

Wrestling champ teaches youngsters to have fun, Page 5



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Developer wants to build housing at former hospital

Plan envisions up to 48 condo-style units with covered parking

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

A Georgia-based developer who has taken a liking to Wrangell has offered the borough \$200,000 for the former hospital property, with plans to tear down the building and con-

struct as many as 48 new housing units.

Wayne Johnson's offer on the 2-acre property is contingent on striking a deal to purchase six smaller borough-owned lots behind the hospital building, adding an additional 1.3 acres to the development site.

The purchase price for the hospital property, which has been vacant since SEARHC moved into its new Wrangell Medical Center three years ago,

is below its appraised value, but borough code allows the assembly to approve such sales for economic development of the community.

Johnson said he needs the additional six lots to provide enough space to build a covered area for the development's residents to put their vehicles and boats.

"You need a place to park your toys," he said in an interview Saturday, March 2.

His offer for the hospital property says it is contingent on reaching a "mutually agreeable" deal for the six lots.

The new housing would be a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom units, probably condominiums but that's still undecided, he said. It might be two three-story buildings with eight units per floor or one six-story building with eight units per floor.

He estimates teardown, dem-

olition and disposal of the hospital structure at \$850,000, with new construction estimated at \$12.5 million to \$15 million. The land acquisition costs would be added to those expenses.

The hospital property would be sold as is, with Johnson responsible for the costs of any asbestos removal or soils cleanup. The original building opened in 1967, with additions in 1974, 1988 and 1994.

Continued on page 7

Draft school budget draws down half of district reserves

By MARK C. ROBINSON
Sentinel reporter

The Wrangell school district is proposing to draw down about half of its reserves to balance the upcoming year's budget, and Schools Superintendent Bill Burr warns that the solution is not sustainable for the long term.

The school board at its Feb. 26 meeting reviewed with district business manager Kristy Andrew the first draft of the budget for the 2024-2025 school year.

The budget shows general fund revenues of approximately \$5.2 million — of which about 60% is from the state foundation funding formula — and expenses of more than \$5.8 million. To balance the budget, the district would draw a little over \$600,000 from its reserves, currently estimated to total \$1.2 million at the end of the fiscal year on June 30.

There are no plans to cut programs or staff for next year, though Burr cautioned on March 1 "the money's not infinite."

Of the proposed budget, 75% would go to salaries and benefits for faculty and staff. "The biggest expenditure that we have is staffing, and right now we're not looking at cutting any staffing," Burr said.

Regardless, the district will reevaluate its long-term financial strategy. "Anytime you're running in a deficit, you can't sustain that forever," Burr said. "So, we look at the budget every year and adjust to it."

For the past few years, the district has balanced its budget with the help of federal pandemic aid, using the one-time grant money to cover the salaries and benefits of the two school principals. With those grants exhausted, the district will need to cover those costs of about \$300,000 from its general fund dollars.

Continued on page 3



PHOTO BY MARK C. ROBINSON / WRANGELL SENTINEL

Tlingit story of salmon runs

Students from Tracey Martin's fifth grade class participated in the Tlingit shadowbox theater production of "Raven and Fog Woman," with members of the high school Tlingit class on drums. The performance was held Friday, March 1, at the high school. The story explains the bounty of salmon during certain months and the disappearance of salmon in other months.

State looks at possible timber sale at Earl West Cove in 2025 or 2026

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

The state is working toward a possible timber sale at Earl West Cove in 2025 or 2026, with the borough hoping it could piggyback on the effort and put up its own acreage in the area to increase the logging work and generate revenue for the municipality.

A state timber sale of approximately 160 acres is part of the state's five-year plan covering 2023-2027.

But there is work to do before the state timber could go out for bid.

The Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry and Fire Protection hired a consultant two or three years ago to provide an opinion of the marketable timber at Earl West Cove, said Greg Staunton, Southeast area forester, based in Ketchikan.

The next step for the division will be to get on the ground to look at details of a possible layout and roads needed for the timber sale, "and what the cuts might look like," Staunton said in a recent interview.

He hopes a crew can spend time in the field this summer.

Earl West is about halfway down the eastern side of Wrangell Island, facing the Back Channel. Making money on a timber sale there could be a challenge for a buyer.

"The operability of the area is considered

marginal because the stand is predominately a hemlock-dominant forest type, and also due to mobilization costs," according to the state's five-year plan. "Approximately 1 mile of new road construction has been identified, along with 0.5 mile of light road reconstruction."

Existing Forest Service roads provide access to the area.

The division identified Earl West Cove "a number of years ago" as a candidate for a timber sale, Staunton said.

"We have heightened interest in what we're doing because the federal government isn't doing timber sales anymore."

After field work and mapping, the department would need to issue a best-interest finding as the last step before putting the timber out for bid, maybe in 2025 or 2026.

That would allow time for the state to work with the public on setting conditions for the sale, the area forester said.

The state sale is proposed at 3 million board feet of timber, which, if it all went to dimensional lumber, could be enough wood to frame a couple hundred 2,000-square-foot homes, according to a federal chart.

The Tye Lake hydroelectric power transmission line cuts across the acreage, and fish streams meander through the state lands and the nearby acreage the borough has selected.

Continued on page 7

Resident asks borough to help with animal euthanasia services

By MARK C. ROBINSON
Sentinel reporter

For Dorthea Rooney, her appeal to the borough assembly was born out of a personal tragedy. She requested some form of animal control that could provide euthanasia for pets in cases of illness or injury.

Her sister's large, 13-year-old dog Lilly, who served as their mother's emotional support animal, had become unable to move her back legs. "She was basically paralyzed," she said.

The house where Rooney's sister and mother lived had 40 stairs, and with Lilly's size and 100-pound weight, it was impossible for them to get her outside. The sister reached out to veterinarian Judge Conniff of Skookum Vets, who lives in Juneau and comes to town once or twice a month, but learned he wouldn't be back for two weeks.

"My sister tried to keep the dog comfortable, but she was unable to get her outside to go to the bathroom," Rooney said. "And then her pain increased to the point where I knew some-

thing had to be done."

