



## Fully vaccinated count reaches 325; almost 300 more with first dose

By CALEB VIERKANT  
*Sentinel writer*

More than 600 Wrangell residents had received their first COVID-19 vaccination shot, and more than half of those had received their second dose, too, as of Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the community's health care provider, the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium, will open the vaccination list even further as more doses become available in the community and is encouraging people to register for the shot so they are ready when their group is called.

"Depending on the people registered and vaccine availability we will be working down the priority list," said Carly Allen, manager at the Alaska Island Community Services clinic operated by SEARHC.

Allen said Tuesday she is encouraging everyone to register for their vaccination so that SEARHC can provide them quickly as more doses arrive.

As of Tuesday, 325 people, about 13% of the community's population, had received both doses, while an additional 296 had received just their first dose, reported Aaron Angerman, of SEARHC.

Those first-dose recipients are in the three- to four-week waiting period for their second shot.

Angerman said 193 people already are registered and waiting to receive their first shots.

SEARHC is moving quickly through their vaccine sequencing for priority groups, Angerman said, ensuring those at higher risk get their shots first. The sequencing list includes long-term care residents, health care workers, the elderly and essential workers.

However, Angerman said everybody is encouraged to register for their vaccinations. "They're just encouraging everyone to sign up," he said. "We're far enough down now we want everyone to sign up."

Vaccination registration is available at [www.covid19.searhc.org](http://www.covid19.searhc.org).

## Community market returns this Saturday

By CALEB VIERKANT  
*Sentinel writer*

After a seven-week absence, Wrangell's community markets will return this Saturday at the Nolan Center.

"We're really excited to have it back," Nolan Center Director Cyni Crary said of the event, planned for 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The community markets are an opportunity for enterprising locals to show off their homemade goods for sale. Past markets have seen items ranging from baked goods to artwork to jewelry, and more.

The last market was held Dec. 19, Crary said. The event was put on hiatus during renovations to the Nolan Center. The civic room flooring needed to be replaced, and the room has been closed for several weeks. The civic room serves as the community's movie theater and gathering place for large events.

The renovations are complete and Crary said they are prepared to host the community markets again, with

safety protocols in place. There will be hand sanitizer at the doors, she said, and people will be asked to socially distance while visiting booths at the market.

Face masks are also an important part of the safety strategy, she said. Everyone attending the market will be required to wear one.

The community markets will be a regular event again, Crary said, taking place on the first Saturday of each month. There will be an additional holiday market mid-December, according to a schedule Crary shared on Facebook. She said some of the other markets planned will coincide with other holidays, too.

"A few of the markets will tie in with other events," Crary said. "Like the one on May 1 will tie in with Birdfest. Then of course on July 3, the Fourth of July."

Crary said anyone interested in setting up a booth at the market can visit the website, [www.nolancenter.org](http://www.nolancenter.org), or call 874-3770.



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Wrangell's Tyson Messmer looks for a way through Petersburg's defense during last Saturday's game. The Wolves split their home-opener series against the Vikings. Turn to Page 6 for the story and photos.

## Governor wants summer advisory vote on PFD

By LARRY PERSILY  
*Sentinel writer*

Gov. Mike Dunleavy is asking legislators for \$2 million in state funds to hold a special election this summer, to ask voters their opinion of a Permanent Fund dividend that would average \$2,400 a year for the rest of the decade and beyond.

The governor's proposal is to split the annual withdrawal of Permanent Fund earnings between dividends and public services 50-50. He introduced legislation to call for the special election as an advisory vote, and a few days later promoted the issue in his State of the State speech Jan. 28.

But asking voters their opinion of a PFD about double the average of the past five years is not that useful of an exercise, said several Southeast legislators.

It "would give people the wrong impression that you could afford a 50-50 split," said Ketchikan Rep. Dan Ortiz, who also represents Wrangell.

The governor's 10-year budget plan acknowledges that setting aside for dividends half of the annual draw on Permanent Fund earnings would create an annual shortfall of \$1 billion for public services — a gap exceeding 20% of the state budget.

The 50-50 split would produce PFDs averaging more than \$2,400 this decade and increasing from there, assuming the Permanent Fund continues to grow.

The governor's fiscal plan includes a billion-dollar-plus placeholder labeled "other revenue sources" starting next year to plug the large budget hole. However, he has provided no detailed proposals for where that \$1 billion in other revenue sources would come from for the start of fiscal year 2023, just 18 months from now, other than he supports legalized gambling in Alaska.

Asking voters their opinion of a large dividend could create unrealistic expectations, Ortiz said.

Sitka Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins shared a similar view. "The question may sound simple but the implications of that question are hugely complex," he said of the advisory vote. Putting more money into dividends at the expense of

other needs would affect "the level of state services Alaskans would receive and the level of taxes they would have to pay," said Kreiss-Tomkins, who also represents Petersburg.

Without any context of how a larger dividend would affect public services, an advisory question would be of limited value, he said.

There is a danger in asking the public for their opinion when the state cannot afford to make good on the expectations, said Juneau Rep. Sara Hannan, who also represents Skagway and Haines.

Hannan told the story of growing up in a matriarchal household. Her mom would ask whether her husband wanted chicken or steak for dinner. When he ordered steak and found chicken on the dinner plate, Hannan recalled, mom would answer: "I was just letting you think you had a say in what was going to happen."

The state cannot afford a 50-50 split and still provide reasonable services, such as schools and ferries, she said. When elected officials ask the public their advice but don't follow it, public confidence in government weakens even further, Hannan said.

The Legislature is in its third week of the session. The Senate has yet to hold a committee hearing on the governor's bill for the special election, which would cost \$2 million to hold. The House has not settled on an organization — whether led by Republicans or Democrats or a combination — and cannot hold hearings until the members adopt a leadership team.

The governor's proposal to ask voters their opinion of how to spend Permanent Fund earnings is part of his wide-ranging, multibillion-dollar push to send more money to Alaskans in the annual PFDs.

Dunleavy is asking legislative approval of his budget request for an additional \$1,900 PFD this spring, and a \$3,000-plus PFD in the fall, at a combined cost of \$3.2 billion from the Permanent Fund. The purpose, he has explained, is to

Continued on page 2



# PFD

Continued from page 1

boost the economy and help people hurt by the COVID-19 pandemic.

His plan, if approved by voters and the Legislature, would be to reset the dividend starting next year at half the annual draw on fund earnings, about \$2,400. The dividend has averaged about \$1,250 the past five years after lawmakers debated and decided on what the state budget could afford while still paying for public services.

According to state law, Permanent Fund earnings are general fund revenues which can go toward dividends, the same as schools and other public services.

At a news media briefing after the governor's State of the State speech, Senate President

Peter Micciche downplayed the need for an advisory vote. "We have a constitutional provision allowing for referendums to repeal laws, so we don't need an advisory vote," said the Soldotna Republican, according to a report in the Alaska Legislative Digest report, a private newsletter.

The size of the PFD is part of the overall discussion this legislative session of how the state can afford to maintain services and pay a dividend, avoid spending down the Permanent Fund, and whether a state income or sales tax will be part of the solution.

"We must act this year or we start eating our seed corn," Micciche said of the need for a fiscal plan.

## Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

**WRANGELL HIGH SCHOOL** boys and girls basketball games at home versus Craig; 5 p.m. start time for the first game Friday; 9 a.m. start time for the first game Saturday. Spectators limited to two household members per player. The games will be live-streamed.

**BOROUGH ASSEMBLY** will hold a work session via Zoom at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 9, to discuss general fund budget projections for the fiscal year ending June 30 and the next fiscal year which starts July 1. The regular borough assembly meeting will follow at 7 p.m.

**HOSPICE OF WRANGELL** will hold its annual meeting at noon Monday, Feb. 15. The public is invited. To participate remotely via Zoom, contact Alice Rooney at 305-0007, or attend in person at the parish hall, St. Philips Episcopal Church.

