

## Enrollment drop will cost Wrangell schools

By CALEB VIERKANT  
*Sentinel writer*

Wrangell schools could receive at least a couple hundred thousand dollars less in state

funding for the next school year, due to declining enrollment.

The community has seen a sharp decline in enrollment

this year, likely due to homeschooling and correspondence schooling because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Currently, about 200 stu-

dents are enrolled in the district, according to a presentation at a school district town hall budget meeting Jan. 19. Historically, the district has

counted about 300 students a year, said School Board President Aaron Angerman. The district is basing its 2021-2022 school year budget on a projected enrollment of 259.

"Looking at the numbers here, it seems the main category we're looking at significant reductions in is salaries, which of course means jobs for teachers and our community," School Board Member Laura Ballou said at the town hall.

"The biggest variable we don't know is the students who are currently homeschooling. Even if they don't plan to come back this year, are they willing to come back next year?" Ballou said, adding "a plea and appeal to any of these families to please reach out to the school district and let the school know your intentions for the fall."

State funding for schools is based on enrollment numbers collected each fall. "Literally, our teachers' jobs are on the line if we don't hear from you," Ballou said.

No action was taken at the school district's town hall meeting. A public hearing on the 2021-2022 budget is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 1.

"If we could possibly reestablish normal enrollment, it would help provide fiscal and academic stability, and would affect the money we get from the state," Schools Super-

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PHOTO BY VINCENT BALANSAG, OF VINCE PHOTOGRAPHY

### Winter doesn't look any better than this

Snow-covered trees framed the view of Chief Shakes Tribal House last Sunday.

## One weekly sailing each direction under summer ferry schedule

By LARRY PERSILY  
*Sentinel writer*

Wrangell would see one northbound and one southbound state ferry each week this summer, under the proposed schedule released Monday.

That's one-third the level of service from 2017 to 2019, before the pandemic significantly cut into ferry runs last year.

Under the draft schedule for May 1 through Sept. 30, the Matanuska would stop in Wrangell northbound on Sunday mornings and southbound on Friday afternoons on its weekly run to Southeast Alaska from Bellingham, Washington.

The Alaska Marine Highway System budget is down about 25% from two years ago. The largest ship in the fleet, the Columbia, will be held out of service this summer to save money, as will the fleet's newest ships, the Tazlina and Hubbard.

"One boat a week in each direction is not horrible," Wrangell Mayor Steve Prysunka said Tuesday. "It could have been a lot worse."

The community saw just one ferry stop in town in November, no visits in December and only one sailing in January.

At least travelers can make plans with

a weekly sailing in each direction during the summer, the mayor said, "as long as they can keep the boats running."

Southeast communities suffered a near total loss of ferry service last winter when the Matanuska broke down in late January 2020, and the Marine Highway System did not have another vessel available to take its place until April.

In addition to the Matanuska's weekly voyages this summer, the state's draft schedule calls for the LeConte to serve Juneau, Haines and Skagway with three or four round trips per week. The Kennicott will make a run between Bellingham, Ketchikan and Juneau on alternate

weeks, serving Yakutat, Kodiak, Homer and other ports on cross-Gulf sailings.

The proposed schedule is based on several factors, the Department of Transportation said in its Monday announcement. Those include the state's tight finances, weakened travel demand due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the governor's proposed budget for the fiscal year that starts July 1.

The Alaska Department of Transportation has scheduled a teleconference to accept public comments on the draft schedule, set for 10 a.m. Feb. 8 for Southeast communities. The toll-free number is 1-515-604-9000, access code 279613.

## Assembly appoints Dalrymple to fill out term

By CALEB VIERKANT  
*Sentinel writer*

The borough assembly on Tuesday evening appointed Bob Dalrymple to fill the unexpired term of member Julie Decker, who resigned Jan. 11. Dalrymple and Jim DeBord both expressed interest in filling the seat to the end of the term in October.

DeBord has previous experience with the assembly. He served as a member from October 2018 to 2019, choosing not to seek reelection that year. Dalrymple also has experience on

the assembly. He was appointed to sit on the assembly after Assembly Member Mya DeLong resigned in August 2020. He officially ran for office in the October 2020 election, but was unsuccessful.

The assembly on Tuesday presented Decker with a certificate of service for her eight years on the assembly, 2013 to 2021.

"I am interested in serving on the currently vacant seat on the Wrangell Borough Assembly and would like to be considered for that seat," Dalrymple's letter of interest read. "I would

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# Wrangell schools

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intendent Debbe Lancaster said.

"If we can do that, then we'll be able to be more consistent in our large-ticket items, which are salaries and benefits," she said. "We would be able to maintain a similar or close level of salaries and benefits, and that would actually help support our local economy."

State money, mostly under the per-student foundation formula program, comprises about 60% of the school district's total budget.

Total expenses in the district's three scenarios for next year are about \$5.85 million, \$5.55 million and \$5.32 million, with the biggest differences found in less spending on salaries and employee benefits.

All three budget scenarios would produce a significant deficit for the district, Lancaster said.

The district is looking at different ways to increase revenues and lower expenses, and the superintendent stressed that these are not real budgets but merely potential situations until the district knows more about enrollment and state funding.

Wrangell students enrolled in correspondence schools in other districts affect state funding, explained Erin Hardin, a special assistant at the Alaska Department of Education. Funding goes with the students, she said, based on each district's average daily enrollment. For example, if a student left the Wrangell School District and took correspondence

courses with another Alaska district full time, that student would count toward the other district's funding.

There is a provision in the state funding formula that could help districts with declining enrollment, said Ketchikan Rep. Dan Ortiz,

who also represents Wrangell. The hold-harmless provision cushions the drop in state foundation funding, preventing a steep all-at-once decline.

That safety valve could hold the drop in state funding to Wrangell to about \$200,000

next year, Ortiz said Tuesday. That would be less than half the cut if the hold-harmless provision were not in place.

The Department of Education has estimated the number at closer to \$250,000 in reduced state funding for Wrangell next year.

## Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

**WRANGELL COURTHOUSE** will be temporarily closed starting Monday, Feb. 1, until further notice. For general questions and information, contact Petersburg Court at (907) 772-3824. To file documents, email pdf files to 1WRMailbox@akcourts.us. For court hearings, call (800) 768-2983, access code: 874 2311. If it is an emergency, contact the Wrangell Police Department at 874-3304.

**WRANGELL SCHOOLS** will hold a public hearing on next year's budget at 6:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 1, live streamed via Zoom. No formal action will be taken. To attend the Zoom meeting, go to [https://zoom.us/j/97944596136?pwd=cXpUOXcrS3h3NmY0K2EvUGx6b2M4dz09\\_meeting\\_ID\\_97944596136](https://zoom.us/j/97944596136?pwd=cXpUOXcrS3h3NmY0K2EvUGx6b2M4dz09_meeting_ID_97944596136), passcode: 725135. Community members are encouraged to turn in their comments in advance by emailing them to [kpowell@wpsd.us](mailto:kpowell@wpsd.us). If you'd like to speak at the hearing, sign up by emailing or calling 874-2347 before 3:30 p.m. the day of the meeting.

**HIGH SCHOOL** basketball games set for 6 p.m. Friday and 10 a.m. Saturday, at home versus Petersburg. In-person attendance will be limited to two household members per player and necessary staff. All attendees must wear a mask, sanitize their hands and have their temperature taken. All home games will be streamed on the school's YouTube channel for at-home viewing. The games can viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/c/WPSDusStreaming>

*Is the attendance at your meeting or event low? Send information for Roundup to [wrgsent@gmail.com](mailto:wrgsent@gmail.com) or call 874-2301.*

## Continuing Events

**AA Meetings: North Star Group Meeting** Tuesdays and Fridays 7 - 8 p.m at St. Philips Episcopal Church.

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

### Jan. 27, 1921

Samuel Cunningham will erect a new home for his moving picture business as soon as the weather is sufficiently settled to permit building operations. The new building will occupy the Lemieux property between Sorset's meat market and the building formerly occupied by the Shurick drug store. It will be two stories high to provide a balcony.

