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SEARHC-WMC deal looks promising, parties say

By DAN RUDY
Sentinel writer

After a series of meetings and public presentations last week, a proposed acquisition of Wrangell Medical Center by a regional health group looks more probable.

Southeast Alaska Rural Health Consortium has expressed interest in administering the municipal hospital, which has been in a prolonged state of financial difficulty. At the Wrangell Assembly's most recent meeting last Tuesday, WMC chief executive officer Robert Rang reported having only 13 days' cash on hand with which to cover operational costs, driven in part by fluctuations in revenue. Though in a spot of positive news, he said concerns the state would not be able to meet its Medicaid reimbursements were alleviated some by confirmation from the Department of Health and Social Services that smaller facilities like Wrangell's would be prioritized before the new fiscal year starts in July.

While an infusion of \$250,000 by the city has been needed to stabilize its condition, the age of hospital's facilities and the cost to maintain them is a more intractable concern. WMC will be turning 50 years old this year, with the date saved for July 28. The building is unlikely to see many more birthdays, however, troubled by infrastructural deficiencies as well as various accessibility and facility concerns.

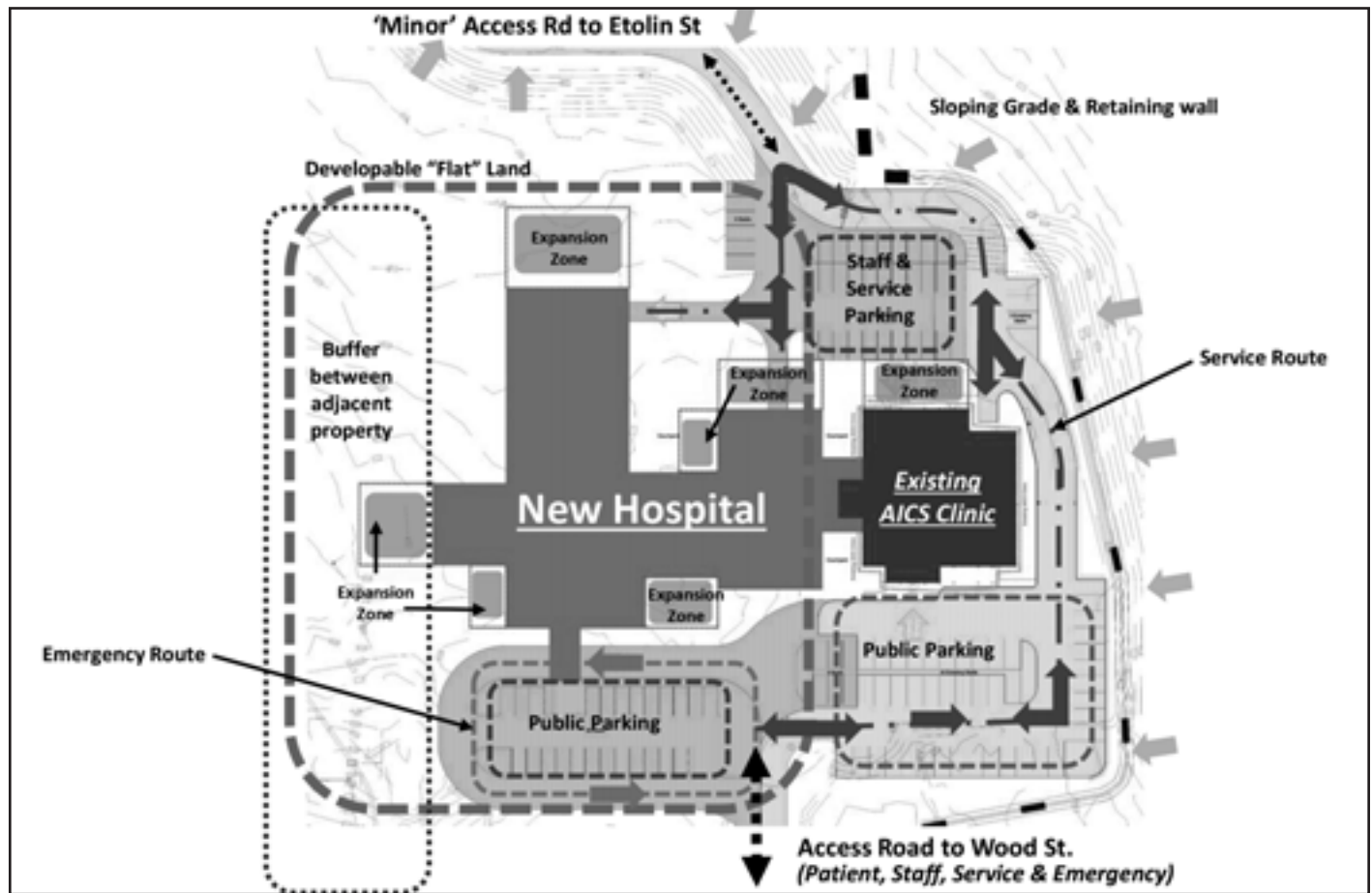
"A pretty heavy investment would be required," said Josh Ripplinger, architect with Wold Architects and Engineers in Minnesota.

The public facilities-oriented firm was contracted by SEARHC to look over Wrangell's hospital last month and assess its needs. The diagnosis was not good, estimating some \$24 million would be needed just to bring the building up to modern health and safety codes, not even addressing its plumbing and electrical needs. For comparison, Jensen Yorba Lott of Juneau had estimated last November that costs for a brand new hospital would be Wrangell at least \$41 million.

Wold's duties were not only to look at the old but to also examine the new, drawing up a concept for a combined campus hospital joined with the Wood Street clinic belonging to Alaska Island Community Services, which SEARHC had acquired earlier last year. A feasibility study also examined WMC's financial standing, questioning whether taking on the organization and construction of a new hospital would be doable for SEARHC. Whether a possible arrangement between the regional health concern and local hospital might be reached would depend on how the numbers played out.

