

Interim boro manager named, Assembly pays hospital revisit

By DAN RUDY
Sentinel writer

The City and Borough Assembly confirmed its selection of an interim borough manager to serve after Jeff Jabusch retires from the position March 31.

He announced his plans to retire last September, putting an end to four decades

of service to the city. In his stead, economic director Carol Rushmore has been named to serve as interim manager. As part of the arrangement, the Assembly agreed she will be paid an extra stipend for the months of March, April, and however long it might take for the transition to resolve itself. Funds would be paid from the vacant posi-

tion's salary.

Beginning in October, one round of searching already passed by without naming a successor to the appointed post. A pool of 25 candidates yielded four main candidates, three of whom dropped out before the in-person interview set for February 14.

"We lost two prime candidates because we took too long," noted Assembly member Mark Mitchell. In the time between the announcement, the close date, initial phone and Skype interviews and the final session, applicants found new employment.

"I think that was one problem this last time. The process was too slow," agreed Mayor David Jack.

Clerk Kim Lane explained she had already begun getting in responses to the rerun job offer, and was making candidates aware that the process would be timely. "They know it's going to be a quicker turnaround."

A close date of March 15 has already been given for the position, and a special meeting for the Assembly to interview candidates telephonically scheduled for the 20th. Assemblyman David Powell wanted any in-person interviews to happen at most the week after conducting them remotely via telephone or Skype.

Assembly member Stephen Prysunka added his opinion that it would be good for the process to be more hospitable to visiting candidates. No public meet-and-greet or community events had been arranged for the previous round of candidates, which he felt seemed unwelcoming.

Fellow members were of a similar mind, and after discussing it thought a public reception would do well after the interviews in executive session were over. Previously, they had opted to only have a closed-door interview with the final round of candidates, citing privacy considerations.

Also on its plate, the Assembly reviewed a cost analysis of Wrangell Medical Center's continued contract with TruBridge, an Alabama-based service which has handled its billing since July 2015. The arrangement was made for two years, during which time the company would earn 2.2 percent of every dollar it collected on behalf of the hospital.

Citing various benefits, including a substantial reduction in WMC's accounts receivable and aged accounts (a comprehensive review of the analysis was published in last week's *Sentinel*), the hospital reported it would cost two and a half times as much in the first year to train local staff to cover similar duties than it would to renew the TruBridge contract. Subsequent years could vary, with an 11-percent savings for in-house staffing measured against the loss of access to the company's expertise.

After reviewing the submitted assessment, Assembly members shared some anecdotal gripes and praise alike about the new service, but Patty Gilbert pointed out financially the arrangement "pencils out."

"This is what I was looking for," commented Prysunka. He thought the report addressed his questions about the contract, and was pleased with the hospital board's

effort.

"I'm really pleased to hear what you're saying," commented WMC Board member Barb Conine, participating over the phone. She attested to the company's efficiencies when responding to coding errors, and following up claims through secondary or tertiary providers and beyond before timing out.

The Assembly then heard from Southeast Alaska Rural Health Consortium senior vice-president Dan Neumeister and Alaska Island Community Services director Mark Walker regarding the former provider's planned absorption of the latter.

The merger was initially set for the beginning of February, but was delayed due to accounting considerations. AICS staff have still gotten a planned three-percent pay raise, and the arrangement is expected to formalize toward the end of this month.

The two clinical executives had come to follow up on discussions they had with the Assembly in January about transferring the statutory warranty deed for the AICS clinic property over to SEARHC. Questions were raised about the future of the clinic under new ownership, its continued cooperative relationship with WMC, and the transfer's effect on healthcare and the local economy.

Neumeister pointed out a renewed draft cooperation agreement between SEARHC, the city and its hospital to continue collaboration. On a question of whether the clinic would continue to pay property taxes, as SEARHC is a tribal entity, he said: "We're putting that in writing very specifically."

On questions as to whether the Wood Street clinic property could or should return to the city as part of the deed's reversionary clause, or whether additional conditions be added to it before transfer, Walker made clear his opinion he had lived up to its end of the agreement.

"I believe AICS met that condition by building that clinic," he said.

On the other hand, the clinic had been constructed there in 2010 with the expectation of WMC building a new hospital on the neighboring parcel. That effort has subsequently gone unfulfilled. Since the clinic's construction, Walker pointed out there were significant costs to developing the land and – left on its own, without an accompanying hospital facility to partner with – the undesirability of the Wood Street location. Paving to the location was only completed last year, and Walker said there has been "a significant ongoing cost" in terms of lost productivity and revenue from the clinic's commitment to WMC from afar.

"We didn't want to move there if we were going to be alone," he said.

However, he also renewed AICS' pledge to continue cooperating with Wrangell Medical Center after the merger. The arrangement will also have the benefit of enhanced reimbursement from the federal government – a point not to be lost as Alaska deals with its ongoing budget deficit. Walker reminded the Assembly that rolled back funding sources can be expected at the state level, but that additional revenues at the federal level should help keep revenues on track.



DAN RUDY / WRANGELL SENTINEL

A father and daughter explore some of the mysteries of the universe at the "Women in Science" table, during Thursday's Education Fair at the high school.

Education fair shows off district's higher tech

By DAN RUDY
Sentinel writer

The high school gymnasium was abuzz with activity late last week, as parents and students of all ages descended on the first annual Education Fair.

Open to the public, the event drew in visitors with door prizes and refreshments, and drew their eyes to 20 different tables and displays that highlight what's going on with Wrangell Public School District. Presentations included the schools' Spanish and Tlingit language programs, migrant education, music and other arts programs, and the annual LeConte Glacier survey.

"This is a great opportunity to show off all the things that are happening," said educator Mikki Angerman, who helped put the event together. She pointed out that most if not all of these programs were made possible through the support of parents and other volunteers from the wider community.

A number of school staff had recently returned from the Alaska Society for Technology in Education (ASTE) conference in Anchorage the preceding week, so tech was one of the big talking points of the February 23 fair.

Angerman showed off the sleek Cube 3D-printer she won as a door prize during the conference. Her goal is to use it to introduce students at Evergreen Elementary School to the technology. Students at the middle and high schools have already been using printers of their own for several years, and the devices have expansive applications in industrial fields and beyond.

WPSD information technology director Matt Gore explained 3D printing is just one facet of the wider array of technology available to students. They already have

Continued on page 8

Birthdays & Anniversaries

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

Thursday, March 2:

Caleigh Miller, Ron Sowle Sr., Ella Guggenbickler, **Anniversary:** Jim and Juli Gillen, **Friday, March 3:**

Brodie Gardner, Nicole Webster, Dave Galla, Josh Rice, Sig Decker, Zerek Popherson, Beth Comstock,

Saturday, March 4: Andy Morse, Donna Louks, Rudy Briskar Jr., Holly Lentz, Betsy McConachie, Angela Allen, Alan L. Cummings, Alan Fennimore, Sherry Bond, Judy Guggenbickler, Samuel Comstock, **Anniversary:** Dude and Debbie Torvend, **Sunday, March 5:**

Kevin Roope, Chris Feller, Jessica Davidson, Pat Warfel, Lucy Robinson, **Anniversary:** Jim and Elsie Bailey,

Monday March 6: Andy Mickle, Sierra Ely, Carly Olson, Michael Lockabey, **Anniversary:** Mike and Gail Ottesen,

Tuesday, March 7: Jack Keller, Peter J. Moody, Delilah Clark, Erin Allen,

Wednesday, March 8: Shannon Keso, Ruth Warfel, Rhonda Edgley, Carter Hammer,

Thursday March 9: Tanner Thomassen, Jerry Massin, Clayton Howe, Julie Allen, Ashley Young

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

Senior Center Menu

Friday, March 3:

Chef salad with egg and cheese, hot roll

Please call Wrangell Senior Center at 874-2066 by 10 a.m. for reservations. Milk, tea and coffee will be served with meals.

Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

Thursday, March 2

Story Time: 10 a.m. Public Library. Join us for stories, crafts and snacks.

SAIL Class: 10 a.m. Senior Apartments Atrium. Stay Active and Independent for Life (SAIL) free class is a strength, balance and fitness class for adults 65+. For more info call 874-3375.

Healthy Eating Demo on Healthy Food Preparation: 11:30 a.m. Senior Apartments Atrium. Free class. Learn how easy it is to prepare healthy and delicious food. Samples will be available. For more info call 874-3375.

Yoga: 5:30 p.m. AICS Medical Clinic. Yoga for everybody, please come and join.

Wrangell Chautauqua: 7 p.m. Nolan Center. Peru Adventure, presented by Girl Scout Troop #4156.

Wrangell Fish and Game Advisory Committee: 7 p.m. Fire Hall. Wrangell Fish and Game Advisory Committee meeting agenda includes proposals on the Federal designated hunter program and Wrangell Borough shooting sports improvements. All are invited.

Stikine Stitchers: 7 p.m. St. Philips Episcopal Parish Hall. Wrangell Quilters Club monthly meeting.

Saturday, March 4

The House Finance Committee: 9 am - 10 am public testimony on Hb 57-approp: operating budget/loans/funds and HB 59-approp:mental health budget at the Legislative Information Office which is located in the Kadin Building.

Monday, March 6

Yoga: 5:30 p.m. AICS Medical Clinic. Yoga for everybody, please come and join.

Wrangell Emblem Club Meeting #87: 6:30 p.m. Upstairs of the Elks. Wrangell Emblem Club #87 monthly meeting.

Tuesday, March 7

SAIL Class: 10 a.m. Senior Apartments Atrium. Stay Active and Independent for Life (SAIL) free class is a strength, balance and fitness class for adults.

Is the attendance at your meeting or event low? Call Adrienne at the Sentinel to have it placed here.

Continuing Events

PARKS & REC ACTIVITIES: Lap Swim: M, W, F 6:00-7:30 a.m. & 5:00-6:00 p.m., M-F 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., S 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.; **Arthritis Foundation Exercise Class:** at the Pool: M, W, F, 9:00-10:00 a.m.; **Water Aerobics:** M, W, F 10:00-11:00 a.m.; **Family Swim:** F 6:00-7:00 p.m.; **General Swim:** M & W 6:00-7:00 p.m., F 7:00-8:00 p.m., S 1:00-2:00 p.m.; **Weight Room:** M-TH 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. **Extra 2 Lane Lap Swim:** M-W-F 10:00-11:00 a.m.

OTHER MEETINGS/ACTIVITIES/EVENTS:

AA Meetings: Tu. 7 p.m., Toss Off Th. 7 p.m., Smoked Fish F 8 p.m., Step Study Sat. 7 p.m. at the Episcopal Church Parish Hall, Study Materials provided. Wed. M & M 12 p.m. at the Catholic Parish Hall, use back entrance.

NA Meeting: Wednesday, We Do Recover, 8 p.m. at the Episcopal Church Parish Hall.

Bridge Social: F, 1 p.m. at th Island of Faith Lutheran Church 874-3440, 874-3507.

Salvation Army Food Bank: Tuesday, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. For information or questions please call Major Michael Bates at 874-3753.

The Way We Were

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

March 1, 1917: The most important social event that has occurred in Wrangell recently was the annual ball given last Thursday evening in commemoration of Washington's Birthday. There was a good attendance. The music by the Wrangell band was never better, and the lunch was all that could have been desired. Every one seemed in just the right mood to enjoy dancing and entered into the light fantastic with an eagerness which showed that they were glad that the annual event was once more at hand. It may be said that the animation continued throughout the evening

until the strains of Home, Sweet Home announced the last dancing number. Mayor J.G. Grant acted as floor manager and discharged the task in his usual successful manner. It requires no small amount of work to arrange for an event such as was the firemen's annual ball The committee on arrangement which handled the affair so successfully this year was composed of Harold Duggan, chairman, E.J. La Bounty, Ernest Campbell, N. Nussbaumer and Louis Olson. The receipts were \$124.15, but the fire boys were so intent in making the affair a pleasant one that they expended almost the entire amount in getting up the affair.

February 27, 1942: J.R. Brown, Wrangell Civilian Defense Director and for 11 years manager of the Coliseum theater here, sailed south Sunday night on the Princess boat, intending to rejoin the Army in which he served for several years before entering civilian activity in Alaska. He hopes to enter Air Corps. Before signing up, Brownie expects to spend some time in Seattle and going east to visit relatives and friends in his old home in Missouri. He has resigned as Civilian Defense head, effective March 1, and Mayor E.J. Wheeler said today he was giving consideration to a successor and would make an appointment shortly. Brown also severed his connection with the Coliseum and Fred Cunningham, well known Wrangell man, has been named by the owner W.D.

Gross of Juneau as his replacement.

February 24, 1967: B.J. Canty, who was with the local school system for two years has been touring Japan and adjacent areas. He has been in the Merchant Marine for the past two months and is presently in Saigon. He is doing fine and wishes to be remembered to his friends here, he reported in a letter to Lawrence Bahovec.

February 27, 1992: In a recent test of trolling gear, a locally handmade product made an impression. Ira Merrill has created a piece of fishing tackle he calls Wrangell Rainbows. The Wrangell Rainbows is an insert

that is used in conjunction with hootchie lures. The inserts come in a variety of colors, and help draw the fish's attention to the lure, which it sits under. The inserts can also be used by themselves, but Merrill said they don't last as long when you use them that way. Merrill said he uses as many as six colors to produce the inserts, while commercially produced inserts may consist of only one color. Combining the colors is where Merrill's skill as an artist comes in. It's not necessarily a matter of convincing six different colors, it's a subtle blending of different shades of the same color.

FERRY SCHEDULE

Departures

Northbound

Saturday, March 4

Matanuska 1:30 a.m.

Sunday, March 5

Malaspina 6:15 p.m.

Tuesday, March 7

Matanuska 10:30 p.m.

Saturday, March 11

Matanuska 6:00 a.m.

Sunday, March 12

Malaspina 6:15 p.m.

Southbound

Friday, March 3

Matanuska 10:15 a.m.

Monday, March 6

Matanuska 8:15 a.m.

