Gov. Mike Dunleavy took the opportunity of the court victory to lay the blame at the president, a frequent tactic among Alaska's elected officials. “Lately, we have been witnessing the Biden administration's tireless attempts to seize power from states,” the governor said in a prepared statement a day after the court ruling. “Now, we have proven that the White House cannot continue to overreach and threaten individual liberties with unconstitutional mandates.”

What individual liberties were at stake in the congressional intent to pay for services, not tax cuts?

In a bout of honesty, the governor's statement did acknowledge, “Currently, there are no pending proposals in Alaska to decrease taxes, so the law would not have had an immediate, direct impact on the state.”

Not only are “there no pending proposals” to cut taxes, there are no specific proposals from the governor to raise any new revenues to cover the state's long-term budget deficit. Dunleavy's only proposal is to drain more money out of the Alaska Permanent Fund in hopes that new revenues magically materialize to cover the bills in future years.

Instead of a political move to sue the federal government, how about a move that actually helps the state.

— Wrangell Sentinel

Oldest continuously published paper in Alaska

WRANGELL SENTINEL

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 2021.

Deliveries

Continued from page 1

but that's not always the case. A lot of people will use the physical address of the post office, thinking that their packages will be sent there."

Booker said people will also use a "general delivery" status, which is mail service for those without a permanent address.

Another problem C&D Deliveries runs into is a fluctuating population. The SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium has contract and traveling workers who might only be in Wrangell a short time, so tracking them down has proven to be complex.

"The biggest challenge, I would say, is not only trying to remember where the 2,000-plus residents live, but also trying to figure out where to deliver packages for new people that, for whatever reason, couldn't use a physical address for shipping."

Booker said Dixie has been able to use Facebook to track down quite a few people. It's normal to visit the company's

page and see posts asking for people's whereabouts.

The majority of packages come via airfreight, he said. Items that would typically be delivered via UPS in other places are flown into Wrangell from Anchorage or Ketchikan by ACE Air Cargo, a contracted carrier for UPS.

A scant amount of packages are delivered via barge, so "99.9% of all our freight is airfreight," he said. Items such as pharmaceuticals are brought in via Alaska Airlines.

"Locations outside of the Railbelt and Southcentral Alaska have extra days of time in transit built into their delivery schedule," said Matt Skeen, communications manager for the west region of UPS. "For Juneau, Sitka and Ketchikan, there is one-plus day added time in transit. For Wrangell, there are two-plus days time in transit."

Skeen said ACE has the ability to move cargo on its behalf Monday through Saturday.

The post office will accept small packages from FedEx, which are brought to town by ACE, but larger packages need to be received at the company's office at the airport. Any items shipped out through FedEx, regardless of size, need to be taken to the ACE office.

Deliveries times are also subject to bad weather, mechanical issues and scheduling.

"Most often, when people's (tracking information) say they're 'out for delivery,' we have to wait, I'd say, two to seven days for it to get here to Wrangell," Booker said. "And there's no tracking update for that, so people here understand that means their stuff is stuck in Anchorage."

With the holidays on the horizon, Booker expects to be putting in more than his usual 40 to 50 hours per week. He said December can be hectic, with a 25% to 50% increase in volume during the month. "Around the holiday season is when it gets to be a little more difficult. So far, we've been fortunate enough to find help in our family and friends when

we've needed it."

The Bookers have six children, with the oldest four ranging in ages 10 to 18, who like helping out.

"We have two delivery vans in operation, which makes staging deliveries and receiving freight at the same time possible. It sounds like a lot of work, and to be clear, it is," he said with a laugh.

To make deliveries easier and to help people get their packages as soon as possible, Booker urges residents to keep an updated address on file with C&D, especially if someone has recently moved.

"Sometimes when we are unaware that somebody has moved, we'll deliver their package to the old residence, which causes confusion," he said. "Try to send us a message on Facebook or leave a message on our office phone (with) the address change at (907) 874-4575. Otherwise, your packages may be a few days late getting to you."

Institute

Continued from page 1

working with the state archaeologist to figure out a timeline for survey work.

Carol Rushmore, zoning administrator, said the actual work probably won't get un-

derway until after the New Year, and estimates the survey cost at \$24,000 to \$30,000. "We're going to be doing this in phases because it's such an unknown."

The State Historic Preserva-

tion Office and Army Corps each have specific requirements, Rushmore said. The borough is trying to start with an initial assessment and archaeological survey required for the Corps' permit for wetlands fill to ready the property for residential development.

"The development that we're pursuing right now is the north half of the property. The full subdivision is about 40 lots, but our initial Phase One of the subdivision will be 20 lots," Rushmore said. "However, we were asking for the Corps permit for the entire proposed development of 40 lots."

The former school property

covers 134 acres.

Rushmore said while the Corps at this time only requires the borough to conduct an archaeological survey of the land that will be developed for roads and utilities, the state office "has a broader viewpoint, especially in light of the Department of the Interior's investigation of all Native boarding schools across the country."

Capital Facilities Director Amber Al-Haddad said the initial contract was with R & M Engineering to survey for the subdivision, and help the borough assess the cost for developing roads and utilities so the borough could move forward and sell the lots. "Under that contract, they're making a modification to add this archaeological work," she said.

The borough is paying for the archaeological survey, Rushmore said. The borough has not received any funds from the Department of the Interior, which is under a deadline of April 1, 2022, to submit a final written report to Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland on its review of the Native and Indian boarding school program.

Good said the residential development plan remains delayed until the borough can meet the Army Corps and state requirements.

Letters

Continued from page 4

persecution alongside His Father and was exiled with His family from their native Iran to Baghdad, from there to Turkey and then to the Ottoman prison city of Akka. During their imprisonment, 'Abdu'l-Bahá cared for His family and followers and looked after the poor and needy that they met at every leg of their banishment.

Bahá'u'lláh directed His followers to turn to 'Abdu'l-Bahá after His passing in 1892, thus preserving His Covenant in establishing harmony and unity among the worldwide Baha'i community as an abiding model for all to explore.

In 1908, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's imprisonment and exile was ended by events associated with the Young Turk Revolution. At age 68, he undertook a historic journey to Egypt, Europe and North America, where he spent 239 days traveling from coast to coast. His over 400 public talks conveyed the essential message of Baha'u'llah — the oneness of religion and mankind — relating it to the pressing needs of

humanity, the cause of peace, the equality of women and men, education for all, racial justice, social reform, and the role of religion in society.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's passed away in Haifa, Israel, on Nov. 28, 1921. More than 10,000 mourners from all religious backgrounds attended his funeral service where nine religious and civic authorities gave tender eulogies for the loss of their friend and confidant.

A film titled "Exemplar" has been produced about the Person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The Wrangell Baha'i community invites everyone to view the 55-minute film on their own at a time convenient for them. It is available at <https://www.bahai.org/exemplar/>. A Zoom session, open to all, will be held at 4 p.m. Saturday to reflect and share experiences of the film. Contact Kay Larson, 907-209-9117, or email kay.larson@gmail.com for the link to participate in the Zoom gathering.