"Congratulations, Wrangell, the numbers came back very favorable," announced Lisa Von Barga, Wrangell's borough manager, during a public meeting at the Nolan Center on May 21.

The public meeting followed another series held in April, with input based on those informing the concept design process. Ripplinger envisioned a new facility would join two new sections to the AICS clinic to its west. On the far side, a main wing would house emergency services, imaging and laboratory offices, acute care and a pharmacy. Just north of that would be a wing for long term care serv-



SUBMITTED ILLUSTRATION

An architectural concept prepared for SEARHC here shows an overview from above of a new facility joining Wrangell Medical Center with the Alaska Island Community Services clinic on Wood Street. Pending an acquisition deal to be struck with the city, the combined facility would boast 44,500 square feet of space, with room for future expansion.

ices, improving patients' privacy and access to facilities over the current layout.

This western wing and the existing clinic would be connected by corridors passing through a central support wing, featuring therapy and rehabilitation services as well as maintenance and staff areas. The clinic itself would remain about the same, with its upstairs area renovated to accommodate administrative offices for the whole center. In all, the new or renovated spaces would come to 36,500 square feet of space, totaling 44,500 square feet.

Ripplinger added the facility would have room to grow as well, reserving "zones of opportunity" for expansion for each of the hospital's departments.

"There's a lot of flexibility in how this campus could be organized," he said.

Aesthetically, he noted how the new additions would mirror the look of the AICS clinic's current façade, with sloping roof and large windows for maximum lighting.

Costs for the new concept were not disclosed, though SEARHC chief operating officer Dan Neumeister explained the facility would be fully funded by his organization. A final price tag would fall somewhere within the range of renovating WMC and JYL's estimates for a new building. Ripplinger expected the doors on the expanded building could open in as soon as 32 months.

The Wold team had met with a steering committee involving members of the WMC board and various stakeholder groups the day before last Monday's meeting, and Von Barga relayed it had voted in favor of "going the next step." A presentation was also given to assembly members before their meeting on May 22.

They will be left to digest the item before taking any action, expected at their June 12 meeting. Prior to that, Von Barga

will be meeting with Neumeister and both parties' attorneys in Seattle on June 7 to review documents for a deal.

If the assembly is keen on pursuing a deal, the SEARHC governing board could be expected to meet on the matter within 48 hours. If both sides agree, a transition process to follow could range between 90 and 120 days, during which time both SEARHC and the city would do their due diligence and consult with their legal counsel before finalizing the transition.

A likely scenario would have SEARHC assume WMC's assets and liabilities, though the current hospital building and property would remain the city's. Ripplinger explained the ability to use it for anything further in future is unlikely due to the cost of needed improvements. The borough would have the responsibility of decommissioning it.

If an acquisition is brought to completion, it will be the latest in a series of gains made by SEARHC in recent years. It took on the privately-held Sitka Medical Center at the end of 2012, as well as the Wrangell-based AICS organization in 2017. The Juneau-based healthcare provider now operates in 20 communities and is already the region's largest private employer.

In part because of its deal with AICS, net assets at the end of its 2017 fiscal year topped \$152 million, a jump upward of 38 percent from the previous year, and nearly 56 percent upward from FY15. Its patient services revenues have correspondingly improved, up from \$38.5 million net for 2015 to \$78 million last year.

The developments are a turnaround for the organization, which in 2011 had announced net losses of \$4 million for the year.

Neumeister explained a change in leadership brought onboard afterward

had sought to change how SEARHC conducted business, redirecting its priorities and making the organization more efficient.

"We had a real focus on transforming the organization to really focus on quality healthcare," he said. "Our long-term goal is to continue to provide quality healthcare services to the various communities we serve."

Some of those gains were organizational, finding synergy with partnering organizations. In the cases of SMC and AICS, for example, SEARHC had been approached as a potential partner because of the gains to be made in sharing services and by reducing expenses.

Other revenue improvements were adaptive, such as seeking out critical access designation for Mt. Edgecumbe Hospital in late 2015. Previously run under the Rural Community Hospital Demonstration Program, by reducing two beds to meet the 25-bed threshold of a CAH the facility was able to receive more favorable reimbursement for inpatient and outpatient services. It is efficiencies such as these that have improved revenue for AICS since its acquisition, and the association with SEARHC would likewise make the care model currently offered by WMC more cost-efficient and thereby sustainable.

"It needs to be a good partnership," said Neumeister. The potential partnership with WMC is a unique opportunity, he explained, because of the volume AICS already provides the hospital, and the services it receives in turn. Its relatively new facility – a combined campus which had already been envisioned when it was built six years ago – is a similarly fortuitous opportunity.

"It's pretty exciting when it becomes a win-win for both organizations," he commented.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

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

Thursday, May 31: Tristan Byford, Louise Shilts, Rose Sundberg, Miles Brown, William Shilts, Michelle Beaghoff. **Friday, June 1:** Hannah Castle, Deanne Cooper, Marc Gunderson, Jack Pino, Jody Hammock. **Saturday, June 2:** Janell Stutz, Steve Thomassen Jr, Spencer Ocean, Karl Altepeter, Willie Bloom. **Sunday, June 3:** Makena Hammer, Mike Jabusch, Ryan Reeve, Matthew Covalt, Gail Thomas, Yuri McCloskey, Robyn Lane. **Anniversary:** Scott and Lorri Angerman. **Monday, June 4:** Kira Torvend, Maleah Wenzel, Haley Vergilio, Doug McCloskey. **Anniversary:** Jim Sr and Sue Nelson, Bill and Janell Privett. **Tuesday, June 5:** Erica Yancy, Mark Stevens, Payton Tailele, Randy Robinson Jr. **Wednesday, June 6:** Carter Cummings, Cari Hazelton, Megan Scott, Chelsea Cleghon, Mick Young, Deanne Cooper. **Anniversary:** Jeremy and Dawn Welch, Brent and Shannon Mickle. **Thursday, June 7:** Kelly Tuttle, Hunter Abbott, Jacob Soeteber. **Anniversary:** Mike and Natalya Jabusch.