Wednesday, March 8

Malaspina 6:30 a.m.

Friday, March 10

Matanuska 10:30 a.m.

Sunday, March 13

Matanuska 3:45 p.m.

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



TIDES TABLE March 2 - March 9

	High Tides				Low Tides			
	AM		PM		AM		PM	
	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
Mar. 2	3:02	17.4	3:24	16.0	9:07	-0.5	9:19	0.2
Mar. 3	3:43	17.1	4:14	14.7	9:56	-0.2	10:05	1.5
Mar. 4	4:30	16.4	5:17	13.4	10:53	0.5	10:59	2.9
Mar. 5	5:30	15.6	6:39	12.4	-----	----	12:01	1.1
Mar. 6	6:47	15.0	8:09	12.5	0:07	4.1	1:21	1.3
Mar. 7	8:10	15.1	9:26	13.3	1:30	4.8	2:46	0.9
Mar. 8	9:24	15.8	10:27	14.5	2:59	4.3	3:59	0.0
Mar. 9	10:56	16.6	11:18	15.7	4:11	3.2	4:56	-0.9



Wrangell Weather

Date	High	Low
February 19	37	24
February 20	35	24
February 21	37	26
February 22	33	24
February 23	35	26
February 24	37	24
February 25	37	32
February 26	35	26



Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Daylight
Mar. 2	6:39a	5:22p	10:43h
Mar. 3	6:37a	5:24p	10:47h
Mar. 4	6:34a	5:26p	10:52h
Mar. 5	6:32a	5:29p	10:57h
Mar. 6	6:29a	5:31p	11:02h
Mar. 7	6:27a	5:33p	11:06h
Mar. 8	6:24a	5:35p	11:11h
Mar. 9	6:22a	5:37p	11:15h

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Southeast Conference to review ferry sustainability fixes

By DAN RUDY
Sentinel writer

When Southeast Conference meets for its annual Mid-Session Summit in Juneau later this month, among the items high on its list for discussion is the structural reform of Alaska's ferry system.

Southeast Alaskans have become dependent on the state's Marine Highway System since its establishment in 1959, essentially becoming their road network into and out of the region. It is a significant economic driver for the coastal communities it services as well, with an estimated impact of just over \$103 million in direct and induced influence in 2014. Though figures for 2016 are still being prepared, the service estimates it transported 288,133 passengers, 100,547 vehicles, and 3,688 vans through 2015.

Faced with multibillion-dollar deficits to reduce the past several fiscal years, the state Legislature has taken big bites out of agency funding across the board, which has been affecting the ferry system's operations.

For FY2017, the AMHS budget for marine operations was at \$140 million, including fuel costs, management, marketing and other costs. That comes to close to a quarter of the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities operating budget, according to Office of Management and Budget totals. That total is also comparable to the entire Highways, Aviation and Facilities budget, at just over \$159 million.

The 2018 fiscal year budget draft put forward by Gov. Bill Walker's office has called for an additional operational reduction of 1.2 weeks from the current year, bringing the system down to 334 weeks overall. Under the proposal, the Taku and Chenega would be under layup, including the 177 vessel positions that would otherwise be needed to run them.

The latest cuts would represent a 17.3-percent reduction since FY2013, and the resulting schedule is about equal to that of a decade earlier, when the system ran two fewer ships. Overall though, the governor's budget would only be a \$2.5 million decrease from the previous year. What the final week count will actually be is still in the air, as the Alaska Senate and House each work on versions of their own budget.

Falling revenues for the state

in recent years and a multibillion-dollar budget deficit has caught up with more than a decade where the ferry system has failed to cover at least half its operating costs through collected fares. With the exception of a sharp uptick in operating costs in 2001, up until 2004 AMHS was recouping at least half its operating costs. Those costs began rising the next year, spiking sharply in 2006 and rising further in 2011.

While annual revenues through fares also rose, the change was slight compared to the added costs. The report highlights the 12-year period from FY95 to FY07, where the system experienced a 96-percent growth in operational expenses with only a 15-percent growth in revenue, resulting in a 340-percent increase in state subsidies. The disparity was tolerable while the state brought in regular budget surpluses, which after a high of \$10 billion for FY12 over a \$5.8 billion operating budget, began to reverse dramatically in subsequent years.

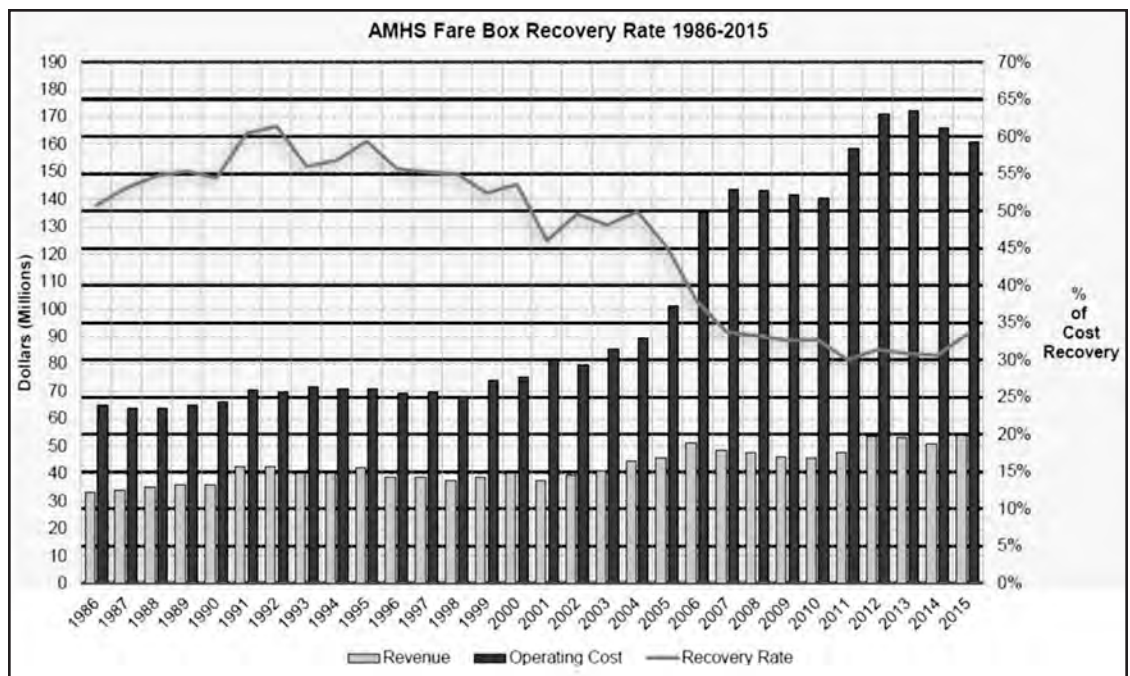
In light of this, last May the office of Gov. Bill Walker tasked SEC with revitalizing the state's maritime transportation network, the first part of a two-phase process to chart the future course of AMHS. A committee was formed and consultants taken on in order to develop a sustainable operational model for the system, while minimizing the impacts of budget cuts to the service.