Wrangell Baha'i community



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Powell moving on from helping students and staff at school

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

For six and a half years, Megan Powell has helped others navigate through Wrangell High School as secretary. Now, she's moving on.

On Friday, Powell will say goodbye to the students and staff that have become like a second family. She'll go to work as a teller at First Bank.

"I think it's just time for a change, and doing something different, trying something else out," she said. Powell came to the secretary position after leaving Crossings when she became pregnant with her first child and needed "more reasonable hours."

Powell said she will remain active in the educational community since she has two children of her own, and still is invested in the well-being of the 63 high school students and many middle school students she knows by name.

"It's going to be hard leaving that. The kids are going to be the hardest thing to leave," she said. "I'm going to miss that. It's really cool getting to see them grow up and develop and grow into adults, and see them kind of figure out life in middle school and work their way up."

She will definitely be missed by her co-workers as well, often taking on more responsibilities than that of secretary.

"She's been much more than a school secretary," said Bob Davis, assistant



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Megan Powell is leaving her job in the high school office after more than six and a half years helping students, staff and the community.

principal of the high school and middle school. "Because of budget cuts and staff shortages, she assumed responsibilities and duties usually assigned to counselors, tech directors, account clerks and school registrars, and she handled those responsibilities efficiently and with impeccable professionalism."

Powell's isn't the only position that is

now available. The school has several jobs it still needs to fill.

"We have some secretary positions that have just opened up and we always need subs," said Schools Superintendent Bill Burr. "Our staff is doing a wonderful job of covering each other and making sure our students get the education is necessary. But we are always open to

getting substitutes."

Much like the added responsibilities that Powell took on, Burr said it's common for other positions to be combined, if only "for an hour here or an hour there."

During her time at the school, Powell has been involved in the education of many students, seeing many leave, and some return. She was even honored one year with giving the commencement address at graduation.

"That was pretty cool," she said. "Last year, I was the graduating class' adviser and did their graduation for them. I tied into a lot of pieces for that."

But she's most proud of building a rapport with the students, making them feel comfortable and welcome at school.

"I had a student who said she was terrified of me, even to come (into the office)," Powell said. "Now, she's been babysitting my kids for years, she works at the elementary school now, she's working to become a teacher, so we've developed a really good friendship over the years."

Davis said Powell gave him advice and guidance when he became the assistant principal, helping him to find his footing.

"I often told her she knew my job better than I did," he said. "She always denied it, but in many ways it is true. They say no one is truly irreplaceable, but Megan is proof that they are wrong."

Substance abuse center rep reports on visit to Wrangell

By SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel reporter

A representative for a substance abuse recovery business that is exploring purchasing the former hospital visited Wrangell last week, learning from borough department heads how the community's services and facilities might fit the needs of the for-profit inpatient and outpatient treatment center.

Casey Odell, who used to live and work in Wrangell as a therapist and health counselor for Alaska Island Community Services in 2013, was in town Nov. 16-18. She has other work that limited her time here. "I'm a therapist. I still have private patients that I see," Odell said.

The plan initially was to try to bring along some of her colleagues from Florida-based Regard Recovery Centers, but it ended up being a solo trip this close to Thanksgiving.

Odell met with borough officials, community members and toured the facility.

Odell said she spoke with Jeff Good,

interim borough manager; Amber Al-Haddad, capital facilities director; Carol Rushmore, economic development director; and Kate Thomas, parks and recreation director.

"I'm just trying to connect with the folks that have businesses, operations, interests in the surrounding area. Parks and recreation does a lot of collaboration with health care here in Wrangell," Odell said. "They're very in tune with what's going on in the community. It's just a very valuable resource."

She added, "The intention of this project in general is to be collaborative with the community. What that could potentially look like, I don't know. I'm exploring those conversations. That's really the objective of this trip."

Thomas said her conversation with

Odell centered on two things: Making use of the site's proximity to Volunteer Park to supplement client treatment plans, and the potential to recruit and train the workers the company would need from Wrangell, similar to SEARHC's locally grown certified nursing assistant training program.

"Most of the time, folks have to leave Wrangell to get skilled experience," Thomas said, be it certifications, internships or apprenticeships.

Thomas said it would be helpful for residents to have training and job opportunities within their own community.

As for client access to outdoor recreation, Thomas said it's becoming more and more common for care providers to prescribe physical activity for physical ailments and disease, and parks and recreation welcomes all members of the community to use its trails and parks, the closest one to the former hospital being Volunteer Park.

"It's wise for (Regard Recovery Centers) to keep our services on the horizon

for folks who might be prepared for an outpatient treatment plan," Thomas said. "I don't know what an inpatient treatment plan would look like, and the liberties of that program, but if they were able to move more freely outside of the building, our services would be able to be utilized."

Meanwhile, Odell said determining the company's potential monetary investment in Wrangell is still in the exploratory stages.

As for what the company expected from her brief visit: "What will it take on the front end for us to get from where we are today to being able to serve our first client? Those are all questions that we have to find the answers to," Odell said.

There's a lot of potential with this project, she said. Creating new jobs and a new industry, and putting the empty hospital building to good use. "But also there's a great need in the community for this type of service, not just in Wrangell, but all of Southeast and Alaska."



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Public comment open to restore roadless rule for Tongass

JUNEAU (AP) — The federal government said Nov. 18 that it's beginning the process of repealing a Trump-era rule that permitted road building and logging in the Tongass National Forest, home to about 60,000 people and habitat for wolves, bears and salmon.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced that a proposed measure to repeal

last year's Forest Service rule will be published for public comment this week, beginning a 60-day process.

The previous rule exempted more than 9 million acres in the Tongass from a 2001 nationwide rule that banned road construction, reconstruction and timber harvesting in roadless areas, with some exceptions.

At 16.7 million acres, Tongass is the largest national for-

est in the country.

Conservationist and Native communities had opposed the exemption for the Tongass, arguing it threatened wildlife, old-growth rainforest and local economies that rely on tourism and fishing. They applauded the announcement.

"The Tongass is a priceless resource and a critical tool in the fight against climate change, and this action brings

us one step closer to ensuring that our forest wildlands remain protected for good," Sierra Club Alaska Chapter Director Andrea Feniger said in a statement.

Andy Moderow, of the Alaska Wilderness League agreed. "We commend President (Joe) Biden and (Agriculture) Secretary (Tom) Vilsack in taking steps to restore the faith and trust of Alaskans who recognize that industrial-scale, old-growth logging is a relic of the past in Southeast Alaska," he said in a statement.

Alaska's congressional delegation has supported the exemption to allow roads and logging in the Tongass. When the Biden administration first announced plans to repeal or replace the exemption in June, Sen. Dan Sullivan called the decision "misguided," and Rep Don Young said it was "yet another nail in the coffin for economic opportunity" in Southeast Alaska.

Sullivan had said the roadless rule is a hindrance to activities such as mineral development, building energy projects and connecting communities.

Police report

Monday, Nov. 15
Welfare check.
Missing firearm.

Tuesday, Nov. 16
Unattended death.
Citizen assist: Vehicle unlock.

