

Borough again offers to help fund OCS office

A 50-50 split with the state to restore local caseworker

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

It didn't work a year ago, but the borough and Wrangell's state House member are trying again to restore the Alaska Office of Children's Services caseworker position in the community.

Same as last year, the borough is offering to cover half the expenses if the state will pay its half. The community has

been without a caseworker for more than a decade due to state cutbacks.

Bringing back a caseworker "is absolutely crucial," said Bob Davis, lead teacher and assistant principal for the high school and middle school. "We're seeing a huge uptick in depression ... just kids struggling."

The Legislature approved the position last year, but the plan failed when Gov. Mike Dunleavy vetoed the spending.

Funding to restore the position this session was in the House version of the budget but not the Senate version, leav-

ing it to a joint House-Senate conference committee to resolve as the Legislature hurries this week to complete its state spending plan for the fiscal year that starts July 1.

Ketchikan Rep. Dan Ortiz, who also represents Wrangell, has been working the issue and said he is hopeful the Senate will accept the House proposal.

In addition to the stresses of school and life during the yearlong pandemic, a lot of the problems for children relate back to their home situations, where a caseworker could intervene and maybe

help, Davis said.

The lack of a caseworker in town is part of the problem, he said. For a long time, all Davis could do was call the state's 1-800 number to get help for youth in crisis. "I've made numerous calls this year," mostly looking for help for middle school students.

"There was a long dry spell when there was nobody," he said. It would take four or five days to get a caseworker to come to town to help Wrangell kids.

Davis recalled one student who asked:

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PHOTO BY VINCENT BALANSAG, OF VINCE PHOTOGRAPHY

Ready for their big day

Wrangell High School graduation ceremonies are scheduled for 7 p.m. Friday at the community gym. Attendance will be limited, but the event will be streamed live on the school district's YouTube channel. The graduates are (from left): Elizabeth Stuart, Bruce Smith, Michelle Stuart, Jacob Allen, Jade Balansag, Brett Abrahamson, Ashlee Barnes, Thien Khuong, Robyn Booker, Alex Rooney, Annabelle Garcia-Rangel, Logan Ritchie, Julia Miethe and Terra Hoyt. See Page 3 for the story.

Music has returned

Sixth grader Madeline Davies was among the high school and middle school musicians and choir members who performed their first concert in more than a year on May 11, striking a positive musical note for the community. See Page 8 for more photos.



PHOTO BY VINCENT BALANSAG, OF VINCE PHOTOGRAPHY

Alaska will quit federal program that pays extra jobless benefits

JUNEAU (AP) - Alaska will stop participating next month in a federal program that provides an additional \$300 a week in unemployment aid to thousands of people, the state labor commissioner announced last Friday, saying it's "time to help people get back to work."

Department of Labor Commissioner Tamika Ledbetter said state participation will end June 12. Alaska joins at least 16 other states that have said they will stop providing the extra benefits paid by the federal government, which was set to expire in September.

Ledbetter said many Alaskans abruptly lost work due to the pandemic last year and she understands some still have child care, transportation or other challenges that keep

them away from going back to work. "However, unemployment insurance is a temporary support system," she said.

The extra \$300 a week has been in addition to regular state unemployment benefits, which max out depending on past earnings at \$370 a week, plus additional for dependents.

Ledbetter told reporters that while many businesses are affected by a lack of cruise ships this summer, others are hiring and reporting difficulties in finding workers. She said there are more job openings than applicants in the state.

"We want our economy to be strong. Therefore, it is time for Alaskans who are able and available to go to work to do so," she said.

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Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

WRANGELL HIGH SCHOOL graduation 7 p.m. Friday at the community gym. Attendance limited to graduates and invited guests. Watch the ceremonies live on the school district YouTube channel.

WRANGELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL kindergarten roundup and screening starts at 11:20 a.m. Friday for incoming kindergarten students. Call the office at 874-2321 to schedule a time. Also, bring your child's immunization record and birth certificate. If you bring both, you will be entered into a drawing for a fun surprise. Students will meet with kindergarten teachers for a tour of the classrooms and a quick screening. (Please do not bring other children or siblings to the roundup.) Call the office for more information, 874-2321.

MUSKEG MEADOWS Ray Pederson Memorial Ryder golf tournament is scheduled for 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. \$25 cash entry fee; 18 holes each

day; register by 9:30 a.m. each day. Call 874-4659 for more information.

IRENE INGLE PUBLIC LIBRARY summer reading program now open for registration. Open to students entering kindergarten through ninth grade in the fall. Register at the library (open Wednesday through Saturday); the reading program runs June 2 through July 31. There will be drawings and a special prize for readers. Participants need to sanitize their hands as they enter the library to register and wear a mask while in the library, stay six feet apart from others who are not in their household, and limit visits to 30 minutes. Call 874-3535 for more information.

WRANGELL PARKS & RECREATION will close at 6 p.m. Friday for graduation. Lap and open swim cancelled Saturday due to staff shortage. All swims are cancelled due to the lifeguard and swim instructor course June 1-5.

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

NOLAN CENTER THEATER presents "Cruella," rated PG-13, May 28-30. Tickets are \$7 for adults, \$5 for children under age 12, for the comedy and crime film, which runs two hour and 14 minutes. Masks are required (and will be provided) as you enter the building. You may remove your mask while eating. Please wash your hands or use the hand sanitizer provided, and stay six feet apart in the lobby as well as in theater seating. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

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

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

Friday, May 21: Ian Chase, Madan Bay Covalt, Trevor Kagee; Anniversaries: Dustin and Devyn Johnson, Don and Betsy McConachie.

Saturday, May 22: Jim Abbott, Charley Murray-Young, Dante Nesbitt; Anniversaries: Warren and Chloe Edgley, Nate and Alicia Sterns.

Sunday, May 23: Lori Torvend Baremore, Nicole Hammer, Dennis Pavlina, Logan Scott, Mia Weiderspohn.

Monday, May 24: Jana Barlow, Bucky Bjorge, Brandon Kade Ellsworth, Jordan Glass, Yvonne Bjorge Reeve; Anniversary: Lorne and Stephanie Cook.

Tuesday, May 25: Chelsea Pollow, Scott Thomas, Guy Young; Anniversary: Jake and Alesha Jabush.

Wednesday, May 26: Judy Bakeberg, Israel Comstock, Shaleen Kuntz, Jesse Sumner, Jordan Velle, Louella Ward.

Thursday, May 27: Tonia Ayers, Aaron Comstock, Austin Dow, Lance Hayes, Ida Howell, Amanda Johnson, Nola Walker.

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, May 21

Hamburger, cantaloupe, fried potatoes

Monday, May 24

BBQ beef, fried potatoes, salad

Tuesday, May 25

Spicy beef stew, fruit cup, roll

Wednesday, May 26

Chinese pork, green beans, salad, rice

Thursday, May 27

Baked fish, Brussels sprouts, salad

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

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

Ferry Schedule

Northbound

Friday, May 21

Matanuska, 5:45 p.m.

Friday, May 28

Matanuska, 3:45 p.m.

Friday, June 4

Matanuska, 5:45 p.m.

Friday, June 11

Matanuska, 4:45 p.m.

Friday, June 18

Matanuska, 4 p.m.