A final draft report prepared ahead of the upcoming March 14 meeting was released in November last year, and looks at both the service's organizational structure and business model. The report was developed by consultancies Elliott Bay Design Group in Seattle and Juneau's McDowell Group.

"There's a lot of moving parts and pieces to consider," explained Shelly Wright, SEC executive director.

To start with, the AMHS reform study report looked at some of the systemic problems affecting the ferry network. Conferring with system employees, its authors found some complaints with its current governance model. These include schedule instability from funding uncertainty, caused by legislative jockeying during budget season. Scheduling is made even more precarious by a diverse and aging fleet.

"The biggest issue with AMHS is the schedule instability caused by funding uncertainty," the



SUBMITTED ILLUSTRATION

The above chart compares revenues taken in by the Marine Highway System each year in fares to its operating budget, in millions of dollars (at left). The flowing line (measured at right) gauges the percentage of cost recovery, or the proportion of operating costs covered by fares.

report's authors reiterated. Without stable funding sources, it becomes difficult to schedule routes, prepare for disruptions, and plan for the system's long-term operation and capital needs.

More than its budget, the report found political influence on the ferry system's management to be disruptive as well, leading to frequent turnover in important leadership positions. Given greater authority and responsibility, the report concludes management would be better able to conduct the business of a multimillion-dollar agency. Allowing AMHS to directly negotiate with workers unions would also be of help. Currently, negotiations are undertaken by the Department of Administration as a third-party.

One of the report's recommendations would be fewer political appointments, leading to greater consistency in management. At most it allowed for an appointed deputy commissioner that is separate from a general manager.

The report's composing team looked at six basic governance models that would be applicable to AMHS: the line agency (how it has been run since 1983), shared public/private corporation, public authority, public corporation, private corporation, and transportation district. Each of these approaches have strengths and weaknesses to them, and the report's composing team managed to hone in on three more detailed case studies for the purpose of comparison: the British Columbia Ferry System, Massachusetts Steamship Authority, and Caledonian MacBrayne in Scotland.

Comparing their example to the opportunities available to Alaska, the project team suggested the following three governance actions:

- **Create a Public Corporation.** Advantages of transitioning AMHS to a public corporation model include a businesslike approach to running the system and the inclusion of private sector expertise, leadership and accountability. This model has the greatest degree of support and suitability, although it will take additional time and resources to explore the operational details, establish the legislative frame-

work, and transition to the new structure.

- **Continue State Ownership of Assets.** State ownership of the assets – terminals, vessels, and support facilities – would allow continued access to federal and state funding for capital and maintenance expenses. The state could coordinate AMHS capital requirements with other transportation projects, through the Alaska Statewide Transportation Improvement Program.

- **Interim Enhancement as a Line Agency of State Government.** Until the public corporation has been established, AMHS would benefit financially by some key changes to its role as a line agency. The recommended changes include forward funding for predictability of service levels, direct control over labor negotiations, and increasing use of revenue management tools.

These in mind, the report recommended the Alaska Legislature consider as a first step separation of AMHS into two entities. The first would be a public corporation owned by the state, operating the system's vessels and terminals. The second would be an asset management group contained within a state line agency, such as ADOT&PF.

Until these could be implemented, the report recommends forward-funding the system from 12 to 18 months in advance, granting AMHS management direct control over the system's sizable labor costs by transferring human resource activities from DOA to AMHS, and allowing management flexibility "to grow revenue through dynamic pricing and partnering with other tourism businesses."

To be hammered out yet, Wright explained the second phase of the AMHS reform project will be considerably more complex, involving a variety of technical committees.

"It'll be a bigger, broader process with more people contributing directly," she said. Their task will be development of strategic business and operational plans based on the aforementioned governance structure changes.

Before SEC members head to Petersburg next weekend for its Mid-Session Summit, members of the public still have an opportunity to review and comment on the proposal. The report and link to comment are both available online at www.seconference.org/amhs-updates/seeking-input-draft-amhs-governance-report.

Police report

Monday, February 20

Report of Theft.

Tuesday, February 21

Report of Suspicious Person.
Citizen Assist: Vehicle unlocked.

Wednesday, February 22

Driving Complaint: UTL.

Thursday, February 23

Arrested on charges of Bench Warrant: Ryan Claggett, 22.
Driving Complaint: Speeding.
Missing Juvenile: Juvenile came home.

Friday, February 24

Arrested on charges of Assault IV/DV: April Dianne Larson, 37.

Saturday, February 25

Agency Assist/PW
Arrested on charges of Assault IV/DV: Dana Cawthorne, 34.

Sunday, February 26

Agency Assist: Power: Line Crew was requested.

There were two ambulance calls and three dog complaints during this week.



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State Senator Stedman talks ferries, budget and oil tax credits

By **RON LOESCH**
Sentinel publisher

PETERSBURG — State Senator Bert Stedman predicts the legislature will be in session for a full 120 days with an additional 30 day session if they are to complete their work this session.

“There’s a lot of talk of the 90 day session but the constitution calls for 121 days.

“We’ve only finished in 90 days one time,” Stedman noted.

Stedman was in Petersburg this past weekend to attend the Chamber of Commerce Annual Banquet along with his wife Lureen.

Stedman said there is a “near zero chance of a 90 day session with any quality work being accomplished.”

The Senator said it will take

probably a couple more years before the state budget issues are fully resolved.

“We’re not a homogenous group by any means. There will be a multi-year step approach to get out of this budget downturn,” Stedman predicted about his fellow legislators.

Stedman explained that government has to shrink more before an income tax is brought forth. The Rail Belt wants to implement sales taxes while Coastal Alaska is more inclined to have an income tax, because they already have sales taxes in many communities. Implementing a statewide sales tax is a huge concern, “because we would have Amazon.com instead of Main Street.”

Stedman says, “There is no way out of this without help

from the Permanent Fund.”

That help has been under debate for the past two weeks.

He noted that the state has \$4.2 billion in cash and needs \$1.5 to 2 billion to operate. “Those that say stay out of the permanent fund are literally saying let’s shut the state down on July 1, 2019 and that’s unacceptable,” Stedman emphasized.

“Agencies need to come forward with programs they can eliminate. We can’t just reduce everybody’s budget,” he added.

Ferries: While the two new Southeast ferries now under construction in the Ketchikan shipyard are funded with appropriations Stedman put in place while chairing the Finance Committee, the discussion now

is over whether the replacement vessel for the Tustemena can be built in the Ketchikan yard.

“I think they can. We’ll build them ourselves. We, the people of Alaska own that shipyard... it’s managed by Vigor,” Stedman stated.

On a positive note, the new federal highway bill contains Capital funds for the Alaska Dept. of Transportation and the Alaska Marine Highway System. A bill signed by the Obama administration will pump close to \$3 billion into ADOT for the next five years. Stedman said, “It will be for

Continued on page 5

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Incumbents retain seats in WCA election

Wrangell Cooperative Association held its annual election for the Tribal Council on February 22.

Open to members, a total of 68 ballots were counted, including four absentee and eight question ballots. Turnout was down by about a dozen members from the previous year, possibly due to the election being rescheduled from the previous week.

