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WRANGELL SENTINEL

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Wrangell trying to stem rising COVID case count

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

Almost 12,000 COVID-19 cases were reported around the state in August, the most since last fall, with some schools starting to close to in-person learning in only the first week or two of classes.

Alaska set a record for hos-

pitalizations on Tuesday, with 152 COVID patients under care.

Wrangell also had a record COVID month, with 48 new infections reported in the community, more than one-third of all cases since the pandemic tally started in March 2020.

The community is trying to

stem the surge. "We have lots of people getting preventive testing," Borough Manager Lisa Von Bargaen said Monday. That includes residents who are not showing symptoms but are deciding to get checked anyway, and are going to the airport for the free COVID nose-swab tests offered twice a

day.

The state-funded tests, administered by the SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium, are contracted to run through the end of September, Von Bargaen said. Though the state has extended its airport testing contracts in the past.

In addition to more people

getting tested, "we have lots of businesses reaching out" for the free face masks and hand sanitizer the borough is offering, Von Bargaen said. Borough staff will deliver. Requests can be emailed to travel@wrangell.com.

Amid the late-summer

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House approves \$1,100 dividend; Senate vote next

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

The state House has approved a Permanent Fund dividend of about \$1,100 this fall, but even if the Senate agrees and the governor signs the appropriations bill, it is too late to avoid a delay in sending out the payment to Alaskans.

Full approval was needed by Tuesday if the state were to meet its traditional date of issuing the annual PFD by the first week of October, according to a Department of Revenue spokesperson, who added that the dividends could be issued about 30 days after elected officials settle on the amount.

The House passed the appropriations bill after lengthy and contentious debate Monday and Tuesday over the amount of this year's dividend, with a contingent of predominantly Republican lawmakers pushing for a much larger payment to Alaskans.

But about half of the \$1,100 is questionable. It would draw on a state account that is empty, the governor's office said Tuesday, though many lawmakers disagree with that interpretation of a recent court decision on state accounting. The House majority contends the money is available for appropriation.

If the account is not available, the dividend would be about half

If lawmakers are unable to agree on a

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PHOTOS BY LARRY PERSILY/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

First-day smile

Baylee Daugherty (left) gives a COVID-safe high five to assistant principal Jenn Miller-Yancey as the fourth grader walks into the building for the first day of school Monday. Claire Rooney (above), also in fourth grade, was among the students who arrived shortly before 8 a.m. at Evergreen Elementary School for the start of classes. Schools Superintendent Bill Burr reported the district started with 242 students enrolled as of Monday, close to the budget projection of 259 and a substantial boost from last year's pandemic-inflicted low of 200.

New editor starts work at Sentinel

By SENTINEL STAFF

Marc Lutz started work this week as editor at the Wrangell Sentinel, and the Central California transplant will be doing more than writing stories about the community.

"Marc is an accomplished photographer and skilled in page layout software, which means sometime this fall the Sentinel will bring back all its production in-house rather than contracting with the Petersburg newspaper for the design work," said Sentinel owner and publisher Larry Persily.

"A major objective when I bought the Sentinel in January was to rebuild its presence in the community, and Marc's arrival will be a big part of that," Persily said.

Lutz will join office manager Amber Armstrong in the Sentinel's downtown storefront, with an additional reporter scheduled to start work by the end of September.

"With three full-time staffers in Wrangell, the Sentinel should be able to provide the town the news coverage and advertising services it needs and deserves," said Persily, who will continue to write and edit for the newspaper.

Lutz, and his wife, Melinda, arrived in Wrangell aboard

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Reduced ferry service in October, November

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

The Alaska Marine Highway System fall/winter schedule is online and open for reservations, but don't look for too many sailings into Wrangell in October and November. A state ferry will pull into town just six times over the two months.

But it will be more service than the community received last year.

The Kennicott will make two northbound and two southbound stops in Wrangell in October, and just two southbound stops — nothing northbound — during November.

The Matanuska, which usually calls on Wrangell once a

week in each direction, will be out of service for winter overhaul during those two months. The ferry system is using the Kennicott to cover Southeast, while also serving Prince William Sound and Kodiak, cutting into its time for Southeast port calls.

By the second week of December, the schedule shows Wrangell back to its usual Matanuska stops, northbound on Fridays and southbound on Mondays every week.

The community will get a bonus December through April, when the Matanuska, one week a month, will skip its long run to Bellingham, Washington, going only as far south as Ketchikan and spending

more time in Southeast. During that week each month, Wrangell will see the Matanuska twice in each direction.

Last winter, Wrangell received one northbound ferry stop in all of November 2020, and none in December, with just one southbound stop in January this year.

The state last week released the schedule for Oct. 1 to April 30, opening the sailings for reservations.

Budget cuts that have led to pulling ships out of service to save money and maintenance issues with the older vessels have cut deeply into the ferry schedule in recent years.

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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, Sept. 2: Clara Haley, Laura Holder, Ryan Jabusch, Cameron Stough.

Friday, Sept. 3: Janice Churchill, Shailyn M. Nelson, Colby Danielle Nore, Tasha Peterman.

Saturday, Sept. 4: Rynda Hayes, Kenny Speers; Anniversary: Glenn and Rebecca Smith.

Sunday, Sept. 5: Sandra Byrd, Helen Keller, Devan Massin, Randy Oliver, Jason Rooney, Luke Steele; Anniversary: Matt and Margo Walker-Scott.

Monday, Sept. 6: Phil Carey, Luke Feuerhelm, A. Dan Nore, Casey Shilts; Anniversary: Jeremy and Brandy Grina.

Tuesday, Sept. 7: Chris Versteeg, Clara Waddington, Mathias Wiedersphon; Anniversary: Colin and Erin Anderson.

Wednesday, Sept. 8: Leroy Travers, Maxi Wiedersphon, Peggy Wilson.

Thursday, Sept. 9: Josh Blatchley, Jasmine Clyburn, Mario Marie Ellsworth, Hope Miller, Andrew Scambler, Jody Waddington.

Senior Center Menu

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

Friday, Sept. 3

Baked fish, steamed greens, calico corn salad, noodles

Monday, Sept. 6

Closed for Labor Day

Tuesday, Sept. 7

Sweet and sour spareribs, green beans, salad, rice

Wednesday, Sept. 8

Baked chicken, broccoli, carrot pineapple salad, au gratin potatoes

Thursday, Sept. 9

Roast beef with gravy, spinach, fruit slaw, mashed potatoes

Please call the senior center at 874-2066 by 2 p.m. the day prior to reserve a seat at lunch at the center or to request delivery.

The senior van also is available to transport seniors to medical appointments, reasonable errands such as collecting mail, getting prescriptions or other essential items.

Ferry Schedule

Northbound

Friday, Sept. 3

Matanuska, 4:45 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 10

Matanuska, 4:15 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 17

Matanuska, 4:45 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 24

Matanuska, 3:45 p.m.

Monday, Oct. 4

Kennicott, noon

Southbound

Monday, Sept. 6

Matanuska, 6:30 a.m.

Monday, Sept. 13

Matanuska, 6:30 a.m.

Monday, Sept. 20

Matanuska, 6:30 a.m.

Monday, Sept. 27

Matanuska, 7 a.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 13

Kennicott, 9:30 p.m.

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



TIDES September 2-September 8

	High Tides		Low Tides					
	AM Time	PM Ft	AM Time	PM Ft	AM Time	PM Ft		
Sept. 2	11:05	11.9	10:43	14.1	04:25	2.5	04:23	6.0
Sept. 3	11:52	13.0	11:33	15.1	05:21	1.3	05:23	5.0
Sept. 4	12:32	14.2	06:04	0.2	06:08	3.7
Sept. 5	00:17	16.1	01:07	15.2	06:40	-0.8	06:46	2.5
Sept. 6	00:57	16.9	01:39	16.1	07:13	-1.5	07:22	1.4
Sept. 7	01:35	17.4	02:11	16.8	07:45	-1.7	07:58	0.4
Sept. 8	02:13	17.5	02:42	17.3	08:18	-1.7	08:35	-0.4

Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

WRANGELL PARKS AND REC is seeking volunteer coaches to help ensure youth athletes have a fun season of skills and drills, scrimmages and games. The season runs mid-September through early November for kindergarten through fifth grades. Volunteers must pass a background check, commit to 2.5 hours weeknights per week — and it's important to have a general knowledge of the sport. Call 874-2444.

NOLAN CENTER THEATER presents "Free Guy," rated PG-13, at 7 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Tickets are \$7 for adults, \$5 for children under age 12, for the action, comedy, and sci-fi film that runs one hour and 55 minutes. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

BRAVE has postponed its fourth annual Family Resilience Fair to Oct. 16 at the Nolan Center. (It had been planned for Sept. 11, but will be delayed due to COVID safety concerns.) Come learn how your community can help your family. Contact: BRAVE.Wrangell@gmail.com or 907-204-0530.

Want more attendance at your meeting or event? Send information for Roundup to wrgsent@gmail.com or call 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, 5:30 - 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

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

The Way We Were

In the Sentinel 100, 75, 50 and 25 years ago.

Sept. 1, 1921

The Zillah May sank off Strait Island on the evening of March 31. It was towed into port Monday night and is lying in the harbor, awaiting further attention from the local men who undertook to raise her. It will not be decided definitely what will be done with her until an examination reveals just what shape she is in. The men who were instrumental in raising her were Chas. Benjamin, Heinie Heinbockel and Charlie Lynch. They had been at work at the scene of the wreck for several weeks and had a diver from Juneau assisting them at first. The Zillah May, held afloat by logs and air drums, her masts above water, was towed in by the Sunland. She required a depth of 20 feet of water. Except for delays caused by the tide, the journey was continuous night and day.