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

## Continuing Events

### PARKS and RECREATION POOL ACTIVITIES:

- ARTHRITIS FOUNDATION EXERCISE CLASS, 8:30 - 9:30 a.m., Monday, Wednesday, Friday
- WATER AEROBICS, 10 - 11 a.m. Monday, Wednesday, Friday
- LAP SWIM, 6 - 7:30 a.m. Monday, Wednesday, Friday
- LAP SWIM, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. all five weekdays
- LAP SWIM, 5:15 - 6:15 p.m. Tuesday, Thursday, and 11 a.m. to 12:30 pm Saturday
- 2-LANE LAP SWIM, 10 - 11 a.m. Monday, Wednesday, Friday
- LAP/TOT SWIM, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. weekdays, and 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday
- SWIM CLUB, 3:15 - 5:15 p.m., weekdays
- OPEN SWIM, 5:30 - 7 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday; 6:30 - 8 p.m. Friday; 1 - 2 p.m. Saturday

### WEIGHT ROOM:

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

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

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

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

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

**Friday, Feb. 5:** Nadra Angerman.

**Saturday, Feb. 6:** Walter Moorhead, Binky Maenhout, Tamra Claggett and Natalya Jabusch.

**Sunday, Feb. 7:** Krystal Schultz, Lindsay Hannah and Paige Hoyt.

**Monday, Feb. 8:** Ethan Blatchley and Chris Blackburn, Anniversary: Joel and Tis Peterman.

**Tuesday, Feb. 9:** Dan Roope and Bill Grover Jr.

**Wednesday, Feb. 10:** Valarie Draper, S.R. Privett III, Bridgette Andrews and Jeff Barlow.

**Thursday, Feb. 11:** Lexi Prunella, Ashlyn Christian, Cody Eastaugh and Terry Gerrard.

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

## Senior Center Meals Menu Delivery Only

### Friday, Feb. 5

Fish sandwich, potato salad, zucchini tomato salad.

### Monday, Feb. 8

Beef vegetable soup, tomato cheese sandwich with salad.

### Tuesday, Feb. 9

Sweet-and-sour pork, carrots, tossed salad.

### Wednesday, Feb. 10

Vegetable meatloaf, mashed potatoes, romaine/radish salad.

### Thursday, Feb. 11

Baked fish, tossed salad/peas, scalloped potatoes.

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

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

## FERRY

## February Sailings No Ferries Scheduled

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



## TIDES February 4-February 10

	High Tides			Low Tides				
	AM	PM		AM	PM			
	Time	Ft	Time	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	
Feb. 4	05:22	16.0	06:04	12.6	11:44	1.5	11:44	3.0
Feb. 5	06:25	15.7	07:32	11.9	...	...	12:57	1.5
Feb. 6	07:37	15.6	08:59	12.1	00:51	4.2	02:19	1.0
Feb. 7	08:50	16.0	10:12	13.0	02:11	4.9	03:38	0.1
Feb. 8	09:57	16.7	11:11	14.0	03:34	4.7	04:44	-1.0
Feb. 9	10:55	17.4	...	...	04:43	4.0	05:36	-2.0
Feb. 10	00:02	15.0	11:47	17.9	05:38	3.1	06:20	-2.5

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

### Feb. 4, 1921

Complimentary to the young ladies who gave the leap year party at New Year's, a number of young men entertained last Saturday night at the home of Julius Mason. The young men had spared no effort to make the affair a great success and a delightful evening resulted. The ladies who were honored with the invitations were kept in the dark as to where the affair was to be given. At the appointed time, their escorts led them to the Mason home. Here they were met at the door by Harold Shangle, who, appropriately costumed, acted as major domo and received their cards. All the guests appeared in costume. The acting host, Julius Mason, represented the King of Spain and there were several notable and interesting personages. Games furnished amusement for a part of the evening and there was a program dance which was greatly enjoyed. A delicious supper was served in the dining room.

### Feb. 1, 1946

Wrangell women who have had sons, husbands or brothers in the military are being urged by the local Merlin Elmer Palmer American Legion Auxiliary to join its membership. The next meeting of the Auxiliary is at the Dugout Monday night, Feb. 11, and prospective members are invited to attend. "Women of World War families must unite to help win the peace," said Wilma Mason, president of the local unit. "We have again won a terrible World War and the women of the Axillary are determined that we shall not have to fight another," Mrs. Mason continued. "We are working with the American Legion to help establish and maintain policies which will assure a lasting peace. If another war comes there will be no

winners, only death and desolation on both sides." The Auxiliary is now enrolling membership for 1946, with special invitation going out to women of World War II families. Women who themselves have served in the armed forces also are eligible, as are mothers, wives, sisters and daughters of those who died in service.

### Feb. 4, 1971

Wrangell's "walking man," Dick Ballard, figures he's covered 150 miles and lost 20 pounds since he began trekking off pounds a month ago. Ballard hikes two and one half miles out Zimovia Highway and back every morning. Anyone who wants to join him is welcome, he said. "I had a couple of companions originally," Ballard said, "but they sorta backed out." Ballard also is dieting (1,000 to 1,200 calories a day). He has gone from 225 to 205 now and wants to reach 170 eventually. Merce and Kathy Angerman also are doing the Zimovia shuffle, following in Ballard's footsteps every day, but they are going afternoons. "They have been at it every day that I have," Ballard

said. "I'm proud of them."

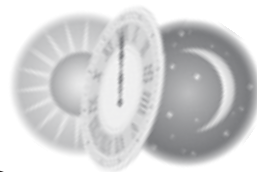
### Feb. 1, 1996

Susan Chojnacki, of Anchorage, has been hired as Sentinel editor, and Kris Haight, of Juneau, will serve as the newspaper's second full-time staff member. The new employees are scheduled to arrive in Wrangell this weekend, said Sentinel owner Larry Persily, of Juneau. Chojnacki, pronounced Hoy-not-ski, worked as business manager at an Anchorage graphic design and printing business from 1981-1985, and handled design, production and writing duties at the Tundra Drums weekly newspaper in Bethel from 1985-1989. Chojnacki will share the writing, advertising sales and production chores with Haight, a journalism major in college, former broadcast reporter in Juneau and a 20-year resident of the capital city. Seanne Saunders will continue to work in the Sentinel office part-time, as she has done since Persily purchased the newspaper from the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Boise, Idaho, after the former owners filed to liquidate the business.



## Wrangell Weather

Date	High	Low
Jan. 25	32	23
Jan. 26	34	22
Jan. 27	30	20
Jan. 28	24	19
Jan. 29	34	23
Jan. 30	35	28
Jan. 31	35	27
Feb. 1	34	29



## Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Hours
Feb. 4	7:40a	4:26p	08:45h
Feb. 5	7:36a	4:30p	08:54h
Feb. 6	7:34a	4:32p	08:58h
Feb. 7	7:32a	4:35p	09:02h
Feb. 8	7:30a	4:37p	09:07h
Feb. 9	7:28a	4:39p	09:11h
Feb. 10	7:25a	4:41p	09:16h
Feb. 11	7:23a	4:44p	09:20h



# Pandemic doesn't deter first-time pizza maker

By CALEB VIERKANT  
Sentinel writer

Being creative with food, and providing meals for people, is a passion for Nic Martin.

It came from his mother, he said, and further developed during this time on fishing boats. As a kid, his mother would have the family pull together all the leftovers and whatever was left in the pantry once a week and make a meal out of it. As a fisherman, he learned to be creative turning limited ingredients into meals.

He is now bringing this passion and creativity to Wrangell's newest pizzeria: Nic's Place.

"I've been fishing my entire life and I love to cook," Martin said. "Always the cook on every boat I was on, and I enjoy cooking for groups of people and everything like that. It's always been a passion, I got that from my mom."