### Jan. 25, 1946

A number of interesting figures have been made available this week by Postmaster E. R. Sharubroich in his annual report for the year 1945. A total of 26.22 percent more money was collected by the post office from stamp, box rents and second-class mail receipts this year than in the 1944 calendar year. Receipts from stamps the past year totaled \$9,727.26. In 1944 stamp sales totaled \$7,707.94. This large increase in one year is credited largely to the airmail service which Wrangell is now receiving. Despite bad weather and a number of times the planes were unable to land because of inadequate floats, airmail was received at the local post office 280 days out of the year. Airmail was dispatched on 274 days out of the year. An idea of the amount of airmail received can be gained also from the report. A total of 8,687 pounds of airmail was received and a total of 7,503 pounds of airmail was dispatched.

### Jan. 28, 1971

What we go through to get your Wrangell Sentinel to you each week. As you might have noticed, the weather has not been very good for either flying or boating between Wrangell

and Petersburg (where our press is located). Last week it came to pass that the paper was off the press and ready for distribution good and early Thursday but the weather was keeping the transfer from taking place. On Thursday afternoon the editor and Hap Jones took Jones' 20-foot cabin outboard out of the Wrangell harbor bound for Blind Slough, where a rendezvous with a taxi and the papers was arranged. The taxi got there but the editor and Jones couldn't quite navigate the 15-mile trip in the snow and had to turn around and come home with darkness nearing. We made it the next day, though, but this time it took a tugboat. The taxi returned and the driver put the papers aboard the Campbell Towing Co.'s Alasco 4, which was working in Blind Slough. The much-traveled papers arrived in Wrangell Friday afternoon and were out with our crew of patient and hard-working paper boys and gals Friday evening.

### Jan. 25, 1996

The 1990s' equivalent of the street corner pay phone is coming to the Alaska Marine Highway System. Cellular phones. "What we're envisioning is that there'd be some place where the public can go and swipe a credit card and make a phone call," said George Reifenstein, ferry systems operations manager. "Just this week it so happens the equipment is being installed on the Columbia for a one-month project," he said last week. The equipment is being installed near the purser's station. Assuming the demonstration project works, the state would request proposals, evaluate them and contract for the service. The Columbia is the largest of the fleet's eight vessels, though the phones eventually could be added to the other ships, too. The new ferry being built for delivery to Alaska in 1998 will have space set aside for a cellular phone station, Reifenstein said.

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

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

**Thursday, Jan. 28:** Rebecca Mork.

**Friday, Jan. 29:** McKinley Angerman-Kellogg, Dawn Mill, Ronan Rooney, Colten Speers, Jeff Villarma and Freddie.

**Saturday, Jan. 30:** Audra Netro.

**Sunday, Jan. 31:** Steve Beers, Crystal Crayne, Selina Rilatos, Quinton Davies, Justin Churchill and Lavonne Klinke.

**Monday, Feb. 1:** Scott Mason, Aly Howell, Christy Harris Good, Erica Smith; *Anniversary:* Gordon and Emily McCloskey.

**Tuesday, Feb. 2:** Rhiannon Wenzel, Leslie Cummings, Maria Weeg and Kaylahni Rose Weddel.

**Wednesday, Feb. 3:** Aaron Angerman, Oakley Marshall, Aaliyah Messmer, Lindsey Gross, Danika Smith, Ingrid O'Hern and Bryan Allen.

**Thursday, Feb. 4:** Charlotte Neff, Terry Carney, Collin Dando, Raymond Hayes and Cody Roberts.

*If you would like to add a birthday or anniversary, call the Sentinel at 874-2301. There is no charge.*

## Senior Center Meals Menu Delivery Only

**No Available Menu Until further notice.**

**Please call Wrangell Senior Center at 874-2066 by 10 a.m. for delivery.**

**Senior van also available to transport seniors to medical appointments reasonable errands like collecting mail, getting prescriptions at pharmacies or other essential need items.**

## FERRY

**January Sailings  
No Ferries Scheduled**

*Call 874-2021 for information or call 874-3711 or Toll Free 800-642-0066 for recorded information.*



## TIDES January 28 - February 3

	High Tides			Low Tides				
	AM Time	Ft	PM Time	Ft	AM Time	Ft	PM Time	Ft
Jan. 28	00:54	14.6	12:29	17.2	06:17	3.5	06:55	-2.2
Jan. 29	01:29	15.2	01:07	17.5	06:55	2.9	07:29	-2.5
Jan. 30	02:02	15.6	01:45	17.5	07:33	2.4	08:04	-2.4
Jan. 31	02:36	16.0	02:24	17.1	08:13	1.9	08:40	-1.9
Feb. 01	03:11	16.3	03:07	16.4	08:57	1.6	09:19	-1.1
Feb. 02	03:49	16.3	03:55	15.2	09:46	1.5	10:01	0.1
Feb. 03	04:32	16.2	04:52	13.9	10:41	1.5	10:48	1.5



## Wrangell Weather

Date	High	Low
Jan. 18	45	39
Jan. 19	41	37
Jan. 20	37	29
Jan. 21	34	25
Jan. 22	29	22
Jan. 23	30	26
Jan. 24	31	27
Jan. 25	32	23



## Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Hours
Jan. 28	7:52a	4:13p	08:24h
Jan. 29	7:50a	4:15p	08:28h
Jan. 30	7:48a	4:17p	08:33h
Jan. 31	7:46a	4:19p	08:37h
Feb. 1	7:44a	4:21p	08:41h
Feb. 2	7:42a	4:24p	08:45h
Feb. 3	7:40a	4:26p	08:49h
Feb. 4	7:38a	4:28p	08:53h

# Alaskans await opening of new housing assistance program

By LARRY PERSILY  
Sentinel writer

The state of Alaska and the municipality of Anchorage will share in \$200 million in new federal funds to help renters who have lost jobs or suffered economic hardship due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The Alaska Housing Finance Corp., which operated a similar, but much smaller, federally funded program last summer, is expected to manage the new as-

sistance program outside Anchorage, with more information expected this week and application details possibly later in February.

The housing finance agency is "working now to understand the requirements and develop a plan that supports renters and gets money to landlords as soon as we're able. More information about our plan will be updated on our Alaska Housing Relief website (AlaskaHousin-

gRelief.com) starting next month," Soren Johansson, public relations manager at the agency, said Jan. 21.

Alaska was allotted \$200 million under a \$25 billion rental assistance appropriation in the coronavirus relief bill Congress approved in December. Almost \$36 million of Alaska's housing assistance allocation will go straight to Anchorage, according to a resolution on the Anchorage municipal assembly's Tuesday

meeting agenda. The federal aid bill carves out funds directly for municipalities of more than 200,000 residents.

The minimum in the law for smaller states is \$200 million.

The housing aid is among multiple appropriations in the \$900 billion spending package, which included stimulus checks of up to \$600 per person, enhanced federal unemployment benefits, and additional funds for small businesses, schools, child care and vaccine distribution.

Under the federal rules for the housing assistance funds, eligible households may receive up to 12 months of aid, with an additional three months possible if the state or municipal agency "determines the extra months are needed to ensure housing stability" and if extra funds are available.

Payment of arrears "that could result in eviction of an eligible household is prioritized," under the federal rules.

The funds may be used to bring renters current and then to

help cover future rent, according to the rules.

Each state will have leeway to establish its own rules and application process, within the federal requirements.

A portion of the \$25 billion in federal funds for housing assistance will go to Alaska Native and American Indian tribes and tribal housing authorities — \$800 million nationwide. The U.S. Treasury Department had not posted an allocation of that \$800 million as of Jan. 25.

The rules also allow some of the money to be spent on case management and other services intended to keep people in stable housing, but requires that "not less than 90% of awarded funds must be used for direct financial assistance, including rent, rental arrears, utilities and home energy costs ... and other expenses related to housing."

Alaskans can expect to see widespread television, radio and internet advertising after the rules are settled, AHFC Executive Director Bryan Butcher told Alaska legislators on Jan. 18.

Almost 20% of Alaska renters were behind in their payments in December, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a Washington, D.C.-based research organization.

Last summer, AHFC operated a small program with \$10 million in federal CARES Act funds, providing up to \$1,200 in one-time payments to assist Alaskans with their rent or mortgage payments. More than 8,000 households applied for the aid. This year's federal program is limited to renters only.

In addition to the state-operated program last summer, several municipalities around Alaska used a portion of their federal CARES Act money this past fall to provide housing assistance to renters and homeowners in their communities.