Aug. 30, 1946

Although seine and trap catches continue to be extremely poor throughout the district, Fisheries Management Agent Howard Baltzo today said things do not look at all bad in the troll and river gillnet fisheries. He said king salmon are continuing to be caught in good numbers at many of the trolling grounds. Coho trolling at Cape Pole has been good since last week, and the fishing that Point Baker has enjoyed through most of this month really became "hot" on Wednesday as the outside fish moved in, he said. Baltzo reported that the first heavy coho run of the season hit the Stikine River on Tuesday, with the gillnetters catching 35,000 pounds that day and 55,000 the next. Indications for a successful coho season are good, Baltzo concluded.

Sept. 3, 1971

Wrangell entered the fifth month of the 1971 tour ship season this week. The Greek ship Orepheus and the Canadian ships Prince George and Princess Patricia have made 45 stops at the Wrangell Wharf during the season so far and nearly 10,000 tourists saw the town. Wrangell's famous welcoming band upheld its record and met each ship. The band even boarded a barge on June 25 to travel out into Zimovia Strait and serenade hundreds of passengers aboard the British tour ship Arcadia, which sailed past the town but did not stop. Meanwhile, the band members are taking stock of funds they have collected from

appreciative tourists this year to see if there is enough to take them on a trip to Hawaii for their traditional holiday after their summer of performances.

Sept. 5, 1996

Ever since the city council chamber got its blue, upholstered chairs this spring, sitting through two- and three-hour meetings has become a lot more comfortable. Where did the chairs come from, and why weren't they put here sooner? For being mere furniture, the chairs are remarkably well traveled. Yes, they used to belong to a movie theater — the 49th Star Theater, operated by Dick Ballard from 1958 to the early 1970s. Ballard started his theater in the old high school gym, leasing the building from the city. To outfit his new theater, he bought some used equipment from the Green Lake Theater in Seattle. In 1962, Ballard purchased a building on Front Street. When he moved his theater to the new location, he donated the wooden theater seats to the Baptist Church. Recently, church members remodeled their building and called the Wrangell Museum about taking the theater chairs. With little storage space available, Bob Caldwell was given the chore of finding a place to put them. The suggestion to substitute them for the folding metal chairs in council chambers won approval from the mayor and other council members, and seems to have found favor with audience members, as well. Now, if there was only some popcorn.

Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Hours
Sept. 2	5:55a	7:40p	13:45h
Sept. 3	5:57a	7:38p	13:40h
Sept. 4	5:59a	7:35p	13:35h
Sept. 5	6:01a	7:32p	13:31h
Sept. 6	6:03a	7:30p	13:26h
Sept. 7	6:05a	7:27p	13:21h
Sept. 8	6:07a	7:24p	13:17h

Schools start with similar COVID plan as last year

By SENTINEL STAFF

Amid the recent surge in COVID-19 cases in town, Wrangell schools opened for classes on Monday with several measures in place to help protect students, staff and the community from further spread of the virus.

Those measures include face masks, sanitation cleaning, improved ventilation, distancing between students whenever possible, and policies for students and staff who travel out of town.

"It had been our hope that we would have been able to start the year with less restrictions, but the current COVID-19 variants (Delta especially, which is 97% of the positive cases in Alaska at this time) have expanded our level of caution in Wrangell to a

greater level than we once believed would have been needed," Schools Superintendent Bill Burr wrote in a letter to the community last month.

"This variant has been shown to spread easier and between all groups regardless of age or vaccination."

The district took last year's COVID-19 mitigation plan, "condensed the information into a slimmer and more clearly stated 'Start Strong' plan," Burr wrote.

That includes:

- Face masks for all students, staff and guests when in school buildings. "During outdoor school activities, masks are required if unable to social distance."

- Hand sanitizer will be available in classrooms, and electrostatic sprayers to kill the virus will be used daily.

- Improved ventilation and air filters, with additional air purifiers in some locations.

- Students will be grouped in class at tables and desks at least 3-feet apart whenever possible.

- Last year's one-way hallway traffic will return to regular hallway use, "but staff and students are still encouraged to social distance, and lockers will be allotted upon request."

- Lunch will return to its regular schedule, including a single lunch period at the middle and high schools. Seating in the lunch areas will be set up for social distancing.

- Vaccinated students and

staff returning from travel should test on their return Wrangell, but then may return to school while waiting for their test results and should follow social-distancing policies.

- Unvaccinated students and staff should test upon their return to town and quarantine. They should take a second test at five days after their return, and if that comes back negative they may return to school if they are not showing any symptoms of COVID. In lieu of a second test, they may return to school after 10 days in quarantine, as long as they are not showing any symptoms.

Many school districts in Alaska have retained their required face mask policies from last year, though not three of the largest: Masking is not required in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Kenai Peninsula Borough and Fairbanks North Star Borough.

After an outbreak of cases last week at Butte Elementary School, the Mat-Su School District closed Butte to students and switched to 100% remote learning, at least for this week.

The district reported 153 cases in the first eight days of classes at all its facilities.

The Nanwalek School near Homer on the Kenai Peninsula went to 100% remote learning last week, but was scheduled to reopen its classrooms this week.



PHOTO BY LARRY PERSILY/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Wrangell's newest teacher, Ann Hilburn.

Newest faculty will teach special education, American Sign Language

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

Ann Hilburn and her husband had driven from Mississippi to Bellingham, Washington, to catch the ferry for her new job at Wrangell Public Schools. They made the 2,700-mile drive in four days. "It was long days," she said.

"The day we pulled off the ferry with our U-Haul and our pickup truck," the schools superintendent, principal and special education coordinator had planned to meet the couple at the terminal. But the ferry was early, and the welcoming committee missed the rendezvous.

"They had come to help us unload," Hilburn said of the group, which changed direction and headed right over to the apartment and went to work unloading.

"That speaks volumes of the community," Hilburn said at the high school last week as she was getting ready for the start of classes.

Hilburn — Wrangell's only new teacher this year — is the special education teacher for the high school and middle school, and also will teach American Sign Language.

"It's no harder than learning any other foreign language," she said, noting that 11 or 12 high school students had signed up for the class as of last week.

That doesn't mean it's easy. "If any are taking it because it's a soft class, they will be sorely disappointed," she said.

Her first college degree was in education of the deaf, which she earned at Southern Mississippi University. She has taught hearing-impaired students for years.

Hilburn later earned a master's degree in education administration at a university in Illinois.

She has taught in Mississippi, Texas and Idaho, in addition to three different jobs in Alaska: The Lower Yukon School District; then Gustavus, where she also served as principal; and Angoon, where she was superintendent.

Back in Mississippi, she took a year off and was planning to retire when the Wrangell School District saw her profile online and called. "They talked me into it," she said, smiling with the eagerness of starting a new school year.

Wrangell is by far the largest town in Alaska she has worked in, adding that she and her husband enjoy hiking and already have been on the Mt. Dewey, petroglyphs and nature trails, with Rainbow Falls next on their agenda — plus they got in some berry picking — in just the first few weeks in town.

As the high school and middle school special ed teacher, Hilburn will work with students who need extra help in school and with life skills, she explained. She will work with the district's special education coordinator, Ryan Howe.

Of the 16 high school and middle school students in the special education program, five need one-on-one help, Hilburn said. She has four assistants, with two more positions unfilled. Experience is helpful, but not required. The district will provide training, she said.

"I could not do this job without assistants," Hilburn said. "Two more would make a tremendous difference."

Wrangell is not alone with empty jobs. There is a nationwide shortage of special ed assistants, she said.

"It's no harder than learning any other foreign language"

- Ann Hilburn,

Corrections

The Sentinel incorrectly reported Aug. 26 that the borough assembly had voted unanimously to reject a face mask mandate to help stem the spread of COVID-19 infections. The vote was 6-1. Assemblymember Ryan Howe voted yes.

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The Sentinel incorrectly reported Aug. 26 that the first day of classes at Wrangell schools would be Tuesday, Aug. 31. It was Monday.

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



Partnership for a Tobacco-Free Southeast

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Sentinel will start paying for its mistakes

By LARRY PERSILY
Publisher

Life teaches us there is a price for making mistakes. Or least the important ones. There is no penalty for picking up the wrong flavor of ice cream at the store, other than you have to eat the entire half-gallon before you can go back and get the correct flavor.

Actually, that sounds like a prize, not a penalty.

I'm talking the kinds of mistakes that a lot of people notice or that lead to other problems. Just like a football team gets penalized valuable yardage for their blunders on the field, and the same as bank customers pay a fee when they mess up and bounce a check, so too will the Sentinel pay the consequences of its mistakes.

No, not by marking off an extra 15 yards to the coffee stand. More like the bounced-check fee.

Besides for the remorse and embarrassment of making a mistake for hundreds of readers to see, the Sentinel will assess itself a penalty fee. Such as if we misspell name or, as we did last week, get an assembly vote count wrong and report that school opened Tuesday, when it was Monday.

Starting immediately, every time the Sentinel makes a factual mistake, we will donate \$50 to the charity of choice of the person or organization subjected to our error.

The rules are fairly minimal: The \$50 can go only to nonprofits and community groups; not political causes. I'm OK paying for my mistakes, but I am

not going to compound the error by writing a check to a political group.

The penalty will be paid for errors of substance, such as misspelled or the wrong names, facts that are important in the story, anything that would mislead or misinform readers. Grammar errors are ineligible for the fee. At 70, I am still leaning the difference between affect and effect, and have not yet mastered the finer points of participles and modifiers.

The limit is one fee per error, even if we misspell a name for a family of 12 people. Sorry, but my embarrassment is worth only so much.

I may adopt some other rules as this moves along, but I promise to get them right. Nothing wrongheaded.

If you are the subject of an error, or if you are a better editor that week than me, you need to call it in within the week the paper is out. Besides for writing the check, we would want to print a correction in the next issue of the Sentinel. If we wait too long, readers may forget what it is that we are correcting.

Part of me hopes not to write any \$50 checks this year, or any year. Mistakes weaken the credibility of a newspaper. And after Facebook took away many of our readers and advertisers, we can't afford to lose any more.