They reached out to the Sitka Veterinary Clinic, who Rooney described during her Nov. 14 address to the assembly meeting as "very responsive and caring." However, their prescribed overdose of Oxycodone had no effect, likely due to Lilly's size. "We tried other things they suggested, but only so much can be done by phone."

Continued on page 3

Don't forget to
**SET YOUR
CLOCKS AHEAD
1 HOUR**

**SUNDAY,
MARCH 10**

Senior Center Menu

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

Thursday, March 7

Chicken tahitian, steamed zucchini, honey mustard slaw, confetti rice, fruit

Friday, March 8

Corned beef and cabbage with noodles, mixed vegetable sunshine salad

Monday, March 11

Closed. Shelf-stable meal delivered on Friday, March 8

Tuesday, March 12

Ham sandwich, pork noodle soup, danish salad

Wednesday, March 13

Chicken adobo, mixed vegetables, honey orange salad, rice

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

Ferry Schedule

Northbound

Monday, March 8
Kennicott, 7:30 p.m.
Friday, March 15
Kennicott, 3:15 p.m.
Friday, March 22
Kennicott, 8:15 p.m.
Friday, April 10
Hubbard, 12:45 a.m.

Southbound

Thursday, March 7
Kennicott, 4 p.m.
Monday, March 11
Kennicott, 4 a.m.
Monday, March 18
Kennicott, 5 a.m..
Monday, March 25
Kennicott, 7:30 a.m.

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

Tides

High Tides

| | AM | PM | AM | PM |
|----------|-------|------|-------|------|
| | Time | Ft | Time | Ft |
| March 6 | 09:11 | 14.6 | 10:36 | 13.3 |
| March 7 | 10:16 | 16.1 | 11:21 | 15.0 |
| March 8 | 11:10 | 17.5 | | ... |
| March 9 | 00:01 | 16.6 | Noon | 18.5 |
| March 10 | 00:39 | 17.9 | 01:46 | 19.0 |
| March 11 | 02:16 | 18.8 | 02:32 | 18.8 |
| March 12 | 02:53 | 19.2 | 03:16 | 18.1 |

Low Tides

| | AM | PM | AM | PM |
|----------|-------|------|-------|------|
| | Time | Ft | Time | Ft |
| March 6 | 02:43 | 6.3 | 03:56 | 0.4 |
| March 7 | 04:01 | 4.7 | 04:50 | -1.1 |
| March 8 | 04:59 | 2.8 | 05:35 | -2.3 |
| March 9 | 05:47 | 0.9 | 06:15 | -2.9 |
| March 10 | 07:31 | -0.8 | 07:54 | -2.9 |
| March 11 | 08:14 | -2.0 | 08:32 | -2.3 |
| March 12 | 08:57 | -2.5 | 09:09 | -1.2 |



ALASKA AIRLINES CLUB 49 COMMUNITY EVENTS CALENDAR

FAMILY GAME NIGHT 6 p.m. Thursday, March 7, at The Salvation Army. Free snacks and board games. All are welcome. Call for more information, 907-874-3753.

TLINGIT CANOE PADDLE-MAKING WORKSHOP Friday, Saturday and Sunday, March 8-10, at the high school shop class. Paddles will be for dancing or actual boat paddling. One People Canoe Society will send artists and workshop leaders. Sealaska contributed red cedar planks and the high school contributed use of the shop and tools. To reserve your spot, email khoyt@searhc.org.

COMMUNITY MARKET 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, March 9, at the Nolan Center. Check out the locally grown and handcrafted items.

WRANGELL SCHOOL BOARD will hold a work session at 6:30 p.m. Monday, March 11, in Evergreen Elementary School Room 101 to discuss curriculum and high school course credits. The public is encouraged to attend. No official action will be taken.

STATE PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE will be in Wrangell on Thursday, March 14. Immunizations, birth control and STD screening, well-child exams for kids up to age 6, TB screening and medication, Narcan kits and medication disposal bags will be offered. The Public Health Center is in the Kadin Building, 215 Front St. Call 907-723-4611 to make an appointment in advance so the nurse knows what immunizations to bring.

LITTLE LEAGUE VOLUNTEERS needed for coaching, umpiring, scorekeeping, concessions, running the pitching machines, field upkeep and more. Little League is scheduled to start April 1 and end June 15. Coaching positions must be filled before registration can start. Call or text Brianna Schilling at 907-305-0282.

FREE TAX RETURN PREPARATION every Saturday through April 13 at the Nolan Center classroom. Open to everyone, regardless of age. IRS-certified volunteers will prepare and e-file your return for you at no charge. By appointment only. Call Paula at 907-874-3824 or 907-305-0309.

NOLAN CENTER THEATER no movies until the end of March.

BOOK FAIR 1 to 6 p.m. Thursday, March 21, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday, March 22, at the Evergreen Elementary School gym. Open to the public. Call Kendra at 907-874-2321 for more information.

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

VIRTUES MATTER activities for children, 2:35 to 4 p.m. Wednesdays at the elementary school music room. An interfaith effort hosted by the Baha'is of Wrangell and open to all. For more information and to register, call Kay Larson, 907-209-9117, or email wrangell@akbnc.org.

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

- **SKATE NIGHT** 5 to 7 p.m. Saturdays at the community center gym. Limited quantity and sizes of skates available to borrow. Family focused, kids 12 years and under must be supervised by a parent or adult. Open-gym style activity. Drop-in fee; pay before you skate.
- **OUTDOOR CHALLENGE** through April 28 is built to encourage consistent movement, with a goal of completing at least 30 minutes of exercise 5 to 7 days per week. This challenge is for people of all fitness levels. The participant who completes the most workouts will win a six-month pass to the Parks and Recreation facility; prizes donated by local businesses will be raffled off at the end of the challenge. For ages 14 and up. Registration required for this free activity.
- **FUNCTIONAL FITNESS PROGRAM** 10 to 11 a.m. Tuesdays through April 9 with Devyn Johnson. \$25 fee, plus daily entry fee. Registration required.