The cities of Sitka, Soldotna, Kenai, Wasilla, Kachemak, Palmer and Homer, along with the Kenai Peninsula Borough, turned to AHFC to operate the local programs.

Federal rules for the 2021 assistance program require that at least one member of the household must be qualified to receive unemployment "or has experienced a reduction in household income, incurred significant costs, or experienced a financial hardship due to COVID-19."

There will be a household income limit to the program, based on the area's median income, and the rental assistance will not be available for households already receiving reduced rent through any other state or federal program.

In Wrangell, the annual household income limit appears to fall around \$57,000.

Household income will be determined as either the income for 2020 or the household's monthly income "at the time of application," such as for applicants who worked in 2020 but then lost their jobs or income in 2021, according to the federal rules.

"In general, funds will be paid directly to landlords," the rules said. "If a landlord does not wish to participate, funds may be paid directly to the eligible household."

## New assembly member

Continued from page 1

like to be more involved in public service and I think my abilities and experience would complement the current assembly."

Each assembly member was asked Tuesday to offer their nomination between DeBord and Dalrymple. Mayor Steve Prysunka explained this was done for the sake of fairness and transparency.

While meeting on Zoom, he said, people's responses to calling for motions could be affected by their internet speeds. Someone could get the jump on making a nomination

before another assembly member, just because they had faster internet than the other person.

To counteract that risk, each assembly member offered their nominations individually. All assembly members aside from Ryan Howe nominated Dalrymple. Howe nominated DeBord. When the vote was called, however, Dalrymple won unanimous support.

"I was kind of torn between the two, so this was not an easy decision on my part," Assembly Member Terry Courson said.

# Wrangell Medical Center

## Opening February 2021



SEARHC is excited to announce the phased opening of the new Wrangell Medical Center. WMC staff will begin to see patients in the new facility on the following days for each department:

<b>REHABILITATION</b>	<b>February 3</b>
<b>LABORATORY</b>	<b>February 8</b>
<b>IMAGING</b>	<b>February 11</b>

**If you have questions about the moving timing or where to get your care during the transition, please call 907.874.7000.**

### EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT ACUTE CARE OUTPATIENT SERVICES

Will transition to the new facility at noon on February 12th. All emergencies will be seen at the **new facility at 12:00 p.m. on February 12, 2021.** After this date and time, the old facility will not be available for emergency care.

**NEW FACILITY**  
232 Wood Street  
in the former AICS Clinic.

 **SEARHC**  
healthy is expanding here.

# FROM THE PUBLISHER

## Target economic aid to help those in need

By LARRY PERSILY  
Publisher

It's good that President Joe Biden and members of Congress, Gov. Mike Dunleavy and members of the Alaska Legislature are all talking about doing more to help people hurt financially by the COVID-19 pandemic and its resulting damage to the economy. The harm to people's lives and livelihoods has been terrible and, in many cases, long term.

But not everyone needs help, and we should not use the state and federal treasuries for one-size-fits-all solutions.

Workers who have been able to stay on the job from home; workers considered essential who have gone to the office, store or factory and collected paychecks; and retirees who have not lost any benefits due to the pandemic — they are not in the same category as laid-off workers, the self-employed who saw their income shrink or disappear, or workers who had to stay home after getting infected or to care for a family member with COVID or because their child's day center closed down.

In Alaska's case, the governor's proposal to pay out about \$5,000 in Permanent Fund dividends to every eligible resident in 2021, in part to help the COVID-wounded economy, is just such a case of misdirected aid.

Much of the money would never get to Alaskans — it would be lost to federal income taxes. Besides, most Alaskans are still working and have not lost their job or suffered economic harm from the pandemic. Stress, anxiety and loss of enjoyment of life, yes, but not financial hardship that puts them at immediate risk.

Food banks statewide report doing a sadly booming business; almost 20% of renters

statewide were behind in their payments last month; and workers in the service-sector, tourism and hospitality sectors have been hit the worst and need help. Giving \$5,000 to every Alaskan far overshoots those who actually need assistance.

The idea that many Alaskans would spend their bonus money and bring workers back to the job ignores the reality that bars, restaurants, movie theaters, shops, airlines and hotels are months away from "normal," and much of that extra PFD money is not going to speed up vaccinations or slow down the virus.

On the federal level, targeted spending also is the right answer, such as help with child care services, boosting food stamp benefits, providing rental assistance, and additional funding for schools that are spending heavily on more equipment, cleaning and staff to provide safe classrooms.

State and federal loans and grants to keep businesses around until the pandemic eases and customers can return also are a wise use of public money. The intent is to ensure there is an economy to return to after the pandemic.

But sending out several hundred billion dollars more in federal "stimulus" checks to Americans, while well-intentioned for those in need, would direct too much money to people who aren't all that much in need. Even if they spend a lot of the extra cash on goods and services, it would be more efficient to send the assistance directly to those who need it most.

That applies equally to federal money and state of Alaska efforts to help the economy. All that extra money for Permanent Fund dividends would excessively draw on the state's savings when we could do so much better with a lot less for more people who really need it.

# Editorial

## Recall not the answer

Wrangell Mayor Steve Prysunka was unopposed when he won a second term last October. More than 85% of voters cast their ballot for Prysunka; about 15% wrote in someone else. In 2018, he won election with almost 80% of the vote against the other candidate on the ballot.

Sure seems like a strong case of majority rule and overwhelming community support.

But a contingent of Wrangell residents don't like it. They want to force a special election to recall the mayor.

Why?

Mostly because they didn't like Wrangell's mask rules, claiming the rules restricted their freedoms. The municipal order required people to wear masks while at indoor public spaces.

But the rules were not about limiting anyone's freedoms, they were about protecting others from possible infection. That's all it was, nothing more sinister than doing what's necessary to help keep your friends and neighbors from getting sick.

The municipal ordinance also recommended limiting gatherings to fewer than 20 people, reduced restaurant capacity and imposed quarantine and testing requirements on travelers.

Wrangell has had just 28 COVID-19 cases since the start of the pandemic. Judging by the low number, it appears mask wearing helps.

It's sad that health and safety and stopping an infectious deadly disease has become a political battle in this country, and now in Wrangell.

If you don't like wearing a mask, don't wear one, but don't go into public areas and risk infecting others. Most people who carry the virus don't even know it, so why take the chance and put your neighbors at risk.

If you disagree with the municipality's efforts to protect more than 2,000 residents, that's OK. It's your right to object. But overturning an election in an emotional fever is not healthy. Not for democracy and not for Wrangell.

The recall organizers prematurely turned in their opening paperwork last month to start gathering petition signatures to force a recall vote. The law requires they wait until at least 120 days into the mayor's term. That means they have to wait until early February to submit their paperwork.

That gives the organizers time to reconsider, and plenty of time to find a candidate for mayor in the next election. That's the way to set policy, not a recall.

— Wrangell Sentinel

## Letters to the Editor

### Ortiz asks constituents to take budget survey

To the editor:

This week, the Legislature convenes for session. One of the main obligations of the Legislature is to pass a budget for the upcoming fiscal year. It is also one of our greatest challenges.

In order to create a budget that works for District 36, I need to hear from you. This time of year, I typically send out a survey asking for your opinion. This year, in lieu of a survey from my office, I am asking you to take Commonwealth North's budget survey. It is a tool that asks you to balance the budget based on our revenue projections. It is very comprehensive.

You can find the survey at [www.AKBudget.com](http://www.AKBudget.com). Don't forget to include your ZIP code to ensure accurate results for District 36. I will receive the District 36 results from Commonwealth North later this winter, which will help me make budgetary decisions during session.

All responses I receive will be anonymous, but if you would like to personally communicate your response with me, the website allows you to print out a summary report of your response which can then be sent to my legislative office.

If you want to discuss the budget in more detail or have questions ahead of taking the

survey, feel free to reach out to me. You can email me at [Rep.Dan.Ortiz@AKLeg.gov](mailto:Rep.Dan.Ortiz@AKLeg.gov) or call my office at 907-465-3824.

Rep. Dan Ortiz

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- 400 words or less with consent of publisher.
- Typed or clearly written
- Letters must be signed
- Longer letters can be published as a paid ad
- The Sentinel reserves the right to edit any submissions.