Martin said he decided to stop fishing and give the restaurant business a try to spend more time with his loved ones. "I met a girl (Victoria Smith), and she's got two kids, and wanted to be a part of their lives as the kids grow up and see them do different things."

After finishing up some obligations

with the fishing business, and purchasing pizza-making equipment from Chris and Dixie Booker (formerly of NotSoFamous Pizza), Martin renovated the former Cabin Cafe on Front Street and prepared for business last fall.

The timing was a bit odd to start a business during the COVID-19 pandemic. Martin said they decided to get a jump on it, however. The opportunity was there, he said, so there was no reason to wait.

Martin had never made a homemade pizza before opening his restaurant, he said. There was a lot of trial and error while getting ready, and a lot of bad pizzas. It has been a fun learning process, he said.

"The coolest part is the community," he said. "All the support from everybody has been phenomenal. All our friends and family helping out, and even different businesses. I feel pretty dang blessed. I think if we had opened up anywhere else during a pandemic we wouldn't have gained as much traction as doing it here in our little hometown."

Nic's Place opened in early November. However, a series of unfortunate events forced the restaurant to close



PHOTO COURTESY NIC MARTIN

Nic Martin and Victoria Smith, at their pizzeria, Nic's Place.

down for a few months. They took some time off for the holidays, Martin said, and when they returned they found the restaurant's water heater had sprung a leak and caused a flood in the building. On top of that, the entire family got sick shortly thereafter, so they all stayed

home.

Then there was a second flood, Martin said, so he tore out and redid the floors.

Despite this string of bad luck, he said they are tentatively planning to reopen this week.

## Couple faces fines for 'jumping the vaccine line' with charter flight to Yukon

VANCOUVER, BC (AP) - Public condemnation has grown over a wealthy Vancouver couple who allegedly flew to a remote Indigenous community in Canada's Yukon Territory to get vaccinated for the coronavirus.

Marc Miller, Canada's federal Indigenous services minister, said he was "disgusted" by the purported actions of Rodney Baker and his wife, Ekaterina, who have been issued tickets under Yukon's Emergency Measures Act and face fines of up to \$1,000 Canadian (US\$783) plus fees.

Baker resigned on Jan. 24 as Great Canadian Gaming Corp.'s president and chief executive after a media report of his actions.

"That is maybe the dumbest thing I've seen in a long while," Miller said. "I don't know what went through those people's minds. There is extreme scarcity of the doses and for some reason people tried to game the system. It's unfair. It's wrong. They need personal reflection."

Yukon's Community Services Minister John Streicker alleged the couple flew the third week of January in a chartered plane to Beaver Creek, where they posed as visiting hotel workers and received shots of a coronavirus vaccine at a mobile clinic. The community, popula-

tion less than 100, is just a few miles from the Alaska border.

Streicker said that he was outraged and that members of White River First Nation in Beaver Creek felt violated.

The community was given priority to receive vaccine because of its remoteness, an elderly population and limited access to health care, White River Chief Angela Demit said.

"There is nothing more un-Canadian than going to another jurisdiction to jump the line because you have the means to do so," British Columbia Premier John Horgan said.

Tickets filed in a Yukon court indicate that Miller, 55, and his wife, 32, were each charged with one count of failing to self-isolate for 14 days and one count of failing to act in a manner consistent with their declarations upon arriving in the Yukon.

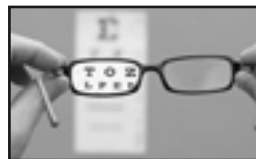
Ekaterina Baker did not immediately respond to calls and emails requesting comment. An unsuccessful attempt was made to speak to Rodney Baker through a request to Great Canadian Gaming Corp., which accepted his resignation.

An information circular published by Great Canadian Gaming in March said Baker earned about \$6.7 million Canadian (US\$5.2 million) in compensation from the company in 2019.

The company owns and operates more than 20 casinos in British Columbia, Ontario, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Baker became president in 2010 and CEO the following year.

Ekaterina Baker is an actress who had small roles this year in "Chick Fight" and "Fatman," which starred Mel Gibson as a rowdy, unorthodox Santa Claus, according to her IMDB Pro page.

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## Letter to the Editor

The recall group has been portrayed as people who are upset with the mask mandate. This is not the fact. We are a group of citizens who feel strongly about following the laws as set out in our borough charter and state statutes.

Many ordinances within the city and borough have been violated, as well as state statutes. Meetings have been called without proper notice, which restricts public input. Letters have been written by city employees to the assembly informing them of actions that have been taken which are not allowed within the city's ordinances.

There is state law and court proceedings that have happened in the past that shows this to be a fact.

Using one's position to benefit themselves is not something that should be placed on the

shoulders of employees. We have had two people leave their positions and almost lost a third.

So why target the mayor? This is also covered in the city's ordinances. Meetings are called by the mayor and/or city manager through written directions to the clerk. They also can be called by two assembly members together. All of the meetings in question were called by the mayor and/or city manager.

The mask mandate was a result of a vote that was taken by the assembly. That is a democratic process. Therefore, it is only the mayor who has violated the laws of the state of Alaska and the ordinances of our borough.

Running for office is something that we believe in and one our group placed their name for the empty assembly seat.

*Don McConachie Sr.*

## Editorial

### Governor needs a plan, not a poker face

The governor had a chance to talk honestly about taxes when he announced his 10-year budget plan last month. He had a second chance Jan. 28 with his State of the State speech.

Sadly, he failed both times.

The governor's 10-year fiscal plan acknowledges there will be a \$1.2 billion hole in the state budget 18 months from now. That's equal to more than 20% of public services and Permanent Fund dividends the next year. And that's after spending down the state's savings for much of the past 30 years and after over-drawing Permanent Fund earnings this year.

It's important and urgent that Alaskans solve it now, wouldn't you think?

Yet all Gov. Mike Dunleavy could offer to cover that \$1.2 billion was three words in his budget plan: "Other revenue sources."

No honesty about the inevitability of state taxes, which Alaskans haven't paid in more than two generations. It's as if some magical, painless revenue sources will appear in 18 months.

Then, as if he had been holding an ace up his sleeve, the governor in his State of the State said he would support legislation "to bring gaming to Alaska." That's it? Alaska is short \$1.2 billion for schools, the state ferries, the university, troopers and everything else, and other than the routine talk of more oil, a mythical North Slope natural gas pipeline and how the federal government is bad for Alaska, all he could summon was a vision of casino gaming?

The most recent credible estimate for public revenues from a statewide lottery came in at \$15 million, about 1% of the budget gap. That was from a 2015 Alaska Department of Revenue report which did not look at casinos, only a lottery. Either way, it's a small number for a big problem.

The governor could have worked harder at telling Alaskans the truth about the impending \$1.2 billion crevasse. In total, he devoted 70 words of his 3,770-word speech to gambling. He said nothing about what much of the Legislature is discussing: A state income tax or a state sales tax, either of which could fill one-third to one-half of the revenue gap.

Dunleavy is in his third year in the job, his third year of trying to close the budget gap that is hurting our communities, and his best cut of the deck is to tell us legalized gambling is a winning hand?

To make it worse, the governor continues to promote his proposed constitutional amendment that would prohibit any new taxes without a vote of the people. But since that constitutional amendment, even if approved by the Legislature, could not go before votes until the next general election in November 2022, just how does Dunleavy think \$1.2 billion in magic money will appear starting July 2022 when his voter permission slip would not come until months later?

The calendar, just like his budget math, does not add up.

*- Wrangell Sentinel*

## FROM THE PUBLISHER

### Tell us what you're doing

By LARRY PERSILY  
Publisher

Just because I don't use Facebook doesn't mean I don't see its value in spreading the word about community events online. Even better, people like it because it's free. But the Sentinel also does that, and the publicity is free, too, though we need to know about the events before we can share the news with Wrangell.

