

## House budget restores two offices in Wrangell

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS  
AND SENTINEL STAFF

The Alaska House passed a version of the state operating budget Monday that would bring back the Department Fish and Game and Office of Children's Services to Wrangell, but the spending plan still needs Senate approval and the governor's signature before the two jobs could be restored.

Wrangell lost its children's service caseworker several years ago to budget cuts. The commercial fisheries office closed last year.

The Legislature tried last year to fund both positions, but Gov. Mike Dunleavy vetoed the appropriations. His spokesman said the fisheries managed out of the Wrangell office could instead be handled out of the larger Petersburg office "with no adverse impact on the fisheries."

The city offered to help cover the cost of reopening the children's service office in Wrangell in last year's state budget, but the Dunleavy administration turned down the offer.

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## Travelers cope as best they can with ferry woes

By CALEB VIERKANT  
Sentinel writer

With frequent breakdowns of the Matanuska — the only state ferry scheduled to serve Wrangell through September — residents are adjusting to the uncertainty, although not always happily.

Besides for canceled sailings, Mayor Steve Prysunka also is critical of ferry system management's approach to dealing with COVID-19 cases among the crew.

Crew members aboard the Matanuska tested positive for COVID on both the April 18 and 25 sailings into Ketchikan, posing a risk for others on board the ship and for communities where it stops, the mayor said.

"I appreciate that the ferry breaks down, like it did," Prysunka said at the April 27 borough assembly meeting. "That's one thing, but pulling into Ketchikan with three infected staff who have been wandering around the ferry and coming to all our little communities."

The Alaska Marine Highway System's website says it requires that crew members present evidence of a negative COVID-19 test taken within seven days before reporting for duty, or proof of vaccination. The requirements are stricter for passengers who board in Bellingham, Washington: Proof of a negative COVID test taken within 72 hours of departure, or proof of vaccination.

Passengers on shorter runs are not required to show proof of COVID-19 testing.

Aside from delays in Ketchikan to deal with COVID cases among crew members, the Matanuska has suffered mechanical and

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PHOTO BY KIARA HARRISON

### Peakaboo bunny

CeAirra Glaser loves to carry her pet rabbit, Luna, all over town to enjoy the sights, but not when it's raining hard. "Rabbits aren't supposed to get super wet," the high school sophomore said. Glaser originally bought the clear backpack to carry around her two cats — "my cats both actually like it" — but then hit on the idea of making it a rabbit carrier too when taking Luna on a visit to a friend's house. She has been taking her rabbit on sightseeing walks for about a month now.

## Ketchikan wrestling tournament spread COVID cases

By Larry Persily  
Sentinel writer

A COVID-19 outbreak at a high school wrestling tournament in Ketchikan last month is linked to 23 infections in five communities across Southeast Alaska, including one case in Wrangell, according to health officials.

Ketchikan High School hosted the regional wrestling tournament, an annual event that attracted athletes from eight other schools on April 24.

In addition to cases in Ketchikan, wrestlers from Wrangell, Sitka, Mt. Edgecumbe, Craig and Klawock also tested positive for the coronavirus after returning home, according to Kacie Paxton, spokesperson for the Ketchikan Emergency Operations Center.

No activities or events have been

anceled in Wrangell, but the wrestling team went into quarantine after returning from the tournament, attending class remotely, said Bob Davis, lead teacher and assistant principal at the secondary schools.

The students returned to class Monday, he said, and should be able to attend the state wrestling meet May 21-22 in Anchorage.

One team member who had been fully vaccinated more than two weeks before the meet was not quarantined, Davis said.

Team members were tested before going to Ketchikan and are tested twice a week, Davis said.

Officials from the Alaska School Activities Association Southeast Region 5 issued a warning to Ketchikan last

week, accusing the school district of failing to test competitors and enforce mask orders at the event, as is required by the region's mitigation policies.

Contact tracing showed that at least five people who attended the wrestling tournament were infected with the virus at the time, Paxton said.

Ketchikan had 67 active COVID-19 cases as of last Friday after recording its fifth consecutive day of double-digit COVID-19 case counts. Most of the dozen new cases reported Friday were due to close contact with an infected person, the operations center said.

As of May 5, close to 9% of the high school's students were quarantined due to the outbreak, which has infected 2% of the school body, according to the Ketchikan Emergency Operations Cen-

ter. The high school went to remote learning last week.

Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District officials said last week that the matter was under investigation. The district, which has 30 days to respond to the warning from the school activities association, is looking into what happened and plans to provide information soon, said Katie Parrott, acting superintendent.

"Due to Ketchikan High School's actions, Region 5 schools and communities have been subjected to unnecessary health and safety risks related to COVID-19," said the letter by Jamie Cabral, executive committee president for the activities association Southeast region.

Continued on page 4

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

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

**Thursday, May 13:** Bart Churchill, Everly Rose Cook, Stone Guggenbickler, Kyle Hammock, Gaven Hunt, Harley Johnson, Troy Kagee; Anniversary: Joe and Donna Kuntz.

**Friday, May 14:** Jon Abrahamson, Kristofer Maenhout, Kjell Darek Nore; Anniversary: Joe and Pam Stover.

**Saturday, May 15:** Terry Davenport, Trista Szefer, Eliza Villarma, Hunter Wiederspohn.

**Sunday, May 16:** Anniversary: Alan and Leslie Cummings.

**Monday, May 17:** Violet Allen, Lovey Brock, Della Demerjian, Brody Hommel, Olin Kagee, Kristin Mill, Deenie Rilatos, Peighton Royster; Anniversary: Wayne and Dani Easterly.

**Tuesday, May 18:** Jakob Cox, Mena Feudner.

**Wednesday, May 19:** Rhea Bowman, Kolin Shea Wallace, Jacob Werner, Sheila Wickman; Anniversary: Jeff and Danielle Smith.

**Thursday, May 20:** Jerry Bakeberg, Dawn Davis, Ray Francois, Lindsey McConachie; Anniversaries: George and Ann Benson, Ben and Kristin Schwerin, Felix and Verda Villarma.

## Senior Center Meals Menu Delivery Only

### Friday, May 14

Spaghetti, Italian vegetables, orange salad

### Monday, May 17

Beef stroganoff, vegetables, slaw, egg noodles

### Tuesday, May 18

Chicken sandwich, vegetable chili, orange salad

### Wednesday, May 19

Hotcha baked beef, broccoli

### Thursday, May 20

Chicken noodle vegetables, cabbage, raisin slaw

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 Schedule

### Northbound

#### Friday, May 14

Matanuska, 4:45 p.m.

#### Friday, May 21

Matanuska, 5:45 p.m.

#### Friday, May 28

Matanuska, 3:45 p.m.

#### Friday, June 4

Matanuska, 5:45 p.m.

#### Friday, June 11

Matanuska, 4:45 p.m.

### Southbound

#### Monday, May 17

Matanuska, 6 a.m.

#### Monday, May 24

Matanuska, 5:45 a.m.

#### Monday, May 31

Matanuska, 6:30 a.m.

#### Monday, June 7

Matanuska, 6:30 a.m.

#### Monday, June 14

Matanuska, 1:45 a.m.

All times listed are scheduled departure times.

Call the terminal at 874-2021 for information

or call 874-3711 or 800-642-0066 for recorded information.



## TIDES

May 13 - May 19

### High Tides

### Low Tides

	AM		PM		AM		PM	
	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
May 13	02:14	16.5	03:07	14.2	08:34	-1.0	08:29	3.7
May 14	02:42	16.0	03:42	13.6	09:05	-0.7	05:19	4.3
May 15	03:10	15.5	04:18	13.0	09:39	-0.2	05:58	4.9
May 16	03:42	14.9	05:01	12.4	10:19	0.3	06:32	5.6
May 17	04:19	14.2	05:33	12.1	11:04	0.9	07:03	6.0
May 18	05:09	13.4	06:58	12.1	11:59	1.4	07:32	...
May 19	06:19	12.7	08:08	12.6	00:17	6.2	08:00	1.8

## Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

**WRANGELL SCHOOL BOARD** public hearing on progress toward strategic plan goals, 6 to 7 p.m. Monday, followed by the regular monthly school board meeting at 7 p.m. Attend via Zoom. Click on the calendar tab at the school district website [www.wpsd.us](http://www.wpsd.us).

**WRANGELL HIGH SCHOOL** graduation 7 p.m. May 21, on the city dock. Attendance limited to graduates and invited guests. Watch it live on the school district YouTube channel.

**WRANGELL CHAMBER** is looking for event and 4th of July committee volunteers. And if you are planning a food or game booth for the 4th of July, contact the chamber to secure a booth spot. Contact the chamber if you are interested in becoming a volunteer or to secure a booth spot. Call 874-3901, or stop by the chamber office.

**WALK SOUTHEAST** registration is open through Friday. The more you walk, run or hike, the more chances you have to win outdoor prizes including up to 25,000 Alaska Airlines miles. This is a friendly competition with Petersburg and Juneau to see which community can rack up the most miles walking, running or hiking. Registration link: <https://bit.ly/WalkSoutheast2021WRG>.

**SEARHC** is sponsoring Move for a Cause May 1-31: Hike, bike, walk or run. This month-long program is designed to enhance your fitness level while raising money for the Southeast Alaska Food Bank and CoastAlaska public radio. Participation is free, open to all ages and fitness levels. For more information or to register go to <https://searhc.org/moveforacause/> or call Tami Meissner 874-5139.