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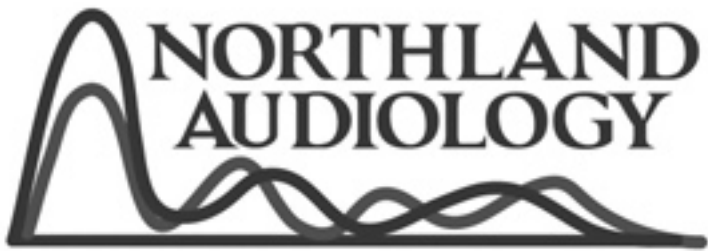
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# NORTHLAND AUDIOLOGY

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## Letters to the Editor

### Crippen shares his accomplishments



PHOTO COURTESY VERONICA RYAN

James A. Crippen has been hired as an assistant professor of linguistics at McGill University (Montreal) starting January 2021.

#### To the Editor

*Dzéiwsh Gunyaa.* James A. Crippen, member of the *Deisheetaan* clan (*Laayineidí* Raven moiety) from the *Kaáák'w Hít* Basket House (also known as *áak'weidí*), is humbled to share that he has graduated with his Ph.D. in linguistics from the University of British Columbia in December 2019, completed a postdoctoral fellowship with Simon Fraser University in 2020, and has been hired as an assistant professor of linguistics at McGill University (Montreal) starting January 2021.

He would like to thank his family in Wrangell (Ruth, James, Cinda and Vena Stough; Tammi and Greg Meissner; Katie Hagan Calhoun; and Solvay Gillen), as well as Sandy Churchill, Virginia Oliver, Lu Knapp, the Wrangell Cooperative Association, and everyone else who has supported his journey over the years in his pursuit of learning, researching and sharing the Tlingit language.

He shares these accomplishments in honor of his grandmother *Oonyéik* Margaret Bakke Sturtevant, mother *Oonyéik Tláa* Andra Jane Crippen, father James W. Crippen, and his other ancestors who continue to support his spirit now and in the future.



# WRANGELL SENTINEL

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# WRANGELL SENTINEL

## Assembly postpones boost to liveaboard fees

By CALEB VIERKANT  
*Sentinel writer*

The borough assembly on Tuesday postponed an increase to the residential user fee for liveaboard vessels in Wrangell harbors. The ordinance would have raised the fee for water, sewage and garbage services by about \$35 a month.

The change in municipal code also would have broadened the definition of liveaboard, while boosting the monthly rate to almost \$117, the harbor department's Keeleigh Solverson told the assembly.

The assembly decided the ordinance still needs some work, directing that it go back to the port commission for additional consideration before coming back to the assembly again.

"'Liveaboard' means any vessel utilizing the harbor as a primary residence for one or more persons," the ordinance reads. The utility fee would be charged any vessel with overnight guests five days or more in a month.

The proposed residential user fee would consolidate current rates in Wrangell's ports and harbors for water, sewer and garbage collection. Solverson said the new liveaboard rate comes from the minimum fees Wrangell residents pay at their home. The minimum fee for water is \$47.15, she said, \$40.74 for sewer, and \$28.60 for garbage.

The current harbor fee, she said, was calculated in a similar manner, but was out of date at about \$85 a month.

According to the ordinance, the residential user fee would be charged to anyone receiving mail through the harbor, claiming a harbor address as their primary residence, or for vessels that exceed the no-fee limit on overnight stays.

Several community members voiced concerns regarding the ordinance at the assembly meeting. Bob Wilkinson said the fee increase was a "solution looking for a problem," adding that he believes enforcement of fees for liveaboards would be difficult.

Rodney Nowlin said the definition of liveaboard needs to be reworked. People visiting from down south with their boats, or commercial fishermen working on their boats, could face substantial fees with the definition that assesses the fees after four nights a month.

Assembly Member David Powell wanted clarification on the issue Nowlin raised. WHO IS Miller said the definition could stand to be narrowed a little further, but it was a question of whether or not the vessel was serving as a primary residence.

Powell also suggested that the city add a fine for people who fail to register their vessels as liveaboards.

Assembly Member Patty Gilbert suggested the issue could be fixed for tourists and fishermen by rewording the proposal to state that liveaboards would pay the fee if they are a primary Wrangell residence, not just a primary residence in general.

Mayor Steve Prysunka also voiced concerns with the ordinance, saying he did not want to punish people with a large fee if they come to town and only live on their boat for a short period of time.

# City sees more revenue from tax on online sales

By CALEB VIERKANT  
*Sentinel writer*

Online sales tax revenues brought in more than \$90,000 in nine months last year, with receipts continuing to rise, according to Wrangell Borough officials.

While the municipality is struggling with rising costs and decreasing revenues, one bright spot has been the collection of sales taxes from online, out-of-town merchants.

The borough is budgeted this fiscal year to collect \$1.25 million in sales taxes, projected to be down substantially from last year due to the pandemic-inflicted economic slowdown.

A 2019 U.S. Supreme Court decision opened the tax door for states and municipalities to require online merchants to collect and remit sales taxes, even if the business has no shop or office or warehouse in the jurisdiction.

Wrangell is benefitting from its association with an organization collecting sales tax from out-of-state online retailers on behalf of about 33 municipalities across the state.

The Alaska Remote Sellers Sales Tax Commission was formed in late 2019 by the Alaska Municipal League to assist local governments with sales tax collection, administration and enforcement.

Borough Manager Lisa Von Barga said the commission helps local governments collect sales taxes owed by out-of-town merchants that might otherwise not collect and remit the funds. It would be very difficult to achieve as much success in collections if Wrangell were not part of the statewide cooperative effort, she said.

Out-of-town merchants that sell at least \$100,000 in goods in Alaska, or 200 sales per year,

are required to sign up and collect the sales tax for each municipality where they ship their goods. By pooling with other Alaska cities and boroughs, Wrangell benefits because few online retailers do that much business just in Wrangell, Von Barga said.

"We hit this threshold for the state as an aggregate, rather than as individual municipalities," she said.

Wrangell began collecting online sales tax in March 2020. The commission collects the taxes on a monthly basis for its member communities, Von Barga said, and then distributes it to each community.

Finance Director Joyce Mason said the commission takes a percentage in fees, but Von Barga said the fees will decrease as collections build. The most recent numbers currently available to the city show that Wrangell received a little over \$19,000 in online sales tax revenues in November 2020. After fees, they kept a little less than \$16,000.

From March 2020 to November 2020, Wrangell received \$91,099 in taxes after the fees. "But if we weren't signed up for this, we'd be getting none of this money at all," Von Barga said.

Mason said the city does not have any projections for how much money Wrangell can expect to receive from online sales taxes, as this is still the first year. But the monthly numbers have steadily increased as more online businesses meet the criteria for collection, she said, adding she is unsure when they would plateau.

"It's showing a steady climb," Mason said.

Von Barga said collecting sales tax on online purchases levels the playing field between online retailers and in-town businesses, as all now have to collect the tax.



PHOTO COURTESY DEVYN JOHNSON

**Moody Folks Bakery founder Devyn Johnson says baking is "my happy place."**

## Her family couldn't eat it all, so she went into business

By CALEB VIERKANT  
*Sentinel writer*

"I actually have always loved baking," said Devyn Johnson, of Moody Folks Bakery. "I baked with my mom growing up, and I baked for people all the time. ... It's my happy place."

Moody Folks Bakery is one of Wrangell's newer businesses. Johnson was running a child care out of her home before COVID-19 struck. When the pandemic reached Alaska, however, she closed it down out of safety. She found herself with more time, and started filling that time with more and more baking.

She was starting to make three or four loaves of bread a day, she said, and her family couldn't eat it all. So they started gifting her baked goods to friends and other family members. Then, one day, she decided to take a chance and turn her love of baking into a new source of income.

Going on half a year as an official business, Johnson said it was a big risk trying to start a new business during the pandemic. However, she said the community has been nothing but supportive of her bakery.

"I'm a little overwhelmed, in a good way," she said. "I'm just blown away by the support."

The name Moody Folks Bakery comes from her maiden name, Johnson said. She wanted something personal to her, for her business, and "Moody Folks" just had a good ring to it.