But part of me hopes that we have a few not-too-harmful mistakes, maybe even some funny ones. I'd be happy to write those checks.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

B.C. needs to do more to protect transboundary rivers from mining

This August marked the seventh anniversary of the Mount Polley mine disaster. Mount Polley, located in British Columbia, is a large open-pit mine and its tailings dam collapsed, bringing significant negative impacts on the Quesnel Lake and Fraser River ecosystems, as well as local communities and cultures.

Since that time, no significant regulatory or legal changes have been made in British Columbia to address the risks of large-scale mines.

Although we do not have jurisdiction in B.C., we are impacted by their mining policies and their current lack of sufficient oversight of their mining industry. Currently, there are 26 mines proposed, abandoned or operating in the headwaters of our shared rivers, some of which are owned by the same company that owns Mount Polley.

Alaskans receive no direct financial benefits from the B.C. mining industry, but we do carry the risk of serious damage to the ecosystems in our rivers.

The fishing industry is vital to Southeast Alaska, and we don't have the luxury of taking on additional risks.

We are currently suffering from low fishing returns. The Unuk has already been deemed a stock of concern, and the Taku and Stikine are on the same path.

The fishing and mariculture industries produce \$5.6 billion in economic output to Alaska's economy and employ almost 60,000 workers each year. In addition to economic benefits, fishing and mariculture bring countless other benefits to our communities. We need to protect our fishing industry.

As an Alaska lawmaker, I have fought hard to bring this issue to the forefront. Earlier this year, myself and multiple other legislators wrote a letter to B.C. Premier Horgan expressing our concerns and requesting better systems in the province. We specifically requested binding international agreements, water and wildlife monitoring, and reclamation bonds.

We have not yet heard back from Premier Horgan, but are hopeful that B.C. will open more lines of communication in the future.

Rep. Dan Ortiz
Representing Ketchikan
and Wrangell

OPINION

Tribes call for pause to mining permits in transboundary river watersheds

By FREDERICK OLSEN JR.
(K'YUHLGÁANSII)

Sometimes a pause in the hustle is necessary.

Our transboundary watersheds, the Taku, Stikine and Unuk rivers that flow from Northwest British Columbia into Southeast Alaska, face an onslaught of too many industrial mining projects proposed for locations too close together to each other in far too sensitive areas.

Those projects, and the way they are being approved without the consent or input of many of those who could be impacted, including tribes and Southeast Alaskans, give many reasons for a pause in business as usual.

After the infamous Mount Polley disaster of 2014, the British Columbia auditor general's report said "business as usual" should not continue if the province is to prevent such contamination-laden disasters in the future.

Of course, business as usual does continue. Right now, in

EDITORIAL

This is a bad time to play doctor

Discussions and medical decisions about the prevention and treatment of COVID-19 should be based on facts, not scientifically untested and unproven rumors spread on social media. And certainly not on irresponsible health care advice prescribed by an elected official who seems to think a drug that kills worms in horses and cows might also destroy the coronavirus in people.

A polite person might say "horse feathers" to such medical guidance from an unlicensed politician. A not-so-nice person might call the Kenai Peninsula Borough mayor a horse's rear end for mixing veterinary deworming with a human pandemic that has killed more than 430 people in Alaska, over 637,000 nationwide, and about 4.5 million worldwide.

Mayor Charlie Pierce has publicly backed ivermectin, an anti-parasitic deworming drug, as a potential lifesaver for COVID-19 patients. It's not like he whispered his horse story — he broadcast it at a borough assembly meeting and then saddled up a week later and again defended the drug on a talk radio program.

"Let the doctors experiment with perhaps some things that haven't been signed off by the Food and Drug Administration," Pierce said on Kenai Peninsula commercial radio station KSRM.

The FDA has approved ivermectin in people and animals for use against some parasitic worms and for head lice and skin conditions. No manufacturer has ever asked for FDA approval to market the drug to treat COVID, which is a virus, not a parasite.

Ivermectin is "a very inexpensive medication," Pierce said, as if the fact that it is cheap makes it OK. So is aspirin and Bengay, but neither cure COVID.

The mayor encouraged listeners to research the drug further, and he unwisely directed them to a website that recommends ivermectin and offers prescriptions from a doctor in Texas. If he had done his own research, he might have seen that the Texas Department of State Health Services issued a health advisory over the improper use of ivermectin — calls to the state's poison center for people exposed to the drug are triple last year's level.

Even before taking to the airwaves, the mayor at a borough assembly meeting in August got on his high horse and criticized the borough-owned hospital for not offering drugs like ivermectin.

Not surprisingly, livestock supply stores on the Kenai Peninsula have received numerous inquiries about the drug in recent weeks.

Too bad all that interest in stopping COVID from sickening and killing people has not translated into a higher vaccination rate against the virus. The Kenai Peninsula has the third-worst vaccination rate among boroughs in the state, about 15 percentage points below the rate in Wrangell. The Kenai Borough's COVID infection count since March 2020 is almost 11% of its population, more than double Wrangell's.

Looks like people here have more horse sense than the peninsula mayor.

— Wrangell Sentinel

the Stikine River watershed, the Red Chris mine tailings storage facility features an earthen dam over half as tall as Seattle's Space Needle. The dam needs to remain stable for a minimum of 250 years in order to keep the lake of poison it contains "safely managed."

The Kerr-Sulphurets-Mitchell project would have two such lakes with each dam standing over 100 feet taller than the Space Needle.

In 2019, British Columbia passed the Declaration on the

Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act in order to have the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples implemented throughout the province. In order to comply, B.C. must work with downstream Indigenous tribal governments in Alaska on many transboundary issues.

The memorandum of understanding signed in 2015 and the statement of cooperation in 2016 by Alaska and British Columbia acknowledges the im-

Continued on page 5

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PHOTO BY LARRY PERSILY/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Marc Lutz started work this week as the Sentinel's new editor, writer and photographer.

New editor

Continued from page 1

the Matanuska last Friday, after driving from their home in Lodi, Calif., with the U-Haul and their car stuffed with household goods — and four cats.

He had been general manager and editor at the Calaveras Enterprise since 2018. The weekly newspaper covers Calaveras County, population about 45,000.

"Though 45,000 is big by Alaska standards, it's a small town anywhere else, and Marc understands the importance of local journalism in small towns, telling stories and being part of the community," Persily said.

Lutz also had worked as editor at the Central Valley Business Journal from 2017 to 2018, and in information services for Adventist Health in Lodi, where he produced the organization's internal newsletter. He worked at the Lodi News-Sentinel as a designer, cartoonist, staff writer, business and lifestyle editor and web designer, and before that as a copy editor, page designer and illustrator at the Union Democrat, which covered communities in California's Sonora and Sierra Ne-

vada foothills.

He started in 2004 as a cartoonist with the Lodi News-Sentinel.

"After living in California for most of our lives, Melinda and I decided we needed to make a major change," Lutz said. "I've always enjoyed my career in journalism, so I knew I didn't want to leave the profession. When the opportunity at the Wrangell Sentinel popped up on my radar, it just made sense."

The newly transplanted couple has already started getting to know the community, meeting as many people as possible.

Lutz attended the Art Institute of Seattle in 1988, studying commercial art, and later attended San Joaquin Delta College in Stockton, Calif., to study creative writing.

He completed a certified personal course with the International Sports Sciences Association in 2016, and is a certified marathon trainer.

Lutz replaces Caleb Vierkant, who is moving back to Texas after three years at the Sentinel.

Reduced ferry service

Continued from page 1

No ferry service is scheduled into Kodiak between Jan. 3 and March 17. Pelican will go without service for all of January and February.

Both the LeConte and the Kennicott will be in winter

overhaul in January and February, leading to the even lower level of service systemwide during those months.

Continued reductions in the fall/winter ferry schedule are making it harder — and more expensive — on school activi-

ties, said Bob Davis, assistant principal at the high school and middle school.

Without a workable ferry schedule, the other travel options are a charter boat or flying for basketball, volleyball, cross country and wrestling teams.

Borough election draws 13 candidates for 9 seats

By SENTINEL STAFF

There will be contested races for one seat on the borough assembly, three seats on the school board and one seat on the port commission in Wrangell's Oct. 5 municipal election.

Candidates for two other borough assembly seats and a port commission seat are unchallenged.

Jim DeBord and Bob Dalrymple are running for the two three-year open terms on the assembly. Dalrymple is an incumbent; he was appointed in January to fill out the year for Julie Decker, who left the assembly. DeBord also expressed interest in the seat at that time, though the assembly selected Dalrymple to serve until the October election.

Unless a write-in candidate outpolls either contestant on the ballot, DeBord and Dalrymple will win seats that run to 2024. Both have previously served on the assembly.

Don McConachie Sr. and David Powell are running for the last year of Decker's unexpired term. The winner will serve on the assembly until October 2022. Powell is currently on the assembly; his term expires in October.

Terry Courson's term on the assembly ends next month and he is not seeking reelection.

There are four candidates for two three-year terms on the school board. The top two vote-getters will win the job: Angela Allen, Alex Angerman, Brittani Robbins and Elizabeth Roundtree. None of the four are currently on the school board.

Julia Ostrander and Jessica Whitaker are running for the one-year seat of an unexpired term on the school board.

School board members Cyni Crary, Aaron Angerman and Patti Gilbert are not seeking reelection.

Chris Bunes and incumbent John Martin are the only candidates for two three-year terms on the port commission.

Incumbent port commissioner Frank Roppel is seeking election to a one-year unexpired term.

Absentee voting in the election will open Sept. 20. Registered voters who will be unable to vote on election day may cast absentee ballots from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays Sept. 20 through Oct. 4 at city hall.