Southbound

Monday, May 24

Matanuska, 5:45 a.m.

Monday, May 31

Matanuska, 6:30 a.m.

Monday, June 7

Matanuska, 6:30 a.m.

Monday, June 14

Matanuska, 5:30 a.m.

Monday, June 21

Matanuska, 4:45 a.m.

All times listed are scheduled departure times.

Call the terminal at 874-2021 for information or call 874-3711 or 800-642-0066 for recorded information.

Continuing Events

PARKS and RECREATION www.wrangellrec.com

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Weight room available by appointment and at reduced capacity:

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

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

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

May 19, 1921

The U.S. Fisheries Service boat Auklet made an emergency trip to Prince Rupert, British Columbia, during the week for the merchants of Wrangell. The Auklet left here early Saturday morning and returned yesterday morning. Needed supplies such as flour, sugar, eggs and meat were brought back from the Canadian port. Mrs. Neville accompanied Captain Neville on the trip, which was made by special permission of the government. A union strike has stopped loading of ships at U.S. West Coast ports, significantly reducing flow of goods to Alaska. The Northwestern, which has a non-union crew, left Seattle for Alaska at 9 p.m. Tuesday night with 380 passengers and a large quantity of freight. The ship will not stop in Wrangell.

May 17, 1946

The City Council at its last meeting gave city employees a five percent salary increase. Present salaries are as follows: police chief, \$210 per month; fire chief, \$100 per month; street and water supervisor, building inspector and fire marshal, \$273

per month; health officer, \$25; librarian, \$32.50; city clerk, \$250.00; assessor, city attorney and magistrate, \$150; light plant superintendent, \$341.25; first assistant at the light plant, \$275; second assistant, \$236.25; common labor and truck drivers, \$1.10 per hour. Salaried employees receive two weeks paid vacation a year.

May 21, 1971

Automotive Parts and Equipment Co. of Anchorage will open a branch store in Wrangell in mid-June, a representative of the firm said here yesterday. Jack Bussard, of Ketchikan, sales representative for the chain, said the Wrangell store will carry a full line of automotive, marine and industrial hardware and be located in a store in the Waters Building on Front Street. Jim Wright, a member of the firm's Ketchikan branch sales staff for the past 2 1/2 years, will manage the Wrangell outlet, Bussard said. Automotive Parts and Equipment Co. has outlets in Anchorage, Ketchikan, Sitka, Juneau, Fairbanks, Palmer, Kenai and Seattle. Bussard said the decision to open the Wrangell

branch came as a result of expanding mail and phone orders from Wrangell customers.

May 16, 1996

Amid all the high school graduates this month, only one rated her very own ceremony. Clara Benjamin, 85, received her GED last Thursday after two years of studying and 69 years after having quit school because of family obligations. About 60 friends and relatives showed up in the hospital lobby May 9 to watch Mrs. Benjamin accept her diploma. Her son, Bryant, presented her with a sweatshirt proclaiming her one of the "Class of '96." "When I started my senior year at Missoula High School, my mother became ill with polio, so I quit school to care for my two younger brothers," Mrs. Benjamin said. "Now I realize I should have returned to school later but never thought of it then. ... When I was a patient at Wrangell Hospital, Cinda told me about a GED course where I could study to receive a high school diploma." Mrs. Benjamin added, "I had trouble with math — still my hardest subject."



TIDES

May 20-May 26

	High Tides		Low Tides					
	AM Time	PM Time	AM Time	PM Time	Ft	Ft		
May 20	07:49	12.5	09:08	13.7	01:36	5.8	02:07	1.9
May 21	09:10	13.0	09:59	15.1	02:54	4.5	03:11	1.8
May 22	10:17	13.9	10:44	16.6	04:01	2.6	04:10	1.5
May 23	11:16	14.9	11:28	17.9	04:59	0.5	05:04	1.2
May 24	12:10	15.8	05:49	-1.6	05:53	1.0
May 25	00:11	19.0	01:01	16.4	06:37	-3.2	06:39	1.1
May 26	00:54	19.6	01:51	16.5	07:22	-4.2	07:23	1.4



Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Hours
May 20	4:24a	9:09p	16:44h
May 21	4:22a	9:10p	16:48h
May 22	4:21a	9:12p	16:51h
May 23	4:19a	9:14p	16:54h
May 24	4:18a	9:15p	16:57h
May 25	4:16a	9:17p	17:01h
May 26	4:15a	9:19p	17:04h

Ketchikan's high COVID count prompts season's first ship to cancel

By KETCHIKAN DAILY NEWS
AND SENTINEL STAFF

Ketchikan's first cruise ship of the year canceled its visit due to a spike in COVID-19 infections in the community, UnCruise Adventures director of marketing and communications Liz Galloway said last Thursday.

The Wilderness Legacy, carrying 55 passengers, was scheduled to arrive early last Friday morning and stay until about 6 p.m.

Ketchikan broke two pandemic records last Thursday, recording a record-high case count of 20 new infections, and marking an all-time high of 102 active cases. Then, on Friday, it set another record with 6.2% of COVID-19 tests coming back positive. A test positivity rate over 5% can indicate that the virus is spreading undetected, officials said.

The active case count represents almost 20% of all the COVID-19 cases recorded in the community since the pandemic started more than a year ago.

Restaurants, bars and gyms in Ketchikan were asked last week to close after the city's pandemic risk level was raised to its highest level as officials attempt to slow the spread of COVID-19.

"Everybody is concerned," said Ketchikan Visitors Bureau President Patti Mackey, not only about the loss of the ship visit but about the current high-risk COVID-19 level in the community.

She said another UnCruise Adven-



USTIN SAFRANEK/KETCHIKAN DAILY NEWS VIA AP

Medical Assistant Molly Bolton collects nasal swab tests at a Ketchikan Gateway Borough drive-up COVID-19 testing site May 13. Restaurants, bars and gyms in town have been asked to close as officials attempt to slow the spread of COVID-19 after the city's pandemic risk level was raised to its highest level.

tures vessel is scheduled to arrive this Saturday. That ship can carry a maximum of 76 passengers, but likely will carry fewer due to coronavirus mitigations. UnCruise Adventures requires that all of its crew members and passengers be fully vaccinated.

UnCruise had been expected to stop in Wrangell this summer, after missing last year due to pandemic restrictions, but the company notified the borough

last month that it would limit its port calls this summer to Ketchikan and Juneau.

Ketchikan Emergency Operations Center Incident Commander Abner Hoage said he wasn't particularly surprised by the decision of the cruise line to skip Ketchikan last week, with the virus risk level so high locally.

"As we look at things starting to re-open, and especially our cruise industry,

they're going to be looking at community infection rates, despite the fact that they're going to be requiring crews and passengers to be vaccinated," he said.

Hoage said that of the 77 cases recorded locally between April 1 and May 5, only two of those people had been vaccinated against the coronavirus.

Because of the high case count and risk, two Ketchikan schools were closed to in-person learning and a third ran at half capacity last week.

COVID cases increased in connection with an outbreak at a wrestling tournament held at Ketchikan High School in April that brought athletes from seven different schools across the region. State activities association officials issued a warning to the school for its alleged failure to enforce the wearing of face masks and testing of competitors.