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

Senior Center Menu

Thursday, May 31

Pineapple-lemon chicken, peas & carrots, romaine, radish & tomato salad, baking soda biscuits.

Friday, June 1

Fiesta pork chops, broccoli, cabbage slaw, cracked wheat rolls.

Monday, June 4

Beef on a bun, oven fried potatoes, tossed salad.

Tuesday, June 5

Pork chop suey, steamed broccoli, peach salad, rice.

Wednesday, June 6

Baked salmon, peas & carrots, tomato aspic, whole wheat bread.

Thursday, June 7

Herbed lime chicken, mixed veggies, sunshine salad, au gratin potatoes

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

Milk, tea and coffee will be served with meals.

FERRY

Departures

Northbound

Saturday, June 2

Malaspina 11:15 a.m.

Sunday, June 3

Columbia 4:45 p.m.

Tuesday, June 5

Malaspina 4:15 p.m.

Saturday, June 9

Malaspina 11:45 a.m.

Sunday, June 10

Columbia 5:45 p.m.

Southbound

Thursday, May 31

Malaspina 8:30 p.m.

Monday, June 4

Malaspina 6:30 a.m.

Wednesday, June 6

Columbia 6:45 a.m.

Thursday, June 7

Malaspina 9:15 p.m.

Monday, June 11

Malaspina 12:00 p.m.

Arrival times may vary. Call 874-2021 for verification or call 874-3711 for recorded information.



TIDES May 31 - June 7

	High Tides				Low Tides			
	AM Time	Ft	PM Time	Ft	AM Time	Ft	PM Time	Ft
May 31	2:22	16.8	3:19	14.5	8:43	-1.3	8:41	3.7
June 1	2:55	16.2	3:56	14.0	9:17	-0.8	9:15	4.3
June 2	3:28	15.4	4:34	13.5	9:52	-0.2	9:53	4.8
June 3	4:03	14.6	5:15	13.0	10:30	0.5	10:37	5.3
June 4	4:42	13.7	6:02	12.7	11:12	1.3	11:30	5.6
June 5	5:31	12.9	6:58	12.7	12:01	1.9
June 6	6:36	12.1	7:58	13.1	0:32	5.6	12:55	2.4
June 7	7:56	11.8	8:55	13.8	1:41	5.2	1:54	2.8

Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

Is the attendance at your meeting or event low? Send information for Roundup to wrgsent@gmail.com or call 874-2301.

PARKS & REC ACTIVITIES: Mid-day closure: M-F 1:30-3:30 p.m. Closed Sunday

Pool:

Arthritis Foundation Exercise Class: M-W-F 8:30-9:30 a.m.
Water Aerobics: M-W-F 10:00-11:00 a.m.
Lap Swim: M-W-F 6:00-7:30 a.m. MTWThF 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
TuTh 5:15-6:15 p.m. Sa 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

2 Lane Lap Swim: M-W-F 10:00-11:00 a.m.

Lap/Tot Swim: MTWThF 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. S 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Swim Club: M-F 3:15-5:15 p.m.

Open Swim: M-W 5:30-7:00 p.m. F 6:30-8:00 p.m. S 1:00-2:00 p.m.

Weight Room: M-Thu 6:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m., 3:30-7:30 p.m. F 6:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m., 3:30-8:30 p.m. S 10:00 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

MEETINGS

AA Meetings: Smoked Fish Fri 8 p.m.; Step Study Sat. 7 p.m. at the Episcopal Church Parish Hall, Study Materials provided.

The Way We Were

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

May 30, 1918

We do not grasp the real significance of the general exodus in the cause of freedom until the experience comes home to our own community.

Wrangell has given of her men before and our hearts have swelled with pride as we bade them goodbye. It remained for the first quota of the selective draft to arouse the entire community and to give us a sense of nearness to the struggle that is going on in the world today.

The big celebration in honor of the departing men began Wednesday evening with the Ketchikan contingent arrived and was given an enthusiastic reception.

Redmen's Hall was gaily and patriotically decorated for the occasion and nothing had been left undone to make the event one to be remembered.

It was a jolly event- on the surface. Seemingly all of Wrangell was present and danced or looked on or played cards at tables arranged for that purpose in the lodge rooms upstairs. A very bountiful banquet had been provided by the citizens of Wrangell and about 200 people visited the dining room during the evening.

Three Wrangell mothers gave their sons; one wife gave up her husband of a short time on this memorable

Accompanied by a fleet of Wrangell boats, the Irene Barnes Glenora, Harold, Ida May and Dart, whistles blowing, voices raised in cheers, flags flying and glorious sunlight flooded the entire scene, the Peterson steamed out across the bay. Our first quota has gone.

May 28, 1943

Ernest Gruening, Governor of Alaska, proclaimed May 29, 1943, the Saturday preceding Memorial Day, as Poppy Day in Alaska. On units wherever organized in Alaska will conduct poppy sales.

This year all money thereby raised will be used for rehabilitation and welfare work among veterans of World Wars I and II and their families.

Poppy Day this year has added meaning as now disabled and wounded veterans of World War II are beginning to return home.

Mrs. J C. Johnson is chairman of the Poppy Day committee for Wrangell and will have many Auxiliary women to aid her.

May 30, 1968

Work continues on the Church Street project. Green Construction Co. is widening the street to 60 feet and putting in sidewalks, curbs and gutters in the city. The pavement will continue out the Zimovia Highway about seven miles.

May 27, 1993

Pat Kellogg of Boise, Idaho remained the leader this week with only a few days remaining in the 41st Annual King Salmon Derby.

As of Tuesday morning, Kellogg's 56.7-pound king salmon outweighed the nearest competitor by 11 pounds. But action in the second week of the derby knocked any fish under 40 pounds out of the top ten.

George Higbee moved into the number two spot this week

with a 45.7 - pound fish caught at the Nose. Vee Bigelow dropped one spot to third place this week with her 43.4- pounder caught at Chichagof.