Is your community group holding a meeting that is open to the public, holding a fundraiser, looking for donations or simply or looking for new members?

Is your organization doing something that you want everyone to know about? We can't write up news stories on everything all the time, but we'll get to everything in time.

Or maybe you just have an

opinion and want to share your thoughts in writing, no face mask required.

Yes, all of the above is harder during a pandemic, but Wrangell is managing well and we want to help.

Send us your meeting notices, your event announcements. There is no charge for putting the items in the community calendar on Page 2. If you want to buy an ad to promote your event in larger type, that's certainly OK but is not required.

Of course, businesses are always welcome - encouraged - to advertise their goods and services in the Sentinel, but that's not what this column is about. The Sentinel exists to report on Wrangell and to reflect the community's efforts. To do that well, we need your help. Send us your news.

And send us your opinions. We print all letters to the editor, with the usual exceptions: No obscenities, no personal attacks, keep it civil, factual and to the point. Shorter is better. Discuss issues, don't shout. Disagree, but do it respectfully.

All letters must include the writer's name. We ask for your phone number in case we have questions, but we would never print your phone number or email address.

Send your letters - and your community events - by email to [wrgsent@gmail.com](mailto:wrgsent@gmail.com), or drop them off at the Sentinel office on Front Street or, if you are like me and still use postage stamps, mail then to Box 798, Wrangell.

Go ahead and post on Facebook if you want, but share with the Sentinel and the entire community, too.

12  
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# Borough goal of fiscal stability will be challenging

By CALEB VIERKANT  
Sentinel writer

Fiscal stability, infrastructure and land development are among Wrangell's priorities for the near future.

But it will not be easy.

"I'm certain that this involves us purchasing a printing press and having a secret room where we come up with the funds we need to do what's necessary," Borough Manager Lisa Von Barga said jokingly.

"As the state continues to face fiscal hardship, as we continue to get downward pressure in a number of different ways, and at the same time the cost of operations is going up, our list of infrastructure needs continues to grow, this fiscal stabilization plan is going to be extremely important," Von Barga said.

The borough assembly held a workshop Jan. 26 to discuss the city's goals for 2021 and 2022. The discussion opened with plans for aiding the city's financial situation.

Among the priorities for "fiscal stabilization" listed in material for the workshop is the creation of a formal fiscal stabilization plan, creating a balanced Fiscal Year 2022 budget, and conducting rate studies for the city's enterprise funds that are supposed to be self-sufficient. This includes the harbor fund, electric fund and others, Von Barga said.

Assembly Member Patty Gilbert suggested that the city

add collecting on its accounts receivable and reducing bad debts to the priority list.

A "policy to prevent loss" would be a good addition, said Mayor Steve Prysunka. This would be to help make sure the city is protected against fraud, Von Barga said. She also said improving efficiency in the city's business operations would help with loss prevention.

The manager also said another way to potentially save money is by making group purchases with local organizations.

Assembly Member David Powell said he wanted to make sure the city remained as local as possible when putting out bids, and to spend money locally.

"I want known that every dollar we spend in the city stays with the city," Powell said.

Infrastructure and land development were also major discussion points during the workshop. While not on the original list for review by the assembly, members discussed expansion of the city cemetery. It keeps getting put off, Gilbert said, and they need to make more room in the cemetery one of these days. There are nine plots left open, Borough Clerk Kim Lane said. However, some of these plots are not diggable, as they are full of boulders and stumps.

Von Barga said the city may want to consider moving away from burials in Wrangell, and instead offer only columbarium



PHOTO COURTESY OF VINCE BALANSAG

Senior Thien Khuong and senior Robyn Booker were crowned homecoming king and queen for 2021 during halftime of the Wolves basketball home game last Saturday. COVID-19 precautions required the homecoming court to stand apart from each other at the halftime event. Other members of the court include: Freshmen Prince and Princess Cody Eastaugh and Mia Wiederspohn; Sophomore Prince and Princess Will Ashton and Brodie Gardner; Junior Prince and Princess Jake Eastaugh and Liana Carney; and Senior Princes and Princesses Brett Abrahamson, Bruce Smith, Jade Balansag and Ashlee Olson.

internments after cremations. This was unrealistic, she admitted, as many people have religious or philosophical reasons for wanting their remains buried.

However, if the city were to treat its cemetery as an enterprise fund operation that had to pay its own way, she said, building new cemetery plots could cost tens of thousands of dollars each. Expansion would be a very

expensive and lengthy process, she said, which given the city's financial situation could be difficult.

"I understand how important it is for people to have burial space, do not get me wrong," the manager said. "But when we're making choices about where to spend the very scant resources that we have, that's a tough pill to swallow."

Von Barga later added that the city needs to purchase a new columbarium, as well.

Despite the potential cost, Prysunka asked Von Barga to work with some assembly members to put together potential options for the cemetery. It will not be an easy discussion, he said, but the city cannot choose to do nothing. With some options and cost estimates, he said, they can at least look at the problem with their more data. They may want to also consider hiring a consultant to help the city make an informed decision, he also suggested.

Other development projects covered in the meeting include efforts to remove abandoned vehicles from Zarembo Island, development of the former Wrangell Institute boarding school property, and numerous improvements to the Public Safety Building, water system and other city properties.

As this was only a work session, the assembly took no formal action.

Other priorities covered in the workshop include negotiating a collective bargaining agreement with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, which represents some city employees, strengthening the partnership between the city and the Wrangell Cooperative Association, and improving the borough's communication and transparency with the media and the public.

## BRAVE wants to get back to work

By SENTINEL STAFF

The Wrangell community group BRAVE (Building Respect and Valuing Everyone) has embarked on a "revival mode" after slowing down last year for the pandemic.

BRAVE, which was founded in 2017, has as its mission statement: "To provide advocacy for healthy relationships in our community through prevention programs, resource referral and community engagement."

It has been an unofficial sister organization to WISH (Women in Safe Homes), the Ketchikan shelter for victims of domestic violence which also serves Wrangell.

The group will meet at noon Feb. 12 at the Salvation Army meeting room, which will be limited to 20 participants to maintain safe distancing. A Zoom link will be available for anyone interested.

For more information, call BRAVE organizer Kay Larson at (907) 209-9117 or email [brave.wrangell@gmail.com](mailto:brave.wrangell@gmail.com).

In past years, BRAVE has managed several programs and activities including a "Choose Respect" march, family resilience fairs, educational programs, training sessions, and obtaining grant funds to provide backpacks with supplies for people in need.

## COVID-19 Vaccination Update



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

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

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



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

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

 SEARHC | healthy is here.



# Tight games for Wolves season-opener split

By CALEB VIERKANT  
*Sentinel writer*

With one win and one loss, both narrow, the Wrangell Wolves had a hard-fought opening to their high school basketball season. Wrangell High School hosted the Peters-

burg Vikings last weekend to start the season.

"They were definitely exciting for sure," Coach Cody Angerman said of the Friday and Saturday games.

The first game, Jan. 29, went to the Vikings. They took the

lead early in the first quarter, sinking a three-pointer. However, the Wolves were not deterred. They took the lead briefly, but ended the quarter in a tie, 10-10.

Wrangell pulled ahead slightly in the second quarter,

17-16, widening it to 26-22 at the end of the third quarter. The score was tied 26-26 and then 28-28 in the fourth quarter, but Petersburg pulled ahead in the final seconds, winning 31-28.

The second game, Jan. 30, was just as hard-fought but a win for Wrangell. The opening quarter saw Wrangell score first, with the score tied 6-6 for most of the quarter. In the final minutes, the Wolves scored on a streak of baskets and took the lead 12-6.

The second quarter saw the Wolves and the Vikings both demonstrate a strong offensive game, tied 21-21. In the third quarter, Wrangell pulled ahead 35-32. The fourth quarter saw the Wolves and Vikings tied up once again for a while, but the Wolves managed to take a narrow lead and hold on to it, winning 48-43.