Wednesday, Nov. 17
Agency assist: Ambulance requested.
Agency assist: Ambulance requested.
Disturbance.

Thursday, Nov. 18
Vehicle impound.

Parking complaint.
Wellness check.

Friday, Nov. 19
Violating conditions of release.
Summons service.

Saturday, Nov. 20
Citizen assist.
Agency assist: Senior Center.
Disturbance.
Agency assist: Ambulance.
Disturbance.

Sunday, Nov. 21
Nothing to report.



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Popular pastime puts players in a pickle

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

What began 56 years ago on Bainbridge Island, Washington, pingponged around the world, and landed on Wrangell's shores just a few years ago.

Now, pickleball is becoming popular among local players of all abilities.

The sport, played on a 20-foot by 44-foot court with a tennis-type net in the middle, was invented in 1965 by friends Joel Pritchard, Bill Bell and Barney McCallum. According to the official USA Pickleball website, the game was named "pickle ball" by Joel's wife, Joan, in reference to "thrown-together leftover non-starters in the 'pickle boat' of crew races," since the game was comprised of various equipment from other sports.

Pickleball grew quickly in popularity, with its founders forming a corporation to keep the integrity of the sport intact. The first tournament was held in 1976, and in 1984 the United States Amateur Pickleball Association was formed, and the game spread across the nation.

In 2010, an international federation was formed to encourage growth across the globe. It's now played in 33 countries, including Holland, Armenia, China, Poland, New Zealand and Belgium.

The appeal of the game is that almost anybody can play.

"The great thing about pickleball is that the court is small and you are on teams of two, so it does not require much running," said Heather Howe, a high school teacher, who happens to be five months pregnant. "So far, I have been able to keep up with every-



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Greg Roberts, left, and Eric Hagelman return a volley during a pickleball game on Nov. 18 at the community gym.

one while pregnant. I anticipate I will be able to keep playing through most of my pregnancy."

Howe began playing about a month ago and had no idea what to expect. She has looked forward to playing Thursday nights at the community gym, and she's encouraged her friends to play as well. "It has been a relatively easy game to learn and I love the friendly competition," she said. Though she has no dreams of going pro, Howe did tell her husband a pro paddle would make a great Christmas gift.

The game uses paddles similar to those in pingpong and a ball somewhat like a whiffle ball. The ball is volleyed back and forth by players (individuals or teams of two) until one side reaches 11 points, win-

ning by a two-point lead.

Chris Johnson was introduced to pickleball by his sister in Arizona and promptly fell in love with it. Having been a tennis player for many years, he enjoyed the similarities but on a smaller court with less impact. He bought a net with Mayor Steve Prysunka and started playing.

They began playing locally about four years ago and, in the beginning, Johnson said it wasn't very popular, only drawing eight or nine people.

"Then it started growing a bit, and this year it's really caught on. We've had as many as 18 or 19 people in here," he said. The borough's parks and recreation department bought another net and more paddles and balls, and the games are now

held twice a week on Tuesdays from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and on Thursdays from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Johnson said the rules are easy and players can learn quickly.

"I started playing pickleball after my body wouldn't handle racquetball anymore," said John Deruyter, a retired psychologist. He played racquetball for 50 years. "I just couldn't keep up anymore, it hurt too bad."

Deruyter, 70, said a good buddy of his talked him into playing pickleball, and he found that the skills from racquetball transitioned to the low-impact sport.

"It's much lower impact, and there are no walls to run into," he said with a laugh. "What I've discovered playing pickleball is that I can still get really good aerobic exercise ... without the pain."

Sebastian and Lindsay Pomeroy, both 26, moved from Ogden, Utah, to Wrangell to work for Crossings. The couple started playing after finding the game listed on the parks and recreation website about a month ago, but they weren't strangers to it.

"We played pickleball a lot at home before we got here in September," Sebastian Pomeroy said. "There's a handful of folks who are competitive, but most are still learning."

The cost to play is \$5 per session, and the program runs about eight weeks at a time.

"We're getting big enough to where we might do some ratings, and Lucie (Robinson) is planning on having an end-of-the-season small tournament with some pizza and prizes," Johnson said. "We just have to see how this progresses. Sometimes there's a lot of interest, sometimes there's not as much interest."

Airport COVID greeter, tire shredder positions remain unfilled

By SARAH ASLAM
Sentinel reporter

Temporary jobs created by the borough last month remain unfilled — an airport greeter to familiarize travelers with COVID-19 rules and two tire shredder positions.

The airport greeter position, approved by the borough assembly on Oct. 12, is a part-time, temporary position at \$15.09 per hour and requires the worker to drive to the airport, ferry terminal, harbors or other locations to greet incoming travelers and inform them of the borough's COVID travel testing mandates.

The position, which requires a high school diploma or GED, would involve regular reporting to the Emergency Operations Center manager regarding the effectiveness of the greeter program.

The position does not include benefits, said Jeff Good, interim borough manager.

In the meantime, since the position is still empty, "for the airport, we are working with them to get a bigger, more visible sign on the wall for COVID testing," Good said. The sign would replace a sandwich board outside the terminal doors that lists the Wrangell Medical Center's clinic location and hours.

The borough requires that all travelers into town must either upload to the state travel portal proof of a negative COVID test taken within 72 hours of their departure for Wrangell or take a test upon arrival at the Wrangell Medical Center.

Alaska residents are exempt from the testing requirement if they agree to quarantine for 14 days after arriving in town.

Fully vaccinated travelers are exempt from the borough's testing or self-quarantine rules.

The two tire shredder positions also are unfilled. The borough assembly in October approved a resolution to share a \$56,700 tire cutter purchased with a grant awarded to the Southeast Conference on behalf of the Southeast Alaska Solid Waste Authority.

The grant covered the cost of buying the hydraulic-powered unit; each community will pay \$25 a day for its maintenance and upkeep on days the unit is used.

The public works department received one applicant, but that did not pan out, Director Tom Wetor said. The positions start at \$14.54 an hour and do not include benefits.

The plan was to chop tires until the bottom of a massive pile at the dump could be reached. "In an ideal world, we would have been able to get to all of them," Wetor said. Of the regional waste authority's mem-

ber communities, the tire cutter came here first because Wrangell led the conversation about the need for the machine to reduce the shipping volume of discarded tires stacked up around Southeast.

But there are inherent hazards of being first when it comes to something new. Wetor said a hydraulic pump on the cutter broke the first week Wrangell had it, and the cutter was down for seven to 10 days. The company that makes the equipment, a mom-and-pop operation out of Iowa, Wetor said, usually sends a technician in person to set up their equipment, but they didn't send someone to Alaska.

"I don't think they ever sold one this far away," Wetor said, and hadn't anticipated having to budget to send a tech to Alaska.

The company sent a replacement part, which got waylaid in Anchorage before it

reached Wrangell. And instead of having a technician in person to help set up the equipment, or fix it, the department mechanic was on the phone with the company, trying to troubleshoot. A temporary staff worker Wetor had assigned to operate the cutter ran it for three weeks before their hours were used up, he said.