Top prize in the derby this year is \$5,000; \$3,000 for second and \$2,000 for third. Still unclaimed (for several years) is a \$1,000 bonus for the first king weighing 60 pounds or more. In addition to the top three and bonus prizes are more than 65 prizes donated by local merchants. Also, a drawing will be held for around-trip airline ticket to Seattle, donated by Alaska Airlines. All derby tickets sold are eligible for the drawing, whether or not the angler caught a fish.

Castle Mountain Entertainment
Upcoming Events/Movies
June 1-3 no movie
June 8-10 no movie
June 15-17 Rampage
June 22-24 no movie
Coming Soon:
Solo, Incredibles 2, Jurassic World
'Like' us on Facebook for the most up to date info!
Tickets:
\$5 for 12 & under,
\$7 for 13 & up
Buy movie gift certificates at the Museum gift shop
Movie info: www.imdb.com

Wrangell Weather

Date	High	Low
May 21	54	50
May 22	54	46
May 23	51	46
May 24	55	41
May 25	52	48
May 26	50	44
May 27	54	44
May 28	48	44

Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Daylight
May 31	4:12 am	9:19 pm	17:07h
June 01	4:11 am	9:20 pm	17:09h
June 02	4:10 am	9:22 pm	17:12h
June 03	4:09 am	9:23 pm	17:14h
June 04	4:08 am	9:24 pm	17:16h
June 05	4:07 am	9:26 pm	17:19h
June 06	4:06 am	9:27 pm	17:21h
June 07	4:05 am	9:28 pm	17:23h

Send or Receive a
FAX

at the Sentinel
Phone 874-2301
Fax 874-2303



PHOTO BY DAN RUDY

In memoriam

One of a pair of pipers play the first few verses to "Amazing Grace" on May 20, following a Blessing of the Fleet jointly held during a Mariners' Memorial fundraiser. Straddling an overlook between Heritage Harbor and Zimovia Strait, organizers for the new memorial hope to see ground broken by next year.

Small spate of intrusions at home and churches

By DAN RUDY
Sentinel writer

There was a spate of mischief afoot this month with a pair of break-ins and some possible mischief being considered related events.

Pastor Nettie Covalt at First Presbyterian Church reported an intrusion at the house of worship on May 22. Home to a summertime hostel for travelers, the church is generally left accessible, she explained. So she was surprised to find the premises in a state of disarray. Door jambs to the church office had been broken through, while a television and other items were staged near the doorway as though the intruding party was planning to return.

"Mostly they left a great big mess," Covalt reported.

The intrusion was not the first, with the disappearance of a microwave and vacuum cleaner noticed from the previous week.

Chief Doug McCloskey of the Wrangell Police Department said officers were also called out to a residence at 12-Mile Zimovia that evening, receiving a tip about a break-in. The homeowner had been away, but "we've got some idea what's missing," he said. Most of the missing items have already been recovered from off-site.

Pastor Doug Schultz at Bible Baptist Church also reported problems, though inside the church there was no evidence of anything missing. On the property, a shed had apparently been tampered with.

"We were missing a lock," said Schultz, it having been pried away. Nothing of interest had been kept in the shed however, and so nothing was noticed missing there either.

McCloskey said the incidents at the private residence and Presbyterian church would be considered burglaries by definition, while that at the Baptist church would be more in line with mischief. The department has a suspect or suspects in mind, and is preparing indictments.

Covalt reported her church's hostel opened up for the season as scheduled on Monday.

"We're going to try to just keep it going as usual," she said. "We're just going to hope for the best at this time."

Police report

May 21, 2018

Arrested: Drew Huntington, 30: On charges of burglary, theft, and violating conditions of release.

Traffic stop: Verbal warning for driving habits.

May 22, 2018

Agency assist: Ambulance.
Burglary/ Criminal mischief.
Disturbance.

Agency assist: Ambulance.

Agency assist: DOC.

Agency assist: AST.

Summons service.

May 23, 2018

Citizen report of DUI: Unfounded.

Assault 4 DV.

Report of theft.

May 24, 2018

Agency assist: Parking complaint.

Juvenile harassment.

Missing child: Unfounded.

Summons service.

Traffic stop: Verbal warning for speeding.

Traffic stop: Verbal warning for loud music.

Arrested: Wilson Boon, 29: Arrest warrant.

May 25, 2018

Disturbance.

Agency assist: Ambulance.

Disturbance/ verbal.

Arrested: Tasha McColloch, 33: On charges of DUI, DWLSC/R, probation violation.

May 26, 2018

Suspicious activity.

Citizen assist.

Subpoena service.

Traffic stop: verbal warning for ATV on roadway.

Citations issued: Michelle Jenkins, 28: Operating vehicle with expired registration and failure to provide proof of insurance.

Citation issued to Delila Wigg, 41: Speeding.

Property damage.

May 27, 2018

Citation issued: Zybrylle Gage, 21: Failure to provide proof of insurance.

Traffic stop: Verbal warning for obscured license plate.

Hazardous play.

Abandoned vehicles.

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Harborlight Assembly of God

Sunday Worship, 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m.,

Sunday School 9:45 a.m. 874-2244

St. Rose of Lima, Catholic Church

Sunday Masses 11:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

Encirchment in Faith, All are Welcome, 10:00 a.m.

874-3771 or 305-0654

St. Philip's Episcopal Church

Holy Eucharist 10:00 a.m., Church School 10:00 a.m.

874-3047 or 874-4480

First Presbyterian

Children's Sunday School and Adult Class 9:45 a.m.,

Worship Service 11 a.m., 874-3534

The Salvation Army

Sunday Worship, 11 a.m., Sunday School 10 a.m.,

874-3753

Island of Faith Lutheran Church-ELCA

Worship Service 9:30 a.m. followed by fellowship,

Faith Walking Saturday 10 a.m., 874-2743

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Priesthood Relief Society & Primary at noon.;

Sunday School 11 a.m.; Sacrament 10 a.m.,

874-3976 or 3778

Wrangell Community Church of God

Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.