Angerman said he saw definite improvement in his team in the second game compared to the first. He spoke with Petersburg's coach, and said they agreed neither of their teams played up to par the first game. The early games of the season are a good time to find areas of improvement in the team, he said, and grow as the season goes on.

"There's still a lot to take away from it ... and hopefully keep getting better," Angerman said.

Trisa Rooney, high school activities director, said that another round of games is tentatively scheduled for this

weekend, Feb. 5 and 6, for both the boys and girls teams. The home games against Craig are scheduled to begin at 5 p.m. Friday and 9 a.m. Saturday. The Wrangell Lady Wolves, the girls team, will play first both nights.

Only two household members per athlete and necessary staff will be allowed to attend the games. "Please remember to mask up and wait to be screened at the door ... and please keep your mask on for the entire time you are in the building," the school district said.

In between the two games each day, spectators will need to leave the gym for about 20 minutes so that crews can sanitize it, the district said.

Rooney said that the games will be streamed for those who cannot attend in person.



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Ryan Rooney makes a basket during last Saturday's game against the Petersburg Vikings.

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# Eighth graders excited for new challenges with Lady Wolves

By CALEB VIERKANT  
Sentinel writer

Due to a shortage of players this season, the Lady Wolves received a waiver from the state school sports association and accepted two eighth graders into the team.

Adeline Andrews and Aubrey Wynne attend Stikine Middle School but will be playing with the high school basketball team. Both have past experience playing basketball, and joined the team for the challenges.

Andrews said she has played basketball for the middle school and with the Amateur Athletic Union for several years. Wynne has also played with the middle school and AAU for several years, she said, adding that she goes to the gym to play in the summers.

Both said joining the team is a good opportunity for them to play a sport they love — and at a higher level.

"I knew that the high school wouldn't have a team without a few of us," Andrews said. "So, I took the opportunity to do it."

Wynne agreed. "It was a good opportunity. ... They didn't have enough players, so it was kind of a win-win."



PHOTOS BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

**Eighth graders Aubrey Wynne (left) and Adeline Andrews (right) are playing with the Wrangell Lady Wolves this season.**

Playing at the high school level will be hard, Andrews said, but that is why she decided to give it a try. Playing against older and more experienced

players will challenge her to improve, she said. After the first couple of practices with the Lady Wolves, she believes she is ready for their first games.

"They've had more practice and time to get skilled up, but it's a nice challenge for me to try to catch up with them early," Andrews said.

Wynne said it will be different, playing with and against high schoolers, but so far she likes the difference. The Lady Wolves are a young team this year, she said, and she enjoys being part of the team because the players take things seriously.

"I really like it, because it's way more serious and it's not so much just for fun," Andrews said.

The Lady Wolves will have their first games of the season Friday and Saturday, against Craig, with the girls playing the first game each day, followed by the boys team. Friday's games will start at 5 p.m. Saturday's games will begin at 9 a.m.

Only two household members per athlete will be allowed to attend the games in person, but the games will be streamed for everyone else to watch.

## Skagway faces uncertain summer as it awaits cruise line decisions

By Claire Stremple  
KHNS public radio

Skagway used federal CARES Act funds to keep year-round residents from leaving in 2020, but the money has run out and there are questions of how the small town that depends on cruise passengers could weather another season without its usual crush of tourists.

Last year was supposed to be the biggest cruise season yet, but the pandemic erased the anticipated million-visitor revenue stream for the northernmost community in Southeast Alaska.

Now there's some doubt whether ships will return in 2021.

Charlie Ball is a senior executive with Holland America Group, which includes Princess Cruises and Holland America Line, and a leading figure with the cruise industry's trade association. "I get more and more pessimistic about the beginning of the season as every week passes, and particularly because

these weeks now, these are real 'money' weeks historically for our business," he said.

Ball made his remarks to the Skagway Visitor Department in January. He said the industry is trying to complete all the steps required under the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's conditional sailing order, but it could take months and cut into the 2021 season.

"At what point is it more expensive to open for a short season that may be somewhat limited than to just, you know, sort of save money for next year?" he said.

Ball said there's a lot of demand that's going to boom once customers feel safe to travel. He says bookings are strong for the 2022 season.

Skagway Mayor Andrew Cremata said the town needs to figure out what to do in the meantime.

"We can't wait for a life preserver from cruise ship companies, we need to learn to tread

water. So that's where my focus is," he said.

That means a backup plan to get Skagway through a second summer without cruise visitors — or maybe a greatly reduced number if ships are able to return. The mayor said the municipality is working on a plan to help residents, but officials are not ready to announce any specifics.

Skagway's business owners said there is a lot of uncertainty.

"Financially, I hate looking at the graphs anymore. 2020 was down for us 87%," said Janylyn Heger, who manages Skagway Spirits Distillery. It's a family business that makes gin and vodka that's sold to regional bars and restaurants and at its tasting room downtown. COVID-19 shut that down. She said they're finding creative ways to keep hanging on.

But she said she knows others who aren't so fortunate. Skagway had used most of its \$8 million of federal pandemic relief to

pay \$1,000 a month to every man, woman and child in town. Those payments ended in December.

"We know of some people who are leaving or have left. If you buy into the insecurity of not knowing what the season is going to be like, we will probably see more of that, I'm guessing,"

Heger said.

Skagway's population normally doubles or triples in the summer with seasonal workers. That isn't happening so far this year. And there's concern whether the 1,200 or so year-round residents will be able to hang on for another year without cruise ships.

## Anti-tobacco message a winner in both communities

By SENTINEL STAFF

Anti-tobacco advocates thought a little friendly competition between Wrangell and Petersburg might draw attention to their message.

"It's been a challenge to reach people because we're not having face-to-face meetings," said Tammi Meissner, Wrangell SEARHC health educator.

Organizers put up posters in each town, showing the connection between tobacco use, e-cigarettes and health, and asked

people to find and take pictures of the hidden posters, and then put them on the event's Facebook page.

The posters targeted "vaping and the tobacco industry's marketing of flavors to kids," Meissner said. The messages are particularly relevant during the pandemic of a respiratory virus, she said, with COVID-19 also featured in the messages.

The Petersburg-versus-Wrangell Tobacco Prevention and Control Facebook Event closed Jan. 22, with the trophy going to Petersburg, where 81 people posted photos, to 75 in Wrangell who spotted and added the posters to the Facebook page.

Meissner and co-organizer Tori Shay, of the Petersburg Indian Association, said they are happy with the participation. Without fans in the stands at high school basketball games and other limitations during the pandemic, "we wanted something that was friendly and competitive," Meissner said.

In addition to the trophy going to the winning community, several names were drawn from the entrants in each town for a hydro flask, she said.

The event organizers are hoping for a similar competition again later this year or next year.

Anyone looking for information on quitting smoking or e-cigarettes can call Alaska's Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT NOW (1-800-784-8669).



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# SEARHC educator makes case for tax on tobacco products

By CALEB VIERKANT  
*Sentinel writer*

A local tax on tobacco products would be a “win-win-win” for Wrangell, a health educator said.

Promoting public health is a win, as is reducing smoking among teens — plus the borough could gain a new source of revenue, SEARHC Health Educator Tammi Meissner told the borough assembly Jan. 26.

“Tobacco is the leading preventable cause of disease and death in the U.S.,” Meissner said. “One in five adults in Southeast Alaska smoke, and one in three American Indian and Alaska Native adults smoke in Southeast Alaska. ... More Alaskans die annually from the direct effects of smoking tobacco than suicide, motor vehicle crashes, homicide, HIV, AIDS, chronic liver disease and cirrhosis combined.”

Higher prices will encourage people to quit a bad habit, or to avoid relapsing if they are trying to stop using tobacco, Meissner said.