Moody Folks Bakery offers freshly baked bread on a weekly basis at Twisted Root Market, on Front Street. Johnson said she also bakes bread for individual customers who reach out to her with orders. She only works part-time for the bakery right now, working out of her home, but has long-term dreams. Johnson said nothing is officially in motion yet, but one day she hopes to own her own bakery downtown.

There have been some challenges getting her business up and running. A few months ago, there was a power surge that killed her oven, she said. For a while she had to run to friends' homes and use their ovens to bake bread, but a new double oven arrived and got things back on track.

One lesson she's learned, she said, is the importance of staying organized. Having spreadsheets and tracking costs is important not only to make sure her business is doing well, she said, but also to make sure she is selling her bread at a good price for her customers. "It's a constant learning journey."

## COVID-19 Vaccination Update



**Keeping you and your families safe during the COVID-19 pandemic is our top priority.**

We want you to know that SEARHC is working closely with our state's leaders and public health officials to secure COVID-19 vaccines for every person in Southeast Alaska. Vaccinating everyone will take time and be dependent on vaccine availability.

The COVID-19 vaccines are being distributed based on sequencing guidelines developed by state, national and global vaccination specialists and approved by SEARHC's medical directors. For more information on sequencing, visit [covid19.searhc.org](https://covid19.searhc.org).



**People interested in receiving the vaccines are strongly encouraged to sign up online.**

After registration, an email will be sent to schedule a COVID vaccine appointment, based on sequence designation. Please watch for announcements on the vaccine availability.

**SEARHC | healthy is here.**

## PUBLIC NOTICES ARE IMPORTANT

These notices are published for public information and are designed to keep you informed on current issues and actions of the courts and local, state and federal governments. Please take time to read them.

# Hoop Shoot netted 33 contestants

By CALEB VIERKANT  
Sentinel writer

Ryder Ritchie's practice paid off at the annual Elks Hoop Shoot last Saturday, as he won first place among 8- and 9-year-old boys.

"I really like it," Ryder said. "I really, really practiced on my basketball hoop at the house. I got good at it and I want to do it some more."

Participants were split pretty evenly at the community center gym Jan. 23, with 18 girls and 15 boys. Though in "normal" years, local winners can advance and try for nationals, there will be no national Hoop Shoot this pandemic year, said Wrangell organizer Jeff Jabusch.

Regardless, he said, volunteers still wanted to put to-



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Charlie Nelson prepares to take a shot at last Saturday's Hoop Shoot.

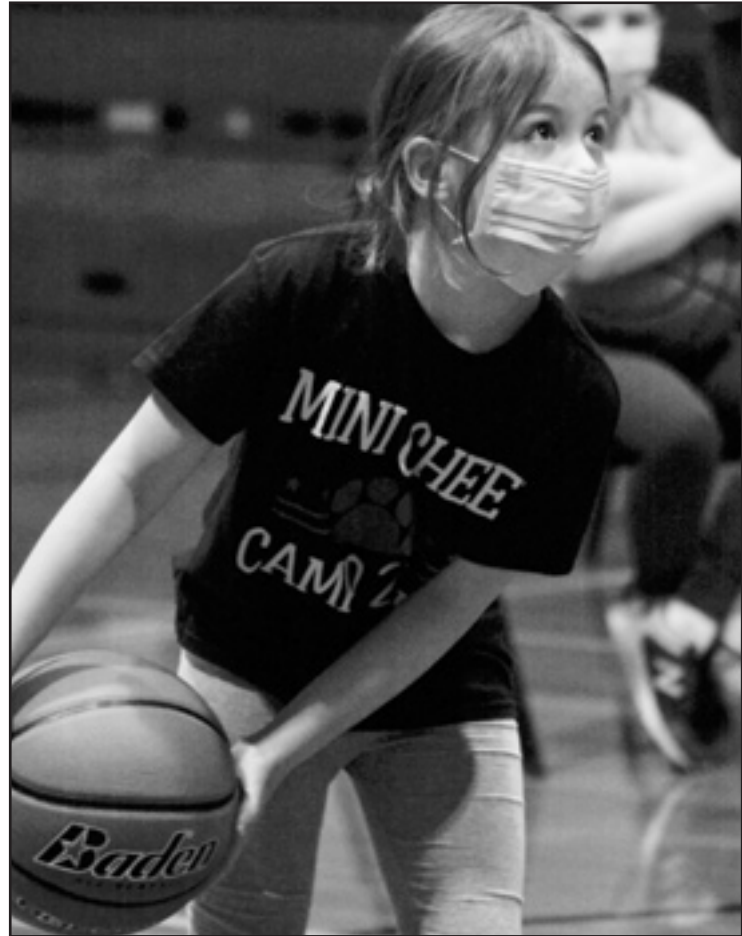


PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Verity Waddington eyes the basket as she attempts an underhand free throw at Saturday's Hoop Shoot.

gether something fun for Wrangell's kids.

The last Wrangell Hoop Shoot, held in December 2019, saw a record 51 participants.

"The numbers were down but we kind of expected it," Jabusch said, adding that it was still a good event regardless. "One more year in the books."

Safety precautions put in place for this year's shoot, Jabusch said. Chairs for participants were spread out through the gym, and spectators were limited. Kids were also each given their own basketball to shoot with and take home, so they were not sharing.

Kids were also asked to

wear masks whenever they were not taking free throws, though some kids chose to keep their masks on the entire time.

The rules of the Hoop Shoot are simple: Participants are allowed up to five "practice" shots, and then they have 25 chances to make as many baskets as they can. The kids were also divided into three different age groups, coming into the gym at different times to further limit the number of people gathering.

Results from the event:

**8 and 9 year olds**

Girls: Kaiya Brevick, first place; Charlie Nelson, second place; Claire Rooney, third

place.

Boys: Ryder Ritchie, first place; Conner Blake, second place; no third-place finisher.

**10 and 11 year olds**

Girls: Evylin Gadd, first place; Haidyn Gadd, second place; Claire Carney, third place.

Boys: Aadyn Gillen, first place; Michael Cook, second place; Lucas Stearns, third place.

**12 and 13 year olds**

Girls: Paige Hoyt, first place; Hailey Cook, second place; Christina Johnson, third place.

Boys: Brody Knecht, first place; Keaton Gadd, second place; Cody Barnes, third place.

# Alaska Native wins award for children's picture book

NEW YORK (AP) - Illustrator Michaela Goade became the first Native American to

win the prestigious Randolph Caldecott Medal for best children's picture story, honored

for "We Are Water Protectors." Goade is a member of the Tlingit and Haida Indian tribes

in Southeast Alaska. "We Are Water Protectors," written by Carole Lindstrom, is a celebra-

tion of nature and a call for environmental protection that was conceived in response to the planned construction of the Dakota Access oil pipeline through Standing Rock Sioux territory.

"I am really honored and proud," the 30-year-old Goade told The Associated Press in a telephone interview. "I think it's really important for young people and aspiring book makers and other creative people to see this," she said.

"I love how it balanced lyricism and poetry with a powerful message," said Goade, who used everything from watercolors to gouache paint as she conjured moods ranging from the water's sensual blue waves to the harsh black of the snake-like pipeline and the burning red of the snake's tongue.

Goade was sent a copy of the manuscript through her agent in 2018 and responded immediately to its political message and lesson of water as a universal force. The book was published last March.

The awards were announced Jan. 25 by the American Library Association. The Caldecott medal was established in 1937.

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## Police report

<p><b>Monday, Jan. 18</b> Welfare check. Agency assist: Search and rescue.</p> <p><b>Tuesday, Jan. 19</b> Papers served. Traffic.</p> <p><b>Wednesday, Jan. 20</b> Traffic stop. Papers served. Fireworks.</p> <p><b>Thursday, Jan. 21</b> Agency assist: Ambulance. Welfare check. Parking complaint.</p>	<p><b>Friday, Jan. 22</b> Motor vehicle accident: Damage only. Found property.</p> <p><b>Saturday, Jan. 23</b> Mail theft. Papers served: Removal from licensed premises.</p> <p><b>Sunday, Jan 24</b> Traffic stop citation issued for driving revoked. Warrant arrest for failure to appear.</p> <p>During this reporting period there were seven agency assists to the Hoonah Police Department.</p>
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# Hospital will start opening departments on Saturday

By CALEB VIERKANT  
*Sentinel writer*

The new Wrangell Medical Center is nearing the end of construction and will start a staggered opening on Saturday, with the long-term care unit first on the list and the rehabilitation unit scheduled for a Feb. 3 opening.