## Continuing Events

**PARKS and RECREATION** [www.wrangellrec.com](http://www.wrangellrec.com)

**Pool activities by appointment and reduced capacity, locker rooms are not available:**

Arthritis class, 8:30 - 9:30 a.m., Monday, Wednesday, Friday

Lap swim, 6 - 7:30 a.m. Monday, Wednesday, Friday

Lap/tot swim, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m., weekdays, 5:15 - 6:15 p.m. Tuesday, Thursday, and 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday

Open swim, 5:30 - 7 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday; 6:30 - 8 p.m. Friday; 1 - 2 p.m. Saturday

Swim Club, 3:15 - 5:15 p.m., weekdays

Water aerobics class, 10 - 11 a.m. Monday, Wednesday, Friday

**Weight room available by appointment and at reduced capacity:**

6 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. and 3:30 - 7:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 6 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and 3:30 - 8:30 p.m. Friday; 10 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. Saturday

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

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

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

### May 12, 1921

The opening of the Stikine River season, an event of great importance to the region, and especially to the residents of Telegraph Creek, British Columbia, and vicinity, will take place Saturday when about 25 passengers will leave Wrangell on the Hazel B III and Hazel B IV. The freight in the warehouse, awaiting shipment up the river, amounts to about 40 tons, but only half of it will be carried up on the initial trip. Five horses that came up on the steamship Mary will form part of the cargo.

### May 10, 1946

This past week, several successful trout fishermen brought back full baskets from Pat's Creek and lake. Two recently returned veterans, Bud Jenkins and Lew Williams Jr., who had been too busy in Uncle Sam's Army to go trout fishing for several years, brought in the first basketful of the season: 35 large cutthroats, all exceeding 12 inches - the majority being from 14 to 18 inches. Also this week, Dr. Alvin "Guppy" Nelson and Charlie "Minnow" Moore brought back the game limit report seeing many deer. Jenkins and Williams counted 13, and Nelson and Moore claimed seeing over a dozen deer.

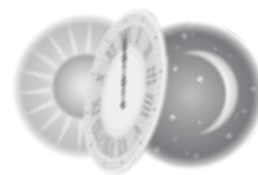
### May 14, 1971

Logger Art Heibert and his wife were reported missing briefly in their amphibian Seabee plane over the weekend. Heibert said he became lost in bad weather while ferrying the amphibian back to Vank Island from Seattle and was forced to land in Behm Canal near Bell Island at 7:30 p.m. Thursday. The logger said he landed in the water, then lowered the plane's wheels and taxied onto a beach to wait out the weather and to radio for more gasoline. "We had 15 gallons left and that wasn't enough to fly out in bad weather," he said. Heibert also discovered that his plane's battery would not start the engine. He made contact with the state ferry Taku, which relayed his request for gasoline and a battery. The Heiberts spent all night Thursday and Friday on the beach and arrived in Wrangell on Saturday morning after a floatplane from Ketchikan brought them all the items they needed.

### May 16, 1996

Old tea pots, prints, fur, jewelry, wood carvings, ivory and sculptures were only a few of the items to be seen Friday night as Island Celebration of the Arts sponsored its first-ever "Artwalk" in

Wrangell. Five businesses participated, offering works by local artists and craftspeople from as far away as the Bering Strait. Each shop or gallery offered a unique selection of artworks, and the public was invited to visit from 7 to 9 p.m. Noted Alaska carver Steve Brown was on hand at the Wrangell Canoe Project site near city dock to demonstrate the technique and skill needed to hollow out and shape a red cedar canoe, using only an adze.



## Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Hours
May 13	4:37a	8:55p	16:18h
May 14	4:35a	8:57p	16:22h
May 15	4:33a	8:59p	16:26h
May 16	4:31a	9:01p	16:30h
May 17	4:29a	9:03p	16:34h
May 18	4:27a	9:05p	16:37h
May 19	4:26a	9:07p	16:41h

# High school grads will walk the dock May 21

By SENTINEL STAFF

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it an unusual last year for Wrangell High School seniors, and that will culminate with a unique graduation ceremony stretched out on the city dock May 21.

That assumes decent weather. The backup plan is back to the community gym, said Megan Powell, adviser to the class of 2021.

The students wanted something different this year, Pow-

ell said, and that is the dock. The school submitted its COVID-19 mitigation plans to the borough manager and port director, and seating will be limited to four guests for each of the 14 graduates. "Right now, we've got people spread out at three feet on the dock," she said. The graduation program will be digital, no paper.

Face masks will be required, and the graduates will walk out to the dock one at a time to take their seats, Powell said.

The 7 p.m. ceremonies will be livestreamed on YouTube, including a slide show of senior photos — baby pictures, too — and letters from parents, Powell said.

Because weather will determine if the city dock or the gym is the venue, organizers will need to hold off setting up until they are confident in the forecast. "The day of we will be scrambling with everything," she said.

In addition to remarks by

the co-valedictorians and salutatorian, science teacher Heather Howe will be the guest speaker at graduation.

There will not be a graduation dinner this year. The students decided they would rather go home and watch the ceremonies on YouTube with their families, Powell said.

Last year's graduation was held in the gym and limited to one student at a time walking into the room to pick up the diploma and then walking out.

This year's graduating class includes:

- Co-valedictorians Terra Hoyt and Bruce Smith
- Salutatorian Jade Balansag

- Brett Abrahamson
- Robyn Booker
- Jacob Dow
- Annabelle Garcia-Rangel
- Thien Khuong
- Julia Miethe
- Ashlee Olson
- Logan Ritchie
- Alexander Rooney
- Elizabeth Stuart
- Michelle Stuart

In addition to this year's Wrangell High School graduates:

- Savannah Rosemarie Smith, of Wrangell, is a PACE Statewide Homeschool graduate this spring.
- Aaliyah Messmer, of Wrangell, is an IDEA Home-schooling graduate.



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

## Students pitch in and pick up too

Jennifer Davies leads her third-grade class down Front Street on Friday to pick up trash as part of the two-day Community Collaborations project, sponsored by Wrangell Parks and Recreation. In addition to general cleanup around downtown, volunteers helped restore and replant the curbside garden beds along Front Street and took on other chores to improve the community's appearance. Kate Thomas, Wrangell Parks and Recreation director, reports volunteers logged in more than 275 hours over the two-day effort.

## Volunteers needed for Fourth; royalty kickoff set for May 31

By SENTINEL STAFF

Plans are set for the Fourth of July royalty kickoff event May 31, while planning is underway for the four-day holiday celebration a month later — but volunteers are still needed.

"The big one we really need is for someone to step up for the parade," said Kimberly Cooper, of the chamber of commerce, which leads Wrangell's annual Fourth of July activities.

Volunteers also are needed for game and food booths, she said.

While planning continues for July 1-4 events, Wrangell's celebration will begin with the introduction of this year's two royalty candidates — Emma Martinsen and Cassidy Cowen — at 6 p.m. May 31 at the downtown pavilion.

The candidates will sell the raffle tickets that raise money for the Fourth of July festivities, while also helping the two high school students earn money for their educational pursuits. Martinsen will open up her food booth on June 1, while Cowen will work other ways at selling tickets, Cooper said.

The theme of this year's celebration will be "Find Your Adventure," with a logo designed by Tawney Crowley.

In addition to the July 4 parade and fireworks the evening of July 3, the four days of events are planned to include races — on land and in the water — shooting competition, logging show, egg toss, Art Clark Scrap Fish Derby and more.

The full schedule of events will be printed in the Sentinel the week before the holiday.

All of the events will be outdoors, and the chamber will follow community guidelines to guard against COVID-19 infections, Cooper said.

Anyone interesting in volunteering to help with a Fourth event can call the chamber at 874-3901, stop by the chamber office, or email [stephanie@wrangellchamber.com](mailto:stephanie@wrangellchamber.com).



Family & friends are cordially invited to a

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**DAN NORE**

May 15, 2021, 1pm

American Legion Post 6

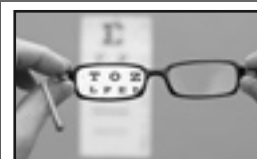
Wrangell, AK

Please bring memories to share.

A reception will follow the service.

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# FROM THE PUBLISHER

## Follow the laws, but fix them when they don't work

By LARRY PERSILY  
Publisher

Consistency is a good thing, whether it's parents applying rules to their children or elected officials following the law.

Inconsistency can mean children misbehave because they know they will sometimes get away with it. And inconsistency can allow elected officials to do what will politically please their constituents most of the time rather than what is right all of the time.

Such as those elected officials who clamor and pound the campaign trail, demanding that the Legislature "follow the law" and appropriate money for the Permanent Fund dividend under the formula adopted 40 years ago.

No matter that paying out billions in dividends under the formula could decimate the fund's earnings built up over time to pay for dividends and public services generations into the future.

No matter that diverting billions to dividends in a strained budget could result in significant cuts to public services statewide.

No matter that the dividend calculation formula was written in the days when the Permanent Fund was worth maybe 3% of what it has grown to today, and when Alaska's North Slope was pumping

three times as much oil as it does today.

Yes, legislators need to change the formula to something that fits the 2020s, not the 1980s, something that is affordable for the long term.

Yes, that will be incredibly, extremely, stupendously difficult politically. Legislative careers likely will end for some who vote to rewrite the formula to something reasonable rather than an unworkable historic relic.

But it is time to make that decision and update the law.

Meanwhile, many of those elected officials, including the governor, who proclaim they must "follow the law" and pay out a dividend this fall of more than \$3,000 fail to show consistency. They want to follow the dividend law because it is popular and wins them elections. But they are just fine with voting to ignore the law in less well known, less well publicized state appropriations.

State law since 1972 has exempted a portion of the property value of homes owned by senior citizens from city and borough property taxes. The law says the state "shall reimburse" cities and boroughs for the loss of tax revenue because of the mandatory exemption. Lo and behold, when money got tight, the Legislature and governors in 1986 started short-

changing municipalities, scaling back those payments to less than required by law. In 1997, state reimbursement stopped, and never came back.

The Legislature's decision to ignore the law will cost cities and boroughs about \$94 million this year.

Another state law that some legislators have chosen to ignore and, in particular, Gov. Mike Dunleavy, is the statute that says the state "shall" reimburse municipalities for a share of the bond payments on debt issued for local school construction projects.

The governor has chosen in the past to entirely eliminate the legally mandated state reimbursement or, for next year, fund it at half of the \$85 million owed to communities in Fiscal Year 2022. Either way, he is not following the law, and many of his supporters in the Legislature are silent.

Most legislators know they need to change the dividend formula in law and discussions are underway in the Capitol to do just that. It's not easy and they may not succeed this year, but give them credit for trying.