Making cigarettes more expensive also would help prevent young people from starting to use tobacco products, she said. The percentage of youth who smoke cigarettes has been in a steady decline for years, Meissner said. However, the recent introduction of e-cigarettes has changed that trend. More young people are beginning to use tobacco products through e-cigarettes.

Every dollar-per-pack increase in the price of cigarettes reduces the number of youth who smoke by 6% to 7%, and the number of pregnant women who smoke by 7%, she told the assembly

A tobacco tax would be an economic boost to the Wrangell treasury, as well. The Ketchikan Gateway Borough collected \$1.37 million in Fiscal Year 2019 from its \$2-per-pack tax on cigarettes;

Sitka collected \$815,000 that same year from its \$1.26 tax; and Petersburg earned \$241,000 from its tax at \$2.07 per pack, according to a state tax report. Two dozen cities and boroughs across the state had tobacco taxes as of last year.

The state tax in Alaska is \$2 per pack on cigarettes and 75% on the wholesale value of cigars and other tobacco products.

Tobacco use costs Alaskans statewide about \$438 million a year in direct medical costs, plus an annual \$93.2 million in Medicaid costs, according to the national Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and other advocacy groups.

“To get this money back, cigarettes would have to be taxed over \$20 a pack to cover those medical costs,” she said.

In Wrangell, the borough could use some of a tobacco tax toward prevention programs to further lower the number of people who smoke, Meissner suggested.

The final reason she said the city should consider a local tobacco tax is because there was public support, according to a survey put together by SEARHC. During the 2019 Wrangell Health Fair, she said, they surveyed 180 smokers and non-smokers, and about 82% said they were in support of at least a \$2 tax on tobacco products.

“It’s a win-win-win with tobacco taxes,” Meissner said. “Why? It’s a health win. ... It also is a financial win. Tobacco taxes can provide revenue which can be put into prevention programs for youth. ... It’s a political win, there is broad support, public support, for tobacco taxes..”

Mayor Steve Prysunka said if SEARHC wants to request borough action on the issue, it should submit a written proposal.

Sitka artist Michaela Goade won a national award for her illustrations in “We Are Water Protectors,” a 2020 book about the struggles against construction of an oil pipeline in the Dakotas.



## Award-winner advises younger artists to look local

By GARLAND KENNEDY  
*Sitka Sentinel staff writer*

SITKA - Award-winning Michaela Goade has a recommendation for younger artists thinking of professional work: Start locally. “It can be really helpful to look for local opportunities. One of the harder, more debilitating things is to look at the top and say, ‘I want to get there, how do I get there?’ It seems impossible and daunting but it can be broken down into small opportunities,” she said.

Goade, of Sitka, is the first Indigenous person ever to receive the Randolph Caldecott Medal for best children’s picture story from the American Library Association. She won for her illustrations in “We Are Water Protectors,” a 2020 book that depicts the struggle against construction of the Dakota Access oil pipeline through Standing Rock Sioux territory

“I’m incredibly honored by the award. The recognition is really affirming and rewarding,” Goade said. “I think it’s really important to recognize that there is a glass ceiling being broken. ... Representation is so important. Look to the future, this is for the kids. I just try to remember that there are little kids that see this.”

The Tlingit artist said the award was a win for Indigenous representation.

The award is not Goade’s first time in the national spotlight. In December, she composed artwork for google.com in honor of Elizabeth Peratrovich, a Tlingit leader who was instrumental in the passage of anti-discrimination legislation in Alaska in 1945.

“I’m still in shock a bit. It’s mind-boggling in a way; even just a year ago when we were prepping for the release of the book this is just some far-fetched dream that never seemed to be in reach,” Goade said.

Awarded since 1937, the Caldecott Medal honors “the most distinguished American picture book for children,” the library association said.

Goade learned of the honor via Zoom conference on Jan. 24. “I was like a deer in the headlights.”

The book was released last March, as coronavirus lockdowns enveloped the country, and Goade was uncertain how much attention the book would receive.

In a write-up for National Public Radio, author Cynthia Leitich Smith gave the book high marks. “It’s not only one of the all-time best Native children’s books, but it’s one of the most beautiful and important picture books ever published, period,” Smith wrote. The book also won praise from the Washington Post and Booklist.

With vibrant watercolor images that evoke a sense of fluidity and offer sharp contrast between the Water Protectors, depicted in bright colors, and the pipeline, shown as a black snake poisoning the land and water, Goade’s artwork carries the story.

The message of Indigenous peoples’ rights and environmental conservation found a universal audience.

“The message really resonated with a lot of people, Native and non-Native alike,” the artist said. “I knew it would be really well received within certain communities. I just had no idea it would reach so far. There is always a risk with subject matter like this that it could be a little politicized.”

Carole Lindstrom, who is Ojibwe, wrote the text of the book and mirrored Goade’s art by telling the story in a lyrical manner that creates a sense of magical realism.

“I wanted to bring it back to the water protectors and land defenders and environmental justice issues around the world. We have a lot within our own community here in Sitka, those who are doing the hard work. Activism takes a lot of shapes, for me it is often art,” Goade said.

Following a difficult year, Goade said, her work seems more relevant than ever.

“As a country, as a world we had such a time of coping last year. And there was a lot of talk about the environment and a lot of other important things,” she said. “In a way that unprecedented year, I think it made more people maybe pick up the book.”

On a personal note, Goade said the award reaffirms that her art is headed in the right direction.

“It feels a little bit more personal in that it tells me a little bit that I’m on the right track. ... It just affirms your artwork, your creative output, it’s a good feeling,” she said.

Her next published work will be in “I Sang You Down from the Stars,” written by Cree-Trinidadian poet Tasha Spillet. That book is set to release in April.

Goade also has begun work on a Southeast Alaska-themed book, though she has not yet settled on a title.

## Juneau has lost 1,300 residents since 2015

JUNEAU (AP) - More people are leaving the city of Juneau than arriving because of state budget cuts and declining state jobs, labor officials said.

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development estimates more than 1,300 people have moved out of Juneau since the city’s population peaked at 33,162 in 2015, public radio KTOO-FM reported.

Juneau lost 172 residents from July 2018 to July 2019, and 286 residents from July 2019 to July 2020, officials said.

The state population has also declined during that time. Agency economist Sara Teel said the percentage of Juneau’s lost population is almost double the state overall. Teel attributed the population decline to the loss of state jobs in the capital city.

“Most likely it has to do with state budget cuts and then attrition, not filling jobs that somebody left,” Teel said. She also said she expects the trend to continue well into 2021.

Sol Neely, a former professor at the University of Alaska Southeast, left Juneau with his wife and daughter in June during the coronavirus pandemic. He said part of the reason was because of budget cuts imposed by Gov. Mike Dunleavy. The cuts dismantled the university program he founded to introduce college coursework to inmates and inspired them to attend college upon their release.

Neely now works at Heritage University, a private college in Washington state. “I do have a sense of job security right now,” Neely said. “And we do have family here. So that’s nice.”

Juneau Sen. Jesse Kiehl said no state department, with the possible exception of the Department of Corrections, has been immune from job losses because of budget cuts and attrition.

“When you see the economy losing payroll, losing jobs, that’s tough for kids in schools and strong cultural institutions,” Kiehl said. “That’s tough for contributions to our nonprofits, and volunteers and our social service organizations.”



# Southeast State Fair back on this year

After missing 2020 due to the pandemic, the Southeast Alaska State Fair in Haines plans to return this year. The board voted unanimously last month to put together some version of the annual event, according to the Chilkat Valley News in Haines.

But it will not be a normal year. Southeast Alaska State Fair Executive Director Kari Johnson said events are likely to be smaller and will certainly be outdoors.

"We are hopeful," Johnson told KHNS public radio. "Yes, there's going to be one. It might be big, it might be small. ... I think we're kind of waiting to see what happens."

The size of the fair will depend on

health safety, quarantines and whether the Canadian border reopens—it's been closed for nearly a year.