Daylight Hours

| Date | Sunrise | Sunset | Daylight |
|----------|---------|--------|----------|
| March 6 | 6:26a | 5:35p | 11:08h |
| March 7 | 6:24a | 5:37p | 11:13h |
| March 8 | 6:21a | 5:39p | 11:18h |
| March 9 | 6:18a | 5:41p | 11:22h |
| March 10 | 7:16a | 6:43p | 11:27h |
| March 11 | 7:13a | 6:46p | 11:32h |
| March 12 | 7:10a | 6:48p | 11:37h |

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

March 6, 1924

The leap year edition of the Stikine Messenger, published on the 29th of February by the girls of the high school, was a splendid six-page paper and reflected much credit on the girls and their adviser, Miss Alice Carlson, teacher of English and history, and could be shown with pride by any school.

When it is considered that enrollment of the high school is only 25, the achievement of the girls is even more remarkable. The boys will issue the March edition of the Messenger and they make no secret of the fact that they expect to put out some paper.

March 4, 1949

Ben Engdal and Harry Sundberg this week announced virtual completion of their new shrimp cannery here and said they would begin operation May 1 for the opening of the shrimping season. Their building on which construction was started just a year ago, is 30- by 40-feet in size, in addition to a 20-by-30 boiler room. The entire construction is of aluminum. The two partners said they will employ about 25 pickers, a sizable and steady payroll increase to Wrangell's economy.

Both men are experienced fishermen, having been engaged in the industry for many

years. George Sumption, with his new boat, the Suki, will fish shrimp for the new company, which has been named Harbor Sea Foods.

March 6, 1974

"If you take a ceremonial knife and commit suicide with it, the act is called hari-kari. In Alaska, if you see a man poaching a moose or salmon or a bear, and you don't report it, you are doing the same thing with your renewable natural resources." Those were the words recently of state Department of Public Safety Commissioner Pat Wellington in a hard-hitting statement calling for Alaskans to help

enforce their own game laws. "We have 59 Fish and Wildlife Protection Officers in this state. This means we have one officer for every 10,000 square miles of land, not excluding the sea. Our men cannot do this job of protecting the fish and game laws of Alaska without the help of the public," Wellington said.

March 4, 1999

The hide and skull of a large mountain lion were turned into the Wrangell Fish and Game office last week by a trapper who found the animal in one of his snares. The unusual find was discovered by trapper Rusty Lukinich, in one of his snares in

Totem Bay on the south end of Kupreanof Island. "Finding the lion answered a lot of questions I had these past few years," says Lukinich. He said last September he and some friends had gotten a deer and found that it already had claw marks all the way through the hide, from the middle of the back all the way back on both sides of the animal. The snared mountain lion measured seven feet, five inches from the tip of his nose to the tip of his tail. He was a young adult male, weighing between 150 and 170 pounds.

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WEEKLY FARE SALES



FREIGHT FOR LESS

Euthanasia

Continued from page 1

At that point, a common practice would have been to take the dog outside borough limits and kill her by gunshot, but that was not an option. "There's no way I could have carried a 100-pound dog, when she was still alert and terrified, in front of my mom and shoot her outside."

With that in mind, Rooney convinced her sister to allow her to put Lilly out of her pain another way: She suffocated the dog to death with a plastic bag over her head.

"It was... not fun," she said. "After I did all this, I talked to several people in town who had tried to shoot their dogs because they had no other options, and it went horribly wrong," she

said. "I'm not against putting an animal out of pain by shooting them but it needs to be done by someone trained."

Rooney once had to put her own dog down because of cancer. "Euthanasia is not quick sometimes. It does take a while, but it's more humane than what I did to my sister's dog."

Two days after Lilly's death, Rooney addressed the borough assembly to advocate for the more humane way. She read a letter she composed about her family's story in the hopes of better relaying the urgency for someone certified to provide that service.

"When I read it, I was very emotional and I had a hard time getting through it, and I left," she said. "I decided to go



PHOTO PROVIDED BY DOROTHEA ROONEY

Dorothea Rooney is advocating for the borough to help with getting someone certified to euthanize pets who are sick or injured, as Rooney had to do herself with her sister's dog Lilly, pictured here, last November.

back to City Hall the next day and talked to (Interim Borough Manager) Mason Villarma. He said he did hear about it, and he was in total agreement, and the city would be willing to get it done."

Rooney continued to do research on possible options until the Nov. 20 landslide put everything on hold for several

months.

She resumed contact with borough officials at the beginning of February. "It needs to happen, and I don't want the city to let it go," she said.

While some Wrangell police officers have offered that kind of animal control in the past, including former Chief Doug McCloskey, Rooney surmised that emergency medical technicians might be even more suitable, given their medical training.

Villarma said last week that one borough employee and one non-employee are interested in taking on the role.

In her report for the Tuesday, Feb. 27, assembly meeting, Borough Clerk Kim Lane said they are working through the process. "I spoke with the vet in town, and he said that he would work with the two individuals who are interested in taking on this task. The challenge is finding a certification course."

Villarma said the borough would cover the insurance for the service. Putting a program in place probably will take months, not weeks, he said.

Rooney is undaunted. "80% of the people in this town have a pet."

Federal grant will help pay for new roof at middle school

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

The state, which administers the federally funded Community Development Block Grant program, has awarded Wrangell \$695,000 toward a new roof at the middle school.

The borough assembly designated the school roof — most of which is almost 30 years old — as its top priority for the grant program this year.

The project is estimated at about \$1.4 million.

"We would have to provide the balance to make it a whole project," Amber Al-Haddad, the borough's capital facilities director, said Feb. 28.

"It's possible we can get the (middle school) roof done this year, but we have to act fast," she said.

The additional money to supplement the grant funding will come from the \$3.5 million Wrangell borrowed after voters in October 2022 approved a bond issue to pay for repairs at the high school, middle and elementary schools.

Continued on page 4

State reminds tour operators they need permits for Petroglyph Beach

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

While it's uncertain if the state could transfer funds to the borough for maintenance work at Petroglyph Beach, the more immediate concern is that neither the borough nor the state have any idea how many visitors commercial tour operators bring to the site each year.

The state this year is requiring tour operators to buy a license and pay a per-visitor fee, which had been required under state law for more than 20 years. But the fee was never enforced for Petroglyph Beach because the Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation essentially lost track of the Wrangell attraction and the borough and local tour operators were not aware of the fee

requirement.