Every year, half of the eight-member council is up for re-election, with members serving two-year seats. The results shown here are preliminary, to be validated at Tuesday evening’s Tribal Council meeting. Officerships then would be decided for the year’s president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer.

Luella Knapp (incumbent)	47
Pres. Richard Oliver (incumbent)	47
Lovey Brock (incumbent)	36
Sam Campus	36
Tis Peterman (write-in)	31
Ty Harding (write-in)	11
Einar Haaseth (write-in)	1
Jana Wright (write-in)	1
Brooks Leslie (write-in)	1

Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

I want to thank the Wrangell Sentinel for printing Ivan Simonek’s letter to the editor in the February 2 edition. The letter was well written and I think 100% right and needed to be said.

Ivan was comparing Russian communism to what is happening in America today. What is happening in America today I call American communism and it is alive and well. Vladimir Lenin once said that liberals are useful idiots. Jon Gruber, an architect of Obamacare, said that the reason Obamacare passed was because of non transparency and stupid voters. I think the definition of stupid is dumb on purpose.

I think America fulfills the 10 planks of communism. Donald Trump surprised the democrat party, establishment republicans, and the mass media with his win in the November election. The Brexit vote in England are hopeful signs to me that the chains of big government are being cast off the people. Big governments have passed out a lot of sugar to buy votes so it will not be an easy fight. Take a look at the liberal modern poster child of Hugo Chavez and Venezuela. They have achieved the equality of misery.

Steve Murphy

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Senator Stedman

Continued from page 4
capital projects not operations. But that frees up cash flow for the AMHS."

Finance committee meetings last week were appalling Stedman said. State DOT funding was cut by 1/3 and the AMHS budget was cut by 2/3.

"It's all about the money... we don't have the political clout to fight the rail belt," he added.

"My colleagues in the Railbelt want the \$80 million in ferry funding for use in road projects in Anchorage and the Mat Su Valley," according to Stedman.

SE Conference Proposal: Stedman has yet to talk with the S.E. Conference about their proposal to revamp the AMHS operation into a system that is operated like a business with State money.

Management can't respond

to labor and scheduling matters fast enough with continual cuts to the system.

"How are you going to replicate the \$80 million subsidy? How do you deal with the labor unions? It's a virtual partnership and it's very difficult to de-link the two. You can't fire all the union employees and go non-union. That's heresy. It's more complicated than that. I'm very skeptical of that plan," Stedman said.

"I'd rather fight the financial battle year by year," Stedman concluded.

Budget Requests: Folks lobbying for funds in Juneau, were starting to, "get it" for the past couple of years, according to Stedman.

He still wants to see the capital project priority lists from each community. "I want to see the infrastructure needs of the

community. It's a good exercise," he added.

"Clearly K-12 funding is a constitutional obligation as well as a moral one," said Stedman.

"We need to educate our kids. We can't have a group of students with a second rate education. Public Safety, Courts, Prosecutors, Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game all have critical funding needs.

As far as priorities he said even though they provide emergency services for local communities, public radio is way down the list. "The quicker they can be self-sustaining, the better," Stedman added.

Oil Taxes: "The tax structure for the oil industry will change. It's unsustainable. We can't afford the credits and it doesn't cash flow," said Stedman.

The Smith Bay project near Prudhoe Bay has been described

as the largest oil find in Alaska in over 40 years. Smith Bay developers are talking of a project of up to 300,000 barrels a day in a find located a little west of Prudhoe. "It's a big deal," said Stedman.

"It will probably take \$6-7 billion to open up. We were paying 75 percent of the development costs. This year it goes to 35% of their costs. We cannot afford to pay 35 percent of 6-7-8 billion dollars with no cash flow coming in, other than to take it out of the permanent fund and that's absolutely unacceptable. Even the industry realizes we have to change the structure," said Stedman.

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Unleaded gas prices posted Tuesday, February 228	

CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL

Pursuant to the City & Borough of Wrangell Code, Sec. 3.04.808, notice is hereby given that the regular assembly meetings of the assembly shall be held on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month. The meetings shall be held at 7:00 p.m., in the Assembly Chambers, City Hall, Wrangell. If any such Tuesday shall fall on a legal holiday as defined by the laws of the State of Alaska, the meetings scheduled for that day shall be held at the same hour on the next succeeding day which is not a holiday. Separate notice for the regular council meetings shall not be required. There will be no regular meetings the second Tuesday in July and August and fourth Tuesday in December.

Kim Lane, Borough Clerk
City of Wrangell, Alaska
Publish: March 2, 2017

WRANGELL LITTLE LEAGUE Registrations!!



WHEN:
March 11th & March 18th, 2017

WHERE:
Carving Shed (Across from Zak's Cafe)

TIME:
10:00 AM - 1:00PM

• Costs- Registration: \$30 or \$50/family • Uniform deposit \$20
Deposit for uniforms are due at the time of registration

Castle Mountain Entertainment Presents

There will be no movie this weekend, our next film will be "Patriot's Day" the weekend of March 3-5

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Tickets:
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Buy movie gift certificates at the Museum gift shop
Movie info: www.imdb.com


Comics

Amber Waves by Dave T. Phipps



ANOTHER COLD AND DREARY DAY WAITING FOR THE SCHOOL BUS.
IF MY PARENTS WERE RICH MAYBE I COULD SKIP SCHOOL AND HAVE FUN.
HEY WHAT IF WE WON THE LOTTERY!
NAH, KNOWING MOM SHE WOULD JUST BUY THE SCHOOL A NICER BUS.

R.F.D. by Mike Marland



WHAT IS THAT?
THAT, MY DEAR, IS JAZZ.
YOU'RE A FARMER, DAD, AREN'T YOU S'POSED TO BE LISTENIN' TO COUNTRY MUSIC?
TSK-TSK, JUNE! NEVER JUDGE A MAN BY HIS PICKUP!

Weekly SUDOKU
by Linda Thistle

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

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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Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps



YOU NEED SOME GOOD SHIRTS. TO THE NORMAL WORLD GOOD SHIRTS DON'T HAVE TOUR DATES ON THEM.

King Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12				13			14			
15				16			17			
			18			19	20			
21	22	23			24					
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30				31				32		
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			36				37			
38	39	40				41				
42				43	44			45	46	47
48				49			50			
51				52			53			

ACROSS

1 Do as you're told
5 A cont.
8 Old fogey
12 Geometry measure
13 Born
14 Divisible by two
15 Soared
17 Choose the best
18 Japanese pond carp
19 With resolution
21 Twelve
24 Highway division
25 Saharan
26 Demonstrated, as when on strike
30 Chaps
31 Chess wins
32 Consumed
33 Sank a billiard ball
35 Caspian feeder
36 Addict
37 William Tell's target
38 Formosa, today
41 Annoy
42 — Major
43 Fined for speeding, e.g.
48 Indonesian island
49 High-arc shot
50 Basin accessory
51 Help in a crime
52 "Tasty!"
53 Annoyingly slow

DOWN

1 Rowing tool
2 Sis' counterpart
3 Common Mkt.
4 Talked on and on
5 Opposed
6 Lawyer's payment
7 Clearly
8 Edict
9 Egg
10 Farmer's home?
11 Sans siblings
16 A billion years
20 Tattoo-parlor supply
21 Moist
22 Sandwich cookie
23 Brass component
24 Metric measure
26 Obviously
27 Rainout cover
28 Common Latin abbr.
29 Strike from
embarrassed
31 Smaller plateau
34 Persian Gulf nation
35 Maintenance
37 Noah's boat
38 Big brass instrument
39 Bedouin
40 — of Capri
41 Cold War weapon (Abbr.)
44 Debt notice
45 Pair
46 "A mouse!"
47 Parched

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Puzzle answers on page 6

Swim club fast and furious in Fairbanks competition

By DAN RUDY
Sentinel writer

Five Wrangell swimmers joined athletes from 22 other Alaskan teams to participate in the 2017 Alaska Age Group Championship meet in Fairbanks over the weekend.