"Departments are currently undergoing a phased relocation as finished punch lists are allowing for staggered staff move-ins," according to a press release Monday from SEARHC. "Patients scheduled for rehabilitation, imaging, laboratory or outpatient services will be contacted regarding the timeline of respective move dates."

The laboratory department is to open Feb. 8, imaging on Feb. 11, and then followed the next day by emergency, acute care and outpatient

services, SEARHC announced.

"This is a monumental achievement for health care in Wrangell," said Leatha Merculieff, SEARHC vice president and WMC hospital administrator. "The facility will greatly improve our ability to provide high-quality care to our patients and long-term care residents for decades to come."

The new \$30 million hospital on Wood Street is a 45,000-square-foot facility attached to the existing Alaska Island Community Services clinic. The new hospital includes 14 beds in the long-term care wing, eight beds in the acute-care wing, and an expanded emergency department, among other improvements.

SEARHC purchased the Wrangell Medical Center from the borough back in 2018, with plans to construct a new facility.

# City reported COVID case after airport test

By CALEB VIERKANT  
*Sentinel writer*

A Wrangell resident arriving at the airport tested positive for COVID-19 and went into isolation in town, the city reported Jan. 21.

The city press release did not specify the date the individual was tested.

The last COVID-19 positive case was reported by the city on Dec. 17.

The case brought to 28 the total number of Wrangell-related COVID-19 positives since the start of the pandemic. Of those, 18 have been in Wrangell residents; eight were identified as non-locals, and two were Wrangell residents who were out of town.

Only this most recent case is currently considered active, according to

the city's Jan. 21 statement.

"Individuals who have tested positive are being asked to notify their close contacts," the city announcement said. "These close contacts may also be notified by Public Health. Please exercise personal responsibility related to COVID-19. If you are contacted by a positive individual and

informed you are a close contact, or if you believe yourself to be a close contact, quarantine for 10 days, monitor for symptoms and seek testing between days 5-7 of quarantine."

The press release also encourages anyone experiencing COVID-19 symptoms to call the SEARHC hotline at 907-966-8799.

# Legislative intern boards flight in Haines despite positive COVID-19 test

By KYLE CLAYTON  
*Chilkat Valley News*

HAINES - A University of Alaska student passing through Haines boarded an Alaska Seaplanes flight, despite testing positive for the COVID-19 virus, possibly exposing the pilot and nine other passengers. The 21-year-old later was fired from his legislative intern job.

Interim Haines Borough Manager Alekka Fullerton said the student was tested for COVID in Anchorage but did not wait for his results before driving to Haines to connect to Juneau. He learned he had tested positive after arriving in Haines on Jan. 8, Fullerton said.

The manager said she talked with the man that evening, explaining how he could get groceries and organize other accommodations during his required 10-day isolation period at a hotel in Haines.

"He confirmed that he knew he had to isolate for 10 days," Fullerton said. "He talked about renting an apartment. We said we could help him coordinate that."

But then two days later, the student and his mother, who had driven with him from Anchorage, boarded a Seaplanes flight bound for Juneau, where he was supposed to intern for Anchorage Rep. Andy Josephson as part of a University of Alaska legislative intern program.

Even before he flew to Juneau, the student was not isolating in his hotel room, was seen doing laundry and was

"out and about," Fullerton reported by email to Josephson's office on Jan. 10.

"When confronted by the hotel staff that he was supposed to be isolating in his room, he got angry and left," Fullerton wrote. "We do not know where he is and he is, apparently, out and about in our community as the only positive case of COVID-19 in our town. I have contacted the police."

Police found his vehicle at the airport, Fullerton said.

When the man arrived in Juneau, police told him he had to isolate for 10 days, according to a Juneau Police Department spokesperson.

The intern declined to comment.

Josephson said the intern alerted his office that he had tested positive for the COVID-19 virus.

"He asked for advice for what to do," Josephson said. "The advice was to follow the instructions from principally the (Haines) borough, but also Beacon, the testing contractor."

The intern told Josephson's office that he "was under a lot of financial pressure and could not afford to remain at the Aspen" hotel in Haines, according to Elise Sorum-Birk, a Josephson staff member.

"He's not going to be interning for me," Josephson said.

Nine passengers were on the flight. Alaska Seaplanes general manager Carl Ramseth said all the passengers were considered close contacts.

"Public Health determined there was low risk of transmission because the positive per-

## Wolves host Vikings for basketball opener

By SENTINEL STAFF

Wrangell's high school basketball season will open this weekend with the boys team playing host to the Petersburg Vikings at 6 p.m. Friday and again at 10 a.m. Saturday. Wrangell's homecoming court will be introduced at halftime Saturday, said High School Activities Director Trisa Rooney.

Safety precautions will be in place for those attending the game. Rooney said only two people per player's household will be allowed into the gym. Face masks are also part of the school district's COVID-19 safety plan.

For those who cannot attend the games in person, they will be live-streamed on the high school's YouTube channel, at [www.youtube.com/c/WPSDusStreaming](http://www.youtube.com/c/WPSDusStreaming).

son was asymptomatic and all were wearing masks," Ramseth said. "Our pilot was scheduled to work two more days but we did not have him work, and had him tested on Tuesday afternoon (Jan. 12) with a negative result. (It's) very frustrating when it happens with blatant disregard for the well-being of others."

Eric Ferrin was one of those passengers. He was traveling to Juneau to get a CT scan at Bartlett Regional Hospital. After the scan, he was put on a Guardian Life flight to Providence, where he required surgery to repair an aortic aneurism.

"That plane was full of other elders that could have impacted their lives dramatically, including mine," Ferrin said. "I didn't talk to anybody. I kept my distance. I kept my mask on and I just think it was pretty selfish on that kid's part to why he thought he should get on the plane."

At least two other Haines residents on the flight were

forced to quarantine at a Haines hotel until their second test.

Fullerton said the man's decision affected the lives of every passenger on the plane. "At that time, we did not have an active case of COVID in our town. I'm fighting every day to keep it that way. This is reckless disregard of other people's safety."

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## OBITUARIES

# George Woodbury, an expert in all things timber

George Woodbury; Feb. 24, 1937, to Jan. 11, 2021.

If there is one word to describe my dad, it is production. Dad was always busy doing something. He worked until his very last days. Up until the end he had plans to get better. He had so much more he wanted to do.

He played just as hard as he worked, always looking for something to do. He continued to learn and was always interested. When he found something he liked, he would study it and search for the best way to do it. Always improving how it's done. He encouraged us to do anything we were interested in, as long as it was productive.

He was proud of our accomplishments no matter how small. He was born Feb. 24, 1937, in Cleveland, Ohio, and raised in Indiana. He graduated from Purdue University with a degree in forestry. He married our mother, Joey, in 1960, before joining the Air Force. He spent five years in the U.S. Air Force as a navigator. He flew reconnaissance over Cuba during the Cuban missile crisis.

George and Joey enjoyed their time in the service exploring new places to live. In 1965 they moved to Thorne Bay, Alaska. George worked laying out timber sales and building logging roads. He became timber division manager for Ketchikan Pulp Co. (Louisiana Pacific) and moved to Ketchikan in 1969. In 1986 he became vice president of Alaska Pulp Corp. in Sitka. He later started his own business as a timber consultant.

In the late '90s, he and Joey moved to Wrangell and he worked for Silver Bay Logging. He consulted for Viking Lumber and Alaska Forest Association until his final days.

He was an expert in all things timber and became an icon of the timber industry.

We were lucky kids, our parents started taking us to Kauai in 1972. We would spend a month there together



PHOTO COURTESY WOODBURY FAMILY

George and Joey Woodbury, and their youngest grandchild, Stuart Woodbury.

every year while the woods were shut down in Alaska. He loved Alaska and Hawaii. Later in life, George and Joey spent summers in Wrangell and winters in Kauai.