Wetor originally factored getting through the estimated 20,000-tire pile by December, but said the department has only been able to fill one-third of a shipping container. Wetor estimates — a rough estimate, because no one has seen the bottom of the pile in decades, and there are larger tires the cutter can't chop — that Wrangell has enough tires to fill six of the 40-foot-long open-top shipping containers.

Regardless of the progress they make, the cutter will have to leave Wrangell in

February, on to Petersburg, the next community in the network sharing the cutter, which consists of Petersburg, Thorne Bay, Craig, Klawock, Kasaan, Coffman Cove and Hydaburg.

It could be one to two years before Wrangell gets the cutter again. "I'm hopeful we can get someone before we lose this thing," Wetor said.

The two part-time, temporary positions require outdoor work in all weather conditions, and the ability to move tires and rims that weigh up to 100 pounds for eight-hour shifts, according to the job posting.

"Part of the problem is, we're going into winter," Wetor said. "If you could make the same amount of money inside, why wouldn't you?"



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PREVENT THE SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS

5 STEPS TO STAY SAFE FROM COVID-19

1

STAY HOME IF YOU ARE SICK

even if you think it is just a cold. Call Wrangell Medical Center at 907-874-7000 to schedule a test.

2

KEEP SOME DISTANCE

from people outside of your household, and avoid crowded places.

3

WEAR A MASK

when indoors in public places. Masks are required in Borough facilities and on all public transportation.

4

GET TESTED

Free asymptomatic testing is available at the Clinic testing trailer, Mon.-Sat., noon to 4 p.m. No appointment necessary.

5

GET VACCINATED

all individuals 5 and older are eligible to receive a free vaccination. Call Wrangell Medical Center at 907-874-7000 to schedule an appointment.

SPORTS ROUNDUP

Lady Wolves place second at regionals



PHOTO BY KYLE CLAYTON/CHILKAT VALLEY NEWS

Wrangell's Kiara Harrison scores against the Craig Panthers last Saturday during the second day of the Southeast regional volleyball tournament in Haines.

Sentinel staff

The Wrangell High School volleyball team will head to the state competition in Anchorage after placing second at regionals last weekend in Haines.

Coach Alyssa Allen said the Lady Wolves beat Haines once and Craig twice, and lost to Klawock twice, placing second out of seven teams.

"Overall, the kids played really well," Allen said. "They played hard after a short week of practice due to COVID protocols."

Emma Martinsen ran an excellent offense for the team, the coach said, while Kiara Harrison, Kendra Meissner and Aubrey Wynne had a good tournament hitting the ball. Meissner stepped into a different position than normal, with good results.

Harrison, Meissner and Martinsen made the all-conference team.

Allen has confidence going into the state competition, but said the team has some areas to work on.

"A couple of things we need to work on is covering our hitters and our passing on serve receive," she said.

Those who want to see the matches Dec. 2 through Dec. 4 can watch a live stream on nfhnetwork.com/playoffs/state/alaska. The site is only accessible through paid subscription.

Wrestlers take three first-place victories in Sitka competition

By MARC LUTZ
Sentinel editor

The Wrangell Wolves high school wrestling team grappled with Craig, Sitka and Mt. Edgecumbe last weekend in Sitka instead of traveling to Palmer to compete in a bigger tournament there.

The weekend's matches resulted in three first-place wins, a second place and two third-place finishes.

"It was a great weekend of wrestling, even though it was a small meet," said assistant coach Jack Carney.

Liana Carney, Mia Wiederspohn and Ryan Rooney won first place in their weight classes, while Ethan Blatchley won second. Lily Younce, Vanessa Barnes and Daniel Harrison won third place for their weight classes. Newcomer Lucas Schneider had two wins during his first competition.

Carney said only eight of the 15 wrestlers competed at the event last Friday and Saturday.

"The team had some impressive matches (on Nov. 19). We got lots of compliments on our team's relentless wrestling style and technique," he posted on Facebook, adding that he hopes to get all 15 wrestlers to compete in the next matches.

The Wolves are scheduled to compete on Dec. 3 and Dec. 4 in Juneau. Regionals are scheduled to take place in Wrangell on Dec. 10 and 11, with state scheduled the following weekend in Anchorage.

Infrastructure bill includes funds for Alaska village water and sewer projects

The Associated Press
and the Wrangell Sentinel

Tribes nationwide will receive an infusion of federal money from the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill to expand broadband coverage, fix roads and address water and sanitation needs. The measure does not allocate funds to individual tribes on a per-capita basis as did the 2020 CARES Act or 2021 American Rescue Plan.

Much of the overall infrastructure funding will be distributed as competitive grants through federal agencies. Funds also will be directed to the states, with lawmakers making the decisions on which projects to undertake.

The legislation signed last week by President Joe Biden includes about \$11 billion in benefits allocated for Indian Country, according to the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. About one-third of that, \$3.5 billion, will go to the Indian Health Service, the federal agency tasked with providing health care for more than 2 million Native American and Alaska Natives.

The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, based in Anchorage, is the largest Indian Health Service contractor in the state, serving almost 180,000 Alaska Natives. It is the largest tribal health organization in the country.

Much of the Indian Health Service funding in the bill will go toward water and sewer projects. The Alaska Tribal Health Compact is the federally authorized designee in the state for water and sewer projects in villages, many of which lack water and sanitation services.

Nationwide, the funding is enough to address more than 1,560 projects on the Indian Health Service list of water and sanitation deficiencies, estimated to cost nearly \$2.6 billion. Projects in Alaska and the Southwest region that covers the Navajo Nation — where many tribal members live without running water and indoor plumbing — collectively have the largest price tags.

"In these and several other tribal communities, sanitation and clean water systems would never be built because the annual appropri-

ations were insufficient to cover all the deficiencies," the National Indian Health Board said Nov. 17.

About \$2.5 billion will go to fulfill tribal water rights settlements that already have been approved. The Interior Department hasn't specified which agreements that quantify tribes' rights to water are included. But the leaders of the Navajo Nation, which extends into parts of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah, and the White Mountain Apache Tribe in eastern Arizona said they expect to benefit from the funding.

Heather Tanana, who is Navajo and an assistant law professor at the University of Utah, is part of a group that released a roadmap on Nov. 16 on how the federal government can move forward with the funding effectively. It includes coordination among federal agencies, working with tribes and through an existing tribal task force.

Tanana, the research lead for the Tribal Clean Water initiative, said the efforts should include building capacity for tribes to operate water and sanitation systems on their own.

"It's critical to getting the money that Congress just appropriated on to the ground and into actual projects."

Building and improving upon water and sanitation systems will have a cascading effect in tribal communities and urban areas where most Native Americans live, improve health disparities and foster economic development, the National Indian Health Board said. The group also said the momentum should continue with Congress fully funding health care facilities serving Indigenous people as part of the federal government's obligation to federally recognized tribes.

Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski said the funding is long overdue. "It's been decades that we've been talking about eliminating the honey bucket and getting clean drinking water into communities, and sanitation systems," she said, referring to lined buckets used to collect human waste in many isolated Alaska Native villages that lack indoor plumbing.