The Oct. 5 in-person voting will be held at the Nolan Center, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Transboundary

Continued from page 4

importance of engaging with B.C. First Nations and Alaska tribes, yet the Alaska sovereign tribes were not a party to the either agreement. Neither were tribes consulted or included in any of the discussions conducted by the bilateral working group, which has members from B.C. and Alaska.

Fifteen sovereign Indigenous nations in Southeast Alaska designated representatives to the Southeast Alaska Indigenous Transboundary Commission (SEITC) for purposes of government-to-government engagement on the transboundary mining issue.

This year, SEITC Chair Rob Sanderson Jr. asked Minister Ralston of the B.C. Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low-Carbon Innovation for an agreement between SEITC and his ministry regarding several huge projects. In his reply, Ralston said several B.C. ministries would be involved and each would need to take time to conduct internal reviews.

Because of the indefinite time period suggested by Ralston, Sanderson asked B.C. Premier Horgan to pause new permits, amendments to existing permits, and approval of new mines until internal reviews by the ministries are completed and until there is a decision on our ability to consult.

So far, the Ketchikan Indian Community and Wrangell Cooperative Association, Washington's Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and British Columbia's Gitanyow First Nation have publicly sup-

ported SEITC's call for "The Pause."

Starting in August, SEITC and Salmon Beyond Borders reached out to Southeast Alaska tribes and municipalities, as well as community members, to gather support for a call to ban mine waste dams, like the one that failed at Mount Polley, in transboundary watersheds — and to request a pause to mineral development and exploration in transboundary watersheds until the U.S.-Canada Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 and the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples are upheld, and an international agreement on watershed protections is implemented.

Recently, several B.C. ministries have agreed to meet with SEITC leadership. The virtual meeting will include the ministries of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, and also Energy, Mines and Low-Carbon Innovation, along with the B.C. Environmental Assessment Office.

We hope this is the start of a journey leading to a true partnership in international watershed governance. Our rivers will have a better chance to prosper when Indigenous governments get a strong say in river management. Our people have done this before. We want long-term solutions that will benefit all connected to the rivers that provide life for our wild salmon — and all of us.

Frederick Olsen Jr. (K'yuhlgáansii), of Sitka, is executive director of the Southeast Alaska Indigenous Transboundary Commission.



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RESOURCES

Schools need adult volunteers; special ed assistant jobs open too

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

Classes started this week at Wrangell Public Schools, but there's still time — and still a need — for people to apply for work as an education aide, and also for adult volunteers to help with a wide range of activities at all three schools.

Volunteers could help during the lunch hour, with tutoring or providing one-on-one help with students who need additional assistance at the middle and high schools.

It could be an hour a day, or a few hours one day a week, whatever time someone might have available, said Bob Davis, assistant principal at the high school and middle school.

"Evergreen Elementary would love to have volunteers sign up," said Jenn Miller-Yancey, assistant principal at the school. "Our younger students will need assistance in their learning groups, and all students would benefit from being able to read with volunteers."

Volunteers don't necessarily have to work directly with students. "There are also ways volunteers can assist like making copies, putting learning materials together, assisting with cleaning and sanitizing, helping organize supplies, and more," Miller-Yancey said.

Davis said he is particularly concerned about students' emotional health as they start a second year amid a surge in COVID-19 cases in Wrangell. The town is going through its largest outbreak of cases since the pandemic started a year and a half ago.

He worries that more students will suffer depression as they try to cope with the COVID-induced limitations in their lives. "It cuts into sports, it cuts into activities," he said, creating "emotional distance" that is hard on many students.

Managing COVID-mitigation measures, such as keeping students a safe distance apart, adds another level of need for more staff time and help from volunteers, Davis said.

In addition to needing volunteers, the middle

and high schools are short two assistants for the special education program. The district has more special ed students than in past years, adding to the workload on staff, Davis said.

The jobs are 5.75 hours a day, five days a week. More information is available on the Wrangell School District website.

The elementary school also is short-staffed in that area, Miller-Yancey said. There are two paraprofessional positions open at the elementary. Staff will fill in as needed, "covering the duties until we have applicants and can hopefully hire," the assistant principal said.

"The paraprofessionals work with special education students, as well as assist with playground, lunch and other supervision duties."

The district also needs more people to sign up as substitute teachers. "If someone is even looking for short term work, they are encouraged to speak to Kim Powell in the district office," Miller-Yancey said.

The school district also was advertising last week to fill a custodian job.

For more information on any of the jobs, stop by the district office or call 874-2347.

For information about volunteering at the middle or high schools, call 874-3995; for the elementary school, call 874-2321.

"We are a community school," Davis said. Which means the school needs to be out in the community, just as community members who have time should consider helping at the school, he said.

And for those with baking skills, the elementary school has a special request. "We would love volunteers to bake mini muffins for Muffin Monday," Miller-Yancey said. "As students enter on Mondays, we offer mini muffins as a welcome back from the weekend."

Mini muffins can be dropped off at the school office any day of the week between 7:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. The district will freeze the muffins for use on a Monday.



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Drilling to learn what's underneath

The parking lot next to the WCA carving shed on Front Street was temporarily closed last Thursday as workers under the direction of Shannon & Wilson drilled soil samples from the property. The Anchorage-based environmental consulting firm is in Wrangell to examine several borough-owned properties for possible contamination, including near the Wrangell Municipal Light and Power generator building on Case Avenue. The Front Street parking lot was formerly a gas station. The city purchased the property around 2011, according to Capital Facilities Director Amber Al-Haddad.

Assembly focuses on two options for Public Safety Building

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

The assembly has directed borough staff to get two estimates for possibly resolving the longstanding deliberations over repairs to the rot-damaged Public Safety Building and the future of the former hospital building.

One estimate would be for a two-year project to repair and renovate the 34-year-old Public Safety Building, restoring it for full use by the police and fire departments, state court system, federal customs and other agencies.

The other estimate from an engineering firm would cover remodeling the vacant Wrangell Medical Center as the new Pub-

lic Safety Building, and adding a fire hall adjacent to the structure.

The assembly decided at its Aug. 24 meeting to seek estimates for only the two options, from among five alternatives presented to the borough.

Mayor Steve Prysunka said he is worried Wrangell could lose its courthouse altogether if it does not provide adequate facilities.

"We have a major tenant in the building," he said. "Before we make any decisions on anything, we need to determine ... if that would be appropriate for the anchor tenant that's in that building, which is the court system."

The mayor added, "I am ex-

remely fearful that we'll lose the court system if we don't do a good job of this. That has implications for all kinds of things."

Assemblymember Terry Courson said that, in general, he is in favor of whatever is the cheapest option. However, he said he needed some more time to think about the available options.

At one time, the assembly considered replacing the Public Safety Building with a new structure, rather than repairing all of the rot and water damage and other problems at the structure. But a rough estimate of \$30 million for new construction turned the discussion to a repair and rebuild, not new construction.

Repairs and renovations to the building have been estimated at roughly less than half the cost of building new.

With a repair project, the borough would need to find

facilities for temporary relocation of staff during the work. The borough has discussed using the former hospital building as temporary quarters, or perhaps even relocating the Public Safety Building tenants there permanently.

Capital Facilities Director Amber Al-Haddad presented the assembly Aug. 24 with five possible options to consider.

Those five options were:

- A single work contract for a two-year project to renovate the Public Safety Building.
- Multiple contracts for the work, spread out over 10 years.
- Build a new Public Safety Building with a jail as a standalone structure, and demolishing the former hospital.
- Build a new Public Safety Building with a fire hall as a standalone structure, and demolishing the former hospital.
- Renovate the former hos-

pital to serve as a new home for the Public Safety Building tenants, and constructing a new fire hall adjacent to the former hospital.

Whichever option the borough may select, Al-Haddad said actual construction work likely could not start until 2023. After deciding on which option to move ahead, the borough would need to contract for design and engineering work, decide on financing, and put the project out to bid.

Assemblymember David Powell said the borough has been spinning its wheels on this project for quite some time, spending more money to get updated cost estimates without actually making any forward progress.

After further discussion by the assembly, Prysunka said the general consensus he was hearing among the assembly was the need to cut down the multiple alternatives to an "either-or" choice. Mainly, he said, members want to get updated cost estimates for renovating the Public Safety Building over two years, or for turning the former hospital into new quarters for public safety agencies.

The original hospital building was constructed in 1967, with remodeling and additions in 1974, 1988 and 1994. The SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium had been leasing the building from the borough until earlier this year, when SEARHC opened its new medical center and returned the old hospital to the city.

WILMA ELIZABETH STOKES, 92
passed away peacefully on August 28, 2021,
surrounded by her family.

A CELEBRATION OF LIFE SERVICE
will be held on Tuesday, September 7, 2021
at the Harbor Light Assembly of God church at 11:00 a.m.
A reception will follow the graveside service.

The Tea Party reception will be held downstairs
in the church's Fellowship hall.
Social distance seating will be encouraged
and masks will be at individual discretion.

The family extends an invitation to
the community to attend Wilma's service.
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Borough creates new deputy manager post

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

Borough leadership will expand in the near future, with the creation of a new position intended to help allow the borough manager to focus on bigger projects — in addition to taking on its own set of assignments.

The assembly unanimously approved Aug. 24 the creation of a deputy borough manager position, following up on discussion from two weeks earlier.

The deputy manager would share the workload and assist the borough manager in administrative functions.

Assemblymember Patty Gilbert asked what parts of the borough manager job the deputy would take the lead on. Manager Lisa Von Barga said the new staffer would take the lead in human resources and safety matters, as well as management training.

“The other thing is the assembly specifically requested that this position be able to replace me if I’m gone,” Von Barga said.

Creating the new position was the assembly’s idea, not Von Barga’s.

Assembly members have been discussing adding the position for at least the past three years, Mayor Steve Prysunka said when the issue was considered at an Aug. 11 as-

sembly workshop.