Meanwhile, those lawmakers who recite the mantra "follow the law" for the PFD should either be consistent and fund every state law, or just admit all they care about is the dividend.

# EDITORIAL

## Keep politics out of fight against COVID

As if COVID-19 wasn't destructive enough, politics has made it worse. It delayed vaccination drives and turned the needle into a political statement, dissuading millions from getting the shot. That needs to stop.

If people choose not to get vaccinated, that's their right. But self-serving office holders have turned it into a debate about freedom, not safety. That's a bad way to make community health decisions.

The country needs to work together — not start fights — to overcome the coronavirus, beat down the pandemic and get closer to 2019 normal lives.

Sadly, that is not what's happening in many places, such as Florida, where the governor has decided the public's right to turn down the vaccine — and his political future as a righteous conservative — overrules anyone else's right to protect their own health and the health of their employees and customers, such as cruise lines.

Gov. Ron DeSantis on May 4 signed a law that blocks Florida businesses from requiring proof of vaccinations. "In Florida, your personal choice regarding vaccinations will be protected and no business or government entity will be able to deny you services based on your decision," he said.

What about a business owner's choice not to expose people to possible COVID-19 infections? Shouldn't a freedom-of-choice-loving politician extend the rights equally: No one has to get a shot, and no one has to let an unvaccinated person into their life. Seems a fair solution.

Besides, the governor's claim that no one can be denied service based on their vaccination status, while a political headline, may not apply to cruise ships that have to follow federal law.

The federal Centers for Disease Control has told cruise lines that the fastest — and safest — way to get back on the water is to require 98% of crew members and 95% of passengers to show proof of vaccination.

Norwegian Cruise Line wants to get back to work and has announced it will absolutely require passengers and crew to show proof of vaccination. Besides, the company said it likes 100% vaccinations even better. And it doesn't like Florida telling it otherwise.

"Cruise ships have motors, propellers and rudders, and God forbid we can't operate in the state of Florida for whatever reason, then there are other states that we do operate from, and we can operate from the Caribbean for a ship that otherwise would have gone to Florida," Norwegian CEO Frank Del Rio said last week.

The bickering over business in the Sunshine State is a distraction the country cannot afford. Get a vaccination because it's the healthy thing to do. Or don't. But elected officials shouldn't wrap a political flag around your arm and expect that it overrules the rights of others to make their own choices.

— The Wrangell Sentinel

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Herring eggs much appreciated

Wrangell Central Council Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA) would like to thank Trixie Kalkins-Bennett of the Ketchikan Indian Community and fishermen from Ketchikan, Colleen James-Olson and Esther Reese, Wrangell Cooperative Association administrator, for collaborating with us, and to the people who helped distribute herring eggs, a cherished traditional food of

the Tlingits, to the community on April 21.

They include Annette Thompson, Jamie and Caleb Stough, Jerry Lee Knapp, Liz Romane of Tribal Transportation, and especially CCTHITA board members Luella Knapp, Lynn Allen, Christine Jenkins, Harry Churchill, Tom Gillen Sr., Virginia Oliver and Arthur Larsen.

Susan G. Stevens  
Wrangell CCTHITA president

# Ketchikan wrestling

Continued from page 1

"This letter is to be considered a 'warning'. ... The undue stress on all communities and participating schools could have and should have been avoided. Ketchikan High School's failure to follow the plans ... created a situation that put both the region and participating schools in an

unsafe and unnecessary situation."

The letter added, "This is unacceptable and future violations of Region 5 policies may result in Ketchikan High School being denied membership in Region 5 in the 2021-2022 school year."

As a result of the COVID-19 cases, a number of Southeast schools canceled events.

Juneau-Douglas High School and Thunder Mountain High School canceled their girls and boys soccer trips to Ketchikan the weekend following the wrestling meet, according to Juneau radio station KINY. Sitka High School canceled its home track meet and called off baseball games that would have featured the Ketchikan

Kings.

Ketchikan Little League canceled its games last weekend.

In addition, "the Native Youth Olympics Traditional Games were also affected, with the southern portion of the event that was to be held in Ketchikan was rescheduled to later in May," the radio station reported.

Oldest continuously published paper in Alaska



ESTABLISHED NOVEMBER 20, 1902  
Published Weekly By: Good Journalism LLC  
PO Box 798, Wrangell, AK 99929  
Phone: 907-874-2301

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

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Wrangell Sentinel (USPS 626-480) is published weekly except the third week of July and the week after Christmas by Wrangell Sentinel, 205 Front St., Wrangell, AK 99929. Periodicals postage paid at Wrangell, AK. Phone: 907-874-2301; Email: wrgsent@gmail.com; Website www.wrangellsentinel.com. @Copyright 2021.

### Subscription Rates

Single Copy.....\$1.50  
Local.....\$46  
Other Alaska.....\$62  
2nd class/Lower 48 & HI.....\$70  
First Class.....\$102

# Students learn to fly without leaving the ground

By CALEB VIERKANT  
Sentinel writer

High school students reached new heights with a university Upward Bound program.

"We started out with some basic drones ... getting the basic mechanics down," said student Terra Hoyt. "Now we're doing these Mavic Minis and Mavic Pros that are kind of more on an intermediate level, and have things like camera footage and stuff like that."

Using small Tello drones in the high school gym, and later bigger Mavic drones, several Wrangell High School students spent their Saturday learning the basics of using drones. The class was organized by teacher Heather Howe, and lead by Brian Reggiani, of the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

The drone class was presented simultaneously across several communities, with some of the instruction via Zoom, Reggiani said. Students participated in Wrangell, Seward, Chevak and Shishmaref. It's part of UAF's Upward Bound program.

"Upward Bound is a program at UAF that's designed to get students interested in coming to college," Reggiani said. "Our philosophy is that the best way to prepare students for college is to give them a reason to come." The idea is to engage students based on their interests



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Wrangell High School students Kiara Harrison (at the controls) and Terra Hoyt fly a drone over the water at City Park, part of a class presented simultaneously in several communities across Alaska on Saturday. In addition to the online instruction in operating drones, Brian Reggiani came to Wrangell from the University of Alaska Fairbanks to work with the students.

and "highlighting college as a way for students to basically meet their goals."

Saturday's class focused primarily on the basic mechanics of flying drones, Reggiani said, but flying safely and ethical consid-

erations of using drones were also covered in class.

It's also about learning, Howe said. "The foundation is in a growth mindset, so learning through failure and continuing to try, and as you stumble you

learn," she said.

"They're really supposed to be looking at telling a story of their community and sharing that with other communities around the nation," Howe said. "So that's kind of the idea be-

hind the drones themselves."

Later in the class, students were given the opportunity to fly camera drones to get footage of Wrangell, and to make a short video of what makes their town special. They ran out of time to make the videos by the end of the day, Howe said, but it was still a good learning experience.

"I would like students feeling confident to use these drones to be change-makers in their communities," Reggiani said. "The end goal of this project is to teach students how to fly drones, so that they can start community impact projects with them in the future. Local mapping is important, videography is important, those are the two main things I can see happening this summer. We have a few students participating in our summer program who will be doing things like this all summer."

The 13 Wrangell students who took the class spent half the day at the high school and half out by City Park.

"I know there's a couple people in town who do it quite often (fly drones) and I just wanted to learn more about it so I might be able to do it in the future," said student Kiara Harrison. "I think it's a really cool opportunity and I'm really grateful for the people who set it up so we can do it."

# State 'education tax' not graduating this year

By SENTINEL STAFF

Legislation to bring back a state tax on individual Alaskans to help pay for schools — which was abolished in 1980 as the state got rich with oil — looks destined

for more homework and returning to class in committee next year.

The bill moved out of the House Ways and Means Committee on May 6, moving next to the Finance Committee. But

getting a tax bill through the full House and Senate before the Legislature's May 19 adjournment deadline would be a tough assignment in any political school.

The measure, as amended

by the committee last week, would impose an annual tax of \$25 on all Alaskans earning less than \$30,000 a year. At between \$30,000 and \$60,000 in annual income, the tax would be \$100. The rate would go to \$200 for people earning between \$60,000 and \$90,000 a year; \$400 for incomes over \$90,000; and \$600 a year for incomes over \$120,000.

The tax could raise an estimated \$65 million a year, and would be collected through payroll withholding for wage earners, and direct payments from self-employed people. It would apply to residents and non-residents the same.

Although the pre-1980 tax, often called the "school head tax," was directed toward education funding, the state constitution prohibits dedicated tax funds. The new tax includes in-

tent language that the money may be appropriated to the state's public education fund.

When she introduced the bill a couple of weeks ago, Anchorage Rep. Ivy Spohnholz, chair of the Ways and Means Committee, referred to the measure as "the first mile of a marathon" for raising revenues to pay for public services.

The state has been living off savings for most of the past 30 years and is struggling to balance the popularity of the annual Permanent Fund dividend with the budget needs of schools, communities and other services.

The education tax was a flat \$10 per person when it was abolished in 1980, assessed on every employed person over the age of 19. The levy started at \$5 per person when Alaska was a territory in 1919.

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## SEARHC urges children get vaccine

By SENTINEL STAFF

The SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium is encouraging everyone over the age of 12 to register for their vaccination shots. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration on Monday approved the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for children 12 to 15 years old.

Dr. Elliot Bruhl, SEARHC chief medical officer, said COVID-19 patients are trending younger and people under 50 years old now make up the largest group of new hospitalizations in the country.