"A flush toilet is not too much to

ask in this day and age," Murkowski said.

Tribal leaders told the Biden administration during the virtual summit that they appreciated the money in the infrastructure bill but pointed out some potential hurdles, including for tribes that don't have the resources to compete for grants or match the funding.

"Why can't tribes just receive

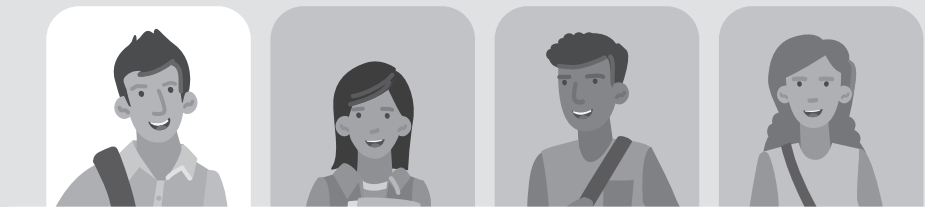
the funding?" said Janet Davis, chairwoman of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe in Nevada. "Why do we have to write grants to be able to use it, so we can use it for our communities to be safe?"

Navajo President Jonathan Nez suggested federal policies and regulations be eased or updated so projects won't be stalled. He cited needing environmental clearances from two different federal agen-

cies when a U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs road or bridge is constructed on the reservation.

"A failure to clear out some of the burdens that prevent infrastructure investment will mean all our efforts to help pass the infrastructure bill may not lead to the progress we want for our people," Nez said. "What's the point of giving us money if regulations make it almost impossible to spend it?"

1 in 4 Alaska high school students vape.



E-CIGARETTES, or VAPES, can deliver high concentrations of nicotine and other harmful chemicals.

In 2019, nearly 1 of every 4 middle school students (24.3%) and over half (53.3%) of high school students said they had ever tried a tobacco product.



REGULAR NICOTINE USE can have harmful effects on your teen's developing brain. It can affect memory, learning, attention span and can even lead to addiction.



Parents, talk to your children about vaping.
Resources are available at alaskaquitline.com/not-buying-it



Snow days in Wrangell



PHOTOS BY MARC LUTZ/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Bo Ritchie sleds down the hill (without a sled) last Saturday near Volunteer Park. Ritchie, his brother, Ryder, and many other children took advantage of the fresh snow to get some outdoor playtime.

Hospice continues tradition of two holiday tree events

Sentinel staff

Hospice of Wrangell is doing its usual double duty this holiday season, with its annual Dove Tree ceremony to remember lost friends and family members and the Christmas Tree Lane fundraiser.

Both events are at the Nolan Center.

The Dove Tree ceremony is scheduled for 2 p.m. Sunday and will include readings, a homily by the Rev. Suellen Bahleda of Island of Faith Lutheran Church, and music by Cindy Martin, Sarah Scambler, Bonnie Demerjian and Alice Rooney.

The tree, with paper doves in memory of people who have

died, "has a place of honor" among the displays at Christmas Tree Lane, Rooney said.

Volunteers already have prepared a dove for each community member who passed away in the past year, and blank doves will be available for anyone to add remembrances to the tree, she said.

The tree will be up throughout the holidays.

Christmas Tree Lane, a fundraising event for hospice, invites community members to bring pre-decorated table-top size or larger trees — artificial trees, only — and holiday table runners to the Nolan Center. The items will be sold to the highest bidder in a silent auc-

tion, with hospice to keep half and the artist to keep half of the sales income.

In past years, as many as 20 trees were auctioned, Rooney said.

No wreaths, please, she added.

The Dove Tree and Christmas Tree Lane have been annual events for close to 20 years.

People can bring their decorated items to the Nolan Center from noon to 4 p.m. this Saturday, or from 2 to 6 p.m. Monday. Prizes will be awarded.

Bidding opens Dec. 1 and closes at noon Dec. 17 to allow winners to take their items home for the holidays.

For more information, call Rooney at 907-305-0007.

Wrangell succeeds in filling holiday food boxes for 50

Sentinel staff

Unlike Fairbanks and the Kenai Peninsula which struggled to complete their traditional holiday food box menus — partially due to nationwide supply chain shortcomings — Wrangell's organizers report 50 Thanksgiving boxes went out fully stuffed.

The Salvation Army, which coordinates the holiday campaign for the Wrangell Ministerial Association, placed its Thanksgiving order in October with City Market and IGA to ensure everything would arrive on time.

They turned in their Christmas food order on Nov. 1, and are still taking inventory of what has come in and is still expected to arrive. "Christmas, we might run into a bit of an issue," Lt. Jon Tollerud, of the Salvation Army, said last week.

And while this week's Thanksgiving food boxes featured a turkey, the Christmas menu starts with a ham, he said.

In addition, the Christmas box will include additional food for at least a couple of extra weeks, as the Salvation Army food pantry closes the first two weeks of January, Tollerud said.

The deadline to sign up for a Christmas food box is Dec. 3. Deliveries are planned for Dec. 17. Call the Salvation Army at 907-874-3753.

Just two weeks before Thanksgiving, the Fairbanks Food Bank reported it was short 1,700 turkeys, plus canned yams, cranberry sauce and frozen pies.

By last Friday, just six days before Thanksgiving, the food bank reported it had cut its turkey shortage in half, and then 17,000 pounds of donated food came in the next day, moving the organization closer to its goal.

The Kenai Peninsula Food Bank reported no shortages of turkeys. Instead, it was short of gravy mix, instant potatoes, stuffing, canned yams, canned cranberries and canned pumpkin.

"We just keep encountering these strange things," Greg Meyer, the food bank director, said of supply uncertainties. "We finally got sugar. Sugar, flour and rice were really hard for about two months. And egg noodles was another one that was really hard to get," he told public radio station KDLL.

Petersburg decides against enforcement penalties in new face mask ordinance

By CHRIS BASINGER
Petersburg Pilot

The Petersburg borough assembly last week adopted a new emergency ordinance requiring face masks in indoor public places amid a surge of COVID-19 cases in the community the past couple of weeks.

The assembly, however, deleted from the draft ordinance a proposed \$50 non-compliance fine for individuals and \$100 fine for business and property owners.

The ordinance adopted by the assembly Nov. 17 replaced an emergency ordinance adopted Nov. 5, which also did not include any specific enforcement measures for non-compliance.

The public health face-mask ordinance applies to communal spaces, community events and such, but a requirement that businesses deny admittance to anyone not wearing a mask was dropped during assembly consideration.

The ordinance expires the evening of Dec. 6.

More than a dozen people spoke out against the fines and other language in the ordinance at the Nov. 17 meeting. Many said the provisions would only serve to divide the community. Others called it government overreach and a violation of civil rights, while some questioned the effectiveness of masks at stopping the spread of the virus.

Petersburg Police Chief James Kerr said enforcing mask mandates would end in verbal altercations and physical conflicts with police.

"Voting yes on enforcing masking allows the assembly to hide behind their vote while they destroy the community's relationship among neighbors, the police department and local government," Kerr said.