The mayor has pointed to several big projects that need Von Barga’s time. Wrangell needs to find solutions to its ailing water treatment plant, repairs/rebuild to the community’s water reservoir dams, a deteriorating building at the power plant, years of water damage to the Public Safety Building and other projects that will total tens of millions of dollars.

The new position will pay about \$8,000, possibly more, per month, depending on experience, at the same wage scale as the job of police chief.

“The wage scale was based on the role that this person is going to play, which essentially is taking over as the city manager in my stead and having an entire set of duties unto their own,” Von Barga said.

Wrangell resident Bob Lippert wrote the assembly to state his objections: “I do not comprehend how a town of 2,500 people with limited tax base has a need for this position,” he wrote, calling the new job “another layer of bureaucracy funded by the citizens of Wrangell.”

No one from the public testified on the issue at the Aug. 24 assembly meeting.

Von Barga had reported earlier that she would first try to fill the position with an in-house hire.

Wrangell renters have received almost quarter-million in assistance

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

Wrangell renters have benefitted from more than \$237,000 in assistance under a federally funded, state-managed program that is among the leaders nationwide in getting money to landlords and utilities on behalf of households economically hurt by the pandemic.

More than \$110 million had gone out to help almost 19,000 households statewide as of last week, almost half of the \$242 million allotted to Alaska under the federal pandemic assistance program.

Alaska was ranked third in the nation among states for distributing the funds, according to Treasury Department data analyzed by The Wall Street Journal.

Nationwide, only about 20% of the \$25 billion allocated to states, municipalities and tribes last December had been distributed as of the end of July, according to the Treasury Department.

The department last week advised states that have been slow to distribute the aid to start accepting self-declarations of financial hardship from tenants when proof is not “readily available.” Treasury also said states and local programs can advance money to landlords while still working to confirm the amount owed.

The Alaska Housing Finance Corp., which before the pandemic managed subsidized rental housing and home loan programs, has been administering the federally funded rent relief payments since last summer.

In Wrangell, as of last Friday, more than \$215,000 had been paid to cover past-due, current and future rent for 61 applicants who met income guidelines and could show loss of earnings due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The program also has paid out almost \$20,000 to help cover utility bills.

Statewide, AHFC as of last Friday had distributed rent and utility assistance for almost 19,000

households. Almost 75% of applicants have been approved for payment, with the rest either still in processing, determined ineligible or withdrew their application.

Most of the landlords participating in the program are small operations, with one or maybe a few rental units, the housing agency said.

As AHFC gets ready to open up another program of federally funded rent relief, it is reaching out to applicants to finish the first round.

“The most common problem we see with applications now is lack of response. There are approximately 5,000 who applied for the program but did not go on to submit their identification, income statements or other documentation such as a rental agreement,” said Stacy Barnes, director of governmental relations and public affairs at AHFC.

“We have emailed these individuals almost weekly since March asking for their documents. We have also begun texting them and we’ve initiated phone calls,” she said Monday.

The next round of aid, funded in March by Congress, will cover rent and utility assistance for tenants who missed the first application period. Applicants under the first round of rental assistance will not need to reapply.

AHFC will open the new program for pre-registration after Labor Day, Barnes said, with the online system available for applications Sept. 13 to Oct. 1. This second round includes about \$125 million to help Alaska tenants.

The March federal appropriation also included money to help homeowners behind on their mortgage because of income loss due to the pandemic. Alaska’s share of that program is \$50 million.

AHFC plans to submit its plan for mortgage relief payments to the Treasury Department by Sept. 30, Barnes said. After federal approval, the state hopes to bring the plan to the public later this fall.

Kenai Borough mayor advocates farm animal drug to treat COVID-19

KENAI (AP) - The Kenai Peninsula Borough mayor, who is not a medical professional, has promoted a debunked treatment for COVID-19 that is intended more for farm animals.

Mayor Charlie Pierce has publicly backed the use of ivermectin, an anti-parasitic deworming drug, the Peninsula Clarion newspaper reported Aug. 25. Livestock supply stores in the borough, south of Anchorage, have received numerous inquiries about the drug in the recent weeks.

Pierce has twice defended use of the drug, first at last week’s borough meeting and during a radio show on Kenai Peninsula radio station KSRM.

“What I’m asking for is that the ... world view of the various treatments that are being researched and looked at outside of and including vaccinations be looked at from a more open perspective,” Pierce said during the show. “Let the doctors experiment with perhaps some things that haven’t been signed off by the Food and Drug Administration.”

Pierce said ivermectin is “a very inexpensive medication,” and encouraged listeners to research the drug further.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved ivermectin in both people and animals for some parasitic worms and for head lice and skin conditions. The FDA has not approved its use in treating or preventing COVID-19 in humans.

“Using any treatment for COVID-19 that’s not approved or authorized by the FDA, unless part of a clinical trial, can cause serious harm,” the FDA said in a warning about the drug.

Pierce did not return calls to the newspaper nor The Associated Press.

He also didn’t answer an email sent by the AP asking how he heard about the drug, why he’s promoting it if he’s not a medical professional, and if he would feel liable if someone were to become ill or worse taking it. He also didn’t answer if he was vaccinated for COVID-19 or if he was encouraging people in the borough, which has the fourth-worst vaccination rate in the state among boroughs, to get vaccinated.

The mayor this past spring criticized the Kenai Peninsula School District for requiring students to wear face masks.

The borough has a population of nearly 59,000 residents, with the total cumulative COVID case count at 6,153 since March 2020. All of the intensive care unit hospital beds were occupied last Tuesday at the borough-owned hospital in Soldotna.

The mayor at a borough assembly meeting in August criticized the hospital for not offering drugs like ivermectin.

Continued on page 9

Dunleavy says ‘people aren’t stupid,’ and can make their own vaccination decisions

ANCHORAGE (AP) - Alaska last week reported its highest daily number of resident COVID-19 cases so far this year as health officials struggle to keep pace with testing and contact tracing and hospitals juggle a surge in patients amid staff shortages.

Gov. Mike Dunleavy told reporters Aug. 26 that Alaskans should talk to their doctors about getting vaccinated “if that’s what they want to do.”

“We know what we need to do. People know what they need to do,” Dunleavy said. “They need to have conversations with their doctor and make a decision, if that’s what they want to do. If they don’t, then they have to understand that they run the risk of getting infected, especially with this variant that is highly contagious.”

As to whether that is an effective way to encourage vaccination, Dunleavy said, “This isn’t North Korea. You don’t dictate to people how they live their lives.”

“I think it’s the best strategy. It’s 2021. This isn’t some place in Europe in 1939. You have conversations with folks. ... You have conversations with your doctors. You have conversations with your friends ... People aren’t stupid,” he said.

Dunleavy was infected with the coronavirus in in February.

His office has said that Dunleavy decided to get vaccinated in June.

As of Monday, almost 61% of eligible Alaskans had received at least their first dose of a vaccine, according to the state health department. The national rate was 72%.

The governor on Aug. 26 announced plans aimed at increasing staffing to help with COVID-19 cases, including speeding the licensing process for new health care workers and seeking federal contracts for more workers.

The state’s chief medical officer, Dr. Anne Zink, said hospital staffing is a concern.

According to the state hospital association, hospitalizations of patients with

COVID-19 are nearing pandemic highs. Combined with staff shortages and busy summertime admissions, Alaska’s health care system faces the threat of being overwhelmed, providers and state officials said.

Health care providers are deciding which patients get intensive care unit beds and are struggling to transfer severely ill patients to other overwhelmed facilities.

“As far as we’re concerned, the crisis we have been warning about is here,” said Jared Kosin, president and CEO of the Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association. “And we need to act like that. It looks like it’s going to get a lot worse.”



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Group shuts down effort to recall Dunleavy

JUNEAU (AP) - The campaign aimed at recalling Gov. Mike Dunleavy is closing down, with a gubernatorial election looming next year and the group short of the signatures needed to force a recall vote.

The Recall Dunleavy group said that as of Aug. 21 it had gathered 62,373 signatures, shy of the 71,252 needed.

Collecting signatures during the pandemic has been difficult, said Joelle Hall, a member of the group's steering committee.

Hall called the decision to halt the recall effort strategic and wise. The primary election for the governor's race is just 12 months away.

Hall, president of the Alaska AFL-CIO and a veteran of state politics, said Dunleavy "was saved by a worldwide pandemic. If there hadn't been one, he would already be recalled. We'll never know that, but based on the zeal. ... I have never in my life seen anything like what was happening at the beginning of this."

The recall effort took off in 2019, fueled by public outcry over vetoes and budget cuts proposed by the Republican governor. While recall supporters quickly gathered signatures for an initial phase, their application was rejected, prompting a legal fight the group eventually won — but which burned up time.

Dunleavy later moderated or relented on some of the 2019 proposals and budget cuts. Then the pandemic made it almost impossible to gather recall petition signatures at public events in 2020.

The governor recently filed a letter of intent to seek reelection. Others who have announced plans to run for governor include former Gov. Bill Walker, an independent whom Dunleavy succeeded in 2018; and former state Rep. Les Gara, a Democrat.

It was unclear how much money either side of the recall effort had raised because little public reporting was required during the signature-gathering phase.

Kenai mayor

Continued from page 8

Sarah Donchi, the owner of Kenai Feed and Supply, said she has received a lot of questions on the types of ivermectin she carries. Though she tells them it's intended for animal use only, she said "people are buying it anyway."

The label on ivermectin paste at Kenai Feed said it is meant to treat a horse up to 1,250 pounds. Another product said it is intended to treat cows weighing up to 550 pounds.

Employees at Cad-Re Feed in Soldotna are also getting inquiries about ivermectin "almost daily," co-owner Shawn Taplin told the Clarion.

Taplin tells customers ivermectin is a drug he orders from a veterinary supply company, but they still purchase it. "What they choose to do with it is up to them," he said.

Studying ivermectin as a COVID-19 medication has been mostly abandoned, according to Dr. Coleman Cutchins, the state pharmacist with the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services.