The meet was the third that Wrangell Swimming Club has entered competitively since starting up last year. Previously, the youth program participated in events hosted by Petersburg in November and Juneau in December.

"It was a lot larger than any of the other two tournaments we've been to," team coach Jamie Roberts said of Fairbanks' meet. Held inside the city's public Hamme Pool, 378 swimmers from around the state competed in a variety of events. Of Wrangell's team, five had qualifying times and were able to attend the competition.

"All the swimmers did an amazing job competing for the first time at this level," commented the team's other coach, Bruce

"All the swimmers did an amazing job competing for the first time at this level."

-Coach
Bruce McQueen

McQueen.

Ten-year-old Jack Roberts earned four first placements, one second, and one sixth out of seven events he competed in. For his times, he was placed in fourth overall among the 10 and under boys.

Swimmers age 11 and over compete in events by age and gender, with all but the longest events run as preliminaries in the morning, with finals later that evening.

"There were long days," said Roberts,

stretching from 7 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. most days.

Nikolai Siekawitch ended up as the only one on his team to advance to the finals in all of his events, earning one second-place finish and two fifths. Hope and Mercy Mikkelsen and Renee Roberts posted a number of personal best times, and "held their own commendably in what are arguably the toughest age brackets," according to McQueen.

The meet was a learning experience for the fledgling team, which when it was started last year was the first Wrangell had fielded competitively in 14 years. Coach Roberts noted a number of other teams' coaches and parents came up to tell her they were glad to see the town competing again.

In addition to the newness of the preliminary round, the young swimmers had to become accustomed to colder water in the pool, and had to learn how better to keep from cramping up in response.

Another novelty was the lack of open

space in the pool. During practices, a minimum of 20 swimmers shared each of the six lanes, rather than the usual four Wrangell was accustomed to.

"I call that 'combat warm-ups,'" quipped Roberts.

Lanes were also considerably shallower than at home, under five feet deep rather than 12. Competitions were compressed for time too, with each heat typically diving off over the heads of the preceding heats as soon as they finished.

"It was run really fast," she said. Still, through long days and speedy competition, her team pulled through with positive results. "I think they handled that level of competition really well. Some of them also achieved times that would allow them to compete at the Alaska Junior Olympics."

The team will next be headed to an open meet in Ketchikan scheduled for the end of March. While there, the swimmers will have another chance to qualify for April's AJO.

Peewee wrestling program teaching self-reliance, community spirit

By DAN RUDY
Sentinel writer

Wrangell's peewee wrestlers hosted their counterparts from Petersburg Saturday.

The Wolfpack Wrestling program sent around 36 kids to the mats, while the group from Petersburg's Arena Wrestling rounded out the total number of participants to 90.

Both programs focus on building skills for elementary age students, from kindergarten to fifth grade. While Wolfpack is a program of Wrangell Parks and Recreation, Arena Wrestling is an independent program organized by parents and volunteers.

With so many children competing, matches at the Community Center were split between K-2 and 3-5 in the morning and afternoon. Wrangell coach Jeff Rooney

and Petersburg counterpart Marty Massin worked together to pair individual wrestlers up according to comparable size and skill levels, and wrestlers competed in a round-robin format.

"We had a lot of fun," said Rooney afterward. "It went really well."

The programs give younger students a taste of the sport, with Parks & Rec supplying shoes and singlets for Wrangell wrestlers. The high school program has also provided the youth group with mats, and a number of students from the team have helped out with the peewee season.

Dillon Rooney, Elizabeth Johnson, Caleb Groshong and J.D. Barratt have been helping coaches since the Wolfpack started practicing in January, and Sig Decker has made assis-

tant coaching for the team his senior capstone project for this year.

"He's very positive with the kids," commented Holly Hammer, Parks & Rec coordinator.

Decker had begun wrestling in the peewee leagues himself, and was glad to be able to help out with practices and matches.

"This year we separated out the kids," he explained, divvying up Wolfpack participants into two age groups. The 21 K-2 students have been having their practices twice a week, while the 15 enrolled in grade 3-5 have had theirs on alternating days, three times a week.

"We've been able to have a lot more one-to-one contact with coaches," said Decker. This has allowed for more focus on form, with older students able to learn some of the

more advanced techniques. Together with his class- and teammates who are assisting, he felt they were really connecting with the new wrestlers.

"It's a lot of fun," Decker recounted. More than moves, he felt the program was passing along important lessons as well. "There's so many things the sport's done for me. One of the big things is it really individualizes a person. When you step on the mat it's just you and yourself."

There's a team element to the work as well, and he said coaching staff over the years have emphasized being a good representative of his community, in addition to self-respect. With the workout regimen and competitiveness of tourna-

ments, Decker also felt the sport teaches how to push oneself mentally and physically.

"That's carried on into school and your work environment," he added. "That's why I wanted to do the peewee thing."

"We love to give back to them," Rooney said of the peewee program's lessons.

The high school students who volunteer with it are learning as well, how to mentor as well as how to serve. And the effort shows.

"We've had a lot of compliments," Hammer noted.

Wolfpack Wrestling will be finishing off its final two weeks of practice, before heading to Petersburg on March 11 for the last tournament of the season.

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THANK YOU TO LISA MESSMER for your hard work and organization of my birthday party. Lawrence

Bahovec.....1x3-2p

A BIG THANKS to the Wrangell EMTs for a great job of giving me a ride to the hospital. Your organizational and medical skills were super. You guys and gals are the best. Also thanks to the Medical Staff at Wrangell Medical Center, for your professionalism and care. Jim Abbott.....1x3-2b27

PUBLIC NOTICE
Public notice is hereby given that the regular board meeting of the Wrangell Medical Center Board of Directors shall be held on the third Wednesday of the month at 5:30 p.m. in the Nolan Center Classroom, Wrangell, Alaska. Separate notice for the regular Board of Directors meeting shall not be required.
Kris Reed
Board Secretary
Wrangell Medical Center
Publish: March 2, 2017

City & Borough of Wrangell, Alaska
NOTICE OF JOB OPENING
BOROUGH MANAGER

The City & Borough of Wrangell is accepting employment resumes for the position of Borough Manager until March 15, 2017, 5:00 p.m.