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

"If we want to have a vibrant economy, the more people we can get vaccinated, so that we keep that spread down, the better," Hoage said.

City of Ketchikan Mayor Bob Sivertsen said, "It's just something to be aware of in regard to our economy," adding, "I think there's a lot of COVID fatigue going on in the community and we may have just let our guard down a little bit, and we need to get back to what worked in the past."

Graduates earn almost \$175,000 in scholarships

By Sentinel staff

Wrangell graduating seniors received scholarships that could total almost \$175,000, with many extending through four years of college.

The scholarships were announced at the high school awards ceremony Monday.

Students received scholarships from 21 different programs.

Among the larger awards

was the Alaska Pulp Corp. scholarship of \$20,000 per student over four years to attend the college of their choice. The former owner of the since-closed Wrangell sawmill started the program in 1992, and since then has awarded scholarships to 74 Wrangell graduates, totaling \$1.34 million, reported Frank Roppel, a former executive with the company.

This year's Alaska Pulp Corp. scholarship recipients are Jade Balansag, Terra Hoyt and Bruce Smith.

Smith and Hoyt also each received University of Alaska scholarships of \$12,000 over four years.

Recipients of the state-funded Alaska Performance Scholarship each qualified for \$4,755 per year for four years. The Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education runs the program, with students selected on their grades and curriculum. Graduates can use the funds to attend Alaska colleges, universities or career and technical education programs. This year's Wrangell winners were Robyn Booker, Balansag, Hoyt and Smith.

Balansag also received the Alaska Association of School

Boards' June Nelson \$1,500 scholarship.

Hoyt received the Wrangell Chamber of Commerce \$1,500 scholarship.

Aaliyah Messmer and Booker each received the Joel Wing (Emblem) \$1,000 scholarship.

Balansag won the state Emblem Club \$1,000 scholarship, and Hoyt received the Wrangell Emblem Club \$500 scholarship.

Hoyt received the Allen Benjamin (Emblem) \$1,000 scholarship.

The Greg Scheff Memorial (Elks) \$2,000 scholarship went to Balansag.

Balansag also received the \$2,500 Anna Loftus Ream (Seattle Foundation) scholarship and an Alaska Spirit of Youth Lifesaver Award of \$1,450.

Other scholarship recipients

are:
Wrangell Teachers Association, \$500: Booker.
Alaska Peace Officer Association, \$500: Hoyt.
Alaska Native Sisterhood Camp No. 1, \$500: Balansag.
Alaska Native Sisterhood Association, \$500: Hoyt.
Kiks.adí Scholarship, \$500: Balansag.
Wrangell Medical Center Foundation Health Careers Scholarship of \$1,000 (for up to four years): Balansag and Hoyt.
Colin Bunes Memorial Scholarship of \$1,000 for up to two years: Balansag.
Iversen Memorial, \$1,000: Balansag.
Frieda Lust Scholarship, \$100: Booker.
Alfred Ryll Scholarship, \$100: Balansag.



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High school graduation back indoors Friday

By Sentinel staff

Wrangell High School graduating class wanted to do something different this year and the students were looking forward to staging the ceremonies on the city dock. But an unkind weather forecast pushed them back into the community gym, where graduation is set for 7 p.m. Friday.

"The weather forecast was not so favorable," Megan Powell, adviser to the class of 2021, said Monday.

Though attendance will be restricted only to graduates and limited guests per student, the event will be livestreamed on the school district YouTube channel.

The 7 p.m. ceremonies will include a slide show of senior photos — baby pictures, too — and letters from parents.

Science teacher Heather Howe will be the guest speaker at graduation. The student class co-valedictorians and salutatorian also will speak at the event.

This year's graduating class includes: Co-valedictorians Terra Hoyt and Bruce

Smith

Salutatorian Jade Balansag
Brett Abrahamson
Robyn Booker
Jacob Allen
Annabelle Garcia-Rangel
Thien Khuong
Julia Miethe
Ashlee Barnes
Logan Ritchie
Alexander Rooney
Elizabeth Stuart
Michelle Stuart

In addition to the high school students, several Wrangell homeschool students are also on this month's graduation list:

Savannah Rosemarie Smith is a PACE Statewide Homeschool graduate.
Aaliyah Messmer is an IDEA Homeschooling graduate.
Caleb Joshua Watson is graduating from IDEA Homeschooling.
And Brian Christopher Jessop II is also graduating from IDEA Homeschooling.

FROM THE PUBLISHER

What, no one has any opinions?

By LARRY PERSILY
Publisher

I know Wrangell people have opinions and viewpoints and all sorts of interesting thoughts in their heads. I hear them in the stores, see them on Facebook and listen when people talk with me on the street.

But I don't read them in the Sentinel. I feel like the Maytag repairman in the TV commercials — lonely because no one calls.

We can fill that missing piece in the newspaper. I say "we" because while I am eager to print your letters to the editor, you need to write them.

I'll provide the newspaper space free of charge for letters. All you need to do is put your thoughts down on paper. Well, I guess that was in the old days, when people sat at typewriters. I suppose putting your thoughts down in an email would be today's equivalent. No texts, please. Too much thumb work for me — I am not that skilled and do not have that much patience to use my phone as a typewriter.

Send your email to wrgsent@gmail.com. Or drop off your letter at the Sentinel office on Front Street. Or mail it to Box 798. No postage due, please.

Your letters can cover most anything, including politics, the state budget, living online, fishing regulations, climate change, the state ferry system, the Canadian border closure, wildlife

(on either side of the border), gardening, sports, national or international events, almost anything that you want to share with your community.

I say "almost" because there are limits. No profanity. No personal attacks. No unproven conspiracy theories that you read on some website. No stealing someone else's words and claiming them as your own (plagiarism). Stick to the facts, not rumors. And be respectful — don't call people "stupid," just say you disagree with them.

I'll correct any misspellings and will help with punctuation and readability, but I will not make any serious edits without your permission.

And try to keep the letters short. A few hundred words would be great. Focus on one point and stick with it. Try to avoid twists and turns and tangents and forks and off-ramps that will get your readers so lost that they miss the point.

The limits may sound unfair, that I am trying to stifle your opinions. Nope, I just want to keep the letters page constructive and informative, not destructive and misleading. There is enough of that already on all sides in political debates on social media and supposed TV news programs.

I want the Sentinel's letters page to encourage thought, not scare or threaten readers. If you want to scream and shout into a bullhorn, use a street corner, not the Sentinel. I'll buy the battery for your bullhorn, but I will not donate the newspaper pages.

EDITORIAL

Governor's PFD plan teaches misleading math

To steal the line from a country-western song of almost 30 years ago — "Well that's my story and I'm sticking to it" — Gov. Mike Dunleavy is sticking to his story that the Permanent Fund dividend is just about the most important thing in Alaska today.

So much so that not only does he want the PFD enshrined in the constitution, but he wants the formula for calculating the annual payment to residents hard-wired into the everlasting document. Even education, public health and safety don't get that kind of star treatment.

The governor wants legislators to put before voters next year a constitutional amendment to guarantee that half of the annual draw on Permanent Fund earnings go to dividends and the other half to public services.

His 50-50 plan would generate a PFD of around \$2,400 the first couple of years, which is about double the average of the past decade.