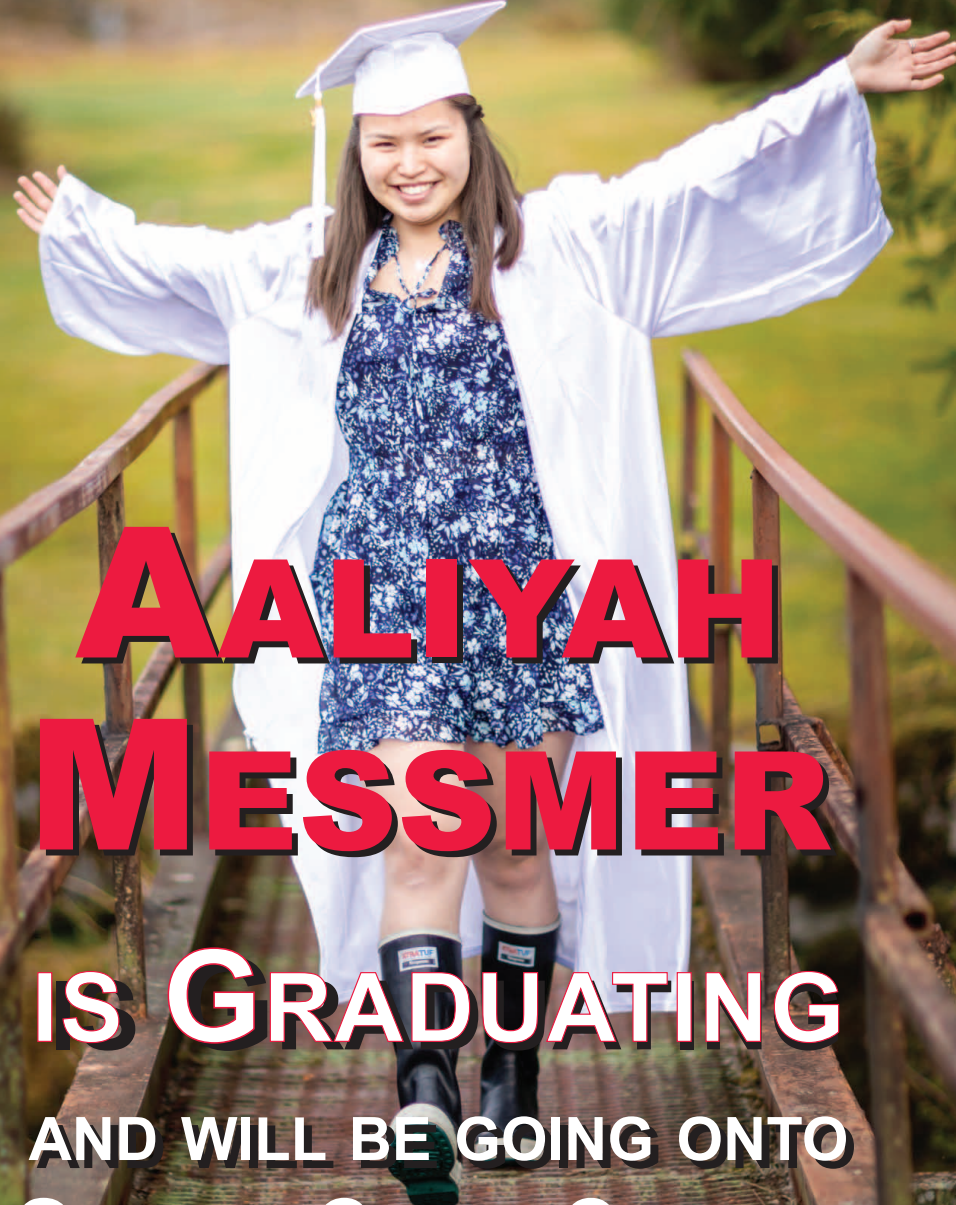
"We urge parents and guardians to be proactive in protecting themselves and their community against COVID-19 by getting all eligible children and members of the household vaccinated," he said in a prepared statement May 6.

Aaron Angerman, with SEARHC in Wrangell, said vaccination registration is open to anyone 12 and older. People can sign up at [www.covid19.searhc.org](https://www.covid19.searhc.org).

Anyone under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian to receive their vaccination, SEARHC said.

Almost half of the community, 1,132 people, had received their first vaccination shot, SEARHC reported May 6. Of those, 1,062 are considered fully vaccinated.

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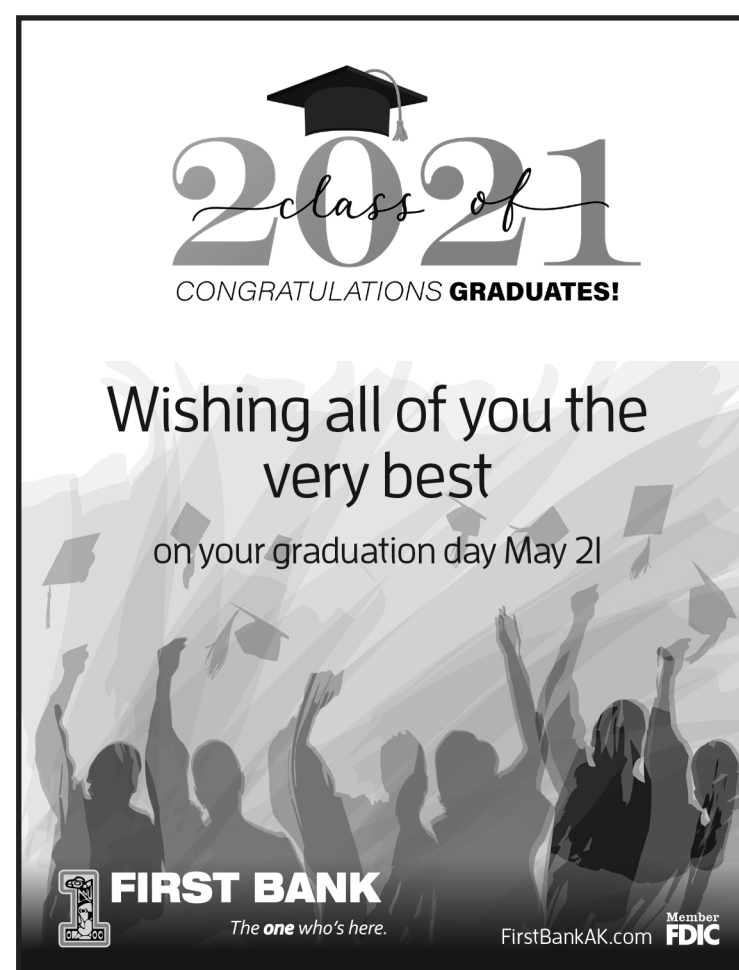


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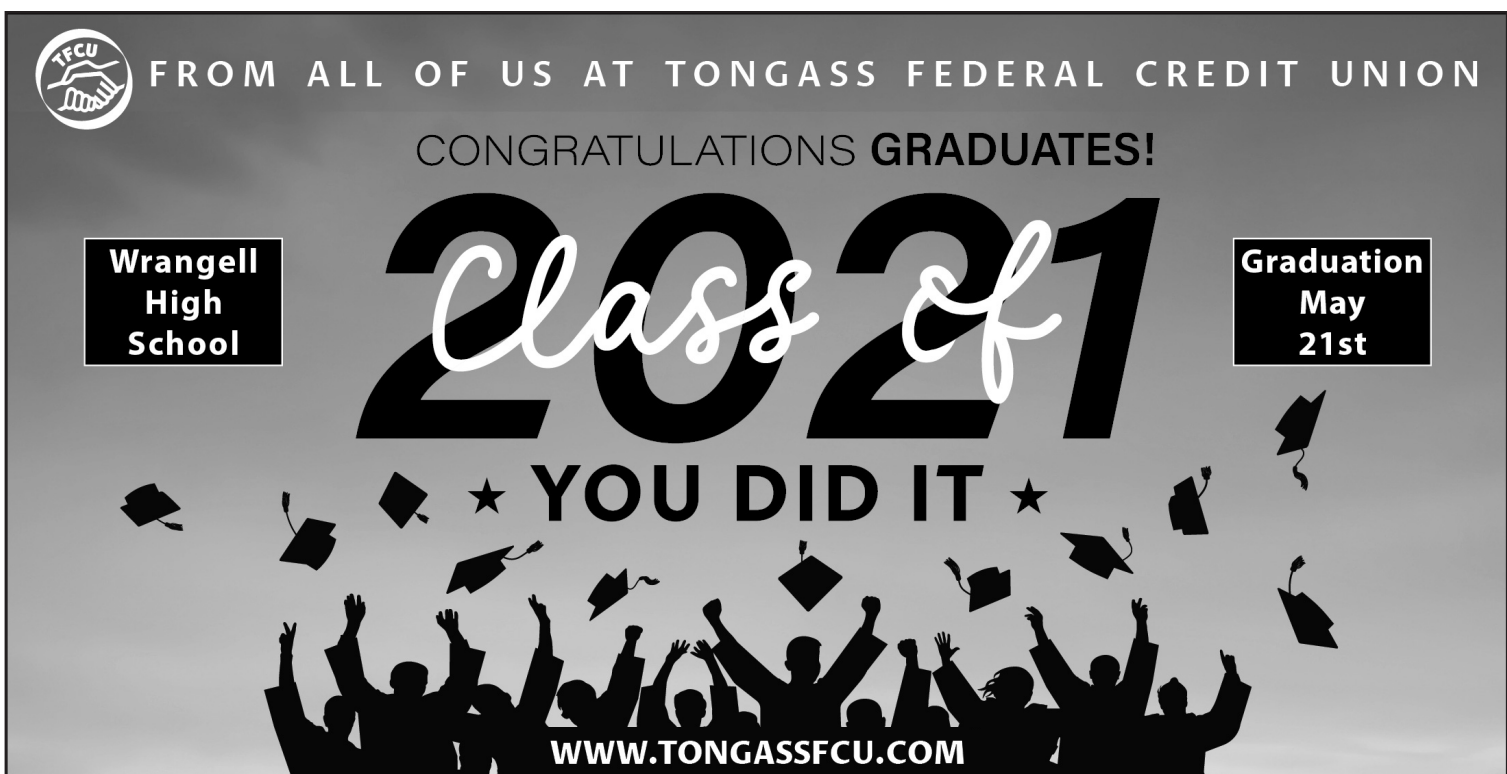


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*PHOTO BY BECKY BOHRER / AP PHOTO*  
 Nome Rep. Neal Foster, co-chair of the House Finance Committee, works at his desk on the House floor on Monday as representatives debated the state budget. The House approved the spending plan, sending it to Senate. Lawmakers face an adjournment deadline of next Wednesday.