Jim Floyd, general manager of Hammer & Wikan grocery and hardware store, said businesses are neither equipped nor willing to require employees to enforce the ordinance as originally proposed.

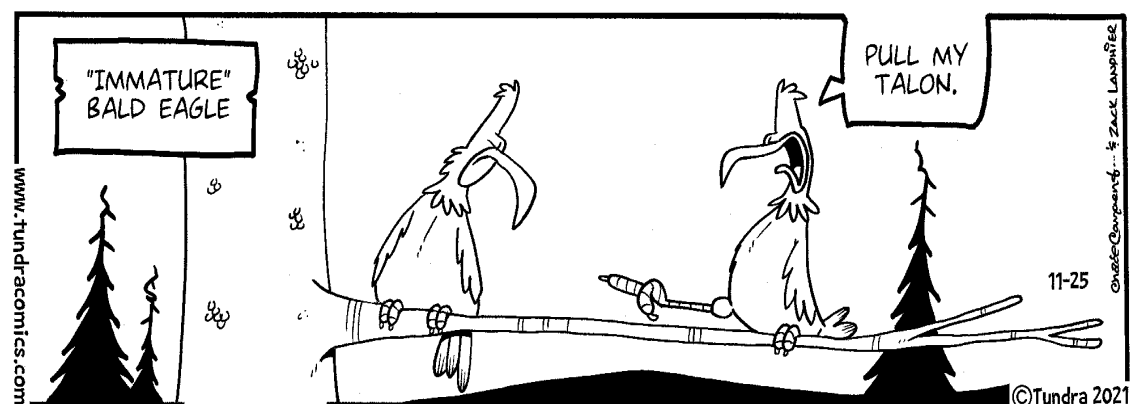
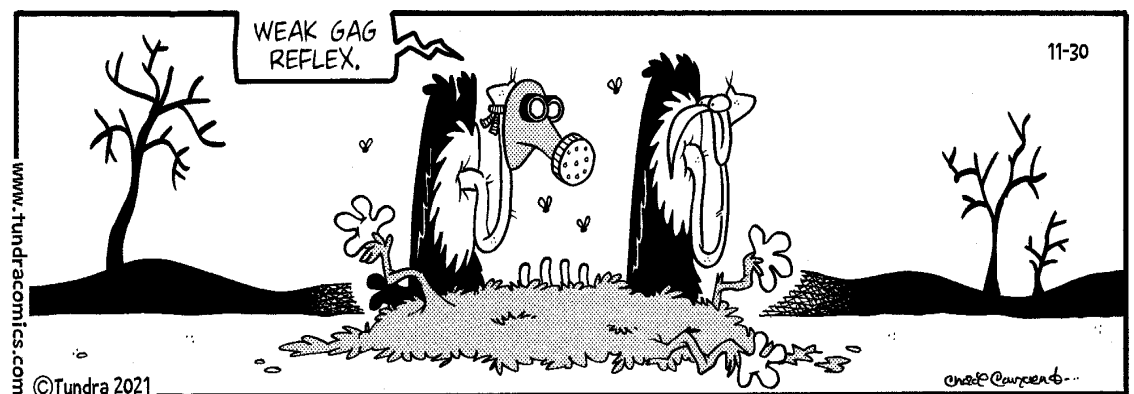
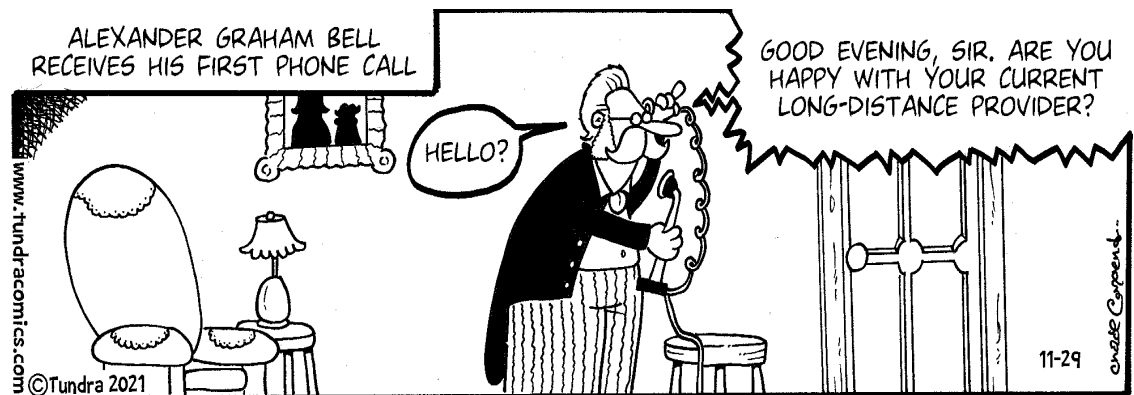
A collection of businesses in Petersburg had signed a letter to the assembly, stating their opposition to the ordinance because of "the inappropriate level of arrogance and overreach of government into our community's private business."

The letter stated that if the ordinance as originally proposed were to pass, the businesses would close and put a sign on their doors reading "CLOSED DUE TO GOVERNMENT OVERREACH — Contact your borough assembly members."

Vice Mayor Leigh Stanton Gregor said he was frustrated with some of the comments of people who called into the meeting and questioned why people would wear a mask when they travel on a plane but not for their own neighbors.

"I'm imploring members of the public to please — it doesn't cost you a penny — please wear a mask and do your best not to get other people sick. It is preventable. Mitigation strategies do work," Stanton Gregor said.

Tundra by Chad Carpenter



CLASSIFIED/LEGALS

JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS
Wrangell Public Schools is accepting applications for multiple positions. All positions are open until filled.

Accounting Clerk: A full-time, 12-month position with benefits working in the Business Office. Responsibilities include assisting the Business Manager with accounting functions such as accounts payable, payroll, etc. This position will also include duties to be determined to assist the district and site administration. This position is paid on Column E of the classified salary schedule. Accounting experience is preferred.

Business Manager: A full-time, 12-month position with benefits paid on the exempt-employee salary schedule. Responsibilities include oversight of the school budget using a uniform chart of accounts coding, maintaining financial records, conducting all banking, payroll, accounts payable, annual audit preparation, and advising the superintendent in all matters that are financially relevant for the district. Degree in business and/or five years experience in school business management preferred but not required. Professional development/job training is available.

School Secretaries: These are full-time, 10-month positions with benefits working in the elementary, middle or high school. Salary placement is Column G on the 10-month classified salary schedule. Responsibilities include performing office functions at a public school and serving as secretary to the school administration, students and staff.

For a complete job description contact the district office at 907-874-2347. It is the Wrangell Public School District's policy to not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, national origin, sex or disability.

SPECIAL ON ADS

Get 25% off all ads in the Dec. 2 issue of the Sentinel that promote this year's Midnight

Madness sales. Deadline is Nov. 29. Contact Amber at 907-874-2301 or wrgsent@gmail.com.