But what Dunleavy glosses over is that his bigger PFD would leave a billion-dollar-plus hole in the annual state budget for schools, health services, troopers, courts, state ferries, and everything else needed by 730,000 Alaskans.

It's like when kids proudly tell their parents they got a gold star in class but neglect to say they stole it from another student.

To his credit, the governor acknowledged in last week's announcement that the annual fight over the size of the dividend has immobilized politics in Alaska. The Legislature and governors have not followed the PFD formula in law the past five years because the state did not have the cash. Dunleavy won his job in 2018 by campaigning on bigger dividends, and now he wants to double down on an irresponsible political pledge by putting the dividend in the constitution.

"The time is now to make the tough decisions for Alaska's future. Alaskans need to know their lawmakers, and governor, will follow the law or change it," Dunleavy said last week. He is right, the Legislature needs to change the 1982 law for calculating the PFD. But he is wrong not to provide equally specific and honest proposals for covering the checks.

He says he wants to address the state budget deficit, which has existed for much of the past 30 years. He says he would be open to "anything and everything that helps solve the problem." But he has proposed nothing specific. It's as if he believes someone else is in charge of unpopular taxes while he is in charge of popular dividends. Is job sharing the governor's office in the constitution?

The Alaska Constitution says "all persons have corresponding obligations to the people and to the state." The governor has an obligation to tell Alaskans how he intends to pay for the larger dividends and all the public services he says he supports. Until then, his talk of a \$2,400 PFD is no more than fool's gold.

— The Wrangell Sentinel

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Music survived a challenging year

Before the May 11 mini-concerts performed by the middle and high school bands and high school choir, our last in-person concert was in December 2019.

It has been challenging this past year. We play with special masks that have flaps for the instrument's mouthpiece to fit through, and we cover our instruments to keep our air to ourselves. Frequently we would have to stop because someone's cover had become entangled in the keys of their instrument. I frequently heard, "Hold on, Mrs. Morse! My sarong has got stuck in my instrument!"

Our middle school band had never performed together until the evening of the concert. That is because we have had them in self-contained "pods" all year. I got to see these students on a three-day rotation, and I was teaching them all the same music.

We do something similar for our Honor Festivals and All-State Music, where students learn their music and can perform, but when we get to the

festival to perform they have three days to iron out the wrinkles. Our middle school band did not get that chance. They had a one-shot-and-done opportunity and did well in spite of all that was stacked against them.

Our choir also faced challenges this year. Trying to sing without projecting our voices as is normally done in a choir was hard. Many times, we would take a breath and get a mouthful of mask. It was frustrating at times, and other times we just laughed at the predicament.

It can be hard to stay motivated to make music when there is no one to share it with. Very few if any people make music to only keep it to themselves. Having the concert was, I believe, a huge motivating factor for many students. I heard from many students that they were happy to perform for someone again.

I also want to note that while it has been a challenge to keep music alive and going through a pandemic, the students and I have been so thankful to have music as an outlet this year. There are several locations in our region that don't have music or have limited what is

going on within the school walls in regard to music class. We have tried to keep that at the forefront of our minds while facing this year's challenges.

We are hopeful that in the future, as more things open up and look more normal, we will have more in-person concerts for everyone to enjoy.

Tasha Morse
Music Director
Wrangell Public Schools

State caseworker

Continued from page 1

"Why do you bother calling them, they don't do anything."

Just a couple of weeks ago, a new caseworker hired in Petersburg was able to visit Wrangell, Davis said.

"The schools are the first line of defense for a lot of these kids," he said.

The House version of the state operating budget includes \$144,000 to add a front-line social worker in Wrangell. State general fund dollars and some federal money would cover half the cost, with Wrangell volunteering to cover the other half.

The borough has offered free office space in the public safety building toward its 50% share, said Borough Manager Lisa Von Barga, in addition to covering some of the salary.

The borough would use money it has available from an unfilled position at the police department,

she said.

In addition, "we will be looking for other (community) partners," to help with the expense, Von Barga said.

Budget pressures led the governor to veto the funding in 2020, his spokesman, Jeff Turner, said last April. "The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services determined it needed to prioritize services in other areas of the state with disproportionately larger child protection caseloads," Turner said. "Based on its determination, the budget increase was vetoed."

The Legislature faced a constitutional adjournment deadline of Wednesday night to finish work on the new budget, though the governor has called them into special session starting Thursday if they are unable to complete a spending plan.

Dunleavy also wants lawmakers to work overtime on his proposal for a larger Permanent Fund dividend.

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PHOTO BY LARRY PERSILY/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Denny Leak is carving a yellow cedar log — first with a chainsaw and later with hand tools — in front of the Nolan Center, turning it into a sign pole that will be displayed on the corner to help attract and welcome people to the city museum. He was still at the chainsaw stage last Friday.

Summer projects at museum look to old and new woodwork

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

The Wrangell Museum has two projects underway, both dealing with wood.

One is a new sign, being carved from a 20-foot-long yellow cedar log. The other is the ongoing effort to preserve and display the 96-year-old retired U.S. Forest Service wooden boat, the Chugach Ranger.

Wrangell carver Denny Leak started last month stripping the bark off the log and is cutting his way into the design, which will spell out MUSEUM in large block letters vertically, with an eagle and a raven carved out at the top of the pole.

The finished piece will be installed at the corner of the museum grounds across from the bank, so that visitors walking from Front Street will see it, said Museum Director Cyni Crary.

Leak was roughing out the log with his chainsaw last week, and hopes to finish the carving in June.

He started carving large pieces about a decade ago, when he was clearing some trees at his dad's cabin in Colorado and his wife suggested he turn one of the logs into a bear. Since then, he said, he has carved an eagle for the

Mendenhall River Community School in Juneau, Beatrice the Beaver for Riverbend Elementary School in Juneau, and a couple of years ago carved an eagle for the Petersburg elementary school.

Even before taking on large-scale projects at his dad's cabin, Leak said he took to wood in his high school shop class.

After roughing out the design with a chainsaw, he turns to smaller hand and power tools, relying on some of the training he received from carvers on Prince of Wales Island.

Crary said she and Leak are still talking about whether to leave the cedar unpainted or not.

The log was donated by the Wrangell Cooperative Association, Crary said, which took the tree from some of its land off Zimovia Highway, just above Heritage Harbor.

"My hope is to have it raised this summer," she said of the new signpost.

The director also hopes to unveil the Chugach Ranger for public viewing sometime this summer. The 62-foot-long boat, the last wooden boat in the Forest Service fleet, was retired in 2015. It is on loan from the Forest Service and was moved

from storage at the Marine Service Center to the museum property March 31.

The city museum and visitor center has been advocating the past several years to move the boat into a permanent historical display outside the center. It is currently wrapped up in a full-boat cover to protect it from the rain.

If staff can figure out a temporary covering for the boat that will allow public viewing, it could be available this summer, Crary said. But keeping the boat dry is essential. "The rain really damages it," she said.

Longer term, "we're going to be building a viewing deck that will go all the way around" the boat, allowing people to walk through the cabin, Crary said. The permanent display would include storyboards about the ship's background.

"There's so much amazing history to this boat," she said. It was built in 1925 in Seattle and was one of 11 Forest Service ranger boats that operated in the state in the early 20th century. The Chugach was first assigned to Cordova and later transferred to Petersburg in 1953.