Though the state discovered the non-payment issue last year, the division decided to wait until this year to start enforcing the rule so that tour operators would have time to build the fee into their customer charges.

The state has sent reminders to all the tour operators it could find online, reminding them of the requirement to get a license and collect the fee, said Preston Kroes, Southeast Region superintendent for Alaska State Parks.

No one had registered for their license as of last week, he said.

Some Wrangell operators are pushing back against the fee, Kate Thomas, the borough's economic development direc-

tor, said last week.

Petroglyph Beach State Historic Site was designated in 2000; it is one of the town's most popular visitor attractions.

The Division of Parks collected close to \$5 million statewide last year from commercial operators that bring people to historic sites, plus cabin rentals, campsites and parking fees. The money goes into the division's budget for spending across the state.

The lack of any visitor counts for commercial use of Petroglyph Beach makes it harder to justify maintenance spending when there is so much competition across the state for the limited pot of money, Kroes explained.

Continued on page 4

Police report

Monday, Feb. 26

Agency assist: Ambulance. Found property.

Tuesday, Feb. 27

Agency assist: Ambulance. Agency assist: Petersburg Police Department. Motor vehicle accident. Agency assist: Ambulance.

Wednesday, Feb. 28

Agency assist: Harbor De-

partment.

Traffic stop. Found dog: Returned to owner.

Thursday, Feb. 29

Found property. Traffic stop.

Friday, March 1

Letter served for removing person from a licensed establishment.

Unattended death. Disturbance. Traffic stop: Citation issues for failure to register vehicle.

Saturday, March 2

Agency assist: Hoonah Police Department.

Agency assist: Hoonah Police Department.

Arrest for violating conditions of release. Motor vehicle accident. Traffic stop. Theft. Traffic stop.

Arrest for driving under the influence.

Sunday, March 3

Traffic stop: Warning for faulty taillight. Agency assist: Fire Department. Agency assist: Ambulance.

Budget

Continued from page 1

The school district and board had planned for the eventual loss of that federal funding, however, saving as much as was allowed.

Although the state ordinarily sets a limit on how much school districts can hold in reserve, a waiver from the cap was granted through June 2025 to help districts cope with pandemic disruptions to their finances.

Burr explained that the current budget plan, with its \$600,000 deficit covered by reserve funds, assumes the borough will provide the district with the maximum contribution allowed under state law, as it has done in recent years.

Still, even if everything goes according to plan for the coming year, the district's reserves will be much lower the next time. "All we did was get a breather for next year which buys us a little time ... if everything goes right," Burr said.

Additional financial assis-

tance from the state would help relieve the budget stress, but that is dependent on the Legislature and Gov. Mike Dunleavy approving a bipartisan education funding bill which would send about \$440,000 more in state funding to the Wrangell district for next year.

While the measure to increase the state's per-student funding formula passed through the House on Feb. 22, and the Senate on Feb. 26, Dunleavy has threatened to veto the measure unless legislators also approve the governor's priorities to allow new charter schools to bypass local school boards and his plan to pay one-time recruitment and retention bonuses to teachers.

Even if the governor and lawmakers can agree on the funding increase, Burr said, it would fall short of covering the inflation that has piled up since the state last boosted the funding formula in 2017.

After hearing from faculty, staff and students, the district will prepare another draft of the budget for board consideration and then submission to the borough assembly before the May 1 deadline in state law.

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Alaska needs to control its PFD politics

By LARRY PERSILY

It was a perplexing week in the Legislature. While the Senate Finance Committee was reviewing honest numbers about real budget needs hitting up against the limit of available state revenues, the House was debating whether the exalted Permanent Fund dividend belongs in the Alaska Constitution, putting the PFD above all else in life.

The Senate committee last week was doing the math, realizing the state would not have enough money for a fat dividend this year, no matter what the governor and too many legislators may pledge, promise and promote.

The senators listened as the legislature's fiscal analysts listed all of the expenses left out of the governor's proposed budget. On purpose, I suspect, to make the budget look smaller. Gov. Mike Dunleavy is not the first elected leader to play that game, though he is perfecting the tactic of blaming legislators for overspending.

The legislative budget analysts went through the big items not fully addressed in the governor's budget, but which lawmakers are considering adding to the spending plan. We're not talking goofy local projects or unrealistic state dreams like a North Slope natural gas pipeline; the Senate committee counted down the cost of important public services missing from the governor's budget.

Those include adequate state funding for school district operating costs, addressing school building construction and maintenance needs around Alaska, deferred maintenance expenses at the University of Alaska, a potential revenue shortfall for the state ferry system, public employee contract negotiations, financial assistance for the state's neediest senior citizens, transmission line upgrades to accommodate more wind and solar projects serving homes and businesses from Fairbanks to the Kenai Peninsula, disaster and forest fire expenses — you get it, real needs.

The intent of most lawmakers is to

balance the budget without pulling money from the state's budget reserve fund, the more than 30-year-old account intended to cover spending when oil prices are really low.

Oil prices are not low — just look at heating fuel and gasoline prices. The state has enough money to meet its needs, just as long as the governor, legislators and the public can accept the laws of math: State revenues minus public services do not leave enough in the checkbook to pay an oversized dividend.

Yet, while the Senate was going over the numbers and realizing that this year's PFD might be around \$1,300, same as last year's, or maybe even a little less, depending on other budget priorities, the House was debating whether voters should get a chance to add the PFD to the state constitution. And not an affordable dividend — some of the debate advocated for a payment two to three times last year's payment.

It was a theoretical — or theatrical — debate in the House. Even if the chamber voted to put the constitutional amendment on the November statewide ballot, a majority of the Senate has no interest in such misleading and deceitful politics. It takes both bodies to advance the measure.

"There's a little bit of a disconnect there," Senate Finance Co-Chair Bert Stedman said of the House debate over enshrining a large dividend in the constitution.

The Sitka senator said he scheduled last week's presentation by the legislative budget analysts so that his colleagues could see the math: "The financial obligations faced exceed the revenue." And that's even before lawmakers consider all of the requests flowing into their offices from communities across the state.