Sunday Worship, 11 a.m.; 874-3964

Bible Baptist Church

Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.;

Sunday Worship, 11 a.m. & 6 p.m., 874-2069

Wrangell Seventh-day Adventist Church

Saturday Worship, 11 a.m.;

Young People & Adult Study, 9:30 a.m., 874-3039

Baha'i Faith

Study circles, children's and youth classes, devotional meetings call 874-3521 for information

Presented for all religious faiths of Wrangell in respect to their devotional influences and public services in our community.

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Byford soil barging project to heave to next week

By DAN RUDY
Sentinel writer

With the addition of funds by the Alaska Legislature into next year's budget, treated soil at the former Byford junkyard site will be shifted to a staging area for transport off-island.

For decades used as a private scrapyards, the four-acre site was significantly contaminated with lead, petroleum and other toxins by the time it became the subject of an extensive cleanup led by the Department of Environmental Conservation in 2016. While 62 containers of the most heavily contaminated materials and debris were shipped southward for disposal, the increasing magnitude of the cleanup meant more than 18,000 cubic yards of lead-infused soil still remained to be dealt with, despite the project already well over budget.

The material was mixed with a phosphate-based compound to chemically stabilize it, while the federal Environmental Protection Agency helped DEC design a more cost-effective alternative for its disposal. A designated monofill was eventually proposed, to be situated at a rock pit maintained by Alaska's Department of Natural Resources and maintained in perpetuity.

While the science behind it seemed sound, local concerns about the project's long-term impact on water quality at the nearby Pats Creek fluvial system were such that DEC put the second phase of the Byford project on hold late last summer. Efforts by the local tribal and borough governments to find additional sources of funding or optional project sites during the interim seemed fruitless, and the monofill's construction was planned to resume this spring.

The difference in cost between funding left available for the monofill and the estimated cost to ship the remaining material off-island was around \$5 million. In light of its ongoing budget deficit - slated to run \$700 million in FY19, even after tapping into Permanent Fund earnings - the state seemed an unlikely source for that extra funding. However, an appeal by Gov. Bill Walker for the amount was taken up by the House and Senate, being included earlier this month in the final budget. That is expected to be signed by the governor sometime in June, ahead of the next fiscal year's start on July 1.



PHOTO BY DAN RUDY

A room with a view

A view of Wrangell from aboard the Star Legend on Friday, which anchored offshore for the day during its stop-through. The vessel is a new addition to the summer cruise fleet passing through Wrangell this year, reflecting a wider increase regionally that is expected to break tourism records.

Rather than pulling it from the state's general fund, the money will instead come from the DEC's emergency response fund, which is drawn from a percentage of production royalties and is used primarily for petroleum spill cleanups.

With the first phase of the Byford project costing \$6.5 million, the monofill phase was allotted around \$5.7 million. Of that, site preparation and other associated costs have left less than \$4 million remaining of the original appropriation. With the additional \$5 million the DEC should be able to change course on the project, being able to afford shipment of the material off-island.

Forging ahead, DEC regional unit manager Sally Schlichting confirmed Tuesday that a contract has been worked out and the project's costs should be covered.

"We've issued a contract to NRC to do the shipping and disposal," she said. NRC Alaska had been the primary contractor involved in the 2016 site cleanup.

At a cost of \$8.99 million, Schlichting reported NRC would be transporting the soil in nine cubic yard reinforced sacks using Heko Services for barging. Moving 25 of the en-

closed sacks from the former Byford site by truck per day, contractors would stage them at the former Silver Bay Logging mill yard. From there they would be taken up in about three loads, shipped southward to Arlington, Oregon for final disposal.

"That project's going to roll out next week," she said. Schlichting expected the project should wrap up by the end of September.

The newly-allotted funds may still fall short of the final cost, she added. "It's pretty close. There'll be a little bit of additional money that we'll need to get," most likely from the same spill response fund. The DEC's commissioner would have the authority to tap the fund for the amount without any additional input needed from legislators.

As a preliminary effort, contractors will make use of some of the stockpiled rock already located at the formerly planned monofill site. Some truck traffic can be expected on the Pats Creek road system this weekend, so drivers ought to exercise caution. Afterward, trucks will only be moving on the highway, between the cleanup site and the mill yard staging area.

Project leads assigned to the

project are currently updating cost estimates to transport the material to Oregon for final processing. Depending on whether newly allotted and remaining funds would together cover the total cost, more

funds may still be required to complete the cleanup. Depending on how much money may be required, Rogers said DEC would likely approach the Legislature for approval.

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Senator Stedman gives a session update during Festival visit

By RON LOESCH
Publisher

With the adjournment of the Legislature on May 12, Senator Bert Stedman, R-Sitka, talked to The Pilot during the Little Norway Festival about the session.

The legislature realized they have to restructure the Alaska Permanent Fund (APF) and Senate Bill 26 does that.

Stedman was one of 13 senators who voted in favor of the legislation. With a \$2.5 billion deficit the APF has to be protected.

He has favored that idea for a long time because it would limit payouts and gives the public the opportunity to look at its structure.

The bill sets a 5.25% draw for the first three years and then would go down to 5 percent. The percentage draw will ultimately be based on a five year rolling average of the funds value. "I prefer a 4.5% average," Stedman said.

The senator said the next challenge would be to protect the totality of the fund by enshrining it into the state constitution. If you don't limit the payout by constitutional protections, the legislature will spend the earnings reserve to the point where the fund is depleted, particularly during fluctuating market conditions, he said.

"We have to block the Legis-

lature, which is the appropriating body, from full access to the earnings reserve, which is all the trading profits and dividend income. This winter the number was around \$15 billion we could have spent," Stedman noted.

Of the Governor's plan to borrow \$937 million to pay tax credits owed to oil companies, Stedman said, "We should just pay the bill to the oil companies. By selling bonds, we're just imposing liabilities on future legislators and Governors. Collectively we created the mess and we should clean it up."

On the topic of turning the Alaska Marine Highway System into a public corporation, Stedman says, "There's a lot of work left to do. I don't think the labor unions have been brought into the conversation."