Ivermectin can be dangerous to humans if used incorrectly, Cutchins said. "The doses people are trying to recommend are really, really high," he said.

Zoning amendment allows condos past cemetery

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

The borough assembly has approved a zoning amendment that opens the possibility for condominiums past the cemetery out to the end of city water and sewer services.

The amendment adds condominiums as an allowable conditional use in the Rural Residential 1 zoning district, if municipal water and sewer service is available to ensure environmental controls over waste disposal from the multiple housing units.

The change "provides another development option," Carol Rushmore, Wrangell's zoning administrator, wrote in her presentation for the Aug. 24

assembly meeting, where members approved the change.

"Roadhouse Condominiums has been a successful venture such that additional similar developments could be appropriate," wrote Rushmore, who also serves as Wrangell's economic development director. The Roadhouse units are the only condos in town, she said.

"There have been a couple of basic inquiries over the years about what it would take to construct condos."

The borough planning and zoning commission had recommended the change in Wrangell's zoning laws.

Condominiums are multi-unit housing developments where residents own their own

unit and the condo association usually owns the land and common areas, such as driveways.

"Any proposal, if the condominium use is approved, would be reviewed on its own merit looking at lot size, number of units, parking, storage and other shared spaces as designated within the application," Rushmore explained in her presentation for the assembly.

A conditional-use permit requires public notice and a hearing by the planning and zoning commission.

The zoning change meets the community's comprehen-

sive plan objectives of supporting "a range of housing types/living arrangements over time in Wrangell, south of town along Zimovia Highway."

Though the zoning change allows condominiums as far south as McCormack Creek, the requirement of city water and sewer services stops the option at about 6-Mile, unless the utility lines are extended.

Land south of the cemetery to McCormack Creek primarily is zoned RR1. There are no other Rural Residential 1 lands in Wrangell, Rushmore said.

Work almost done on \$40 million Kake road to other side of island

By THE PETERSBURG PILOT

Completion of the 37-mile, \$40 million Kake Access Project is expected mid-October, providing road access from the community on the west side of Kupreanof Island to a boat launch ramp on the northeastern shore, about a dozen miles north of Petersburg.

The work, which was funded by a 2012 legislative appropriation, includes almost six miles of new roadway, 21 miles of improving existing unpaved logging roads, and building the boat launch facility on Frederick Sound near the mouth of Twelvemile Creek.

"Overall, our goal is to make this route an easily traversable one, so to do that we have enhanced some existing roads by grading them and putting on new surface," said Garrett Paul, project manager at the Alaska Department of Transportation.

The road would provide a closer link between Kake, a community of about 600, and Petersburg, which is on Mitkof Island.

"The overall project purpose is to provide year-round surface

transportation access on Kupreanof Island between the community of Kake and a new boat launch on the eastern shore of Kupreanof Island," according to the Department of Transportation project description.

The road will provide public access to lands along the route and create "an additional access point to navigable waters on Frederick Sound."

Now that road work is nearly complete, Paul said the contractor is focusing on finishing the boat ramp and building a parking lot next to it.

A temporary bridge is in place at Twelvemile Creek while waiting on delivery of a new bridge that is being manufactured down south, Paul said. The permanent structure is expected to arrive on site in early September.

"We are improving the existing bridges that were out there, they were showing their age but we're trying to bring them up to safety standards and allow them to be used well into the future," Paul said.

Kiewit Infrastructure West is the contractor on the job.

Borough will sell 3 residential lots

By SENTINEL STAFF

The borough assembly has approved the sale of three residential lots.

The lots are all next to each other on Etolin Street, zoned for single-family residences, and each is a little less than half an acre in size.

The minimum bids for the lots range from \$28,350 to \$31,500.

The borough will use the Public Surplus website — a nationwide commercial operation that specializes in selling government property — to auction the lots, just as it recently did for the unused armory on Second

Avenue, which reverted back to the borough after the Army National Guard closed down its operations.

The borough will list the lots at a minimum bid of 90% of their appraised value. The assembly approved the sale at its Aug. 24 meeting.

"They are staying as residential lots. There will be some added costs for utility connections," said Economic Development Director Carol Rushmore.

Rushmore said the lots would likely be put up for auction the first week of September.

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WRANGELL SENTINEL

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

In the Matter of the Estate of Lucille Merrill. You are notified that the court has appointed a personal representative of the estate of Lucille Merrill, born September 10, 1935, died July 21, 2021. All persons having claims against the deceased are required to present their claims within four months after the date of the first publication of this notice or the claims will be forever barred.

Case No. 1WR-21-14PR
Brenda Schwartz-Yeager
PO Box 1996
Wrangell, AK 99929
907-470-4000
brenda@marineartist.com

Publish Sept. 2, 9 and 16, 2021

Police report

Monday, Aug. 23

Inmate booking.
Welfare check.
Traffic stop.

Tuesday, Aug. 24

Agency assist: Ambulance.
Agency assist: Ambulance.

Wednesday, Aug. 25

Agency assist: Fire alarm.
Found property.
Driving complaint.
Vehicle unlock.
Assault IV/domestic violence:
Arrested for assault IV/
domestic violence, interfering with a report of domestic violence and probation violation.

Thursday, Aug. 26

Reckless driving: Citation issued for excessive acceleration.

Friday, Aug. 27

Traffic stop.
Fire.
Parking violation.
Dog at large.

Saturday, Aug. 28

Agency assist: Ambulance.
Dispute.
Agency assist: Ambulance.

Sunday, Aug. 29

Agency assist: EMTs.
Agency assist: Papers served.

During this reporting period there were eight subpoenas served and four agency assists with the Hoonah Police Department.

CLASSIFIED/LEGALIS

MOVING SALE 932 Ash St. If you show up Saturday from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., early, all prices double.

CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL INVITATION TO BID Skeet Range Site Improvements

Notice is hereby given that the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, will receive sealed bids for the construction of the Skeet Range Site Improvements project. Work consists of all activities necessary to clear the existing site and provide a base course finish surface for the skeet range and parking area. The owner's estimate for all work is approximately \$50,000.

Sealed bids will be received by the City and Borough of Wrangell, PO Box 531, Wrangell, Alaska 99929, or located at the Borough Clerk's Office, 205 Brueger Street, Wrangell, Alaska 99929, until 2 p.m. prevailing time on September 17, 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.

Lisa Von Bargen, Borough Manager
City & Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, Owner

Publish Sept. 2 and Sept. 9, 2021

CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, Borough Charter, Sec. 4, public notice is hereby given that the following ordinances listed by title only have been adopted by the Borough Assembly. Such ordinances are currently on file in the office of the Borough Clerk and may be inspected upon request.

Ordinance No. 1005 of the assembly of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, repealing Section 15.12.035 Permits, Section 15.12.050 Meter Deposits, Section 15.12.055 Electrical Connection Fees, Subsection 15.12.065(g), and Extension Policies, Subsection 15.12.140(d) Discontinuance of Service, and Section 15.12.240 Use of Poles in Their Entirety, and establishing a new process for fees in Chapter 15.12, Electricity, of the Wrangell Municipal Code.

Ordinance No. 1007 of the assembly of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, amending Chapter 20.28 of the Zoning Code Titled RR-1 District - Rural Residential Section 20.28.040 conditional uses by adding condominiums in areas with city sewer and water as a new conditional use.

Ordinance No. 1008 of the assembly of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, adding Chapter 5.03, Fiscal Provisions Generally, and adding Section 5.03.001, Set-Offs Prior to Disbursements, in Chapter 5.03, of the Wrangell Municipal Code

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

Publish Sept. 2, 2021

CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC NOTICE

Voter qualifications for the City and Borough of Wrangell, October 5, 2021, Regular Election, are as follows:

1. a United States citizen;
2. registered and qualified to vote in the State of Alaska elections and registered thereat for at least thirty (30) days immediately preceding the municipal election;
3. at least eighteen (18) years of age;
4. a resident of the City & Borough of Wrangell for thirty (30) days preceding the election;
5. not disqualified by reason of having been convicted of a felony involving moral turpitude, and if so, that civil rights have been restored, nor disqualified because judicially determined to be of unsound mind.

Voters are cautioned to make certain their residence address is correct on their State Voter Registration. City law requires that each voter shall be registered to vote in the precinct in which that person seeks to vote in order to vote in municipal elections.

Your name must appear on the precinct list. If you are registered in another city, you must change your registration **prior to Sunday, September 5, 2021, to qualify to vote in the Regular Election of October 5, 2021.**

You may ask the Borough Clerk to check the precinct register to assure your qualifications. Kim Lane, MMC, Borough Clerk City & Borough of Wrangell, Alaska

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

Publish Aug. 12, Aug. 19, Aug. 26, Sept. 2, 2021

HELP WANTED

Wrangell Head Start is hiring for a classroom cook. For more information call 874-2455.

FOR SALE

19-foot Glasply, 225 Merc EFI, trailer, downriggers, hydraulic steering, extras, \$8,500. Call 907-660-7400.

FOR SALE

Remote property, Thoms Place subdivision, South Wrangell Island. 1.88 acres, waterfront. Call 907-321-3240.

FOR SALE

17-1/2 foot Lund, 115-hp Mercury outboard and easy-loader trailer \$3,500. Call 907-518-1417.

FREE

Recycled newspapers. Stop by the Sentinel to pick some up.

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 874-2301 or email wrgsent@gmail.com.



NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Board of Directors of the Southeast Alaska Power Agency (SEAPA) will hold a regular board meeting on September 9, 2021, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. AKDT. During the meeting, an executive session may be held to provide an update on hydrosite analysis and discuss potential interconnections with Metlakatla and Kake. Due to recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and its social distancing guidelines, the board meeting will be held electronically. For additional information, please call 907-228-2281.