It could take a couple of years before the viewing deck and storyboards are in place, with fundraising and grant writing on the agenda to pay for the work, Crary said.

Governor calls special sessions for budget, larger PFDs, federal pandemic aid

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
AND SENTINEL STAFF

Gov. Mike Dunleavy on May 12 called a special session that would begin this week, the day after the current regular session of the Legislature is scheduled to end, if lawmakers are unable to finish work on the state budget for the fiscal year that starts July 1. He also called legislators back to work to consider his proposals for a much larger Permanent Fund dividend.

In addition, he announced a second special session, scheduled to begin Aug. 2, that would address his proposed constitutional spending limit, a constitutional ban on any new taxes without a public referendum, and spending of federal pandemic relief aid.

Both special sessions would be in Juneau.

The first special session is scheduled to begin Thursday, the day after the scheduled end of the regular session. The Legislature has struggled this year to complete its budget work after the House spent a month at the start of session deciding which members would be in charge of the chamber.

The introduction of more than \$1 billion in additional federal pandemic relief aid added more spending decisions to this year's legislative agenda, along with the annual battle over the size of the Permanent Fund dividend.

Dunleavy, in a prepared statement, said it was clear from talks with legislative leaders that more time would be needed to complete work on the budget.

About two-thirds of state general fund revenues come from the Permanent Fund, creating conflict between the need for public services provided in the budget and the want of a larger dividend for Alaskans. With North Slope crude production in decline, oil taxes and royalties provide only about 25% of state general fund revenues.

Under the governor's proposal to split the annual draw of Permanent Fund earnings 50-50 between dividends and public services — generating a much larger PFD than in recent years — the state would face annual budget deficits of more than \$1 billion in the years ahead. Dunleavy has offered no specific proposals for how to pay the bills, other than to mention maybe state-sanctioned gambling.

The governor told reporters he wants to address the deficit and would be open to "anything and everything that helps solve the problem," though his proposed constitutional amendment to ban taxes without a statewide vote likely would push any new tax revenues into 2024.

Dunleavy's proposed constitutional amendment on new taxes, such as a state sales tax or personal income tax, also would change state law to require a two-thirds legislative majority, instead of a simple majority, to raise the rate of any existing taxes. The provision would raise the bar significantly against any efforts to boost the state tax on oil production.

To cover state spending and larger dividends until any new revenue shows up, the governor has proposed withdrawing an additional \$3 billion from the Permanent Fund this year to buy time until elected officials can agree on a long-term, sustainable fiscal plan.

That extra \$3 billion would be in addition to the withdrawal of about \$3 billion a year under a 2018 law adopted by the Legislature to protect the Permanent Fund from excessive draws on its earnings.

Under Dunleavy's plan, the annual dividend would average about \$2,400 per person the next couple of years, growing from there. That would be almost double the average PFD of the past 10 years.

Lawmakers and governors have not followed the 1980s' dividend calculation formula that is set out in state law since 2016, when state finances got so tight that there was not enough money available to pay for public services and also cover the so-called full dividend under the formula, which would be more than \$3,000 this year.

Then-Gov. Bill Walker forced the issue in 2016 by vetoing half of

Continued on page 12



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PUBLIC NOTICES ARE IMPORTANT

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City adds north end of island to aerial imaging project

By Sentinel staff

For not much more money – less than \$10,000 – the city is able to add 411 acres at the north end of the island to an aerial imaging project that already covers 957 acres of downtown, Wrangell’s water reservoirs, and land south and east of Heritage Harbor.

It has been almost 20 years since aerial photography of the community. In addition, the project includes LiDAR, an airborne pulsed laser signal that “sees,” measures and produces detailed three-dimensional images of the terrain, ground cover and surface characteristics.

LiDAR, which stands for Light Detection and Ranging, is used in right-of-way projects for pipeline and highways, and increasingly for municipal mapping and planning work.

The borough assembly May 11 approved adding \$9,425 to the original contract for imaging services to expand the work to include the north end of the island, covering from just north of the state ferry terminal to the airport and over to the turnoff to the golf course.

The original contract for \$24,094 covered lands to the south, and beyond Heritage Harbor.

The contractor, Portland-based Elevate UAS, was coming to Wrangell this spring for aerial imaging work of rock-fall areas on Zimovia Highway for the state Department of Transportation. The borough was able to piggyback on that work, and in April approved a contract with Elevate for the first 957 acres.

In addition to the water reservoirs and slopes, that area includes aerial photography and LiDAR of “all community development from approximately Blooms Trailer Court across from City Park to north of town up to the intersection of either end of Evergreen Avenue and Bennett Street,” borough staff reported to the assembly.

Equipment problems with its drone requires Elevate to return to Wrangell



PHOTO COURTESY CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL

The city’s aerial imaging project includes photography with the clearest images yet of the community from above. This photograph shows the intersection St. Michaels and Reid streets, with the high school in the lower left.

to finish the job – at no additional cost to the city – but it also provided a low-cost opportunity to add the additional acreage at the north end.

“We’d like to take advantage of that,” Borough Manager Lisa Von Barga said at the May 11 assembly meeting, where members unanimously approved the \$9,425.

Having detailed LiDAR images will help reduce the cost of future ground survey work, Amber Al-Haddad, the borough’s capital facilities director, told the assembly.

The updated aerial photography will assist residents and contractors plan and design their work, said Carol Rushmore, Wrangell’s economic development director.

“This new (imaging) system with the drone is pretty incredible,” Al-Haddad said in an interview last Friday.

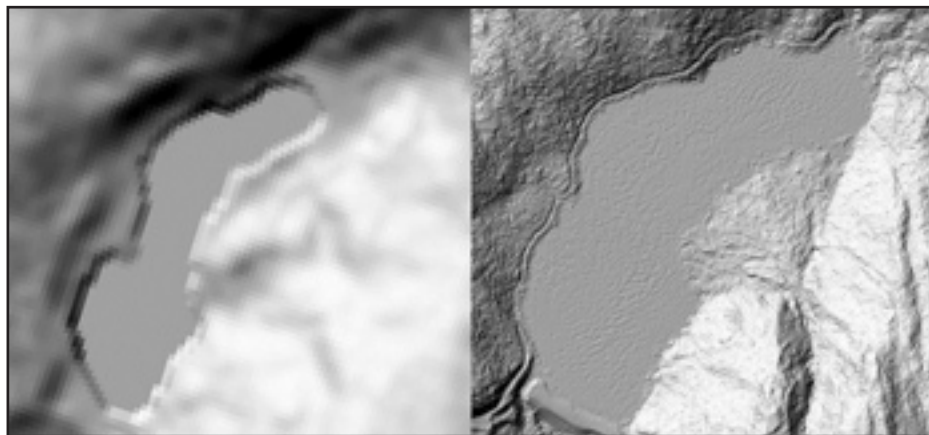


PHOTO COURTESY CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL

This side-by-side shows the high level of detail created by aerial LiDAR (laser) imaging (on the right) compared with IfSAR (radar) imaging (on the left). The view is of the upper reservoir and dam for the city’s water supply. The radar imaging has its uses, such as the state’s widespread digital mapping initiative across Alaska, but LiDAR produces much more detailed images. Wrangell has contracted for aerial imaging, including LiDAR, of almost 1,400 acres from the north end of the island to south of Heritage Harbor.