The public corporation can be done with the concurrence of the Governor and the Legislature. "My concern is that the public corporation formation could make it easier for the Rail Belt legislators to reduce funding to the AMHS," Stedman said.

Receipt authority also has to be granted to the AMHS administration to allow Federal Transportation money to flow to the Marine Highway System as it does today. Stedman added they also need appropriation authority from the Legis-



PHOTO BY DAN RUDY

Them's the breaks

Workers with the Public Works Department move ground getting to a ruptured pipe under McKinnon Street on Tuesday. A resident had reported a possible rupture before the long weekend, this one on top of others around Wrangell last week. "We're not sure what it is, but there's water coming up," Public Works head Amber Al-Haddad commented as work was ongoing. While it could possibly be one of the city's problematic ductile iron mains acting up again, she mentioned another possibility was the distribution line that runs perpendicularly through Cow Alley.

lature to spend the money.

On the construction of the new 280-foot ferry Tazlina, Stedman said, "It was a good decision to build the ferries in Ketchikan. It showed we could build the ferries in Alaska."

The second Alaska Class ferry completion will be delayed, causing Stedman to observe, "Since DOT rarely comes out with a project on time, why should we beat the shipyard up about it?"

The cross-gulf ferry may be too large to build in Ketchikan,

Stedman said, but perhaps the shipyard could build sections of the ship and barge them south for assembly at a bigger yard. Another \$40 million in capital expenditures is needed to expand the Ketchikan Shipyard for additional space for manufacturing ships. Given the jobs generated by the shipyard, that should be a high priority for the legislature. The shipyard is owned by the Alaska Industrial Development Authority and is therefore state owned.

"Hats off to the Mayor," Stedman cheered as he congratulated Mayor Jensen for diligently working with the elected officials in Washington, D.C. and the Coast Guard to bring a USCG patrol boat to Petersburg after the Anacapa is decommissioned. It's clear there is a good working relationship between the Borough, the U.S. Coast Guard and the D.C. delegation in Washington, Stedman said. He added that the Coast Guard has been in Petersburg since before WWII.

Comics

Amber Waves



R.F.D.



Just Like Cats & Dogs



Weekly SUDOKU
by Linda Thistle

7		3	6					4
	1			9				3
		4	8		1			
	7				5	4		
6				7			2	5
		8	6					1
9	2				6	8		
		1		8			9	
3		5						2

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Grand story
- 5 Recipe meas.
- 8 Slender smoke
- 12 Stereo precursor
- 13 Conger or moray
- 14 Opposed to
- 15 Sit on eggs
- 17 Highlander
- 18 Rib
- 19 Off the path
- 21 Thing
- 24 Golf prop
- 25 Related
- 28 Sandwich shop
- 30 Shock and —
- 33 Lair
- 34 Duck down
- 35 Vast expanse
- 36 Pouch
- 37 Male 38-Across
- 38 See 37-Across
- 39 Eggs
- 41 Unrivaled
- 43 Legendary
- 46 Adult insect
- 50 Sahara-like
- 51 On an angle
- 54 Rinky- —
- 55 Use the microwave
- 56 Unrivaled
- 57 Long story

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
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43	44				45			46		47	48	49
50					51	52	53					
54						55				56		
57						58				59		

- 58 Flightless bird
- 59 Tackles' teammates
- 8 Haste result
- 9 Enlarge
- 10 Old portico
- 11 Compassion
- 16 Wager
- 20 Use a swizzle stick
- 22 Fix a manuscript
- 23 Olympics prize
- 25 Billboards
- 26 Mauna — cups and saucers and such
- 27 Arriving name
- 29 Toy block
- 31 Teensy
- 32 Listener
- 34 Jacob's brother
- 38 End
- 40 Bullshot ingredient
- 42 Zero
- 43 Crazes
- 44 Operatic solo
- 45 Dimension
- 47 Any time now
- 48 Neuter
- 49 Rhyming tributes
- 52 "Platoon" setting, for short
- 53 Innards of a PC

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Puzzle answers on page 6

Canadian investor backs away from Alaska mine project

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) – A Canadian company that was courted as a potential partner in a proposed copper-and-gold mine near one of the world's largest salmon fisheries in Alaska has backed away from the project.

Northern Dynasty Minerals Ltd., which is seeking to develop the Pebble Mine project in southwest Alaska, said Friday that it was unable to finalize an agreement with First Quantum Minerals Ltd., the potential investor.

It was not immediately clear what happened or what this means for the project, which has a permit application pending with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Tom Collier is CEO of the Pebble

Limited Partnership, which is owned by Northern Dynasty. In a statement, he said Friday was "business as usual" for him, and that developers are "continuing to press forward."

He said he believes Pebble will secure the funding necessary to continue the permitting process.

A spokesman for First Quantum Minerals did not respond to a request for comment. The company posted on its website a release from Northern Dynasty that lacks specifics.

When the two companies announced talks in December, Philip Pascall, chairman and CEO of First Quantum Minerals, said in a release that the Pebble project is widely seen as "one of the out-

standing unmined copper projects in the world."

He said his company was "very aware of the environmental and social sensitivity of this project."

Critics of the project, which is located in Alaska's Bristol Bay region, hailed news of the fizzled deal. Bristol Bay produces about half of the world's sockeye salmon.

Joel Reynolds, Western director of the Natural Resources Defense Council, said in a statement that First Quantum Minerals did the right thing.

"We hope First Quantum's decision closes the door, once and for all, on this ill-conceived and uniquely reckless scheme," Reynolds said.

Northern Dynasty had been looking for a new partner since Anglo American PLC announced it was pulling out in 2013.

The Pebble Limited Partnership last year settled a long-running lawsuit with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that cleared the way for the company to seek permits for the mine project.

But the EPA has left open the possibility for future restrictions on development.

Collier earlier this year said the company will demonstrate that it can "successfully operate a mine without compromising the fish and water resources around the project."

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King Crossword — Answers

Solution time: 25 mins.