About 70% of the attendance at the fair's Beer Fest comes from the Yukon Territory — that's what makes it financially viable, Johnson told the radio station. The fair's board has put off that decision until at least February.

She said it isn't likely to be a big money-making season for the nonprofit organization that runs the fair, but the goal is to put on as many events as possible.

"We will have something during the weekend of the fair, we're just not sure what it will be yet but, by golly, the gates will be open," fair spokesperson Amanda

## Town's latest COVID case not travel related

Sentinel staff

The city announced a new case of COVID-19 in Wrangell on Saturday morning. It was not related to any travel.

This latest case, the 29th for the community, was reported as a local resident infected with the virus. According to the city's press release, the resident had not traveled recently.

The person has been notified and is in isolation, the city said.

The weekend report was the only active case of COVID-19 in Wrangell. The previous 28 are all reported as recovered.

Residents who experience COVID-19 symptoms or have other COVID-related questions can call SEARHC's COVID-19 hotline at (907) 966-8799.

Randles told the town's weekly newspaper.

Johnson said a big question mark is whether musical acts from down south will be able to attend if quarantine require-

ments are still in place. "It could be we have a normal fair and we can bring entertainers, or it could be a local thing where we're doing local entertainers and not having any travelers here," she said.

# Juneau working to prevent 'Zoom bombing'

JUNEAU (AP) - Officials in Alaska's capital city are working on measures to prevent disruptions of online public meetings that have included verbal abuse of at least one assembly member.

The use of videoconferences allows the public to continue observing and participating city government meetings during the coronavirus pandemic, but there have been problems, Juneau public radio station KTOO reported Jan. 26.

City officials estimated there have been about a dozen instances of what has become known as "Zoom bombing," or planned disruptions of meetings using the popular Zoom videoconference software. The method has been used to disrupt public meetings throughout Alaska and elsewhere on Zoom and other conferencing platforms, often with lewd, racist or pornographic material.

The Juneau Assembly has updated its planned responses, though officials would not reveal details that

could enable the methods to be circumvented. Officials shared only that someone's hand is now always near the mute button.

"We've had a few at the assembly level, we've had a few at the school board level, we've had a few in some committee board" meetings, Juneau City Attorney Rob Palmer said. The city does not have a local law identifying Zoom bombing as a crime, although Palmer said he is working to make that change.

# Submarine cable will be replaced this summer

From the Petersburg Pilot

The Southeast Alaska Power Agency is on track to replace a damaged submarine cable used as backup to serve Petersburg as early as this summer, SEAPA Board of Directors Chairman Bob Lynn said.

The power agency has contracted with Sumitomo, a Japanese firm, to construct a new cable to replace a damaged submarine line between Woronkofski and Vank islands, at a cost of approximately \$14 million.

Lynn said SEAPA has received news that construction of the cable is ahead of schedule and will likely be delivered to Vancouver in April. "This really changes the dynamics ... so we'll be able to put it in this summer," Lynn told the Petersburg Borough Assembly on Jan. 19. "We really will have a backup cable for Petersburg next winter."

The damaged cable is one of four underwater lines between Woronkofski and Vank islands that provide Petersburg with

power. Three of the cables are needed to move electricity power, while the fourth is a backup. Without a working fourth cable for that stretch of the power grid, Petersburg would

have to rely on diesel generation and the borough's Blind Slough hydroelectric project if a second cable were to become damaged.

A fault damaged the backup cable on Sept. 29, 2019. The sys-

tem carries power to Petersburg from the Tyee hydro facility at Bradfield Canal and is part of an 83-mile transmission line bringing power to both Wrangell and Petersburg.

## Fewer Alaskans had cancer screenings in 2020

ANCHORAGE (AP) - Fewer Alaska residents had routine cancer screenings in 2020 than in the year before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, doctors said.

There were 330 fewer mammograms and 28 fewer lung cancer screenings last year than there were in 2019 at Juneau's Bartlett Regional Hospital, said Paul Hawkins, director of the hospital's diagnostic imaging center.

Some medical providers said the screening decrease was likely linked to anxiety related to the virus that has lasted through the pandemic, the Anchorage Daily News reported Jan. 25.

The decrease could also be related to a temporary ban on elective medical procedures the state enacted in March to preserve personal protective equipment and potentially reduce COVID-19 cases.

That elective procedure prohibition was lifted in April, although virus cases surged in the summer and through the fall and winter and kept virus anxiety levels high. Some providers have

shifted to virtual medical care, which is helpful for some types of cancer screenings, but not all.

Routine cancer screening increases the likelihood of survival by speeding up diagnoses. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends asymptomatic testing for cervical, breast, colon and lung cancer.

"Anecdotally, from my personal experience, there have been more cases than normal where there's a clinical change in the person's status because of logistics related to the pandemic," said Anusiyanthan Mariampillai, an oncologist at the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage.

Mariampillai said it is too early to know whether decreased screening will significantly impact Alaska cancer rates and deaths. "But we may in the next year or so see that change," he said.

An important factor will be how long patients delay screening. Waiting a year can be more detrimental than pausing for a couple weeks or months, Mariampillai said.

## Alaska gets its first case of U.K. coronavirus variant

JUNEAU (AP) - Alaska has detected the state's first known case of the coronavirus variant identified last year in the United Kingdom, officials said Jan. 26.

The infected person is an Anchorage resident who had traveled to a state where the variant had already been detected, the Alaska health department said. The person first experienced symptoms on Dec. 17, was tested three days later and received a positive result Dec. 22.

The resident lived with another person in Anchorage, who also became ill. Both iso-

lated and have since recovered, officials said.

It was not yet clear if the second person also was infected with the same variant.

Dr. Joe McLaughlin, the state epidemiologist, said in a news release that the discovery of the variant is not surprising because viruses "constantly change through mutation."

He said this is one of several "variants that has been carefully tracked because it appears to spread more easily and quickly than other strains of the virus."

As of Jan. 25, there have been 293 confirmed cases of the U.K.

variant in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Dr. Anne Zink, Alaska's chief medical officer, said it is likely the variant will be detected again soon.

The CDC says the variant could become dominant in the U.S. by late spring and could lead to an increase in infections, officials said.

Alaska has been sequencing the coronavirus since March to monitor mutations. When significant variants were detected last fall, the state labs began looking for them in Alaska as well.



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# Alaska Fish Factor

By LAINE WELCH Fisheries columnist

## Southeast gets small boost in halibut catch limit

Pacific halibut harvesters received some rare good news last week: Increased catches in 2021, along with a longer fishing season.

At its annual meeting that ended Jan. 25, the International Pacific Halibut Commission boosted the coastwide catch for 2021 to 39 million pounds, a 6.53% increase over last year. It includes halibut taken in commercial, sport, subsistence, research, personal-use and as bycatch for fisheries of the West Coast, British Columbia and Alaska.

Almost 300 individual Pacific halibut stakeholders attended the meeting via an electronic platform.

For commercial fishermen, the halibut catch limit of 25.7 million pounds, compared to a take of 23.1 million pounds in 2020.

Alaska gets the largest chunk of the Pacific harvest at 19.6 million pounds, compared to just over 17 million pounds last year.

All Alaska regions but one, the Bering Sea, will see increased catches. In Southeast Alaska (Area 2C), the 2021 catch limit is

3.53 million tons, a 3.52% increase over last year.

A total of 6.29 million pounds is allowed to be taken as "discard mortality" from all regions combined.

The halibut fishery also was extended by one month and will run from March 6 to Dec. 7.

### KODIAK LAUNCHES FIRST OYSTER CROP

A Kodiak entrepreneur is introducing his first batch of oysters in time for Super Bowl slurping. Erik O'Brien, who grew up in Kodiak and has fished his family salmon setnet sites his whole life at Larsen Bay, has proven it's a pearl of a place that is perfect for oyster-growing. His oyster farm is the fruition of a plan he put in place nearly a decade ago.