Publish Sept. 2, 2021

CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC NOTICE

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

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

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

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

Publish Sept 2, 2021

OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON WRANGELL-PETERSBURG INVASIVE PLANT MANAGEMENT PROJECT

The Wrangell and Petersburg Ranger Districts have released an Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Wrangell-Petersburg Invasive Plant Management project. The project aims to increase the effectiveness of invasive plant management activities across both Districts. The proposal includes manual, mechanical and chemical invasive plant treatments on National Forest System lands, including wilderness areas, as well as on lands of other ownership to reduce invasive infestations mapped over 5,811 acres. The responsible officials for this project are: Clint Kolarich, Wrangell District Ranger, clint.kolarich@usda.gov, and Ted Sandhofer, Petersburg District Ranger, ted.sandhofer@usda.gov.

The EA and FONSI are available online under the "analysis" tab at:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=59576>.

If you require a paper copy or electronic media, or need additional information regarding this action, please contact Carey Case, Project Leader, at 907-772-3871 or carey.case@usda.gov.

HOW TO COMMENT AND TIMEFRAME

Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to object must meet the information requirements of 36 CFR 218 subparts A and B.

Specific written comments on the proposed project will be accepted for 30 days following the date of publication of this notice in the Wrangell Sentinel and Petersburg Pilot, the newspapers of record for the Wrangell and Petersburg Ranger Districts. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for a proposed action documented in an EA. Those wishing to comment should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

The proposed project is an activity implementing a land management plan and is subject to 36 CFR 218, subparts A and B. Only individuals or entities who submit timely and specific written comments about this proposed project or activity during this or another public comment period established by the Responsible Official will be eligible to file an objection. Comments must be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and include supporting reasons for the Responsible Official to consider. Persons submitting comments must provide the following information: name and address; title of the proposed project; specific written comments; and signature or other verification of identity upon request. Other requirements to be eligible to submit an objection are listed at 36 CFR 218.25(a)(3). It is the responsibility of the sender to ensure timely receipt of any comments submitted.

Specific written comments for the responsible official may be submitted via mail, other delivery service, email or fax to: Ted Sandhofer, PO Box 1328, Petersburg, AK 99833, fax 907-772-5995, or through our comment database at <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?Project=59576>.

Electronic comments shall be in a format compatible with the current version of MS Word. Also, hand-delivered comments will be accepted at either district office (525 Bennett St. in Wrangell, or 12 North Nordic Drive in Petersburg), Monday through Friday between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. except holidays; however, for continued public safety during the pandemic, please call ahead (907-874-2323 in Wrangell, or 907-419-6158 in Petersburg).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

Publish Sept. 2, 2021

Alaska Fish Factor

By LAINE WELCH Fisheries columnist

Alaska salmon catch exceeds pre-season forecast

Alaska's 2021 salmon harvest has blown past the forecast and by last Friday had topped 201 million fish, well above the 190 million projected at the start of the season.

The catch was bolstered by a surge of pink salmon to the three top-producing regions: Prince William Sound, Southeast and Kodiak, combined with strong landings of sockeyes.

"Pink salmon runs are over 95% complete, based on average run timing. Effort drops off quickly this late in the season, so it is difficult to predict where that harvest will end up," said Forrest Bowers, deputy director of the Commercial Fisheries Division at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

"My guess is up to another half million late-run sockeye salmon and perhaps 10 million pink salmon will be harvested. If that occurs, we will end up with around 143 million pink salmon, 54 million sockeye, and 207 million total salmon harvested."

Bowers said 2021 could end up being the sixth-largest sockeye and sixth- or seventh-largest pink salmon harvest on record.

Pinks are the bread-and-butter catch for Alaska salmon fishermen. At Prince William Sound, which had a catch forecast of about 25 million pinks, nearly 62 million had crossed the docks.

"Wild stocks are returning stronger than anticipated (to PWS) given the uncertainty about spawning success from the 2019 parent year which was negatively impacted by drought conditions," said the weekly ADF&G in-season summary.

Southeast Alaska pink landings had topped 40 million on a forecast of 28 million fish. At Kodiak, the pink harvest was on target to reach 22 million. The Alaska Peninsula also has had a strong catch nearing 11 million humpies.

The bigger catches combined

with increased prices for all salmon will mean a nice payday for Alaska fishermen, well above the \$295 million from the 2020 season.

Base prices for pinks were averaging 35 cents a pound, up a nickel from last year when the catch totaled about \$62 million.

Sockeye base prices, which last year averaged just 76 cents a point, were at \$1.25 to fishermen at Bristol Bay, making that catch worth \$231 million to fishermen. The value will increase substantially as bonuses and other price adjustments are added in.

Base prices for sockeyes at Kodiak were reported at \$1.45 to \$1.50 and \$1.75 at Southeast.

For the other salmon species, chum catches had picked up and were nearing nine million on a forecast calling for 15.3 million. At Kodiak the base price for chums had doubled to 50 cents a pound, and nearly doubled to 85 cents in at Southeast.

Coho catches typically near their peak around this time and a statewide catch of 3.8 million is predicted. For Chinook salmon, the catch had topped 204,000 out of a projected 296,000 kings.

The Southeast fleet of 713 trollers was averaging \$6.68 per pound for Chinook, compared to \$5.07 last year. Troll-caught cohos were fetching a whopping \$2.84 per pound, and \$1.03 for chums, according to the state.

Cod catch shares

Fishery managers are set to implement a catch-share program for cod trawlers in the Bering Sea. Shares would be divided up based on harvest history over certain years.

The goal is to make the fishery safer and more valuable, and to end the race for cod that results in high bycatch levels of unwanted species.

The measure has the support of the Seattle-based trade group United Catcher Boats that repre-

sents over 70 trawlers, and the Pacific Seafood Processors Association that includes eight shore-side processing companies.

A low of 29 trawl boats and a high of 69 fished for Bering Sea cod each year from 2004 to 2020, according to a report by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council that oversees Alaska fisheries from three to 200 miles offshore.

Documents will be posted to the NPFMC website and public comments will be accepted Sept. 17-29. A final decision will be made at the management council meeting Oct. 10-15 in Anchorage.

Fukushima water release

Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) plans to meet with fishing communities before finalizing its plans to release 250 million gallons of treated but still radioactive water into the Pacific Ocean within two years. The water has been stored in massive tanks at TEPCO's Fukushima nuclear plant that was badly damaged by an earthquake in 2011.

The water, which was contaminated by melted uranium fuel from damaged reactors and is stored in huge holding tanks, is enough to fill 500 Olympic-sized swimming pools. TEPCO said it costs about 100 billion yen (\$910 million) to treat and store the water, and "space is running out so it needs to release it to the ocean."

The company plans to dilute the water more than 100 times with seawater to ensure it is within regulatory limits on radiation before pumping it through a tunnel under the seabed to a discharge point less than one mile offshore.

The Japanese government in April called it "the most practical solution" and said "it will do its utmost to provide compensation to fishermen for any damages."

AFN postpones annual convention due to COVID

ANCHORAGE (AP) - The Alaska Federation of Natives has postponed its annual convention because of a rise in COVID-19 cases in the state, the organization said.

The convention has traditionally been the largest gathering of Alaska Natives in the state. It had been scheduled for Oct. 21-23 but is now delayed until mid-December in Anchorage, the organization said in a statement Aug. 24.

The federation's board of directors cited a rise in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations statewide and the increasing pressure placed on Alaska's limited health care system.

Organizers said they will continue planning for an in-person convention at the Dena'ina Convention Center in downtown Anchorage with a virtual option. However, the statement said the board will make a decision by mid-October on whether to maintain the in-person part.

"The high-risk factors of holding a 5,000-person indoor meeting, with delegates coming in from across Alaska, make an in-person October gathering out of the question," Alaska Federation

of Natives President Julie Kitka said in the statement.

She said the economic impact of the pandemic on businesses and individuals continues to be felt. And when events like the federation's annual convention are turned virtual, there are negative economic impacts for everyone, including the host city.

"We are working to avoid that if we can, though our top priority remains the health and safety of our delegates and other participants," Kitka said.

One notable celebration this year will be the observation of the 50th anniversary of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

The act was the largest land settlement in the nation's history when President Richard Nixon signed it into law Dec. 18, 1971, and settled Indigenous land claims in Alaska.

"Postponing until December provides us an opportunity to gather in person on the 50th anniversary of ANCSA, but it all hinges on everyone's willingness and ability to get vaccinated," said Sealaska chairman and Alaska Federation of Natives co-chair Joe Nelson.

Sitka leases land for cruise ship 'recreation attraction'

SITKA (AP) - The Sitka city assembly has authorized a 20-year lease of land to a Native corporation for a "cultural and recreation attraction" for visitors, particularly cruise ship visitors docking at the nearby Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal.

The assembly, voting 5-2, approved leasing 17 acres to Shee Atiká, which plans to work with another company, Adventure Sitka, to develop the land with attractions such as zip lines, nature trails, a salmon bake and a canoe launch.

The land is between the ferry terminal and the cruise terminal. Chris McGraw, who owns the terminal and manages Adventure Sitka, said development of

the property will be an important part of handling an expected increase in cruise passengers to the community.

"The key to over-tourism is good distribution of guests," McGraw said at the Aug. 24 assembly meeting.

Karl Potts, CEO of Shee Atiká, said the lease would generate \$300,000 and \$400,000 a year for the city.

The development will pay Sitka an annual \$60,000 lease fee, plus \$4 per visitor. The rates will increase over the term of the lease.

Adventure Sitka and Shee Atiká were the only bidders to a city request for proposals to buy or lease the property.

Initial report cites low clouds in area of flightseeing crash

ANCHORAGE (AP) - Pilots reported low clouds the morning a sightseeing plane crashed near Ketchikan, killing all six people on board, according to a federal report released Aug. 25.

The National Transportation Safety Board released the preliminary report into the Aug. 5 crash of a plane that was carrying five tourists off a cruise ship and the pilot. The report did not include details such as a probable cause, which are typically released

much later.