Until Alaska gets its lust for the dividend under control, it will be difficult for elected officials to focus more attention on what the state needs rather than what some people want in their own hands and which too many candidates are eager to promise.

Beach

Continued from page 3

The borough and state have a management agreement that goes back to 1998, with the borough responsible for trash pickup and light maintenance and the state taking on major projects. The state owns the six-acre waterfront parcel about a mile north of the ferry terminal.

The borough is interested in revising the agreement with the state, Thomas said.

In addition, the borough is interested in including the Wrangell Cooperative Association in any new joint-management agreement with the

state, Interim Borough Manager Mason Villarma said at the Feb. 27 assembly meeting.

The borough also would like the state to hand over to the borough whatever money the division collects from commercial tour operators, though Kroes that may not be allowed under state law.

The Legislature, however, can appropriate state funds for specific community projects, though there is a long list of cities, boroughs, schools and nonprofit organizations always lined up for money.

Kroes said he was in Wrangell a few years and it was evident that the decking on the observation platform at the beach needs replace-

ment.

The borough sees the same need, Thomas said. The underlying steel frame is in good shape, but the wooden decking and railing needs replacement, she said.

The commercial operator one-time application fee is \$100, with an annual license fee of \$350. In addition to the license, commercial operators are required to pay the state \$6 per person for guided tours or \$2 per person if they simply drop off customers at the site for an unguided tour.

Permits are available on the state Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation website at dnr.alaska.gov/parks/permit/.

The community's \$6.5 million request is ranked No. 16 on the Alaska Department of Education's Major Maintenance Grant Fund list, but the state has not had enough money to get that far down the list for years.

The Legislature has appropriated significant amounts for the grant program, but Gov. Mike Dunleavy has vetoed most or all of the spending the past three years.

Unless more state funding comes in this year, the borough and school district have about \$4.36 million available as of now to spend on repair work, Interim Borough Manager Mason Villarma reported at the Feb. 27 borough assembly meeting.

That includes the \$3.5 million in borrowed money, about \$160,000 in interest earned from investing that money until it is needed, plus the \$694,000 grant

EDITORIAL

It's a good price for Wrangell's future

Don't think of it as selling the borough-owned former hospital building and it's almost two acres of land for a steep discount to its appraised value. Think of it as potentially getting an immense amount of future value from an unused liability that is costing the borough about \$100,000 a year to heat and insure.

When you look at the math that way, a developer's offer to pay the borough \$200,000 for the hospital property looks pretty reasonable.

Borough code allows the municipality to sell property at less than its appraised value if the sale will promote economic development in the community. Turning the empty hospital building and six smaller, adjoining lots of unused borough land into a housing development is exactly the kind of economic benefit envisioned for such sales.

The developer, Wayne Johnson, operating under the name Wrangell Heritage House Development, is looking at building up to 48 housing units, probably as condominiums, targeting well-off Lower 48 residents from Arizona, California, Georgia too — where Johnson and his wife live — who want to escape the summer heat and enjoy a second home in Alaska.

In addition to going after Lower 48 seasonal transplants, Johnson believes year-round residents will want some of the units, helping to ease Wrangell's chronic and debilitating housing shortage. Employers know too well the problems of attracting and keeping new hires in town if they can't find housing.

Johnson estimates land acquisition costs, demolition of the hospital building and construction could total between \$13.5 million and \$16 million, making it perhaps the largest private-sector investment ever in Wrangell. He estimates demolition alone at \$850,000.

So here's the math: The borough stops paying to heat and insure the building; the borough deposits the \$200,000 it gets from selling the hospital, plus whatever it receives for the six smaller lots next door; all of the property goes onto the tax rolls; and if Johnson goes ahead with the project, millions of dollars will be spent on payroll in town to take down the hospital and put up the new housing.

It adds up to a good deal for everyone.

To make sure, the hospital sale price will undergo review by the borough's economic development board and planning and zoning commission before the assembly takes up the issue.

This is an important decision for Wrangell, and the best opportunity — the only plausible opportunity — to come around since SEARHC moved out of the hospital three years ago and the borough started looking for buyers for the property. So don't think of the \$200,000 as a fire-sale price. Consider it a bargain for the community.

— Wrangell Sentinel

announced last week.

The borough and school district are jointly deciding the top priorities for spending the money, Al-Haddad said.

The second priority for the available funds will be work at the high school.

"At the high school, we would prioritize the siding," which is suffering from rot, she said. "There is some pretty bad siding."

The borough would "try to squeeze in" replacement of the worst sections of the high school roof, depending on the cost estimates, Al-Haddad added.

The high school and middle schools roofs are flat, with a membrane covering.

The borough owns the school buildings — the school district is responsible for routine maintenance and the borough is responsible for major upgrades, Al-Haddad explained.

Officials used a comprehensive conditions assessment of school buildings prepared last

year by Juneau-based North-Wind Architects, which sent in its team of engineers to inspect the buildings, including walking the roofs and crawling around the foundations.

The school district narrowed down the list to \$10 million as its top-priority work from among a much longer list of repairs, replacement and upgrades to roofs at all the buildings, along with new siding, insulation, heating and ventilation controls, a new boiler at the middle school and other non-structural work.

The Stikine Middle School was built in 1979; the two buildings at Evergreen Elementary were built in 1969 and 1979; the high school was built in the mid-1980s.

Any work not completed this year will be done next year.

Under the rules governing the \$3.5 million bond issue, the borough needs to show substantial completion of the work by January 2026.

School

Continued from page 3

To cover even more repair work at the decades-old buildings, the borough and school district last year applied for \$6.5 million in state funds to combine with the local money so that Wrangell could address the top \$10 million in maintenance and repair projects at the schools.

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Canoe paddle making workshop this weekend

By MARK C. ROBINSON
Sentinel reporter

As Ken Hoyt prepares for the Tlingit canoe paddle making workshop at the high school shop room Friday through Sunday, March 8-10, he explained how there are two different types, depending on its intended use.

"Real canoe paddles ... never have relief carving," he said. "They don't have inlays. They don't have anything ornate. They're utilitarian. People will sometimes be disappointed when they see old canoe paddles have a lot of geometric designs, straight lines, way different from the formlines and the really fancy crest designs we're used to seeing."