E	P	I	C	T	S	P	W	I	S	P
M	O	N	O	E	E	L	A	N	T	I
I	N	C	U	B	A	T	E	S	C	O
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S	A	G	A	E	M	U	E	N	D	S

Weekly SUDOKU — Answer

7	8	9	3	6	1	2	5	4
2	1	6	4	5	9	7	3	8
3	5	4	8	2	7	1	6	9
1	7	2	9	3	5	4	8	6
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5	9	8	6	4	2	3	7	1
9	2	5	7	1	6	8	4	3
4	6	1	2	8	3	5	9	7
8	3	7	5	9	4	6	1	2

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Alaska Fish Factor

By LAINE WELCH
Fisheries columnist

A nice pay day for Alaska salmon fishermen may be on the horizon

Forces are aligned for a nice pay day for Alaska's salmon fishermen.

There is no backlog from last season in cold storages, a lower harvest forecast is boosting demand, prices for competing farmed salmon have remained high all year, and a devalued U.S. dollar makes Alaska salmon more appealing to foreign customers.

"Over the past year the dollar has weakened 11 percent against the euro, 9 percent against the British pound, 5 percent against the Japanese yen, and 7 percent against the Chinese yuan. That makes Alaska salmon and other seafood more affordable to those top overseas customers," said Garrett Evridge, a fisheries analyst at the McDowell Group.

Last year Alaska seafood exports set records in terms of volume and value - 1.1 billion metric tons valued at \$3.45 bil-

lion. Alaska salmon accounted for 22 percent of the volume and 36 percent of the value.

On the home front, the weaker dollar will make imports from Chile, the largest farmed salmon importer to the U.S. followed by Norway, more expensive. That also will apply to imports of competing wild salmon from Canada where - if it materializes - a big sockeye run is predicted at nearby British Columbia.

"About every four years we expect a relatively large harvest from the Fraser River run in B.C. In 2014 they produced about 83 million pounds of salmon and sockeye was the largest component," Evridge said. "Likewise, a weaker dollar will make wild salmon imports from Russia and Japan more expensive for U.S. buyers."

Russia, which had grown from a \$10 million customer of primarily pink salmon roe to

\$60 million in 2013, has banned all imports of U.S. seafood since 2014. Meanwhile, that country continues to send millions of tons of salmon and other seafood into the U.S.

For example, 2017 trade data from the National Marine Fisheries Service show that Russia sent nearly four million pounds of frozen sockeye salmon to the U.S. valued at just over \$13 million, a \$2 million increase over the previous year.

Alaska's salmon forecast for 2018 calls for a harvest of 149 million fish, down 34 percent from last year.

Salmon starters - Copper River salmon fishermen were beached for a third scheduled opener on May 24 due to concerns over low numbers of sockeyes. The first fishery on May 17 produced a catch of just 1,900 reds out of an expected 38,600. For the second opener on May 21 the sockeye catch was 3,900 fish - predicted landings were 80,000. The king salmon take from the two 12-hour fisheries totaled 4,000 fish.

Fishery managers said it's too soon to say if the low numbers indicate a delay or a much smaller run than expected. The breakup of the Copper River is behind schedule and water levels are low. They also blame cold ocean temperatures for the delay in sockeye returns.

"We will know soon where we are in the early run, which usually peaks on June 1," said longtime fisherman Jerry McCune.

Latest prices at Copper River were reported at \$14 per pound for king salmon and \$10.50 for sockeyes after the second opener. That's down from \$15.65 for kings and \$10.65 for reds (or higher), plus delivery bonuses on opening day.

More salmon fisheries around the state will start kicking off within days, with other areas in Prince William Sound opening on May 31.

Districts at Lower Cook Inlet open June 1 with Upper Cook Inlet fisheries starting on June 18. Togiak at Bristol Bay also opens on June 1 with other Bay districts opening on June 4; the Nushagak district opens on June 11.

Chignik also is set to open for sockeyes on June 1. Yakutat gillnetters will get to fish starting June 7, as will salmon fishermen at the South Alaska Peninsula.

Kodiak's first opener for sockeyes is tentatively scheduled for June 9 but could open as early as June 1 depending on runs to the west side.

Southeast Alaska drift gillnet openings start on June 17.

Once again there is unlikely to be any commercial salmon fishing at the Kuskokwim due to a lack of buyers since the new plant at Platinum stopped

Subsistence permits now available online

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game announced on Friday it would begin to allow subsistence and personal use salmon permit participants to access their permits online.

Online availability was established as a result of user feedback, with the intention of streamlining and simplifying the permitting process. A single, regionwide permit has been created that will allow bearers the opportunity to harvest salmon through the waters of Southeast Alaska and Yakutat.

Permits are still free, available online at www.adfg.alaska.gov/store/. Permit holders are reminded to download and review specific conditions pertaining to the areas they intend to fish before they begin harvesting activities. Permit holders must sign their permit in ink to make it valid and have it in their possession while taking part in those fisheries.

Due to the move to online permits, the permit itself can no longer be used as a proxy form. Qualifying permit holders who want another resident to fish for them by proxy will now require an additional proxy fishing information form, available at ADFG area offices.

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operating a few years ago.

Norton Sound opens to salmon fishing on June 25 and Kotzebue on July 10. At the Yukon River, commercial fishing for chums will be based on in-season run estimates. As many as 1.4 million chums could be available to Yukon fishermen this summer, and 1.2 million in the fall.

Find links to regional salmon summaries at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's commercial fisheries page.

Big chill in the Bay - Salmon fishermen at Bristol Bay set a record last summer for chilling their fish.

Despite an unexpected hit of one of the biggest sockeye runs in 20 years, 73 percent of the salmon deliveries by the region's 1,447 driftnet boats were chilled, adding up to a record 130 million pounds of salmon. That's a five percent increase over the previous year and compares to a 24 percent chilling rate from 2008.

In addition, chilled raw product purchase amounts from the set net fleet increased by more than 33 percent.

That good news came from the annual 2017 Processor Survey done by Anchorage-based Northern Economics for the Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association. The RSDA is operated and funded by the drift fleet with a one percent tax on their catches.