Mt. Dewey Trail extension work possible next year

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

The Mt. Dewey Trail extension project could go to construction next year, including a new trailhead parking area on Bennett Street, just north of U.S. Forest Service offices.

The borough assembly May 11 unanimously approved a \$69,542 contract with PND Engineers for scoping work to prepare the project for final design, to be followed by construction. Almost 91% of the cost of the scoping contract will be covered by federal funds, with the borough paying the rest.

“It’s nice to have something in the works for more green

space,” said Assemblymember Ryan Howe.

In addition to a new route up the backside to reach the final stretch of the Mt. Dewey Trail, the project includes a short extension of the Volunteer Park Trail to connect with Ishiyama Drive near the golf course, and a parking area for the Paddle Craft Trail near the beginning of the gravel surface on the Spur Road about a mile and a half down from the golf course.

The Paddle Craft Trail parking area would be located in an old gravel pit nearby, Amber Al-Haddad, capital facilities director, told the assembly. The intent is to give drivers a safer

option than parking in the right of way, which is what people do now.

After paying for the scoping work, the borough will have almost \$450,000 left from the federal grant and 9% local matching funds to cover design and construction expenses. Wrangell is trying to stretch the budget as much as possible

using borough staff, Al-Haddad said in an interview Friday. The Forest Service also is helping with staff hours, she said.

The new route to Mt. Dewey will include about 4,000 feet of trail, Al-Haddad said. A real benefit of the project is parking, she said. “There really is no parking” at the current trailhead behind town. “Everybody

parks in the street.”

She said the hope is to get the work done next year.

In the language of the federal government, the project is called a “Non-Motorized Transportation System Project.” Al-Haddad translated for the assembly: “We like to call it the Mt. Dewey Trail extension.”

Wrangell IGA golf winners

The team of Jerry Bakeburg, Frank Roppel, Doug Nelson and Eric Kading took first place May 8 in Wrangell IGA 9-hole best-ball play at the Muskeg Meadows golf course.

The team of Rocky and Rodney Littleton and Marva Reid took first place in May 9 competition.

The Ray Pederson Memorial Ryder golf tournament is scheduled for 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday at Muskeg Meadows. It’s 18 holes each day, with a \$25 cash entry fee. Register by 9:30 a.m. each day.

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OBITUARY

Former resident Gina Smalley dies of COVID

Gina Rose Smalley, 52, died at her home in Chehalis, Washington, April 9. The cause was COVID-19, the family reports.

Born on Feb. 9, 1969, in Ketchikan, Gina later moved to Wrangell, where she raised her children with Jody Smalley and worked at the hospital. She moved to Sitka in 2003 and continued to work with the elderly until 2020, when she moved to Chehalis and continued to work in home health care.

Survivors include her ex-husband, Jody Smalley, their daughter Danika-rae and son-in-law Lucas Shilts; grandchildren Mckenzie, Kevin, Chloe and



Gina Rose Smalley

Bobby; ex-partner Robert Rice and stepson Robert Rice Jr. and daughter-in-law Elizabeth Thomas, and grandchildren Zoey and Hunter; and honorary grandchild Kailyn McCutcheon.

Gina also leaves behind her brothers Bud and William Mather, and Joe Roth; sisters Marcella, Leanora and Anna Barton; and many nieces and nephews, aunts and uncles, cousins, and her stepmother, Patricia Barton.

Gina is preceded in death by her mother, Jeanne Watson; father, Fraser Mather; son, Robert "Bobby" Smalley; sister, Charlene Kissinger; and stepfather, Richard Barton.

Summer reading program returns this year at library

By Sentinel staff

After going online last summer, the Irene Ingle Public Library summer reading program for kids is back this year — just like it was for 25 years before the pandemic.

"We're excited to get things a little back to normal this year," library director Margaret Villarma said.

Kids will receive points for each book they read, with more than 100 drawings and a special prize for readers who complete the program.

Young readers can register now at the library or call 874-3535 to sign up. The library is open noon to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday.

The reading program will run June 2 through July 31. It's open to kids who will be entering kindergarten through ninth grade this fall, though a majority of readers in past years tended to fall within kindergarten through sixth grade, Villarma said.

The program has been popular in past years, she said, with 175 kids signing up in 2019. Participants read 3,621 books in 2018.

Kids will need to come into the library starting June 2 to take a very short quiz to test their reading level so that library staff can help direct them to books to check out based on their skills and interests. "We can find something for everyone," Villarma said, whether it be fiction or wildlife or most any topic.

Visitors to the library are asked to wear a face mask, remain at least six feet apart from anyone not part of their household, and not stay past 30 minutes so that others can come inside while avoiding crowding.

Unemployment

Continued from page 1

Patsy Westcott, director of the department's Division of Employment and Training Services, said there are more than 30,000 active unemployment filers who could be affected by the decision to end the additional benefits.

Alaska's unemployment rate in March was at 6.6%, higher than the national average of 6%. The state is down almost 22,000 jobs from last year.

Nolan Klouda, executive director of the University of Alaska Center for Economic Development, raised concerns over the decision to stop the enhanced benefits, writing on Twitter that it will "hurt tens of thousands of unemployed Alaskans and their households."

Klouda, in an interview, said programs like this have allowed people to pay bills and "prevented a lot of economic pain," and the additional unemployment funds

have flowed into the Alaska economy.

There are anecdotes that people are not returning to their old jobs or taking new jobs because of the increased unemployment benefits, and that the anecdotes are widespread enough that he doesn't "completely ignore them or disregard them," Klouda said.

But he believes the picture "is a lot murkier than that."

He pointed to research, much of which looked at 2020, and said there "really hasn't been evidence that supports people, on a big scale, staying home because of unemployment benefits overall."

Also adding "to the feeling of scarcity in the workforce" is that so many businesses are hiring for similar-type jobs all at once, competing for the same pool of workers, Klouda said.

More than \$1.2 billion in federal and state funds have

been distributed through Alaska's unemployment insurance program since March 2020, according to the state labor department.

In a prepared statement critical of the decision, House Labor and Commerce Committee Co-chair Rep. Zack Fields said, "Alaskans will lose at least \$50 million" in federal assistance.

"At a time when local businesses are struggling, we need every dollar we can get circulating in our economy," Fields said.

"I sympathize with Alaska business owners who are struggling to hire right now, but drastically reducing these benefits which were already temporary, and at no costs to Alaskans, is bad policy as our communities continue to suffer the economic effects of COVID," Rep. Bryce Edgmon said in the same House majority caucus prepared statement.

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Students pick up the beat after COVID absence

Wrangell Schools Music Director Tasha Morse conducted middle and high school students in their first performances since December 2019 at the covered basketball court at Evergreen Elementary School on May 11. At the start of the middle school mini-concert, Morse told the audience: "What you have just witnessed is the very first note that our entire band has played together as a band at all." COVID-19 safety protocols had blocked the two bands since early last year not just from performing but from practicing all together. After the middle school musicians performed at the outdoor event for a limited audience, the high school band took their seats and played several pieces, followed by the high school choir in the third mini-concert of the evening. Student performers included sophomore Paige Baggen (right).