Canoe paddles are more focused on structural integrity, to be used as implements of transportation. "If you were to do relief carving in there, all of a sudden you're going to crack your paddle the first or second day out (in the water)," he said. "With dance paddles that don't have to go in the water,

we can go crazy," he said. "We can dig them out, and put copper, and abalone, and human hair, and seashells, and make them elaborate."

"Sawdust in hair, impacting visibility, everybody in goggles and masks and ... hearing protection, gloves, and we just go."

Ken Hoyt

group that needs dance paddles.

We have a canoe group that needs canoe paddles. We've got at least 24 planks up there. ... I'd like to dedicate individual paddles to all the Wrangell clans."

Sealaska is contributing red cedar planks and workshop leaders will include master carver Doug Chilton, president of the One People Canoe Society in Juneau.

"Doug Chilton's a pretty prominent artist," Hoyt said. "He still has a store, but he's a big-time engraver. He does silver, gold, copper. ... He's been in this canoe movement for at least 20 years."

Hoyt anticipates between 20 to 30 people will attend the free workshop, with everyone working at their own comfort levels.

"It's just a flurry," he said. "Sawdust in hair, impacting visibility, everybody in goggles and masks and ... hearing protection, gloves, and we just go. ... No one will be turned away on ability."

The workshop will run three days, likely starting later on Friday to allow for school activities, then at 8 a.m. Saturday and Sunday. "We're not going to ding people for being late," he said.

Hoyt is the organizer and workshop host, coordinating with the school district, Sealaska, One People Canoe Society and SEARHC, and while he does woodworking himself, he doesn't consider himself at Chilton's level.

"I'll be a grunt," he said with a smile.

Supplies are limited; to reserve a spot, email khoyt@searhc.org or use a smartphone to access the QR code in the work-



PHOTO BY MARK C. ROBINSON / WRANGELL SENTINEL

Ken Hoyt is organizing and hosting a Tlingit canoe paddle making workshop at the high school this weekend.

shop ad in the Sentinel. Those under 18 will need permission from their parent or guardian



PHOTO BY MARK C. ROBINSON / WRANGELL SENTINEL
Keegan Hanson, a state championship wrestler, coaches grade school wrestlers for his high school senior project.

State champion wrestler helps mentor grade school athletes

By MARK C. ROBINSON
Sentinel reporter

High school wrestler Keegan Hanson, a state champion in the Division II tournament this past December, chose for his senior project to help grade school kids in the Wolfpack Wrestling program with Parks and Recreation as an assistant coach.

"Basically, just helping the kids out with their technique and break down the moves, step by step," he said.

He's been volunteering, coaching elementary school and middle school students in wrestling throughout his high school years.

"In Craig, my freshman and sophomore year, my dad was the coach for elementary and middle school, so I just helped him out, just being nice," he said. "Because I remember when I was in elementary and middle school that there were high schoolers that did it and I thought it was something really cool and I wanted to give back. And (at the high school) in Montana, I did the same thing."

Perhaps emulating his mother, high school/middle school principal Jackie Hanson, Hanson has always enjoyed working with younger children. "I think that's one of the best parts," he said. "They're pretty funny. They're kind of shy at the start, and once you get to know them a little bit more, they're all over the place."

Remembering his own experiences as a novice wrestler at their age, his perspective changed as his role shifted to that of a skilled instructor watching as the grade schoolers slowly mastered the moves and techniques he once had to learn. "Instead of (me) looking up to someone, I felt like the kids were looking up to me."

"I remember when I was in elementary and middle school that there were high schoolers that did it and I thought it was something really cool and I wanted to give back."

Keegan Hanson

"I think he's been really great," Devyn Johnson, Parks and Recreation coordinator, said of Hanson. "We're lucky to have him. ... He works really well with the kids."

Hanson said the toughest part of working with the youngsters is the first meeting and slowly gaining their trust. "Amateur kids are really tough to (coach). They don't really know what's going on," he said. "You can't just come in and boss everyone around."

As he continued to work with them, he felt a sense of pride as he watched the kids' growth from goofing around and lacking discipline to becoming good wrestlers. "Once ... they finally get into it and they understand it, it feels like a pretty good accomplishment."

Wolfpack Wrestling competed in their first tournament of the season at the community center on Feb. 17. "They did wonderful," Johnson said. "They did so, so great. Their hard work definitely was highlighted, and their sportsmanship."

Hanson agreed with that assessment. "I think all the kids did very well," he said. "They all placed. They focused on their moves."

However, he believes the most important thing for the young wrestlers is to have fun. "They shouldn't be worrying about whether they win or lose that much."

While he's only been in Wrangell for his senior year, Hanson has had great experiences while competing in cross country running, wrestling and basketball. "I've got a lot of memories," he said. "Cross country, that was really fun. We got a state title as a team. Wrestling, I got a state individual title."

And, I'd say the coaches here are outstanding, some of the best coaches I've ever had. And the kids here are pretty cool, too."

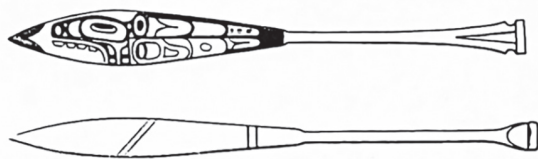
Continued on page 6

TLINGIT CANOE PADDLE MAKING WORKSHOP

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**CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL
PUBLIC HEARING
PUBLIC NOTICE**

During the Regular Assembly Meeting of Tuesday, March 12, 2024, starting at 6 p.m. in the Wrangell Borough Assembly Chambers at 205 Brueger Street, Wrangell, Alaska, there will be a **PUBLIC HEARING** on the following item(s):

- a. Approval to move forward with the Sale of Borough-Owned Real Property within Wrangell Townsite (Lots 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 9), of Subdivision Plat Block 54, according to Plat No. 68-81, Zoned Open Space and Requested by Wayne Johnson.