The better fish quality meant most of the salmon shifted away from the low value canning line into pricier products.

Last year a record 83 percent of the sockeyes were put up whole/headed and gutted, or as fillets - only 14 percent of the Bay's sockeye salmon last summer went into cans. That com-

pared to upwards of 75 percent being canned 20 years ago.

When asked if there are any notable quality improvements gained from chilled, floated fish in RSW systems (refrigerated sea water) compared to chilled, non-floated fish in slush ice, all respondents said the quality of RSW salmon is typically better.

Consistent chilling combined with lower brailer weights (500-600 pounds or less per bag) were reported as the best practices having the largest impact on the quality of delivered fish.

So what's the big deal about Bristol Bay salmon if you fish or live elsewhere?

"The sockeye resource at Bristol bay is very unique because of its size. Typically, it's 35 to 40 percent of the global sockeye supply, and it is a huge chunk of Alaska's salmon value overall," said fisheries economist Andy Wink.

Last year, Bristol Bay's nearly 37 million sockeye catch accounted for fully half of the value of Alaska's entire salmon fishery, and a similar harvest is expected this summer.

The size of that harvest, Wink said, has a big impact on salmon prices elsewhere.

"Certainly in 2015 when the base price was just 50 cents at Bristol Bay and they had a large harvest, we saw coho prices come way down and sockeye prices in other areas were down quite a bit too," he explained. "It's a market moving fishery and that is why it affects so many other Alaska fishermen even if they don't fish in the Bay."

The 2017 sockeye salmon price at Bristol Bay averaged \$1.02 a pound, a six-cent increase over the year before, and the price is expected to be higher this summer.

City open to discuss nuisances, flushing new filter idea

By DAN RUDY
Sentinel writer

Wrangell is still preparing to deal with nuisance abatement, though it will be approaching with an amiable cautiousness.

City manager Lisa Von Barga updated the City and Borough Assembly last week on progress so far made in reducing the various collections of junk and scrap to be seen around town. City code proscribes such gatherings, both on public and private property. The Port Commission has long had in its sights the removal of abandoned vehicles from its harbor facility parking lots, and since last fall the city assembly has taken a similar interest in the wider town's appearance.

Around 20 property owners have been contacted by letter this year, letting them know they are out of compliance. Rather than pursue the matter militantly, Von Barga reported that everyone who has been contacted by letter and is still out of compliance will soon be called up by phone and invited to chat about things face to face. The letters that were issued earlier were very broad, she explained, and do not lay out the particulars of what might be considered to be in violation of code.

On the city's side of things, Von Barga noted its own code could use some cleaning up with regard to nuisances. For starters, it is not terribly specific about what constitutes a nuisance, and does not clearly lay out the proceedings for how to remediate identified problems. This could weaken the city's position if a dispute ended up being taken to court. She also recommended the assembly adopt the most recent International Building Code, a standard held by many municipalities nationwide. Wrangell's last

adopted version was based on 1997's, and an update could have the added bonus of benefiting holders of homeowners insurance.

As far as tackling individual properties, Von Barga suggested taking the initiative piecemeal, focusing first on three or four properties in the city's "visual corridor," or those seen most often. There will be some variety to the selections, with one "a very large" nuisance and another a relatively small one.

In other waste matters, the city's sanitation services will finally end its free scrap initiative, which for seven months encouraged residents to part with their old metal by waiving dump fees. Scrapping firm Channel Construction recently completed another collection of materials from the waste transfer yard, including several junk vehicles.

Metals moved, the department will next focus on household hazardous waste with its annual collection drive. Though times are yet to be set, staff will be at the sanitation center on June 15 and 16 for collection of paints, chemicals and other potentially harmful or unusual wastes.

Assembly members were also informed that a pilot feature being tested at the local water treatment plant has performed below expectations and will likely not be pursued on a larger scale. A Forsta-model self-flushing filter unit was being explored as a possible replacement for the plant's existing roughing filter setup. A preliminary part of the filtration process, the cur-

rent filters have a tendency to clog up and waste a considerable amount of water in the clearing process.

For six weeks the new filter unit was tested on a small scale to gauge how well it would perform using Wrangell's water. Contracting with CRW Engineers, the city learned the system's test results came back poorly. Not only did it need to flush itself often, which ended up wasting comparable amounts of water to the current filter setup, but the quality of water obtained was of lesser quality. Under the circumstances, Public Works director Amber Al-Haddad recommended seeking other alternatives.

Looking ahead to the summer season's increased demand, Public Works' water department has already started one of its two full-time seasonal workers needed to boost production. In an effort to keep up on labor-intensive maintenance during last year's rush, the department had taken on four temporary workers in addition to its permanent staff. That proved to be more than was necessary, so only two were requested this year.

Also an experiment in efficiency last year, the sand filtration bays will be cleaned by plunging them, which proved more useful than the previous stirring method. Left to themselves, the sand material in each bay will quickly clog during a rush, and bays have to be cleaned regularly by the department's staff to keep on top of demand.

City staff are still pursuing funding sources for a new

water treatment facility, one based on dissolved air filtration rather than traditional media. A grant application to the Economic Development Administration was sent off on May 14. If approved, the \$2.98 million it would yield would allow the city to purchase and install the \$9.1 million plant, for which it has already secured \$3.82 million in loans and another \$3.16 million in grants. The remainder would come out of local reserves.

Coming off from a water conservation watch earlier last month, Al-Haddad reported water reserves at the reservoir are again at capacity. Levels have been aided by a combination of reduced demand and wetter weather, while the filtration process has benefited from the cleaner water coming from full reservoirs. When they run low, sediment collected at the bottoms tend to raise overall turbidity.

In an update on capital projects, Von Barga reported bids

for the rebuild at Shoemaker Bay Harbor are scheduled to be publicly opened on June 5, inside City Hall. Meanwhile a construction schedule for the rehabilitation of Evergreen Avenue has not been submitted by the primary contractor. However, mobilization for the project is anticipated to start sometime next week.

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