Dad loved to play golf. All our trips to Hawaii include lots of golf. He liked to swim, body surf, kayak, windsurf, scuba dive, paddleboard and shoot guns and bows. He liked to work with wood. He was a boat captain and a sailor. He enjoyed fishing and hunting. He loved to shop and plan for it. He had a different style: he liked to hunt and fish, although he didn't care if he caught or shot anything. We very rarely caught a fish and just one deer while with me. Come to think of it, he was a terrible fisherman and didn't hunt worth a damn.

He did like to walk in the woods, be on the water, be outdoors, and spend time with us. He went scuba diving

with Jill, windsurfed with me, and golfed with Brett, not unheard of to be all in the same day. Brett and Dad were great friends and did all kinds of fun things together. He and our parents lived in the same town in Wrangell and spent every day together, best friends.

My sister Jill, an angel, took care of my parents for almost three years. Jill provided care and comfort that cannot be matched. Mom and dad's late years were as good as they possibly could be. Mom and dad were married for almost 60 years. We lost mom in September 2019. We take comfort that they are now together, in heaven, sitting together on a nice beach, looking at the waves, having a gin and tonic, and visiting with friends.

We are so fortunate that we had such great parents. They will be missed.

George passed peacefully at home

with his children in Kauai on Jan. 11, 2021, at age 83. He is survived by his daughter, Jill (John) Forrey; grandchildren Nicholas Mackie, George Mackie, Conner Forrey; great grandchildren Nicholas Mackie, Riley Mackie and Hudson Forrey; son, Scott (Flo) Woodbury and grandchildren Max Woodbury and Jake Woodbury; son Brett (Kristy) Woodbury and grandchildren Stuart Woodbury, Jimmy Baggen and Paige Baggen; brother, Max Woodbury, and sister, Lorna Kennedy.

A funeral service was held Jan. 20 at Saint Raphael Church in Koloa, Hawaii. In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent to Wrangell Golf Club, PO Box 2199, Wrangell, AK 99929, where George was a founding member and life-long supporter.

The family hopes to have a celebration of life in Wrangell this summer.

— by Scott Woodbury

## McAuliffe lived his rodeo dream

Jeffrey "Jeff" McAuliffe, 49, born in Klamath Falls, Oregon, died unexpectedly on Jan. 16.

Jeff was a bold, charismatic individual who had the uncanny ability to see the good in a person no matter how bad they seemed to others. Jeff always had a positive attitude and instilled that in others in any situation. The more difficult the situation, the more his optimism shined through. Jeff was a natural leader and had an extraordinary talent for getting people to follow him without question. He always had a smile on his face and people wanted to be around him — they sought him out.

After graduating high school, Jeff joined the U.S. Marine Corps. During his time as a Devil Dog, he served in the infantry as a member of 3rd Light Armored Vehicle Battalion, also known as the "Wolf Pack." He was stationed at Camp Pendleton, California, and Okinawa, Japan.

As a teenager, Jeff found the opportunity to begin his dream of being a rodeo cowboy. He started out riding bulls and later bronc horses. After his service with the Marines, he continued to chase his gold-buckle rodeo dreams. He earned his Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association card to start his professional rodeo career. He was rookie of the year and accepted a rodeo scholarship at the University of Nevada Las Vegas and qualified for the College National Finals, finishing in the Top 15. Jeff enjoyed great success in professional rodeo and went on to win several circuit finals. During this time, he met



Jeffrey "Jeff" McAuliffe

the love of his life — Shannon Donston.

Jeff began working in construction and he and Shannon later moved to rural Southern California,

where he continued to work and compete in rodeo. He started operating heavy equipment. While in California, Jeff mentored several high school rodeo cowboys and cowgirls. He had a sense of community, and when there was a wildfire burning out of control near his neighbors' homes, Jeff commandeered a grader from work and used it to help the firefighting effort. He was able to quickly build a fire break that saved many structures and homes.

Jeff eventually ended up working on the Wrangell runway expansion project. When that projected ended, he landed his first job on the North Slope. He thought this was the ultimate construction job. Most recently, he was promoted to superintendent of ice road projects. The owner of the company where Jeff worked said, "I have never had a superintendent that could lead like Jeff could. He had a way of getting the most out of his crews without them even knowing it. Jeff instinctively knew the strengths and weaknesses of each and every one of the 200 men and women that worked for him."

Jeff is survived by his mother and stepfather, Becky and Gordon Rooney, of Wrangell; father Hans McAuliffe, of Newton, Kansas; wife Shannon Donston, of Yuma, Arizona; son Brandon McAuliffe, of Eugene, Oregon; brother Scott McAuliffe, of Juneau; sisters Jennifer Rankin (Christian), of Stuttgart, Germany, and Heather McAuliffe, of Illinois; along with nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles and cousins.

— Becky and Gordon Rooney and family

# Trappers took 68 wolves on Prince of Wales Island

JUNEAU (AP) - State wildlife officials have reported that 68 wolves were taken by trappers in 2020 on or near Prince of Wales Island. Conservationists had unsuccessfully attempted to block the 21-day wolf trapping season from November to December.

Alaska Department of Fish and Game officials had ruled that trapping would not pose a danger to the overall wolf population. Conservationists had argued that state and federal officials were allowing

unsustainable killings.

"If you can catch 68 wolves in three weeks," Schumacher told CoastAlaska public radio, "I think that means you still have a pretty robust population of wolves."

Schumaker said last week that state biologists do not know the exact fall 2020 population yet, but that he is "pretty confident" there were between 150 to 200 wolves.

The state agency released a report in

fall 2019 estimating there were 316 wolves in and around Prince of Wales Island. That figure did not include the record 165 wolves reportedly killed by hunters and trappers later that year.

Conservationists have argued that the wolf population near the island is threatened and that some hunters and trappers do not report their kills.

"This level of carnage shows that wolves in Southeast Alaska desperately need the protections of the Endangered

Species Act or they'll become another statistic in the wildlife extinction crisis," Shaye Wolfe, a staff scientist in Oakland, California, wrote in a statement for The Center for Biological Diversity.

Island residents have testified at hearings that the trapping season is warranted because too many wolves prey on deer.

Conservation groups counter that decades of commercial development on the island's forests are to blame for thinner deer herds.

# Alaska leads with highest vaccination rate in the country

JUNEAU (AP) - Alaska held the enviable position of having the highest rate of coronavirus vaccinations per capita in the nation as of this week, the state said.

As of Monday, more than 80,000 Alaskans had received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, and nearly 18,000 had received both doses, according to a report in the Anchorage Daily News. That does not include shots administered through the departments of Defense or Veterans Affairs but does include vaccinations handled through Indian Health Service partners.

That's a gain in four days of 13,000 people from the Jan. 21 report of 67,000 Alaskans who had received their first dose.

Alaska Chief Medical Officer Anne Zink said Jan. 21 that the progress was the result of community efforts to quickly distribute vaccinations and additional allotments for federal agencies within the state.

Zink told the Juneau Cham-

ber of Commerce that Alaska had received more doses of vaccine because of additional allowances above the state's share for the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs and Indian Health Service.

"We have the highest veterans per-capita population. We have a large military presence. And we have a large Indigenous population with over 229 sovereign tribes," Zink said, as reported by Juneau public radio station KTOO. "And so, because of those reasons, we did get some additional vaccine in the state via those federal partnerships."

The allotment for the Indian Health Service, which works with tribal entities to deliver health care to Alaska Native residents, could have been subtracted from the state's share of the federal supply, but ultimately was allowed to be added to the deliveries to Alaska, Zink said.

"That's been transforma-

tional for Alaska, that decision for Operation Warp Speed,"

Zink said of the Trump administration's name for the na-

tional vaccine distribution initiative.