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

Publish Feb. 28 and March 6, 2024

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

In the matter of the estate of David Roy Churchill, Notice to Creditors is hereby given that Franklin J. Churchill Sr. has been appointed personal representative of the above-named estate. Pursuant to Alaska Statute Title 13.16.450, all creditors are hereby notified to present their claims within four months after the date of first publication of this notice or said claims will forever be barred. Claims must be presented to:

Franklin J. Churchill Sr.
PO Box 1590
Wrangell, AK 99929

Publish Feb. 28 and March 6 and 13, 2024

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Board of Directors of the Southeast Alaska Power Agency (SEAPA) will hold a regular board meeting on March 14, 2024 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at SEAPA's Headquarters, 55 Don Finney Lane, in Ketchikan, Alaska. During the meeting the board may enter into an Executive Session to discuss employee performances, which discussions may involve subjects that tend to prejudice the reputation and character of a person. For additional information, please call 907-228-2281.



Publish March 6, 2024

**CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL
LEGAL 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 has 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.

- a. **Ordinance No. 1050** of the Assembly of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, adding Section 14.09.042, Use of Port and Harbor Dumpsters, in Chapter 14.09, Prohibited Practices, in the Wrangell Municipal Code.
- b. **Ordinance No. 1051** of the Assembly of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, amending the minor offense fine schedule in Chapter 1.20, General Penalty, in the Wrangell Municipal Code.

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

Publish March 6, 2024

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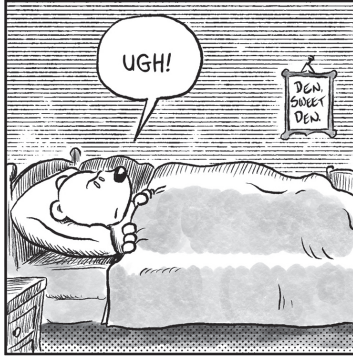
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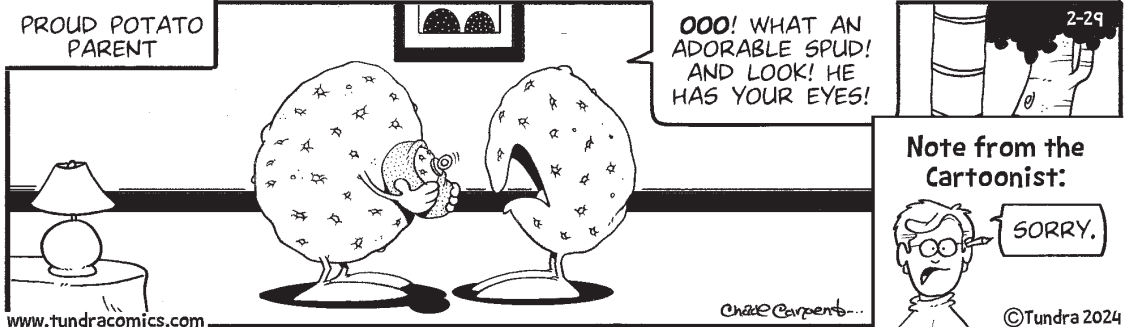
Ritter's River

by Marc Lutz



Tundra

by Chad Carpenter



Wrestler — State budget tightens, big items still unsolved

Continued from page 5

He does admit there is one high school experience he won't miss. "In Montana, chemistry was pretty tough," he said with a smile.

After graduation, Hanson is considering whether to go to trade school to learn plumbing or heating and ventilation systems, or attending college, perhaps in Montana, to major in elementary education. "I think I'm really good with kids," he said. "My mom does too."

By SEAN MAGUIRE
Anchorage Daily News

State senators heard last week that based on current revenue forecasts, legislators will struggle to balance the budget with several big-spending items still to be considered.

The nonpartisan Legislative Finance Division explained that items currently pending, like benefits for low-income seniors, funding needed to start upgrading the Railbelt's electrical grid and a large increase in state money for public education, were not included in the governor's proposed budget.

Other spending, such as Gov. Mike Dunleavy's insistence on \$55 million for teacher bonuses in return for not vetoing a much larger increase in state funding for public schools, would further strain state finances.

An updated revenue forecast is due by March 15, which will give legislators a clearer picture of the state's finances as they finalize the budget for the fiscal year that starts July 1. Legislators were told at a Senate Finance Committee meeting Feb. 29 not to expect significant changes from a December revenue projection, as oil prices have held within a steady range.

Sitka Sen. Bert Stedman, who manages the operating budget in the Senate, said it would be a challenge this year for legislators to make expenditures equal revenues. He said Feb. 27 that the Senate Finance Committee would take a "hard look at the operating budget" to see where cuts could be made to free up additional revenue.

In December, Gov. Mike Dunleavy proposed a largely status quo budget of public services, with almost one-third of state general fund spending going toward a \$3,500 Permanent Fund dividend this fall. But the governor's budget plan would leave the state with a roughly \$1

billion deficit, requiring a more than one-third drawdown from a savings account.

The bipartisan Senate majority caucus has been uninterested in spending from the state's \$2.8 billion savings account to balance the budget, which would require a three-quarters supermajority vote of the House and Senate.

"Are we going to be able to fund everything we want? I don't think so. Not with the income that we have right now."

Gov. Mike Dunleavy

The Senate is planning on a roughly \$1,360 Permanent Fund dividend this fall, following the 75-25 formula used last year, where three-quarters of an annual draw from Permanent Fund earnings goes to help pay for public services, and one-quarter goes to the dividend.

The annual draw on fund earnings is the single largest revenue source for the state budget.

The Republican-dominated House majority last year supported doubling the share of the Permanent Fund earnings draw spent on dividends. This year, the dividend under a 50-50 formula would come to roughly \$2,277 per person, but that would leave the state budget almost \$900 million in the hole.

As a political compromise, lawmakers last year approved using any unanticipated oil revenue to boost state savings and to pay an energy relief check this year. Senators heard Feb. 29

Continued on page 8

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Alaska Charters and Adventures LLC, dba Alaska Charters and Adventures, is making application for a new liquor license, per AS 04.09.260, located in Alaska waters.