Salary Range depending on experience \$80,184-\$111,093 with excellent benefits

The Borough is looking for a top executive and operations officer, accountable for accomplishing short and long-range business and program objectives. This is an appointed position.

This position typically requires a master's degree in public administration, business, planning, and civil engineering or the equivalent and eight years of progressively responsible municipal experience.

For a complete job description, please contact the Borough Clerk's Office at 907-874-2381 or email: clerk@wrangell.com or visit Borough website: http://www.wrangell.com/jobs.

Please send a cover letter, detailed resume and references to: City & Borough of Wrangell, P.O. Box 531, Wrangell, AK 99929, or fax: (907) 874-2304 or email: clerk@wrangell.com.
Publish: February 23 and March 2, 2017

City and Borough of Wrangell
Notice to the Public
Public Survey

The City and Borough of Wrangell will be conducting a community wide survey during February and March to gather information essential for grant funding under the State Community Development Block Grant program. The Borough must provide the State with current estimates of population and income data within the Wrangell Borough.

Resident participants are selected at random and will be contacted by phone or in person. **Please help us with determining if the Borough is eligible by participating in the survey if contacted.** All information is kept confidential. Please direct any questions about the survey to Carol Rushmore at 874-2381.

Jeff Jabusch
Borough Manager
Publish: February 16, 23 and March 2, 2017

King Crossword
Answers
Solution time: 21 mins.

O	B	E	Y	A	F	R	D	O	D	O
A	R	E	A	N	E	E	E	V	E	N
R	O	C	K	E	T	E	D	C	U	L
K	O	I	F	I	R	M	L	L	Y	
D	O	Z	E	N	L	A	N	E		
A	R	I	D	P	I	C	K	E	T	E
M	E	N	M	A	T	E	S	A	T	E
P	O	C	K	E	T	E	D	U	R	A
U	S	E	R	A	P	P	L	E		
T	A	I	W	A	N	I	R	K		
U	R	S	A	T	I	C	K	E	T	E
B	A	L	I	L	O	B	E	W	E	R
A	B	E	T	Y	U	M	P	O	K	Y

Weekly SUDOKU
Answer

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



SUBMITTED PHOTO

A fourteen-group effort

The middle school girls from 14 Amateur Athletic Union teams get together for a monumental group photo during the weekend's three-day Stikine Hoops Invitational. Team Wrangell assistant coach Penny Allen said the round-robin included A, B and C-level teams from Ketchikan, Petersburg, Sitka and Juneau. Last year's season Wrangell's group went undefeated, and this year the team is looking forward to the final tournament in Juneau toward the month's end. They head to Petersburg this Saturday and Sunday, both to play some games and make some noise for the WHS teams playing during the Viking's homecoming weekend. "They're a great group of girls. It's been real fun," said Allen.

Ortiz call-in hears input on new taxes, PFDs

By DAN RUDY
Sentinel writer

As the Alaska House and Senate continue to prepare budgets for the coming year, residents of Wrangell and Ketchikan were invited to their Legislative Information Office locations for a call-in session with Rep. Dan Ortiz (I-District 36).

Meeting late in the afternoon February 23, 10 Wrangell residents and seven in Ketchikan tuned in for the representative's pitch for House Bill 115, a proposal to reconfigure Alaska's Permanent Fund along with revenue enhancements being sponsored by the Majority-led House Finance Committee.

The bill calls for a 4.75 percent-of-market-value withdrawal from the Permanent Fund each year, with inflation proofing of the fund to be contingent on a surplus. Two-thirds of this amount — roughly \$1.5 billion for FY18 — would be directed into the General Fund, supporting state agency funding. The remaining third would be used to pay individual dividends.

Among the other revenue enhancements being suggested, HB 115 would institute a

statewide income tax, equaling 15 percent of an individual's federal income tax liability. The bill would also find additional savings through further cuts to operations costs and petroleum production subsidies.

"That's going to attract some resistance, particularly on the Senate side," Ortiz said of the subsidies. Liabilities to producers in the form of tax credits near \$900 million this coming year, which when coupled with lowered revenues from the industry to the state were effectively "not sustainable" in his opinion.

Coupling the income tax with a 10-percent tax on long term capital gains and that gained from nonresident workers, Ortiz estimated around \$655 million in additional revenue once fully implemented. He explained that estimate is roughly based on the Department of Revenue's assessment of the similarly structured HB 182 from 2015.

In the event an income tax is instated, a resident could opt to lower their liability by putting their PFD toward it under the proposed bill. Calling in from Ketchikan, Don Westland was unhappy with that particular pro-

posal.

"I'm opposed to an income tax. I would rather see a state consumption tax," he said. Noting the number of annual cruise ship passengers stopping into Ketchikan and other Alaskan ports of call, he felt a statewide sales tax would be a better source of revenue.

"I would rather pay two to three percent on something I would buy," he commented, noting such a tax could exclude food, heating fuel and prescription drugs for the sake of residents.

Ortiz responded that legislators would be discussing such alternatives during the session, but thought it would come down to an either-or decision.

"We will be looking at the pros and cons of a sales tax," he said.

The representative noted there would be drawbacks to a consumption tax, with a statewide rate stacking atop of municipalities' levies. Wrangell has one of the state's highest rates, at seven percent, and could look to be paying nine or ten in such an event. Anchorage, by contrast, has no sales tax in place, so the prospect could be more popular there.

Responding to a follow-up question put by Ketchikan resi-

dent Shawn Ryan, Ortiz explained it could be less expensive for the state to implement an income tax, in part because it would be easier to calculate and less difficult to follow up on.

"It's my understanding ... that it would require less infrastructure, less expense on the state's part if they instituted an income tax," he said.

Another concern was the idea of applying one's PFD toward a personal income tax liability, being likened by one unnamed Ketchikan respondent to something of a bait and switch.

Wrangell resident Brian Merritt questioned whether it was wise to continue with the dividend at all under the present financial circumstances. Given the choice between collecting an annual return for residency or being able to enjoy essential public services, he felt the latter was more beneficial.

"We're at a different time" from when the fund was first set up, he explained. Rather than living in a "skeleton state," Merritt suggested money from the PFD go to support retirees and disabled residents, while funding other services for quality of life.

Other budget plans are now being considered in the Legislature. Senate Bill 70 was put forward by the Senate Finance Committee on February 24. The bill would have a 5.25-percent POMV draw from the Permanent Fund, using three-quarters to pay for state operations and the rest used for dividends. PFD payments would be locked at \$1,000 for the next three years, while the overall withdrawal would reduce to 5 percent at that time. SB 70 would leave a \$900 million spending gap to fill, and would set a cap on unrestricted general fund spending at \$4.1 billion per year.

Another PFD-related bill is SB 21, put forward by Southeast Sen. Bert Stedman (R-District R). That would allow legislators to appropriate from the earnings reserve account between 2.25 and 4.5 percent POMV, based on a five-year average of the fund. Because the fund's investment goal is a five percent annual return after inflation, limiting spending to that percentage of value would still allow the fund to at least keep pace with

the rate of inflation.