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
INVITATION TO BID
Swimming Pool Lighting Replacement**

Notice is hereby given that the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, will receive sealed bids for the construction of the Swimming Pool Lighting Replacement project. The work consists of all activities necessary to construct the project, which includes the replacement of light fixtures, panelboard and wiring, and other improvements. The engineer's estimate for all work is approximately \$45,000-\$50,000.

Sealed bids will be received by the City and 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 December 6, 2021, and publicly opened and read at that time. The contract documents are available in electronic format and can be downloaded from the City and Borough of Wrangell website (www.wrangell.com) under the Bids and RFPs Section.

The owner reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any informality in a bid, or to make award as it best serves the interests of the owner.

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

Publish Nov. 18, 24 and Dec. 2, 2021

**WRANGELL COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION
MAINTENANCE FACILITY
PRE-ENGINEERED METAL BUILDING
SUPPLY CONTRACT**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT the Wrangell Cooperative Association (WCA) is soliciting bids for supplying a pre-engineered steel metal building. The lump-sum base bid and alternate bid shall include all materials, structural steel, secondary steel such as purlins and girts, insulated metal panels, door framing, mechanical openings and misc. metal fabrications as shown on the drawings. Installation of the metal building is not a part of the bid.

To receive the Invitation for Bid (IFB), contact: 907-874-3077, office of Bill Willard. Each firm must register with WCA by sending an email to: wwillard@wca-t.com to receive the IFB documents. The IFB documents will also be posted on The Plans Room. Bids from unregistered bidders will not be accepted. The required email must include the firm name, address and telephone number. No faxed or oral bids will be allowed.

Bid Submission Deadline: To be considered, bids must be emailed to Bill Willard, Wrangell Cooperative Association, at wwillard@wca-t.com by 2 p.m. local time, on December 3, 2021.

Publish Nov. 4, 10, 18 and 24, 2021



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Alaska Marine Highway System is actively recruiting focused, hard-working individuals interested in positions in our **Passenger Services** department. These employees provide professional customer service and ensure the safety of our passengers while performing tasks in the galley, dining room or cafés, crew mess, staterooms and public areas aboard the ferries.

AMHS is also offering a **Hiring Bonus** for qualified candidates interested in building a merchant mariner career.* Best of all, you don't need any prior maritime experience to apply! Choose a position today that can start you on the path to building your certifications for a successful maritime career.

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*Conditions apply. Review the job posting for details.

**WRANGELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS
PUBLIC NOTICE**

Wrangell Public Schools is accepting letters of interest from citizens who wish to serve on the School Board. The unexpired term of appointment is until October 2022.

To be eligible to be a member of the School Board, a person must have the same qualifications as are necessary to be a municipal voter in the School District.

Letters of interest should be submitted to: School Board President David Wilson, P.O. Box 2319 Wrangell, AK 99929. You can also email your letter of interest to the Administrative Assistant at: kpowell@wpsd.us on or before Tuesday, November 30, 2021, at 4 p.m.

Information on the powers and duties of the School Board are contained in School Board Policy, Article 7. A copy of the policy chapter can be obtained at the School District Office or viewed at the school's website at <http://www.wpsd.us>.

Publish: Nov. 18 and 24, 2021

Alaska Department of Fish and Game



**Wrangell Fish and Game Advisory
Committee Meeting**

Tuesday, December 7, 2021, 6:30pm

The Nolan Center, 296 Campbell Drive, Wrangell

Zoom webconference available

Free & open to the public

Agenda items include:

1. Board of Fisheries Proposals
2. Comments on special harvest area and enhancement proposals
3. Comments on shrimp/crab proposals

And other issues as needed.

To join the meeting from a computer or phone, use the following Zoom link or phone number, and enter the meeting ID.

Zoom Meeting Link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82980309608?pwd=RDJOY3FNSktWT3hkZEtaNlB3gZdz09>

Phone: +1 253 215 8782

Meeting ID: 829 8030 9608

Passcode: 436423

Fish & Game Advisory Committees are a collection of community members from across user groups that come together, discuss Fish & Game issues, and recommend changes to current regulations. They also represent their community before the Board of Fisheries & Board of Game at board meetings.

For further information, please contact:

Chris Guggenbickler cggugg@gci.net

or Henry Leasia, henry.leasia@alaska.gov (907) 465-6097

Alaska Department of Fish and Game



**Wrangell Fish and Game Advisory
Committee Meeting**

Thursday, December 9, 2021, 6:30pm

The Nolan Center, 296 Campbell Drive, Wrangell

Zoom webconference available

Free & open to the public

Agenda items include:

- Board of Fisheries proposals
- Comments on personal use/sport/subsistence proposals
- Groundfish proposals

And other issues as needed.

To join the meeting from a computer or phone, use the following Zoom link or phone number, and enter the meeting ID.

Zoom Meeting Link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89478839848?pwd=YS9UYXhQUW83ak1XMEUzSUczMUNjUT09>

Phone: +1 253 215 8782

Meeting ID: 894 7883 9848

Passcode: 675355

Fish & Game Advisory Committees are a collection of community members from across user groups that come together, discuss Fish & Game issues, and recommend changes to current regulations. They also represent their community before the Board of Fisheries & Board of Game at board meetings.

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or Henry Leasia, henry.leasia@alaska.gov (907) 465-6097

Alaska Fish Factor

By LAINE WELCH
Fisheries columnist

Legislative hearing questions state position on bycatch

A hearing on seafood bycatch didn't satisfy a bipartisan group of Alaska legislators at a meeting of the House Fisheries Committee on Nov. 15.

The bycatch issue came up again this summer when all Yukon River salmon fisheries were canceled due to so few returning Chinook and chums. Along with ocean and climate impacts, villagers questioned the takes by huge trawlers that catch and process fish at sea.

A presentation of the committee hearing by Glenn Merrill, regional administrator at NOAA Fisheries/Alaska, showed that in the 2019 Bering Sea pollock fishery 20,000 Chinook salmon were taken as bycatch and more than 500,000 chums, with only 1% originating from the Yukon River.

The hearing shifted from salmon to the building anger among Alaskans over the amounts of halibut, crab and other seafood taken as bycatch in federally managed waters (3 to 200 miles out), where nearly 65% of Alaska's fish volumes are harvested.

Most bycatch is taken by a wrong gear or the fish is caught out of season or it's too small and federal law dictates that it must be thrown overboard, Merrill explained.

He showed that bycatch totals in 2020 were 3.3 million pounds by pot gear, more than 38.5 million pounds by hook and line, and more than 92 million pounds by trawlers, who fish at varying depths down to the bottom.

Federal rules for fisheries, "require balancing minimizing bycatch to the extent practicable while achieving the optimum yield from each fishery," Merrill told the Fisheries Committee and 140 watchers and listeners.

Bering Sea sablefish (black cod) in 2020 ended the year at 7.9 million pounds (519%) over the trawl bycatch limit. Managers re-

sponded by increasing the 2021 trawl limit by 65%.

In response to complaints, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council said in June 2021: "When constraints such as high bycatch rates emerge, vessel operators do not have the option to cease fishing completely because cost accrual on such large platforms would be unsustainable."

Sablefish takes are currently 2 million pounds (165%) over the 2021 bycatch limit, and yet fishing continues.