Interested persons should submit written comments to their local governing body (Wrangell Borough Assembly), the applicant, and to the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board at 550 W. 7th Ave., Suite 1600, Anchorage, AK 99501, or email alcohol.licensing@alaska.gov

Publish Feb. 28, March 6 and 13, 2024

Minimum wage, ranked-choice initiatives likely on ballot

By IRIS SAMUELS
Anchorage Daily News

A pair of citizen-backed initiatives will likely appear on the general election ballot in November, including one seeking to repeal Alaska's voting system, state election officials said Feb. 27. After a monthlong review, the state Division of Elections made the initial assessment that separate groups had gathered enough signatures to place the two questions on the ballot. Voters will be asked if they want to overturn Alaska's ranked-choice voting and open-primary system; and whether they support increasing the minimum wage and amending state law to mandate paid sick leave for many workers.

The initiative opposing ranked-choice voting was organized by allies of some Alaska Republicans who have

raised concerns about how the new voting system hurts the ability of conservative GOP candidates to defeat more moderate opponents. They also claim the system is confusing, disenfranchising some voters.

In 2022, Alaska became only the second state to use ranked-choice voting in congressional elections, following Maine. Several other states have since considered adopting similar voting systems, which supporters say improve the likelihood of electing moderate candidates with broad appeal. Supporters of Alaska's voting system have filed several complaints against the organizers of the initiative, accusing its leaders of repeatedly violating the state's campaign ethics requirements.

The organizers of the initiative were fined by Alaska's campaign ethics commission more than \$94,000 in Janu-

ary for several campaign ethics violations. Still, the commission allowed the ballot initiative organizers to carry on with their signature-gathering effort.

According to the office of Lt. Gov. Nancy Dahlstrom, who oversees Alaska's elections, the ranked-choice voting opponents collected nearly 37,000 qualified signatures, meeting threshold requirements in 34 out of 40 House districts. Under state law, each initiative petition was required to collect 26,705 qualified signatures from residents in at least 30 of the 40 House districts.

The anti-ranked choice voting group, Alaskans for Honest Elections, reported raising \$60,000 in the last quarter of 2023. All of that funding was funneled through the Ranked Choice Education Association, a church formed by the leaders of the ballot measure when they launched their campaign. The Alaska Public Offices Commission determined that funneling campaign contributions through the church illegally concealed the true source of the money.

Alaskans for Better Elections — a group supporting Alaska's ranked choice voting system and open primaries — reported contributions totaling nearly \$400,000 in the last three months of 2023, most of which from out-of-state groups and half of it in non-monetary donations of staff time or services.

That group also raised large sums ahead of the 2020 election, when Alaskans narrowly approved ranked choice voting and open primaries through a ballot measure. The second ballot initiative — backed by the state's largest labor group — would gradually increase Alaska's minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2027. It would also provide employees with guaranteed paid sick leave and prohibit employers from compelling employees to attend meetings regarding religious and political matters, a tactic sometimes used to dissuade workers from unionizing.

The ballot group submitted more than 34,000 signatures, meeting requirements in 36 out of 40 districts, according to Dahlstrom's office.

The ballot group, called Better Jobs for Alaska, has so far reported raising more than \$850,000, including \$100,000 in the last quarter of 2023. Almost all the funding came from the Sixteen Thirty Fund, a left-leaning Washington, D.C.-based organization that has also supported Alaska's current voting system.

The Division of Elections said it was still in the process of verifying all signatures submitted by both groups before finalizing the ballot questions.

State budget

Continued from page 6

that the energy relief check would be approximately \$175, added to the dividend issued in October.

As to the state spending plan now before the Legislature, the Senate has factored into its budget-making process the roughly \$200 million bipartisan education package that overwhelmingly passed the Legislature last week. That includes the first increase in the state per-student funding formula for local K-12 schools since 2017.

During an hourlong press conference Feb. 27, the governor threatened to veto the Legislature's school-funding bill unless some of his education priorities were approved, including close to \$55 million in teacher bonuses and a process for new charter schools to bypass local school boards and apply to the state for approval.

Dunleavy on Feb. 27 acknowledged the state's tight fiscal outlook and said that not everything in the Legislature's final budget was certain to get funded, including education spending.

"Are we going to be able to fund everything we want? I don't think so. Not with the income that we have right now," he said.

Legislators are facing a March 14 deadline to

approve Dunleavy's education priorities or face his veto pen. The governor supports one-time bonuses to help recruit and retain teachers more than he backs a permanent increase in state funding to school districts.

Even if the governor signs the education bill, he later could veto some of the money when he signs the state budget.

While House members across the political spectrum have been more amenable to the governor's teacher bonus proposal, members of the Senate expressed concerns.

"I don't see where there would be room to address the bonuses given our current financial situation," said Bethel Sen. Lyman Hoffman, during the Feb. 29 fiscal outlook presentation in the Senate Finance Committee.

Separate from the school funding debate, legislators are anticipating that other significant new spending will be considered for the next fiscal year's budget, which would further tighten state finances.

The Senate expects that over \$23 million will be needed for monthly payments for low-income seniors; that \$30 million would be required this year to start modernizing the Railbelt's electrical grid; and that the Alaska Marine Highway System will need an additional \$38 million in state funding in case Alaska misses out on federal grants.

New fine takes effect for illegal harbor trash

Sentinel staff

As of last week, anyone caught throwing trash into a harbor dumpster, other than household garbage by a boat owner, could face a \$150 fine.

The borough assembly on Feb. 27 adopted two ordinances: One which specifies in municipal code that the port and harbor dumpsters are for use by vessel owners only, and a second ordinance that imposes the \$150 fine.

Assembly members voted unanimously to adopt the new rules. No one from the public testified on either ordinance.

The port commission had recommended the new provisions in borough code in hopes that the fine would deter non-harbor tenants from dumping household garbage and everyone from tossing old fishing nets, construction trash, oils and other hazardous waste into the trash bins.

Through the years, people have dumped car parts, kitchen appliances, waste oil, bags of cement and construction debris in the dumpsters.


Surveillance cameras which are being installed at all of Wrangell's port and harbor facilities will help with enforcement of the new rules.

The \$150 fine is for each offense.

The new ordinances took effect Feb. 27.

Assembly members made clear in their discussion of the ordinances that while vessel owners can use the dumpsters for trash off their boat, they cannot dump garbage from their home into the harbor trash bins.


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