A minimum of half the withdrawn amount would continue to fund Permanent Fund Dividend payments, with the rest then going toward the General Fund for core services. Each year it would fall upon legislators to then determine what level would be appropriate, which the sponsor expected could help rein in spending. Stedman's bill was due for another hearing in Finance on Tuesday afternoon.

The Senate Finance Committee is currently considering SBs 1 and 2, proposals which together could call for reinstatement of the dividend withheld from last year's payout by Gov. Bill Walker's summertime veto. Both were proposed by Sen. Mike Dunleavy (R-District E), who chairs the committee. He had also put forward a budget plan in January calling for more than \$1 billion in additional cuts over four years, with no new taxes levied.

During Ortiz's call-in last week, residents were able to speak to other concerns as well. Olinda White in Wrangell took time to speak up for the state ferry system, which has seen 17-percent cuts to operating weeks the past three years.

"It makes it very difficult to get around," she commented. "They really need to rethink this, because the ferry is our road."

Wrangell teacher Bob Davis added to that, noting cuts to ferry scheduling affects education. He noted students on average miss 30 days of school a year to participate in extracurricular activities.

"That's just devastating to the academic education. Further cuts in the ferry schedule will just make that all that much worse," he said. "They're driving parents and kids to make a choice between a decent education and being able to participate in extracurriculars."

Ortiz asked that they testify to that effect at future hearings. "That would be the most helpful thing you could do, that would be helpful to Sen. Stedman and I."

Fellow residents Deanne Cooper and Merritt added their two cents as well, noting that ferry cuts would negatively impact the community's summer tour season.

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Fair

Continued from page 1

school-issued laptops and tablet devices, which play an increasing number of roles in the classroom.

To keep up on grades and courses, for example, Gore noted that in the past year students and parents alike have had a 96.7-percent engagement in online accounts using PowerSchool. Content for games, presentations and other events have also been made available for online streaming, and new applications and programs are finding new avenues through which to encourage students' interest.

Social studies teacher Jim Brooks demonstrated one such program, Kahoot! The game-based learning platform is free to use and extensively customizable, allowing Brooks to create interactive reviews of class material ahead of tests.

"It's kind of a game show in class," Gore explained.

"The kids love it," Brooks added. He's been making use of the program for the past year.

The possibilities of virtual reality headsets are also becoming reality. While a group of students crowded in to watch a demonstration showing off a roller coaster simulator, Gore explained the technology can be used to take virtual field trips. The school already has a Google Daydream device, a headset which can accommodate certain smartphones and makes use of a hand controller.

Gore said one such virtual trip in the making is a trip to the Smithsonian Institution museums in Washington D.C. Teacher Virginia Oliver will be headed there on a separate trip later this year, but will bring along a 360-degree camera. Eventually, that footage will provide for the opportunity for classes back in Wrangell to experience that virtually.

"It's a really powerful engagement tool," Gore pointed out. "It takes them somewhere they can't go, living on an island in Alaska."

Other potential subjects would be the high school's LeConte survey, which could in a sense share the experience with other students elsewhere. But the footage could also be shelved for later use, in the event such trips are no longer possible due to budget cuts or other unforeseeable problems.

The technology is just taking off, and was one of the highlights of this year's ASTE conference. Among school districts in the state, Gore noted Wrangell was the first to be making use of a set in the classroom.

"We're quite ahead in this sense," he said.

Students have also been encouraged to explore more physical technologies, with between six and a dozen meeting irregularly for an ad hoc robotics club. Industrial arts teacher Drew Larrabee has been guiding the group, and at last week's fair showed off some of the units they had been tinkering with. One was a "balance bot," which cannot stand on its own but makes use of gyroscopes and algorithms to upright and stabilize itself.

"We want to start coding clubs and robotics clubs," Gore explained. The group is currently garnering interest among the student body, with the intent of formalizing a program.

WPSD has also been encouraging local youth to use their tech know-how to maintain their schools' gadgets. An online help desk has been set up, allowing students and teachers alike to put in support requests by email, setting up a virtual "ticket." So long as the issue isn't of a confidential nature, five OJT students then pick up the items as they can and make some fixes.

Gore pointed out the program gives participating students an opportunity to solve problems in the real world, while also assisting with upkeep for the district. They learn soft skills useful in a workplace environment too, like documenting tasks and conducting follow-up to projects. The logging



PHOTO BY DAN RUDY

Drew Larrabee shows a group of curious kids how to work a remote-controlled robot, put together by a group of his high school students. The ad hoc electronics group reflects a wider "maker movement" taking root, emphasizing creativity and industry through tinkering and invention.

system also helps the schools' IT department keep up with its various technologies.

"This gives us a tracking mechanism to see what we're even doing ourselves," he said.

Other projects in the offing will be preparation of a digital library in collaboration with the public library, and an upcoming Science, Technology, Education, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) two-day digital learning course later this month.

The school system has also been encouraging girls to take greater interest in the oft male-dominated fields of engineering. At the "Women in Science" table, Heather Howe encouraged kids and adults alike to check out a

variety of tuning forks, microscopes and scientific whistles. As a bonus, she also showed them how to transform their smartphones into microscopes on the go, by placing single drops of water on the lens of the devices' cameras, increasing the zoom.

"It's a really exciting time," Gore said.

Parents and students also got to check out advances in biology, with the elementary's E.A.T.S. Garden program showing off progress on its new greenhouse and collecting boxtops in order to help pay for its walls and roof. Jenn Miller explained her students were well on their way to raising the \$5,000 they need, most recently with \$350 raised through seed

sales last month. They're already preparing sprouts for a garden plant sale later in April.

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Petersburg Scouts take part in STEM workshop

The Petersburg Girls Scouts enjoyed a day long STEM workshop at the Sons of Norway Hall lead by Kelly Fitzgerald of the Alaska Girl Scout Council. The girls rotated through four sections on: engineering, ecology, ornithology and seismology.

Susan Harai, a professional engineer licensed in the State of Alaska, lead the engineering project which was a geodesic dome made of newspaper triangles. The triangles are the strongest structure shape and are used throughout building trusses and bridges. The girls built the dome then further added to the structure to turn it into a flying horse with wings and named it "Pegasus".

Girl Scouts worked as aquatic ecologists with Joni Johnson, USFS Botanist. The girls used sampling tools to collect water and plankton from the Hammer Slough bridge. They performed a chemical test to measure dissolved oxygen; the titrations and color changes made some girls comment that chemistry is "cool."

Lynda Jones Outdoor Environmental Education & Outreach Intern from Girl Scouts of Alaska led a bird beak adaptation session with the girls. The girls learned how birds have adapted to their environment with different shaped beaks to gather different types of foods. Everyday tools such as tongs, tweezers, chopsticks and straws represented bird beaks from herons, warblers, sandpipers and hummingbirds, discovering how bird beaks work and how birds gather their food.

Sunny Rice from the Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program led the girls in an activity to understand plate tectonics, volcanoes and mountain building using whipped cream and graham crackers. They learned about how the movement of lithospheric plates, combined with erosion, shapes the world we see around us.



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