The floatplane hit heavily wooded, mountainous terrain as the plane was returning to the Ketchikan harbor from a trip to Misty Fjords National Monument, the report said.

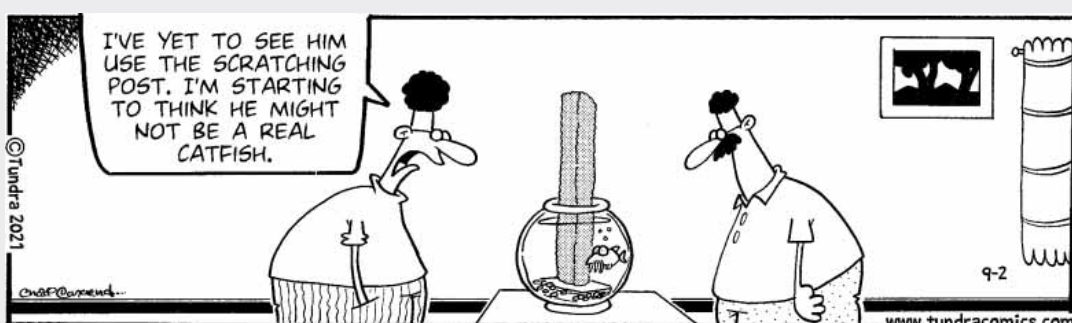
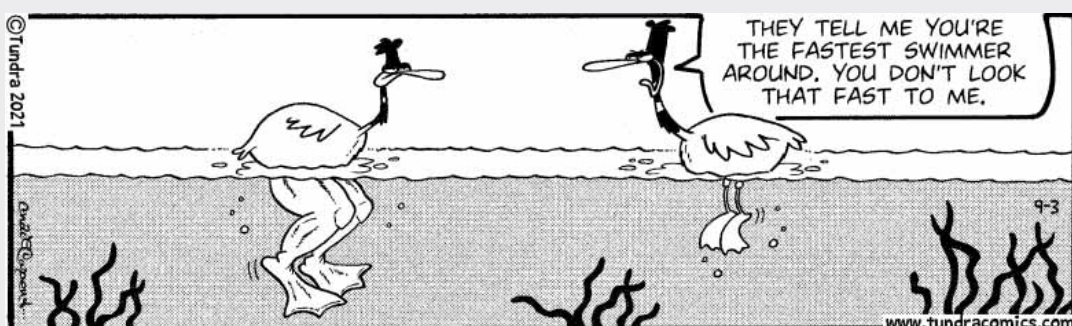
The accident site was 18 miles northeast of Ketchikan.

The plane initially hit a tree about 435 feet from the site where the main wreckage was found. The de Havilland Beaver was owned by Southeast Aviation.

The report said other pilots who were conducting passenger flights that morning said there were low clouds in the valley where the accident occurred.

Pilots who assisted in the search for the plane said the weather was overcast, and the mountain tops were obscured.

The clouds were as low as 600 feet to 800 feet in some places, including the valley where the accident occurred, the report said.



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COVID report

Continued from page 1

surge in infections, more people are deciding it's time to get vaccinated. The rate of Wrangell residents eligible for a vaccine who have received at least their first dose has climbed from 60% to 65% over the past two months.

Though ahead of the statewide rate by a few percentage points, Wrangell still is behind the national rate of 72%.

In addition to more often rolling up their sleeves for vaccinations and tilting their head back for COVID tests, Wrangell is responding by canceling public events to reduce the risk of spreading infections.

The borough has issued a public "thank you" for organizations that have canceled or postponed events to keep the community safer, ranging from a moving sale to a chamber of commerce luncheon.

"Let's be vigilant a little bit longer," Von Barga said.

That vigilance is particularly important now that classes have started, she said. Students — many of whom are too young to get vaccinated — will be going to school to spend time in the classroom, participating in activities and school sports, potentially exposing others to any infections they may pick up at home or in the community.

In Ketchikan, the high school closed to in-person learning on Monday, the first day of full attendance in the district, due to COVID infections. Ketchikan Charter School also sent many of its students home Monday because of active cases.

All activities were canceled until at least Wednesday, officials said, which is the earliest the schools might reopen.

In recent weeks, Ketchikan has broken records for new COVID-19 cases, active cases, hospitalizations and deaths in a surge fueled by the Delta variant.

State health officials reported 341 cases in August in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough.

In the first two weeks of school, the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District reported more than 130 students and staff tested positive for COVID-19, while 930 others have been identified as "close contacts" of cases.

The Kenai district is one of several in the state that has not adopted a mandatory masking requirement in the schools.

"We are seeing, compared to last year, far more positive cases and people needing to quarantine," said Pegge Erkeneff, spokesperson for the Kenai Peninsula school district. "It's

completely different this school year than it was last year. And that's because Delta [variant] is completely different," she was quoted by public radio station KDLL.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District is another without mandatory face mask rules. The district's Butte Elementary School closed this week to in-person classes after more than 20 new cases were identified in that school over seven days. Butte students will attend classes remotely until at least next week.

Glacier View School, also in the Mat-Su, switched to online learning this week "due to multiple outbreaks and community transmission," the principal reported in a letter to parents on Monday.

The high number of cases and hospitalizations are putting a strain on Alaska's health care providers. There were no intensive-care beds available in Anchorage on Monday.

"We've hit new highs, and it looks like we're not done yet," Jared Kosin, president of the Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association, told the Anchorage Daily News on Monday. "Make no mistake: This is a crisis."

Bartlett Regional Hospital in Juneau last week became the latest hospital in the state to announce it would require staff to be vaccinated against COVID. The SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium, which operates the hospital in Wrangell, was one of the first in the state to require vaccination of staff, contractors and volunteers.

The high caseload has created a backlog at the state's contact-tracing effort, leading health officials to ask people who test positive for COVID to reach out on their own to close contacts. The faster contacts can get tested, the better chance communities will have to limit the spread of any infections.

Close contacts are encouraged to get tested, and to stay at home until they get their test results, said Erin Michael, state public health nurse for Petersburg and Wrangell.

The state defines close contact as someone who was within six feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes over a 24-hour period — regardless "whether or not you were wearing masks and whether or not they" were showing signs of COVID.

Anyone with questions about managing their own contact tracing can call 907-531-3329, Michael said.

The Ketchikan Daily News contributed to this story.



PHOTO BY MARC LUTZ/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

End-of-summer sunshine

The view from the water, pulling into Heritage Harbor on Monday, showed just how good it can look when the sun is out, the skies are blue, and the clouds are reflected in the water.

\$1,100 dividend

Continued from page 1

dividend amount acceptable to the governor, there will no payment this year.

The Senate was scheduled to meet Wednesday, though final action on the spending bill was not certain.

As of Tuesday, Gov. Mike Dunleavy had not publicly stated his position on an \$1,100 dividend, which would be about \$100 higher than last year and just under the average of the past decade — but not even half of the \$2,350 PFD he has advocated all year.

In June, the governor vetoed the dividend approved by lawmakers — \$525 — calling it a "joke."

Paying anything more than the \$1,100 House number would require withdrawing additional money from the Permanent Fund, exceeding the annual limit adopted by the Legislature in 2018 to protect the fund from excessive drawdowns.

The state has been using Permanent Fund earnings the past three years to pay for public services and dividends. Any additional money directed to the PFD would require cuts to public services, taking more out of the savings account, or new taxes.

Senate Finance Committee Co-chair Bert Stedman said many of his constituents "don't want to pay taxes to have a big dividend."

The Sitka lawmaker, in his 18th year in the Senate, said, "They want the biggest dividend they can get without taxes. That's the tradeoff we're trying to, I guess, rectify."

Top members of the Senate Finance Committee strongly oppose drawing more money out of the Permanent Fund to pay larger dividends.

Rep. Ben Carpenter, in his second term from Nikiski, said the amount of this year's check can't be lawmakers' sole focus.

"We need to remain focused on achieving structural change that will stabilize the dividend and the state's finances and not make everything just about the dividend because then people don't focus on solving the problem," he said.

Carpenter, however, voted Monday night to pay a \$3,800 dividend this year, based on a 40-year-old formula the Legislature has not followed in the past five years because handing out that much money would have meant large cuts to public services or withdrawing billions more from the Permanent Fund. The \$3,800 amendment failed 19-21.

Though legislators have talked about adjusting the 1982 dividend formula, and have considered new taxes to bolster the state's finances, such as a state sales tax and an increase to oil production taxes, nothing has gathered enough support to win passage.

Andrew Halcro, a former Anchorage House member, said residents have a right to be angry about the delay in this year's dividend, but the issue goes beyond checks.

"While we are all focused on how much we are going to pay Alaskans forever ... the economy and the entire structure of Alaska is crumbling before our

eyes," he said.

Estimates show Alaska has lost population since 2016, the state's maintenance backlog of public facilities is around \$2 billion, and the oil and gas sector last year hit its lowest job numbers in decades.

Glenn Cravez, of Anchorage, wrote to legislators that he's a longtime resident of Alaska, which has no state sales or income tax, and that "it's wonderful to not pay those taxes AND receive a PFD check each year. But as adults, we know that money does not grow on trees, and that the free ride is over."

House majority members — mostly Democrats — debated at length with minority Republicans over the size of the dividend, taxes and the state's long-term fiscal future. Alaska has used savings to cover revenue shortfalls more than half of the past 30 years. Most of those savings are now gone, except for the \$81 billion Permanent Fund.

In the closing hours of Monday's debate in the House, which was characterized as "bickering" by one observer, House Speaker Louise Stutes, of Kodiak, asked: "Is this all we're going to do? Look for things to pick on each other? And you wonder why nothing's getting done. Good grief!"

The Legislature has been in special session for more than two weeks. The session will expire Sept. 14, unless lawmakers or the governor extend it.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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