A fundamental management failure is now on display in the Bering Sea crab fisheries, where trawler bycatch for 2021/22 is higher than what the actual commercial crabbers can take.

For Bristol Bay red king crab, closed to commercial harvest for the first time in 25 years, trawlers are allowed 80,000 crab as bycatch totaling more than 500,000 pounds.

Many Alaskans are calling for a shift away from protecting "optimum yields" in industrial trawl fisheries toward optimizing the health of the state's fishery resources and communities.

That will be put to the test in early December when, after six years of discussion and 26.5 million pounds of halibut dumped, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) is poised to reduce a fixed cap of more than 4 million pounds by bottom trawlers targeting other flatfish in halibut nursery grounds of the Bering Sea.

More than 3,000 commercial halibut fishermen, 955 charter operators, several thousand halibut sport fishermen and over 4,000 subsistence harvesters in Alaska and the West Coast are affected by halibut bycatch in the Bering Sea, according to Linda Behnken, director of the Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association and a former NP-

FMC member.

The state of Alaska has a vote on the bycatch reduction options being considered by the NPFMC. Rep. Sarah Vance, of Homer, asked what that position will be.

"We are reviewing all the materials at the present time but we don't have a position yet on what we're going to do," said Alaska Department of Fish and Game Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang. "We are going to take a step to have a significant reduction in halibut bycatch, but which alternative would be premature to postulate what we will ultimately support until we're done reading all the materials in advance of that meeting."

The 20 bottom trawlers in this bycatch debate are all Seattle-based and owned by "six or so companies," said NPFMC director Dave Witherell, who also presented at the hearing.

Vincent-Lang quickly came to their defense.

"Although they may be homeported in Seattle, they pay significant fishery landing taxes to the state of Alaska and what we're seeing is the ownership of these vessels is increasingly becoming Alaska-based with the community development quota groups in Western Alaska basically buying into this industry," Vincent-Lang said. "That contributes a lot to those coastal economies."

There are six CDQ groups that represent 65 communities within 50 nautical miles of the Bering Sea coast. All are allocated portions of the region's catches; all are owners or part owners of large fishing vessels.

Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, of Sitka, asked the state's perspective on habitat impacts by bottom trawlers on crabs and other species.

"I am going to defer an answer on that because I have not given that a good deal

of thought," Vincent-Lang replied. "I will speak to my staff and promise to get back to you with an assessment on that."

Rep. Dan Ortiz, of Ketchikan, questioned the makeup of the NPFMC, notably its lack of Indigenous members.

"The appointments of the membership are made by the governors of Alaska and Washington," said Witherell. "If the governor of Alaska wants to appoint someone who's Native, the governor can do so."

The NPFMC makeup is raising eyebrows among Alaskans because a majority of voting members of the council along with the top executives of its 19-member advisory panel have direct ties to the trawl fleets.

The Fisheries Committee members said they were generally dissatisfied with the information they received during the three-hour hearing.

"I also find it very disappointing for the Dunleavy administration, two weeks out from the NPFMC decision, to not verbalize the alternative they support. We want definitive answers and actions and policy direction from them," Vance said.

Gov. Mike Dunleavy was quick to respond after the committee hearing.

Within two days of the bycatch meeting, he announced formation of a 13-member Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force "to explore the issue of bycatch and provide recommendations to policy makers." Applications are being accepted now.

"And all three of us were like, isn't it a little late for that?" said committee member Rep. Kevin McCabe, of Big Lake. "Shouldn't we have had a task force to make recommendations to the state (NPFMC) voting member long before this? Why is the state just now seeming to be waking up? So yeah, we are very concerned. It's a shame, if you ask me."

Mat-Su Borough gains population but not House seats

By BECKY BOHRER
The Associated Press

JUNEAU (AP) — A fast-growing area north of Anchorage known as a hotbed of conservatism gained the most population since the 2010 Census but will keep the same number of House seats in the Legislature under a new map of state political boundaries that some critics say shortchanges the area.

Census data showed the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, which is about the size of West

Virginia and includes Palmer and former Gov. Sarah Palin's hometown of Wasilla, had 18,086 more people last year than in 2010, the biggest jump for any borough or Census area in Alaska.

The region also was the second most populous overall in the state, with an estimated 107,081 people, behind Anchorage, with 291,247, according to Census data.

In addition to not gaining a House seat, the new legislative

maps would place two Wasilla incumbents in the same district. If upheld, they would have to run against each other, or one could move to another district or leave office.

The Alaska Redistricting Board approved new legislative boundaries earlier this month, as required every 10 years after the census, though court challenges are expected from multiple parties.

Republican Rep. Christopher Kurka, who under the redistrict-

ing plan would be in the same district as fellow conservative Rep. David Eastman, said on social media the Matanuska-Susitna region is "getting Cheated, Shortchanged, and Hosed."

The board's target population for each of 40 House districts was 18,335, 1-40th of the state's population.

Kurka indicated the board could have considered drawing six borough districts under the population target but instead drew in population from other areas, including Valdez. Districts in the Matanuska-Susitna region had among the greatest deviations from the target of 18,335. "Under this map the Mat-Su will be the most under-represented region of the state, even though (it) has grown more than any other over the past decade," Kurka said on social media.

Under the maps approved after the 2010 Census, the region has had four full House districts and two that are shared with other areas, including with Valdez. Officials with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and Valdez, more than a four-hour drive from Palmer, unsuccessfully lobbied during the redistricting process against a shared district this go-round.

The borough, which as part of this redistricting cycle proposed four full and two shared House districts, also recommended a shared district with the Denali Borough to the north. The new maps include a pairing that extends into the Denali Borough.

Senate Majority Leader Shelley Hughes, a Palmer Republican, said the board had a hard job and can't please everyone. But she said allowances should have been made for continued growth in the region over the next decade. House districts get

paired to create Senate districts.

Peter Torkelson, the board's executive director, said the board is required to use the "snapshot" the Census data provides and cannot factor in future projections or trends.

Senate Minority Leader Tom Begich, an Anchorage Democrat, said he thought the House map was fair. He did, however, take issue with the board's decision to split the conservative Eagle River area into two Senate districts and pair Eagle River with other parts of Anchorage in those districts.

He said he believed the goal "was to take areas that were heavily Republican within the Municipality of Anchorage and use them to try to water down what has become a very progressive city." Eagle River falls within the municipality but is separated from the city by a mountain range.

During board discussions, member Bethany Marcum argued there were ties between the districts that justified the pairings.

Member Nicole Borromeo, who cited constitutional concerns in opposing the plan, said at the board's final meeting last week that she prays that litigation "is swift and just."

Board Chair John Binkley said he thought all board members tried to put together a fair and reasonable plan, "but sometimes those are in the eyes of the beholder." He, Marcum and Budd Simpson supported the overall plan. They were appointed to the board last year by Republicans.

Borromeo and Melanie Bahnke opposed the plan. Borromeo was appointed by then-House Speaker Bryce Edgmon, an independent, and Bahnke by then-Alaska Supreme Court Chief Justice Joel Bolger.

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