**House budget**

*Continued from page 1*

The governor also declined to add the two jobs back to the budget he submitted to the Legislature this winter. The funding was added in the House Finance Committee by Ketchikan Rep. Dan Ortiz, who also represents Wrangell.

The House bill covers state spending for the fiscal year that starts July 1, with few changes of any significance from this year's budget. However, the measure does not appropriate money for this fall's Permanent Fund dividend. That decision could in come time for the May 19 adjournment deadline after negotiations with the Senate, or legislators could decide to separately deal with the dividend in an extended or special session.

Setting the amount of this year's PFD has become even more contentious than in past years as the state has mostly drained its traditionally more accessible savings account and the only option left for a large dividend would be to withdraw more money from the Permanent Fund than allowed by law.

Legislative leaders have said a Permanent Fund dividend will be paid, though the amount is unresolved.

The budget is now before the Senate, and any differences between House and Senate versions would be settled by negotiators as part of a conference committee.

The House measure covers the operating budget for state agencies and public services. A separate budget bill for public works projects — new construction and maintenance — is expected from the Senate this week.

The budget process is playing out later than usual this year: Often the House, which traditionally makes the first run at reworking the governor's budget proposal, passes its version of the spending plan in March. But it took the closely divided 40-member House a month to organize after the session started in January. The bipartisan coalition in control of the House has the bare minimum needed for a majority, 21 members, which has slowed down the process.

Another delaying factor has been the more than \$1 billion that Alaska will receive under the latest federal pandemic relief package. Federal guidance on use of those funds was released Monday, with legislators and the governor studying the rules to learn how — and how not — the state can spend the money, including plugging holes in the budget.

Dunleavy had proposed an initial spending plan for all of the \$1 billion. The House version of the budget proposed spending 70% in the fiscal year that starts July 1. Both proposals came before the guidelines were issued and appear contrary to federal plans to send Alaska about \$500 million this year and \$500 million

more next year.

Senate leaders have had different ideas for the relief aid, spending maybe just half this year, and Rep. Neal Foster, co-chair of the House Finance Committee, said he is comfortable taking the matter to a House-Senate conference committee.

Lawmakers last year largely ceded decision-making on a prior pandemic-related federal aid package to Dunleavy, and legislative leaders have said they want a greater say in how the dollars are spent this time around.

If the Legislature is unable to decide on a spending plan for the pandemic aid by the May 19 adjournment deadline, they could vote to extend their work or the governor could call them into special session. That could be separate or in addition to a special session on the PFD, if lawmakers are unable to settle that spending item by May 19.

Dunleavy spokesmen Turner said by email there were "ongoing discussions" with lawmakers about how to pass the budget by May 19, and whether a special session would be needed to "resolve the ongoing debate about the future of the Alaska Permanent Fund" and the dividend.

Dunleavy has proposed a series of constitutional amendments, setting a new formula for the dividend, prohibiting any new taxes without voter approval, and a spending limit. He has supported paying a dividend in line with a decades-old calculation until the formula is changed.

Under the 1980s' formula, this fall's PFD would exceed \$3,000, but that formula was last used in 2015 amid an unrelenting state budget deficit.

In 2018, lawmakers began using Permanent Fund earnings, typically used to pay only dividends, to also help pay for public services, creating tension that has yet to be resolved.

The dividend in past sessions has overshadowed other issues. Coming into this session, a number of lawmakers considered the dividend a key issue that needed to be addressed.

Focus on that issue earlier on this year was derailed by the federal relief money and the lateness with which the House organized, said Senate President Peter Micciche, of Soldotna.

"I have not in any way lost hope that we can get together on a sustainable future path for the Permanent Fund dividend," Micciche said. Whether that happens before May 19 "is my only area of doubt at this point," he said. "It has to be done this year."

House Speaker Louise Stutes, of Kodiak, said one topic of conversation with Dunleavy has been a possible special session to deal with the dividend. But she said nothing has been finalized.

# Wrangell profits from strong stock market

By CALEB VIERKANT  
Sentinel writer

Wrangell, just like most other investors, profited from stock market gains of the past year, adding about \$1.5 million to the value of the municipal permanent fund over the past 15 months as the Dow Jones Industrial Average reached record highs.

The city's savings account was at \$10.2 million as of March 31, up from \$8.7 million on Jan. 31, 2020.

About 55% of the permanent fund is invested in stocks and 45% in bonds. Though stock markets crashed at the start of the pandemic early last year, they have since recovered far past their value of a year ago.

Alaska Permanent Capital Management, which has handled investments for Wrangell since Jan. 31, 2020, presented its first-quarter 2021 financial report to the borough assembly on April 27.

The company also manages the city's operating funds, which are invested entirely in low-risk bonds and other assets, so the money is available as needed for day-to-day spending on budgeted services. The operating funds account grew from \$5 million to about \$5.03 million between Feb. 26, 2020, to March 31, 2021.

The operating funds account is invested entirely in U.S. Treasury notes, state and local bonds, such as Alaska

North Slope Borough and state of Washington bonds, and cash to minimize risk.

The permanent fund represents Wrangell's long-term investments, and is meant to act in a similar manner to the state's permanent fund, generating earnings that can help with the budget, explained Borough Manager Lisa Von Barga.

"A permanent fund is set up to try to provide what I would call an endowment for the city in the future," she said. "We take a small percentage of the earnings every year for operations from the permanent fund." The city is budgeted to withdraw \$280,000 from the permanent fund for city operations this year,

an amount that is in line with previous years, Von Barga said.

The city can only withdraw a limited amount from the savings account, she said. A vote of the people would be required to spend any principal of the fund.

Anchorage-based Alaska Permanent Capital Management took over management of Wrangell's investment accounts in early 2020. Before that, UBS, a global investment firm with an office in Anchorage, handled the accounts, Von Barga said.

Alaska Permanent Capital Management had \$3.24 billion in assets under its management as of Dec. 31, 2020.

# Motor fuel tax hike legislation could run out of time

By LARRY PERSILY  
Sentinel writer

Legislation to increase Alaska's state motor fuel tax rate for the first time since 1970 is in a calendar crunch. It was still in the House Finance Committee as of Tuesday, with lawmakers facing a May 19 adjournment deadline.

The measure would double the state tax of 8 cents to 16 cents a gallon, with the intent — but not a legally binding requirement — that the money go toward highway maintenance. The Alaska Constitution prohibits dedicated funds.

The tax hike is overdue, said the bill's sponsor, Anchorage Rep. Andy Josephson, who noted the Parks Highway, the main route between Anchorage

and Fairbanks, did not exist the last time lawmakers raised the tax on gasoline and diesel fuel.

He also noted that while federal dollars pay for most of Alaska's highway construction, that money cannot be used for maintenance and snowplowing. That takes state money, Josephson said at the bill hearing last Friday in House Finance.

The measure would raise more than \$30 million a year.

Gov. Mike Dunleavy in 2019 closed a major maintenance and snowplowing station on the heavily traveled Seward Highway between Anchorage and the Kenai Peninsula, blaming a lack of funds. The governor later relented to public pressure and reopened the station for the 2020-2021 winter, using tempo-

rary funding.

Alaskans are being pulled "kicking and screaming" into the fiscal decisions "we have been avoiding for years," Dillingham Rep. Bryce Edgmon, who supports the tax increase, said at the Finance Committee hearing.

The state has drawn on savings more than half of the past 30 years to pay for public services, depleting those accounts and pushing lawmakers to consider taxes.

"Obviously, we have a revenue problem in the state," said Anchorage Rep. Sara Rasmussen. "I'm not sure if increasing the motor fuel tax is the best answer," she said at Finance Committee hearing.

Maybe toll roads could be a better answer for raising more revenue for highway maintenance, said Rasmussen, who is in her second term in the House and first year on the committee.

Alaska's motor fuel tax rate is the lowest in the nation, about one-third the average charged by the other 49 states.

The legislation also would raise the tax on marine fuel from 5 cents a gallon to 10 cents, but with a provision that commercial vessel owners could send in their receipts to get the additional 5 cents back from the state each year.

The rebate for commercial fishermen would not apply to sport or charter boat operators, and that did not go over well

with several Finance Committee members.

"It doesn't make sense to me that we're carving out a spot just for commercial fishing," said Rep. DeLena Johnson, of Palmer.

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# Hungry Beaver cuts hours until it can hire more help

By SENTINEL STAFF

Hungry Beaver Pizza, Wrangell's longest-running pizza restaurant and part of the Marine Bar, is operating at reduced hours until the owner, Patty Kautz, 78, can hire some help.

Kautz said she can't maintain her usual pace of work. For the foreseeable future, pizza will be available only during high-demand days: Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, from 5 to 8 p.m.

"I'm 78, I can't keep doing it," Kautz said.

The pizza spot was closed for a week before it reopened last Friday. "You talked us into it," she said on Facebook.

Kautz has owned and operated the Marine Bar and Hungry Beaver Pizza since the early 1980s. She started making pizza in 1983, she said, a couple years after buying the bar. Back then Wrangell didn't have a pizza restaurant, and after doing some research and buying a recipe she thought it would be a good business opportunity.

"At 16 I started washing dishes and making salads," Kautz said. "Then they didn't have a waitress one day and I started waitressing, then they didn't have a bartender when I turned 21 so I started bartending. It just progressed from there."

It has been a struggle for her to find workers, Kautz said. Several of her employees work multiple jobs, which limits the amount they can help. Other employees that were recently laid off have decided against returning, too, because they make more money on unemployment benefits, she said.

Kautz invited anyone looking to work in the kitchen to give her a call.

## OBITUARY

### Former parks director Ron Koch dies at 72

Ronald Grant "Papa" Koch, 72, who served as Wrangell Parks and Recreation director 1986-1997, died May 4 at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, Iowa City.

In addition to his time in Wrangell, he worked as director of parks and recreation for cities in South Carolina and Washington state. Ron loved photography, fishing (even though he was a terrible fisherman, his family said), playing golf and was an avid swimmer. He participated in the 1968 Olympic trials in swimming.

He loved spending time with family and friends, especially his grandson, Jenks. "He was a mentor to so many people," the family wrote. He trained Olympic athletes in swimming, volunteered in his community in a variety of ways and was a former swimming coach for the University of Washington.