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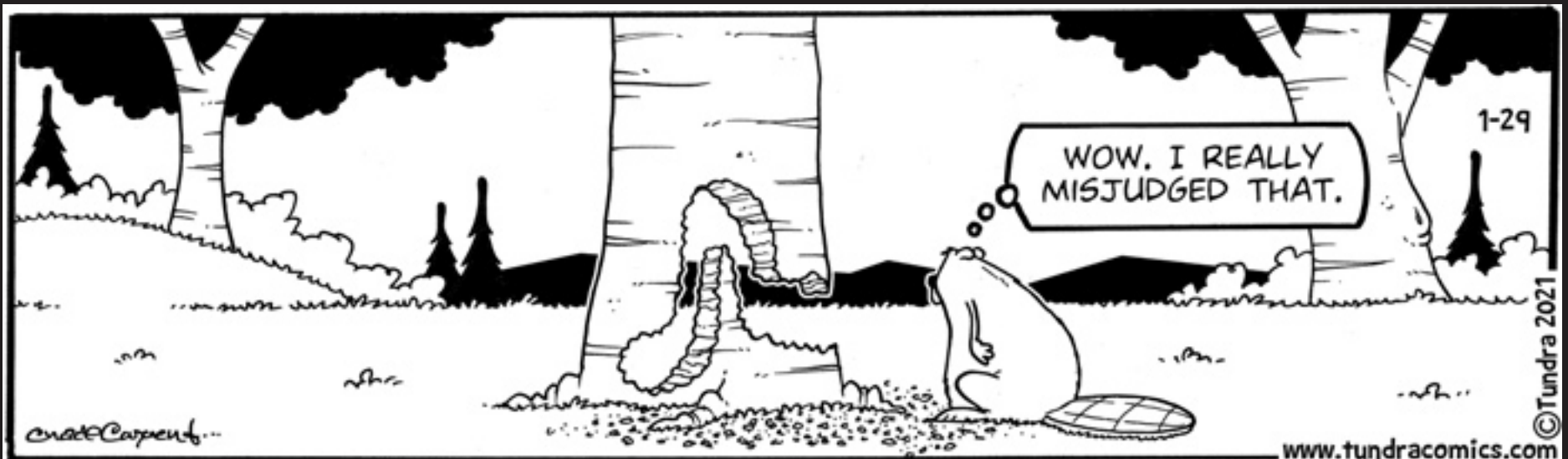
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The Wrangell Sentinel will publish Wasilla cartoonist Chad Carpenter's "Tundra" comic strip each week. He started the cartoon almost 30 years ago, and is now published in almost 650 newspapers worldwide.



# Alaska Fish Factor

By LAINE WELCH  
Fisheries columnist

## New fund will help jump-start ocean businesses

New ocean-related jobs, investments and opportunities will be seeded by the ambitious Blue Pipeline Venture Studio that connects marine business entrepreneurs with the technology, contacts and finances they need to grow.

"The state's blue economy includes anything that takes place on the water, most prominently the seafood industry, along with marine recreation, maritime research, waterborne transportation and much more," said Garrett Evridge, a well-known fisheries economist previously with the former McDowell Group and new research director for the Venture Studio.

"There is significant opportunity to grow the Alaska ocean economy," he said. "That might come from refinement of existing industries, getting more

value out of salmon, support for new industries like growing seaweed, or just being prepared for opportunities that aren't even on the radar. Like what's going to happen in 10, 20 or 30 years. What can we do now to position ourselves for success?"

"We have a lot of challenges and opportunities that we know are headed our way, like climate change and ocean acidification. What's our plan for those? It's part of growing a culture that can embrace change and identify opportunities," Evridge said.

The nonprofit Venture Studio is the first statewide program of the Bering Sea Fishermen's Association's (BSFA) Ocean Cluster that launched in 2017. It is modeled after a venture led by Iceland in 2011 that now includes more than 50 clusters around the

world.

Last fall, the BSFA received a \$600,000 grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration with matching funds to help jump-start ocean businesses and pump \$1.2 million into Alaska's ocean economy. Grant partners include the College of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Arctic Domain Awareness Center at the University of Alaska Anchorage, Moonbeam Exchange, AKWA-DC, and the Pacific Northwest Economic Region.

Evridge said many people have great business ideas but don't have the time or know where to start. The Venture Studio will serve as a sort of matchmaker to connect them with capital, expertise and connections to get off the ground.

"Some of the first things we

will do is focus on all of the previous research that is available and then try to identify the roadblocks of why this specific industry has not grown," he said.

"One reason that I came aboard is the opportunity to focus on what other industries have learned that is applicable to us. The fruit industry, for example, has some pretty strong parallels with seafood processing with the picking and identification and inspection of apples. There are applications in the agriculture realm that are very relevant. But so many entrepreneurs or existing stakeholders don't have the opportunity to focus on those things."

Evridge said his team, which includes Taylor Holshouser as director of business development, will focus most of this

year on developing a robust Venture Studio and building a platform capable of delivering jobs, investment and opportunities across Alaska.

On a related note, NOAA Fisheries last week announced its Blue Economy Strategic Plan that aims to, among other things, "collaborate with partners to support the growth of American business and entrepreneurship that contributes to the development and sustainability of the blue economy across the U.S. that will help accelerate the nation's economic recovery."

NOAA said it intends to expand and strengthen the effort by leading agency-wide initiatives in marine transportation, ocean exploration, seafood competitiveness, tourism and recreation, coastal resilience, aquaculture and developing an American Seafood Campaign.

### PLUG IN FOR SILENCE AND SAVINGS

No engine noise, no fuel slicks or emissions — would an electric boat be suitable for your marine business? Newer battery banks and hybrid options make it ideal for several uses and an Alaska resource can answer all your questions.

"We're more focused on low-speed vessels that know where they are going every day and pretty much have the same routine. Some of the uses would be harbor port operations, work boats, tourism, recreation or rentals. And then, of course, fishing, especially mariculture," said Bob Varness, of Juneau, who operates Tongass Rain Electric Cruise and has been converting boats from gas to all-electric or hybrid since 2014. "Why wouldn't you want to harvest your product with no oil sheen on the water? It only makes sense to have good clean water when you're pulling in your kelp or oysters or whatever you do. And trollers or gillnetters plugging along at two to three knots — that's an ideal application for electric motors."

Varness has recently partnered with builders and suppliers to bring more earth-friendly electric vessels to Alaskans.

"We're identifying ideal areas of operation, and then introducing electric boat alternatives to operators and providing them with information and education," he said. "Then we'll commence with design and identify the description of operation, the budget, the performance and the options to a supplier. At that point, the client, whether it be a fisherman or a tour operator or harbor administrator, can get a good idea if an electric vessel will work for them."

It is newer and smaller, high-energy lithium ion batter-

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**WRANGELL SENTINEL**

# Fish Factor

Continued from page 11

ies that make it feasible. Studies show they can reduce vessel operating expenses by 75%.

“Some of the other benefits are you have no warm-up or idle time, you hop in the boat and push a button and off you go. You have increased reliability, reduced maintenance and quieter operations, which result in less crew and passenger fatigue,” Varness said. “If you don’t have access to a plug-in for recharging, you can go with a hybrid option and recharge your batteries while you’re underway,” he said.

There is one hybrid diesel/electric fishing boat in Alaska – the Sunbeam, owned by Fabian Grutter who longlines and gillnets out of Sitka. Its diesel engine can charge the 70-kilowatt battery bank with an alternator in four to five hours of cruising, “and then you shut the diesel off,” he told the Daily Sitka Sentinel.

Electric boats also are “submarine silent,” Varness added. That could effectively remove the boat sound signatures from internal combustion engines that attract whales to longline hooks loaded with black cod.

“Between an electric motor and some nice black cod traps, the whales wouldn’t even know you were coming,” he said with a laugh.

Each vessel is unique and it is not “one size fits all,” Varness said.

“It can be confusing and people may not know where to go,” he added. “And that’s our purpose – to help and facilitate with those transitions.”



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

It looked like winter last weekend in Wrangell. The muskeg along the Volunteer Park trail was frozen and covered in white after snow fell last Saturday and Sunday morning.

### SEAFOOD WITHOUT THE SEA

San Diego start-up BlueNalu, which is growing fish filets directly from fish cells, has raised \$60 million in financing to build a pilot factory and launch its seafood in restaurants. The 3-year-old company plans to grow up to eight species of seafood, with mahi-mahi and bluefin tuna as its first products. Depending on federal approval, BlueNalu could roll out its first lab grown fish this year.

### OILY PLASTICS

The Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act of 2020 would,

among other things, hold corporations accountable for wasteful products, phase out single-use plastics, reduce wasteful packaging and reform the nation’s waste and recycling systems.

Today, 14% of oil and 8% of gas is used to make petrochemicals, the feedstock of plastics. The International Energy Agency predicts that within 30 years, 50% of the growth in oil demand will be related to petrochemicals.

That means we are extracting fossil fuels, not for energy, but for things like plastic soda bottles that we use once.

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