"Larsen Bay might have some of the best growing waters we've seen in Alaska," he said. "It is a relatively large body of water with an extremely narrow opening, so it's very protected in a fjord. It warms up and it's got our big Kodiak tides, so there's a lot of tidal flow. And it faces Southwest Alaska, which is a

whole bunch of wind with a lot of energy and stirring up of nutrients. That really seems to promote the growth."

The superb growing conditions have O'Brien's oysters reaching market size in little over two years compared to the more typical four or five years. He also credits his floating culture system that will eventually span 20 acres.

"There are black bags tied together on a long line with floats on one end of the bags and they float in four inches of water. And that has some other benefits, because my oysters are really clean as they're on the top of the water," he said. "Most of the nutrients in the water column are on the top where the sun is. And on top of that, the black bags suck up some extra solar heat. There's a belief that those bags and that solar heat have led to the more rapid growth. They grow much faster than I anticipated."

Right now, O'Brien is only using about a half-acre site which should yield 150,000 oysters by September. His goal is to

double production each year.

"My farm layout is long and skinny, so I can put eight 600-foot shackles in one line, and the site is 160 feet wide and I can put eight strings 15 feet apart, so I can have 11 strings. Each string can hold about 500,000 full-grown oysters. So I could eventually have 5.5 million full-grown oysters allowing me to sell about 2 million oysters per year," he added.

The fledgling oyster farm already has put two people to work, which is another of O'Brien's objectives.

"Part of the goal was to create a sustainable business and bring jobs and opportunity back to our community," he said. "In a very small way that has started, and

I'm hoping that it will continue and I'm able to provide new opportunities for folks who want to live in Larsen Bay full time."

Meanwhile, local oyster orders already are flooding into Island Seafoods, Kodiak's retail store and custom processing outlet, a division of Pacific Seafoods.

"I'm thrilled to be featuring Kodiak oysters," said Ian Whiddon, store manager. "I've been

Continued on page 11

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Larry Persily, paper@alaskan.com, 907-351-8276. (tfnhdh)

### SERVICES

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**Application Deadline February 15, 2021**

For an application call (800) 478-1456 or (907) 786-3888 or visit [www.doi.gov/subsistence/regions](http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/regions)

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

Chad Carpenter's **TUNDRA**

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Chad Carpenter



# Fish Factor

Continued from page 11

selling live shellfish here at Island Seafoods for over 20 years, and I've always sourced them from other parts of the state or from the Pacific Northwest. So I'm really thrilled to be featuring local oysters."

## STATE BOARD OF FISHERIES DELAYED TO FALL

Alaska Board of Fisheries meetings focused on Southeast Alaska, Prince William Sound and statewide shellfish have been postponed from this spring to the fall. The Fish Board voted

Jan. 25 on the delay due to COVID-19 concerns.

"I'm just basing on the most logical assumption that this year, this spring anyway, is pretty much toast as far as how this COVID thing is going up and down. One day it's good and the next day it's not. It would be irresponsible to try and continue these meetings like we had planned," said John Jensen, of Petersburg, the only board member from a coastal community.

The Board of Fisheries focus on regional issues every three

years for commercial, sport, subsistence and personal-use fisheries. The current lineup includes 79 proposals for Prince William Sound, 155 for Southeast and 42 for statewide shellfish issues.

The delay means back-to-back meetings for those regions this fall, possibly into next year, followed directly by fish issues for Bristol Bay, the Alaska Peninsula, and the Arctic/Yukon/Kuskokwim regions. No dates have been set for either round of meetings.

The shuffle could cost the Alaska Department of Fish and Game an additional unbudgeted \$250,000. That would require a supplemental appropriation from the legislature, said state Fish and Game Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang.

"I'm supportive of trying to do this, but I just want you to know at the end of the day that there's going to be potentially some impact if we can't get that money through the legislature. And there is going to be some impact to board meetings as a result of divisional support attending those meetings. But again, we'll do our best to try and power through that," he said.

Meanwhile, the status of unconfirmed Fish Board members is still being litigated. They were not vetted or confirmed by state lawmakers due to COVID-19 cutting into last year's legislative session. Gov. Mike Dunleavy insists his appointees can remain, but Kodiak Rep. Louise Stutes



PHOTO COURTESY ERIK O'BRIEN

**Erik O'Brien has designed a system for growing oysters that uses a long string of floats to keep the oysters well positioned in the water column for nutrients.**

said not so fast.

"Currently, we have four sitting members — three new members and one old member — that have not been confirmed and they are making decisions and some of them just don't have the experience. And they have the opportunity to make monumental decisions affecting

people's livelihoods," Stutes said during a United Fishermen of Alaska webinar.

Stutes has filed House Bill 28 that would allow board members to participate but not vote until they are confirmed in a joint session, except under unusual circumstances.

# Police report

## Monday, Jan. 25

Welfare check: Person is fine.

## Tuesday, Jan. 26

Agency assist: Ambulance.

Traffic stop: Citation issued for speed over 20 mph in school zone.

Summons service.

Agency assist: Ambulance.

Domestic disturbance.

## Wednesday, Jan. 27

Agency assist: Ambulance.

## Thursday, Jan. 28

Agency assist: Hoonah.

Traffic stop.

Citizen assist.

## Friday, Jan. 29

Agency assist: Public works roads.

Theft.

Disorderly conduct.

Agency assist: Hoonah Police Department.

Agency assist: Ambulance requested.

## Saturday, Jan. 30

Trespass / assault.

## Sunday, Jan. 31

Traffic complaint.

# Wrangell Medical Center

Opening Soon



## ATTENTION:

The Wrangell Medical Center Emergency Department will transition to the new facility at **noon on Friday, February 12.**

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

### New Facility

232 Wood Street  
adjacent to the Clinic

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



# Child abuse cases increase during pandemic

ANCHORAGE (AP) - Severe child abuse cases in Alaska have increased significantly at times during the coronavirus pandemic, experts said.

As students return to classrooms, child welfare advocates are assessing the impact of the pandemic on child abuse, Alaska Public Media reported Jan. 27.

Visits by one clinic to children in need of hospitalization for severe injuries because of suspected abuse skyrocketed by 173% in the past year, said Mike Canfield, a spokesperson for Providence Alaska Medical Center in Anchorage.

"This absolutely reflects an increase in serious physical abuse and neglect cases," said Barbara Knox, the medical director of the clinic, Alaska Child Abuse Response and Evaluation Services.

Knox found an alarming change while evaluating 2020 child abuse data for the clinic, known as Alaska CARES, at Providence.

"The cases that are presenting are presenting inpatient, and it's the big and the bad," Knox said. "A serious uptick in cases of abusive head trauma, serious physical abuse."

Reports to the state Office of Children's Services decreased by up to 30% in some months of 2020, while evaluations by Alaska CARES slightly decreased compared to 2019.

The lower reporting rate and the spike in severe cases is likely because of a combination of factors, including increased isolation, stress from family financial instability and school closures, Knox said.

The children's services office has seen the number of children in foster care grow,

with children staying in foster care for longer periods.

Kim Guay, acting children's services director, said the pandemic "sent us for a loop." Family courts closed, social workers' ability to do home

studies and home visits were disrupted and the pandemic increased the difficulty of investigating suspected abuse, especially in rural areas, Guay said.

Elizabeth Congdon-McGee,

acting executive director of the Alaska School Counselor Association, said, "We don't know what has been in our kids lives. We see them on a screen, but we don't know what's behind that screen."

**Questions about COVID vaccines?**

Find answers to frequently asked questions and get the latest information at [covidvax.alaska.gov](https://covidvax.alaska.gov)

### POLICY FOR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

The Deadline for submission is **Monday at 5 pm** for Thursday publication.

## Customer Appreciation Program

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