Ron was born March 23, 1949, in Denver, Colorado, a son of Alfred and Anna (Meier) Koch. He earned a bachelor's degree from Western Colorado University, where he was a Hall of Fame inductee. He married Kathleen Darou on March 14, 1970, in Fairbanks. They have celebrated 51 years of marriage.

Funeral services will be 11 a.m. Monday at



**Ron Koch, former Wrangell Parks and Recreation director, died May 4.**

Halligan-McCabe-DeVries Funeral Home, Davenport, Iowa. The family will greet friends from 10 a.m. Monday until the time of the service at the funeral home. Pandemic protocols must be maintained.

Memorials may be made to the National Park Service or the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Disease.

Those left to honor Ron's memory include his wife, Kathy; children: Peter (Angela) Koch, and Sasha (Gary) Rowland, all of Davenport; grandson and best friend, Jenks Rowland; siblings: Jerry (Janet) Koch, of Wellington, Nevada, and Marvin (Donna) Koch, of Centerville, Ohio. He was preceded in death by his parents and a nephew, Eric Koch.

Online remembrances may be expressed at [www.hmdfuneralhome.com](http://www.hmdfuneralhome.com).

Email the Sentinel at  
[wrgsent@gmail.com](mailto:wrgsent@gmail.com)



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

## Batters up for the next four weeks

Sophie Andrews, of the Sharks, takes a swing during the Little League game last Thursday. Wrangell Little League teams will play every Wednesday and Thursday until June 10. Games begin at 6 p.m. Concessions will be available. "The safety of our kids and community are a priority," the Little League says on its Facebook post, "so we ask that you social distance when possible, wear a mask if you feel the need, and feel free to bring your own camping chairs to sit anywhere along the fence you would like."

# Petition drive underway in Juneau to limit cruise ships

By SENTINEL STAFF

Advocates of restricting cruise ship traffic to Juneau have started gathering petition signatures to put three questions on the municipal election ballot Oct. 5.

The initiatives would make the ballot if supporters can gather signatures of nearly 3,000 registered voters in the town of about 30,000 residents. They started collecting signatures May 3, and face a June 2 deadline to turn in their pe-

tion books at city hall.

One of the amendments to the city charter would ban cruise ships in town between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m., though it would apply only to ships with capacity for more than 250 passengers. Another amendment would ban ships of the same size on Saturdays.

A third measure would ban all cruise ships over 100,000 gross tonnage, beginning in 2026. That would apply to al-

most all of the large cruise ships that come to Alaska.

Juneau set a record in 2019 with more than 1.2 million cruise ship passengers coming to town.

The lead sponsor of the effort, Karla Hart, is a co-founder of the Global Cruise Activist Network, and has been outspoken about what she calls negative impacts of tourism and said she is concerned about overcrowding caused by

the cruise ship industry.

An opposition group, Protect Juneau's Future, already has organized to campaign against the initiatives, estimating the limits could cut the number of cruise passengers in town by about 75%, costing jobs and tax revenues.

"Their job is to make the sky fall, or to make it appear that the sky will fall," Hart said of the opposition group. "I don't believe that it will."

# Governor disputes legislative change to ferry advisory board

By LARRY PERSILY  
Sentinel writer

The state Senate is considering House legislation that would restructure the 18-year-old ferry system advisory board, taking away the governor's authority to appoint all of the members.

House Bill 63 passed that body unanimously May 5, moving next to the Senate.

The governor, however, does not believe a key provision of the legislation is legal. He had proposed his own restructuring bill that did not relinquish appointment authority for members to the board.

Gov. Mike Dunleavy's bill also would continue the provision in law that a governor can remove board members at any time, while the House measure

would protect members from removal except when their term ends.

The House bill designates that the speaker of the House and the Senate president each would appoint two members of the new nine-person board, with the governor naming the other members. Under existing law, the governor names all 12 members of the panel.

The governor's office told CoastAlaska public radio last week that allowing lawmakers to appoint members to an executive board violates the separation of powers.

"The board appointment process contained in HB 63 is considered to be unconstitutional by the administration because it permits the presiding officers of the legislature to appoint members to an executive board," Dunleavy spokesman Jeff Turner told CoastAlaska by email.

The Legislature's own legal counsel raised the same issue in an April 6 memo to lawmakers, but said it may survive a legal challenge because the board is

advisory, with no actual authority.

The bill would change the name of the Alaska Marine Transportation Advisory Board to the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board, and instruct it to put together short- and long-term operating plans for the state fleet — which the Department of Transportation would be required to consider.

"This takes a step forward to reform the system," Sitka Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, the bill sponsor, said during House discussion of the measure May 5. "My hope is a body that will provide direction" to ferry system management, avoiding politics

The representative acknowledged the restructured board "will not fix all of the ferry system's woes," which have included reduced services due to deep budget cuts, the age of the fleet and frequent mechanical breakdowns of the vessels.

Eliminating the provision that allows every new governor to change out the board could

make a difference, Kreiss-Tomkins said, adding that it would help prevent "a rotating cast of characters" from advising on long-term plans for the ferry system.

"We're never going to wring all the politics out of it," Juneau Sen. Jesse Kiehl said at a Senate Transportation Committee hearing April 8 on the governor's bill. The Department of Transportation "is free to ignore" the board's recommendations, Kiehl said.

Improving ferry operations has been a big issue for coastal lawmakers, including trying to add funding back to the system's budget this session. The Legislature faces a May 19 adjournment deadline, leaving less than a week to move the bill through the Senate and work out any differences with the House.

The governor's bill is still under consideration in the Senate, and both the House and the Senate would have to adopt the same measure for the legislation to move to the governor for signature or veto.



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# Alaska Fish Factor

By LAINE WELCH  
Fisheries columnist

## Copper River 'first of the season' opener for reds, kings on Monday

Alaska's 2021 salmon season officially starts on Monday with a 12-hour opener for reds and kings at the Copper River.

All eyes will be on early Cordova dock prices for Alaska's famous "first fresh salmon of the season" as an indicator of wild salmon markets. COVID-forced closures of high-end restaurants and seafood outlets last year crushed opening prices to \$3 per pound for sockeyes and \$6.50 for kings, down from \$10 and \$14, respectively, the previous year.

But early signs are looking good this year.

Heading into Mother's Day on Sunday, demand for seafood was "fanatic," Mitch Miller, vice president of national upscale seafood restaurants Ocean Prime, said in Nation's Restaurant News.

National Retail Federation President Matthew Shay said there is a lot more consumer optimism this year as more people are getting vaccinated, federal stimulus checks are being distributed, and friends and family are moving about more freely.

Alaska's 2021 salmon harvest is projected to top 190 million fish, a 61% increase over the 2020 catch. The breakdown includes 46.6 million sockeye, 3.8 million coho, 15.3 million chum, 296,000 kings and 124.2 million pinks.

### Commercial fisheries impacts from COVID

A drop in dock prices stemming from the COVID pandemic was the biggest hit to Alaska fishermen over the past year, followed by planning and logistics disruptions.

Those are just a few takeaways from a presentation compiled by McKinley Research Group economist Dan Lesh for the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute at its May board of directors meeting.

Other lowlights: Docksides values were down across the board due to a mix of biological factors and COVID disruptions to markets. That decreased the value of Alaska's 2020 seafood catch by roughly 20% to 25% to an estimated \$1.5 billion, down 16% in export value and volume from 2019.

Disaster declarations were posted for eight Alaska salmon fisheries in 2020, one of the worst years since 1970s.

Alaska's seafood industry in 2020 reflected a 21% decline for crew licenses from 2019, and a 31% decline in peak employment for processing workers.

For Alaska processors, costs above and beyond those normally incurred added up to \$70 million, and they expect to pay more than \$100 million this year due mostly to travel and quarantine expenses.

Of roughly 100 fishermen surveyed, nearly half said they had received COVID relief payments, not including the Paycheck Protection Program; half said they did not. Of those, 21% said it was due to a lack of awareness about relief payments.

COVID impacts are expected to be even more challenging this year, due to trade disputes, climate change impacts and increased competition, including from plant-based foods.

The Alaska Department of Revenue spring forecast estimates that fisheries business and landing taxes for Fiscal Year 2021 will total \$47.8 million, a 19% decrease from last year's \$58.8 million.

### Big seafood surge

A who's who of more than 60 U.S. fishing companies, organizations, medical professionals and more sent a letter to Congress last week, asking for support for a nationwide seafood marketing and public education cam-

paign. The goal is to highlight the immense health benefits of eating fish and shellfish — a message backed by Americans who have sent seafood sales soaring during the COVID pandemic.

The group plans to resurrect a National Seafood Council, a move recommended by NOAA's Marine Fisheries Advisory Council last July. A Seafood Council was created in 1987 as part of a Fish and Seafood Promotion Act but fizzled after five years.

The mission is simple: Get Americans to eat more seafood.

The push gets some extra clout from new U.S. dietary guidelines that advise Americans to eat two seafood servings per week, starting for kids at six months.

"Maybe we should have a contest to find a nice tag line that would identify seafood in the same way as Got Milk? Or Beef, It's What's for Dinner, or the Incredible Edible Egg," said Dr. Tom Brenna, professor of pediatrics and nutrition at Dell Medical School at the University of Texas, pointing to other major U.S. food producers that back their industries to promote their products.

This week's industry letter to Congress requests \$25 million in seed money to revive a more modernized seafood council that would eventually become industry funded.

A task force led by the Seafood Nutrition Partnership has formed to lay a foundation for the council.

Brenna is encouraged by the seafood push.

"Apparently, we have not done the kind of job that we should have in educating consumers in what they ought to be demanding for themselves and their kids," he said. "We have a major effect here with seafood that we should be heralding from the rooftops."

### Elsewhere on the fishing grounds

Alaska's biggest herring fishery kicked off May 3 at Togiak, with two buyers and about a dozen boats on the grounds. The quota is roughly 85 million pounds, the largest since 1993.

Herring fishing continued around Kodiak for a nearly 16-million-pound catch, the largest ever.