PHOTOS BY VINCENT BALANSAG, OF VINCE PHOTOGRAPHY

U.S. Senate votes to allow cruise ships back in Alaska

By Sentinel staff

The U.S. House is the next stop for legislation granting a temporary waiver of federal law so that large cruise ships could come to Alaska this summer, avoiding a Canadian COVID-related ban on the ships stopping in that country's ports along the way.

Senators voted without opposition to approve the measure May 13.

Even if the legislation makes it into law, however, it is uncertain that cruise lines would offer summer Alaska voyages.

Most of the ships are not in position on the West Coast, and many operators are still struggling to come to terms with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's extensive

framework for resuming cruise operations from U.S. ports, the Maritime Executive reported May 13.

CDC requirements include either test voyages to try out health and safety protocols against COVID-19 infections, or 95% vaccination rates for passengers.

Major cruise lines already have canceled plans for cruises in July, citing the steps required by the CDC along with the need to restaff and restart their ships, according to Maritime Executive. However, Carnival Cruise Line said last week that while it has canceled most July sailings, it was still working to find a solution that would permit ships to sail to Alaska later this summer.

The company said Monday that it hopes to restart cruises out

of Florida and Texas in July.

It could take companies at least two months to market and sell Alaska cruises, prepare crews and position their ships, Ralph Samuels, an executive with Holland America Line and Princess Cruises, said in April.

The Senate bill, sponsored by Alaska Sens. Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan, pauses enforcement of a federal law that prevents most foreign-flagged ships from transporting passengers directly between U.S. ports without at least one stop in a foreign port. The 19th century law is intended to favor domestic fleets and maritime workers.

Because nearly every ship owned by the seven cruise lines sailing between Seattle and Alaska is registered outside the

United States, the Seattle Times reported May 13, most cruise traffic to Alaska stops in Canada to satisfy the U.S. law.

Most of the cruise ships sailing between Seattle and Alaska are registered in Panama, the Bahamas, Bermuda or the Netherlands, the Times reported.

The ships that don't start in Seattle begin their voyages from Vancouver, British Columbia. Either way, the U.S. law and Canada's closure have blocked Alaska cruises by the large ships for the second summer in a row.

Canada banned cruise ships last year, ending the Alaska season before it ever started, and has extended the ban to early 2022 to protect against the spread of the coronavirus.

"This has been a struggle to get everyone pulling together, but I think we are at a place where there is a glimmer of hope for Alaska's tourism industry," Murkowski told the Seattle Times.

Alaska had expected more than 1.3 million cruise ship passengers last year, providing the bulk of summer tourists to the state. The ships are big business in Seattle, too. Before the pandemic, the cruise industry generated nearly \$900 million annually in economic activity, according to estimates from the Port of Seattle.

Even if the legislation passes, Murkowski said it will take a major scramble in Alaska port towns to find workers and shop inventory, and for shore excursion providers to gear up.

"There's been so many moving pieces here that we've had to kind of cobble together," she told the Times. "I'm feeling much better today than I have in weeks about the viability for a semblance of a cruise season this summer."

Murkowski said she is optimistic the bill can pass the House. It would then go to President Joe Biden for signature into law.

Police report

Monday, May 10

Agency assist: Vehicle unlocked.

Agency assist: Theft of fuel from vehicle at the airport. Vacation check.

Agency assist: Ambulance.

Tuesday, May 11

Subpoena service. Motor vehicle accident. Disturbance.

Wednesday, May 12

Arrest for violation of conditions of release. Citizen assist.

Paper service. Driving with license suspended, revoked or canceled.

Agency assist: U.S. Forest Service.

Subpoena service.

Thursday, May 13

Agency assist: Structure fire.

Friday, May 14

Agency assist: Hoonah Police Department.

Saturday, May 15

Disturbance at bar. Traffic stop: Citation issued for speeding. Subpoena service. Harassment. Disturbance: Verbal warning.

Sunday, May 16

Assault. Animal complaint: Dead deer. Agency assist: Ambulance.

During this reporting period there were six agency assists for the Hoonah Police Department.

Ketchikan cancels king salmon derby

By Sentinel staff

Just three days after announcing the Ketchikan king salmon derby would return after a three-year absence, organizers reversed course and said there will be no derby next month.

Organizers had planned for two weekends of derby fishing — June 18-20 and June 25-27 — but the Alaska Department of Fish and Game thought that would be a bad idea, considering low king stocks in the area.

The department's sport fish division called the event organizer on May 11 with the bad news. "They expressed some concerns with the idea of basically encouraging 1,000 boats across a couple of weekends to go out there and target king salmon," said Michael Briggs, who coordinates the event for Ketchikan's Cabaret, Hotel, Restaurant and Retailers Association, during an interview with the community's public radio station KRBD.

The derby had been a 70-year tradition until 2018, when concerns about low wild king salmon stocks in the region prompted the state to curtail the sport harvest of kings through mid-June. Ketchikan held derbies for silver salmon in 2018 and 2019, but even that was canceled last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Wrangell king salmon derby also was canceled 2018-2020 but, unlike Ketchikan, the event has not been pulled for this year — as of Tuesday. The Wrangell Chamber of Commerce is planning to run the town's 66th king salmon derby June 15-30.

Briggs said community interest prompted the try to bring back the Ketchikan derby.

"After the heartbreak of not having a tournament at all in 2020, we thought it might be appropriate to go ahead and return it to its roots a little bit," Briggs told the Ketchikan Daily News the week before the cancellation. "We're not fishing three weekends, just the two, and so hopefully it won't impact king stocks too much — (and) still allow everybody to get out there and get some fishing in."

In a statement to KRBD, state fisheries biologist Kelly Reppert said the same problem that led organizers to cancel the king derby in 2018 still exists in 2021: poor stocks of wild kings.

"There is more concern in 2021 for the Behm Canal wild stocks than in 2018 when the derby was first canceled," Reppert said. And king salmon on the Unuk River north of Ketchikan have been a "stock of concern" for the department since 2017, Reppert said.

Too few kings are escaping the fishery into nearby Chickamin River as well. She said the river has missed its escapement goal four of the past five years.

Briggs said he understands the concerns of fisheries managers. "We certainly ... don't want to do anything to impact those stocks. We want to be able to continue fishing for king salmon around here for a long time."

He said he hopes for a silver salmon derby late summer, though planning is in the early stages.



SEAPA fire

The Southeast Alaska Power Agency reported “minimal damage to the structure and its contents” from a fire May 13 at its warehouse and office building at 4408 Zimovia Highway. “The root cause and anticipated cost of repairs is under review,” the agency said. The fire struck about 9 a.m. and did not affect electrical service to the community.

Former hospital on possible standby as temporary home when public safety building undergoes major renovations

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

One option for the former Wrangell hospital building would be to use it as temporary quarters when the public safety building undergoes major renovations.

There is no date set for the renovations, which have been estimated at more than \$13 million, but the 34-year-old public safety building needs significant work, particularly to repair water damage, rot and structural components, and staff and equipment would need to move out during construction.

The borough owns the hospital and land, and since 2018 had leased the building to SouthEast Regional Health Consortium until last month, when SEARHC completed the move into its new \$30 million facility. The borough then took back responsibility for the empty hospital, which was built in 1967 and expanded in 1974, 1988 and 1994.