Sitka's roe herring fishery this spring produced less than half of its 67-million-pound quota, taken by 18 of 47 permit holders.

Southeast Alaska's summer pot shrimp fishery opens on May 15 with a 40,000-pound catch limit. Southeast divers are still going down for a half-million-pound geoduck clam quota. A ling cod fishery opens on May 16.

A 10-day pot shrimp reopens at Prince William Sound on May 10 with nearly 60 boats vying for a 70,000 pound catch.

Kodiak's Dungeness fishery opened on May 1 and so far, a fleet of about 15 boats is dropping pots around Kodiak, Chignik and the Alaska Peninsula. Last year's dungie catch of nearly 3 million pounds was the region's best in three decades.

Bering Sea crabbers are pulling up the last of their snow crab quota of 40.5 million pounds. Crabbers also are wrapping up the season's tanner crab and golden king crab fisheries.

Alaska's halibut catch is nearing three million pounds with Seward, Juneau and Homer the leading ports for landings. Alaska halibut fishermen have a nearly 20-million-pound catch limit this year.

Black cod (sablefish) catches have topped seven million pounds, with most going to Sitka, Seward and Kodiak. That fishing limit this year is 40.5 million pounds.

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3-BEDROOM, 1½-bath townhouse in Wrangell, quiet neighborhood. \$1,200 per month plus tax, 1-year lease. Call 907-738-6639. (tfn2-4b22)

### HELP WANTED

OBI Seafoods in Petersburg, AK, is looking for employees for summer salmon season. We do have some early spots as well. Call Lori or Martha at 907-772-4294 for details. (4x6-3b29)



### HELP WANTED

ROBERTS CONSTRUCTION is looking for a bookkeeper, carpenters and laborers. Pay DOE \$25-\$45 an hour. Call Doug at 425-785-9283. (8x5-20b18)

### HELP WANTED

WRANGELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS is accepting applications for the Director of Accountability, Assessment & Technology. The Director of Accountability, Assessment & Technology is responsible for managing the District's information technology infrastructure and applications, technical support team, and providing IT services for staff members and students. The Director is responsible for the Local Area Network (LAN) and Wide Area Network (WAN), as well as all attached workstations and peripherals. The Director is responsible for all e-rate, business applications and support thereof. The Director reports current project status, offers IT solutions and makes recommendations on all IT



### NOTICE IS HEREBY

GIVEN that the Board of Directors of the Southeast Alaska Power Agency (SEAPA) published a notice on Thursday, May 6, 2021, announcing that SEAPA will hold a Regular Board Meeting on May 13, 2021, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. AKDT. The notice is amended to advise that during the meeting the Board may enter into an executive session for discussions relating to a potential interconnection with Metlakatla. Due to recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and its social-distancing guidelines, the board meeting will be held electronically. For additional information, call 907.228.2281.

Published: May 13, 2021

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

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

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

Bid Submission Deadline: To be considered, bids must be emailed to Bill Willard, Wrangell Cooperative Association, at wwillard@wca-t.com by 2 p.m. local time, on **JUNE 4, 2021**.

Publish: May 6, 13, 20 and 27, 2021

# Golf tournaments every weekend to September

By SENTINEL STAFF

The loss of most cruise ship traffic to town will hurt Muskeg Meadows again this summer, but the golf course is open and it's already on its third tournament of the season this weekend.

Back in 2019, before the pandemic shut down cruise ship travel, a local tour operator would book golfers in advance, meet the ship and drive the visitors to Muskeg Meadows, sometimes as many as 20 a day, said Bill Messmer, who works at the course.

The package would include clubs and golf cart rentals. "That was a huge day for us," he said.

The course still expects a lot of play from golfers coming to town from Ketchikan and Petersburg, Messmer said. The two Southeast neighbors lack their own courses, unlike Sitka, Juneau and Haines, which have golf courses.

Muskeg Meadows currently is open Wednesday through Sunday. The early week closure is due to a lack of staff, Messmer said. "The main thing is we haven't been able

to find anyone to work," to sell snacks and beer and rent out clubs and carts.

Because the shop closes when it rains, employee hours can be uncertain, he said. "It is ideal for someone who is retired, like me," but hard on an employee who needs the hours and dependable pay.

Weather permitting, Muskeg Meadows opens at noon Wednesdays and Thursdays and 10 a.m. Friday through Sunday. Season's pass golfers often play in the mornings, before the pro shop opens, Messmer said. "They

like that, because there's nobody else around."

The winners at this year's first tournament, the Angerman's 9 Hole Best Ball on May 1-2, were the Friday team of Jim Brooks, Matt Kramer and Joe Delobru. Saturday's winning team was Jerry Bakeburg, Frank Roppel, Brett Woodbury and Jim Brooks.

Tournaments are scheduled every weekend — except the Fourth of July — through the first week of September. For more information, go to [www.wrangellalaskagolf.com](http://www.wrangellalaskagolf.com).

# Police report

**Monday, May 3**  
Traffic stop: Verbal warning for no tabs displayed.  
Agency assist: Chimney fire.  
Criminal mischief.

**Tuesday, May 4**  
Citizen assist.  
Subpoena service.  
Agency assist: Ambulance.  
Citizen assist.  
Intoxicated person.  
Agency assist: Fire Department.

**Wednesday, May 5**  
Agency assist: Ambulance.  
Dog attack.  
Citizen assist.  
Agency assist: Honnah Police Department.

**Thursday, May 6**  
Civil issue.  
Subpoena service.  
Stolen bike.  
Citizen assist.

**Friday, May 7**  
Dog bite.  
Dog at large.  
Agency assist: TSA.  
Noise complaint.

**Saturday, May 8**  
Security check.  
Reckless driving: Unfounded.  
Road obstruction.

**Sunday, May 9**  
Traffic stop.  
Found property.  
Agency assist: Ambulance.  
Agency assist: Ambulance.  
Disorderly conduct.  
Traffic stop.

# Seafood processor wants to take over Wrangell location

By CALEB VIERKANT  
Sentinel writer

Tacoma-based Alaska Ice Seafoods, which specializes in geoducks, also markets crab under the Fathom Seafoods name, and it's the crab and other seafood that is bringing the company to Wrangell.

Alaska Ice Seafoods has asked the city to approve an assignment of Steve Thomassen's Crab Alaska marine service center lease. Thomassen sold his business to Alaska Ice, which wants to retain the location.

"We're not saying we're going to light

the world on fire, we just want to come in and work hard, earn you guys' business and try to support you guys," Cody Mills, chief executive officer of Alaska Ice Seafoods, told the port commission at its meeting last Thursday.

Expanding Fathom Seafoods into Wrangell, he said, would provide new opportunities and services for local fishermen as well as opportunities for his business to grow.

The Wrangell Port Commission approved the lease assignment, though approval is required of the borough assembly before it can go through.

"About a week and a half ago I was approached by Steve Thomassen to see how we move forward with exchanging leases," Harbormaster Steve Miller said. "As far as the port is concerned, it all looks like it should be a go."

Thomassen has leased the lot since 2012 and hopes to complete the sale of his company by May 26. There is a year left on the lease. The lot is 5,140 square feet, and the city charges \$411.20 a month.

In a letter to the port commission, Fathom Seafoods said it would buy crab, shrimp, salmon, halibut and bottom fish, as well as provide bait and ice.

# Cruise lines can choose between vaccinations or practice voyage

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control has given cruise operators a choice for returning to work: Show that at least 98% of crew and 95% of passengers are fully vaccinated for COVID-19, or run tests voyages with volunteer passengers to assess whether it is safe to get back to business.

The agency issued its final technical guidelines May 5 for the trial runs. The CDC action is a step toward resuming cruises in U.S. waters, possibly by July, for the first time since

March 2020.

Each practice cruise — they'll run two to seven days — must have enough passengers to fill at least 10% of the ship's capacity. Volunteers must be 18 or older and either fully vaccinated or free of medical conditions that would put them at high risk for severe COVID-19.

The ship operator must tell passengers that they are simulating untested safety measures, "and that sailing during a pandemic is an inherently risky activity," the CDC guidelines state.

Passengers must be examined for COVID-19 symptoms before and after the trip, and at least 75% must be tested at the end.

Restrictions on board will include face masks and social distancing. The CDC will allow guided shore excursions — no wandering about on their own — if tour operators follow certain standards.

Ships must make at least one practice run before resuming regular cruises in U.S. waters, unless the operator chooses to require mandatory vaccination

of crew and passengers to avoid the test run.

So far, only Norwegian Cruise Line has publicly announced its intentions to require vaccinations for passengers and crew, in lieu of the test voyages, though other operators reportedly are considering the option.

ABC News reported May 8 that several ports in Florida and Texas have set up vaccination sites for cruise lines to get their crew members inoculated in preparation for resuming cruises.

Regardless of the CDC decision, voyages to Alaska are blocked by Canada's decision to close its ports to cruise ships. U.S. law requires the large, foreign-flagged ships that come to Alaska must make a stop at a

foreign port along the way. With Canada's closure, the ships are effectively banned from the popular Seattle-to-Alaska cruises.

# State pays former employee \$85,000 in free speech case

ANCHORAGE (AP) — The state has agreed to settle for \$85,000 with a former employee whose job application was rejected because she supported the recall of Gov. Mike Dunleavy.

The out-of-court settlement was announced April 26 by the Alaska chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, which represented Keren Lowell, a former employee for the Alaska State Council on the Arts.

Lowell worked for the arts council in 2019 when Dunleavy vetoed the organization's funding, causing Lowell to lose her job. She then became involved in the effort to recall the governor.

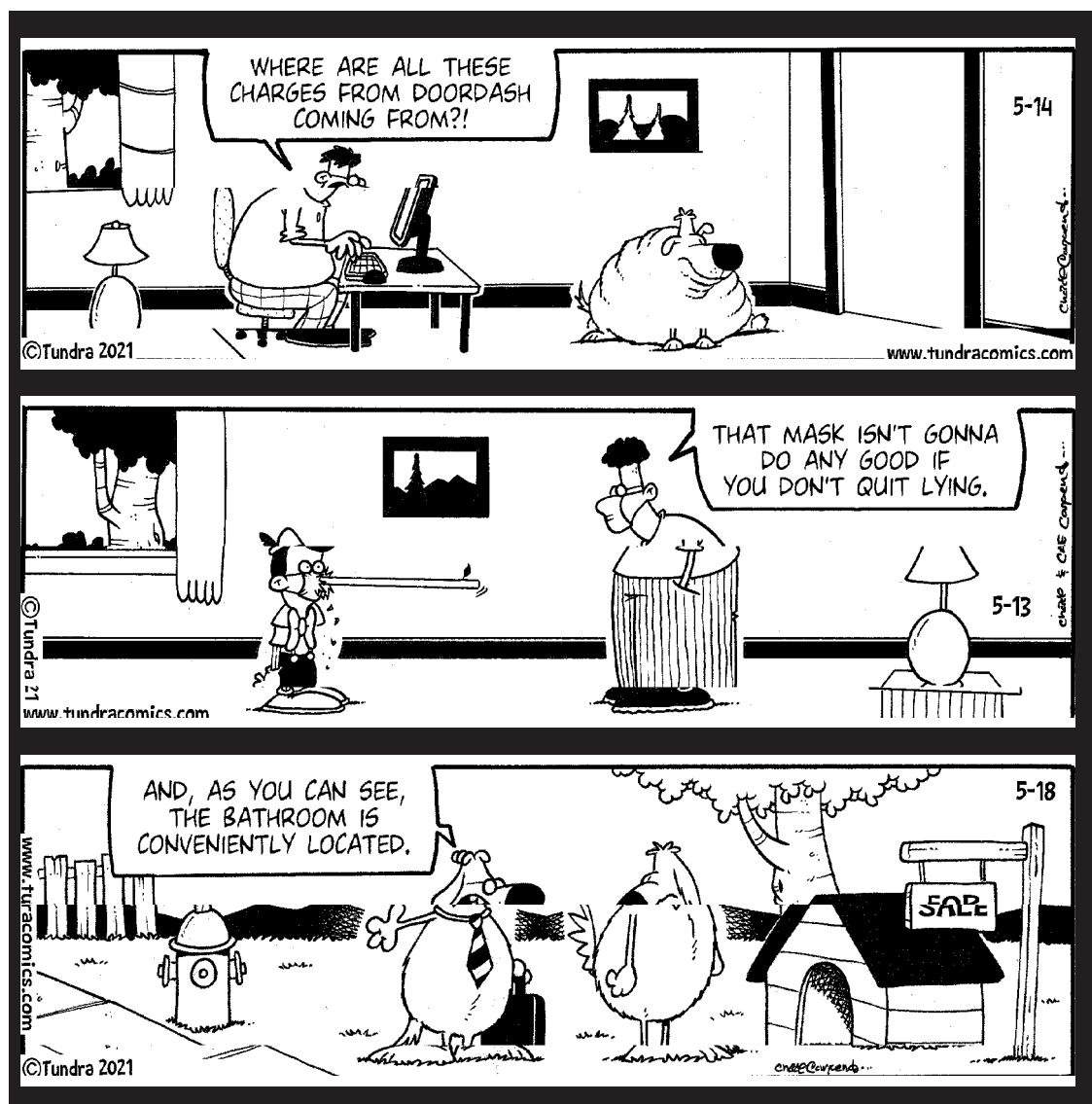
When the Legislature restored the arts council funding and Dunleavy approved it, Lowell reapplied for her job. She was told over email that her application was rejected because of "statements made on social media about the governor."

Lowell said the action was a violation of her right to free speech, and she took the case to the American Civil Liberties Union of Alaska.

The ACLU had threatened legal action but no lawsuit was filed before the settlement. The ACLU cited state law that prohibits the use of "political beliefs" as a reason to hire or not hire a person for most state jobs.

The governor's office deferred comment on the matter to the state Department of Law, which did not respond to questions.

Lowell's settlement agreement said the state did not admit any wrongdoing.



# Ferry problems

Continued from page 1

electrical system breakdowns since February, taking the ship out of service four times for repairs.

For people in Wrangell who rely on the Matanuska for travel, the questionable reliability of ferry service has become troubling.

Thecla LaLonde shared on Facebook that in the past two months her husband has been stranded in Ketchikan twice.

Nicole Webster shared on Facebook that she and her family were planning to use the ferry to return to Wrangell from Juneau after a vacation, but the ship broke down and they were stuck for a few days. They wound up flying home, she said, and got a refund from the ferry system.

"Overall, I probably would have been better off just choosing to fly for the entirety of the trip," Webster wrote. "It for sure would have been less expensive and less tiring. It is hard for me to say all this though, I have always loved the Alaska Marine Highway and think it's super important for our island community. I just wish it weren't such grim times for them, and they could operate more dependably again."

Webster is not the only traveler sympathetic to the current state of the ferry system.

Brian Peterman was stranded in Ketchikan with the most recent breakdown of the Matanuska. He was coming to Wrangell to work on his boat, which he had docked here over the winter. When the ferry broke down, though, he said ferry employees did a good job explaining the situation to passengers, and also offered reimbursement for plane tickets.

He finally flew into Wrangell, leaving behind a truck, which showed up in Wrangell a few days later, he said. It was inconvenient, Peterman said, but ferry personnel did their best in a bad situation.

"I thought the ferry did a real good job compensating us," Peterman said. "It was inconvenient ... all in all it was a minor inconvenience."

Jenni Jackson, in a Facebook message, said Ketchikan ferry terminal employees were helpful through the most recent breakdown, but the ferry system as a whole is no longer reliable.

She purchased a vehicle recently and decided to use the ferry to transport it to Wrangell. When the ferry broke down in Ketchikan, she decided to use Alaska Marine Lines to barge her vehicle the rest of the way. The ferry employees offered her some credit as a refund, but not enough to cover the cost of the barge, she said.

"With the ferry not being able to fulfill their route, I feel they should have paid the barge cost," Jackson said. "The ferry is not dependable anymore and they wonder why ridership is down."



PHOTO COURTESY OF KATE THOMAS/PARKS AND RECREATION

## Digging in for downtown

Renate Davies (left) and WCA staff Esther Reece, Lizzie Romane, Deanna Horn and Kim Wickman dug in, pitched in, planted and trimmed one of the 14 downtown garden beds last Friday as part of the Community Collaboration effort to improve the town's appearance. The two-day event, organized by Wrangell Parks and Recreation, drew more than 60 volunteers. The city electric department hung colorful banners on light posts and kids joined in the effort, too, with Evergreen Elementary School students collecting more than 1,500 discarded cigarette butts from the downtown corridor.

# Florida tells cruise line it cannot require vaccinations

By DAVID KOENIG

The Associated Press

Miami-based Norwegian Cruise Line is threatening to keep its ships out of Florida after the governor signed legislation banning businesses from requiring that customers show proof of vaccination against COVID-19.

The company says the law signed by Gov. Ron DeSantis is at odds with guidelines from federal health authorities that would let cruise ships sail in U.S. waters if nearly all passengers and crew members are vaccinated.

"It is a classic state-versus-federal-government issue," said company CEO Frank Del Rio. "Lawyers believe that federal law applies and not state law, but I'm not a lawyer. And we hope that this doesn't become a legal football or a political foot-

ball."

The company owns Norwegian Cruise Line, Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises.

Del Rio told analysts during the quarterly earnings call May 6 that if the company can't operate in Florida, it can go to other states or the Caribbean "for ships that otherwise would have gone to Florida ... we certainly hope it doesn't come to that."

Del Rio said the company is still discussing the matter with the governor's office.

Last month, DeSantis signed an order banning businesses from requiring customers to show proof of vaccination and prohibiting state agencies from issuing so-called vaccine passports that document COVID-19 vaccinations and test results. This week, he signed legisla-

tion that includes the provision about businesses and gives him power to overrule local measures related to the pandemic, such as mask mandates.

Norwegian aims to have all passengers and crew vaccinated. Guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would let ships skip practice voyages and begin trips with paying customers if 98% of the crew and 95% of passengers are vaccinated and ships take other measures to limit the risk of transmitting the virus that causes COVID-19.

Cruise lines have been barred from sailing in U.S. waters or stopping at U.S. ports since March 2020. Some are slowly resuming trips in other countries and requiring that all passengers on those cruises be vaccinated.

The companies are pushing the CDC to let them return the U.S. this summer, although none of the major companies — Norwegian, Royal Caribbean and Carnival — have an-

nounced any U.S. cruises.

Del Rio said the path to resuming U.S. cruises is "a bit rockier and a bit steeper" than expected, and a mid-summer restart "could be in jeopardy."

## Coast Guard sinks abandoned tugboat

JUNEAU (AP) - The U.S. Coast Guard has sunk a derelict, abandoned tugboat in 8,400 feet of open water 145 miles west of Juneau.

The Coast Guard, in a news release, said the 107-foot-long, steel-hulled Lumberman was sunk May 2.

Coast Guard Petty Officer 3rd Class Janessa Warschkow said crews scuttled the tugboat by opening water valves to flood the vessel, with rounds fired from the Coast Guard Cutter John McCormick to help speed up the process.

The cutter had towed the Lumberman to the site where it was sunk. The Coast Guard said it cooperated with the City and Borough of Juneau and a marine services company in the scuttling.

Hazardous materials previously were removed, and the city obtained a permit for the vessel's disposal at sea, the release stated.

The abandoned World War II-vintage tugboat has been a fixture on Juneau's Gastineau Channel for several years. It was moored at the city-owned cruise ship dock in the fall of 2020, after it broke its anchor line on state tidelands more than two years earlier.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency gave the OK to sink the vessel after it was thoroughly cleaned, first by the Coast Guard in 2018 and more recently by contractors who removed garbage and oily waste from the ship, according to public radio station KTOO reporting in October 2020.

The tugboat was last used as a makeshift live-aboard anchored outside of Juneau's Aurora Harbor. Tragedy struck in 2017 when a skiff with five people heading to the tug overturned, KTOO reported. Two men on the skiff were never found.



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