That responsibility includes paying the heat, utilities, keeping the fire alarm and sprinkler systems operational and other maintenance costs.

The borough assembly May 11 approved \$21,000 to cover those costs through June 30, with the bills for the fiscal year that starts July 1 estimated at almost \$100,000. The only assembly vote against the \$21,000 expenditure was from David Powell, who said he was not interested in long-term expenses to keep the hospital building alive without a long-term plan for its use.

“I just wanted to know where we’re going,” Powell said at the meeting.

The assembly is expected to hold a work session on the building’s future at some point.

The borough is covering the heat and other costs out of what it calls the “Hospital Legacy Fund,” an account set up with one-time revenues received after SEARHC took over operations at the medical facility and the borough collected on accounts receivable.

“We have a finite amount of money” in that fund, Borough Manager Lisa Von Bargaen said in an interview last Friday. The account has about \$250,000, after deducting for the \$21,000 appropriation approved by the assembly.

It would be next year, at the very earliest, before the borough could go ahead with the public safety building renovations.

The borough first would need to decide on funding for the project and issue a design contract, Von Bargaen said. And with lumber prices spiking to record highs around the country, this is not the year to price out exceedingly costly wood, she said.

The Wall Street Journal reported that prices on the lumber futures market closed May 10 at more than four times the typical springtime price. Short supplies and heavy demand have driven lumber and wood-product prices to record highs this year across the country.

The public safety building houses Wrangell’s police and fire departments, state courthouse, motor vehicle and driver’s license registration and other services. The building has needed major renovations for years, and the assembly has questioned whether fully replacing the building would be more cost-effective.

New construction has been estimated at more than \$30 million.

“Considering these project alternatives, with our current and projected future financial environment, Wrangell is not able to consider the option to construct new,” Von Bargaen reported to the assembly in a memo in March.

Wrangell’s finances are a challenge even with the lower-cost renovation, which would impose a steep burden on taxpayers unless the borough is able to obtain state or federal funding for the project.

Ordinance would extend pot sales hours

By Sentinel staff

The borough assembly will hold a public hearing at its May 25 meeting on a proposed ordinance that would extend the closing time for retail marijuana sales to 10 p.m. from the current limit of 6 p.m.

The assembly was asked during recent public testimony to consider extending the hours for marijuana sales, Borough Manager Lisa Von Bargaen reported in her backup material for the ordinance, which was introduced at the May 11 assembly meeting.

The borough “spoke with Wrangell’s only marijuana operator, and his suggestion is to allow operations through 10 p.m., as that seems to be a common time throughout the state,” the manager told the assembly.

“The police chief was consulted, and the police department has no concerns” about the longer hours, Von Bargaen wrote.

Vaccinations Now Available for Ages 12+

Do your part to keep yourself, your families and our community healthy this spring and summer.

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Alaska Fish Factor

By LAINE WELCH Fisheries columnist

Seafood marketing agency asks for slice of federal aid

Alaska's lone seafood marketing arm gets zero funding from the state and, to date, has received no federal pandemic aid funds.

The Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute is hoping to get something from the more than \$1 billion coming to the state general fund in the latest round of federal relief dollars under the American Rescue Plan.

ASMI put in a \$20 million request two months ago, but Gov. Mike Dunleavy made no mention of it in mid-April when he released his proposals for the federal money, nor anything since.

Dunleavy did include \$150 million for an Alaska Tourism Revitalization program, citing the need for "industry relief to promote tourism and adapt services for potential loss of cruise ship season."

"Recovering market losses from the pandemic will require additional investment," said Jack Schultheis, ASMI board chair and manager of Kwik'Pac Fisheries in Emmonak. He cited widespread closures, shipping

disruptions to markets and added costs for harvesters and processors in the communities where they operate.

ASMI revenues dropped 25% in the past year, due to an estimated \$500 million in lost income to the statewide fleet. The group is solely funded by a 0.5% voluntary industry tax based on dock prices and competitive grant funding.

"ASMI's revenue is expected to decline by \$5 million over two years," said executive director Jeremy Woodrow at a House Fisheries Committee presentation last week.

Along with COVID impacts, Alaska's seafood industry faces a double-whammy from hurtful international trade barriers. Seafood is Alaska's largest export by far, with nearly 75% of production exported each year to nearly 100 countries.

The newest hit to trade is a 25% to 35% tariff imposed last November on U.S. salmon going to the 27 countries that comprise the European Union. The dispute stems from U.S. subsidies being paid to Boeing and com-

peting European aircraft.

China, Alaska's largest trading partner, has levied 37% to 42% tariffs on Alaska seafood since 2018.

Russia, Alaska's largest competitor, slammed its doors on U.S. seafood purchases in 2014, but Russian exports to the U.S. are up 173%.

Dollars for direct sellers

The Local Catch Network, a nationwide group of small-scale harvesters, will act as guides through another round of federal pandemic relief funds.

The Farmers Market Promotion and Local Food Promotion programs include \$77 million in competitive grants for seafood businesses, tribes and groups involved in local, regional and direct seafood marketing.

National Fisherman reports it stems from \$92.2 million in funding through the 2018 Farm Bill Local Agriculture Market Program as part of USDA's Pandemic Assistance for Producers Initiative.

Local and direct seafood sales have been a bright spot during

the pandemic and direct-to-consumer, e-commerce sales increased by 122% over the past year, according to ASMI data.

For the next six weeks, the Local Catch Network will host outreach events and provide technical help to fishermen and community organizations interested in applying for funding.

Copper River fish frenzy

Phones were "ringing off the hook" at Pike's Place Fish Market in Seattle where pre-orders of fresh sockeye salmon fillets were retailing at \$49.99 a pound, and \$79.99 a pound for Copper River kings. The fish were expected this past Tuesday, one day after the salmon season's first opener.

The Cordova Times reported that Sena Sea Seafoods in Washington, the sales arm of Cordova-based 60° North Seafoods, had pre-orders for fresh king fillets at \$139 per pound and \$122 for sockeyes. Four, eight-ounce portions of frozen kings were going for \$189 and frozen sockeye pre-orders were \$95 for four,

six-ounce portions.

Copper Rivers Seafoods was taking orders for sockeye fillets at \$49.95 a pound and king salmon at \$69.95. Anchorage-based seafood marketer FishEx was promoting sockeye orders at \$44.95 a pound and \$78.95 for kings.

State managers forecast low Copper River catches this year at 652,000 sockeyes, 13,000 king salmon and 218,000 coho.

Recycling plastics into planks

Turning plastics from old fishing gear and marine debris into durable lumber is building momentum from coast to coast, and one Alaska entrepreneur plans to take it on the road.

Patrick Simpson, of Cordova, received a \$100,000 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to develop a mobile plastic waste recycler. He told Alaska Public Media that the recycler would fit into one or two 40-foot container vans for easy transport to communities.

"The technology is not terribly difficult," he said. "The inno-

Continued on page 11

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FOR SALE

READ ALL ABOUT IT! Four different autographed books regarding our history: Stikine River, Anan, petroglyphs, Wrangell. Purchase them at your local stores or call 874-3665. (4x5-26b27)

FOR SALE

SHELVING: White melamine boards, wall unit with brackets to hold shelves, one 8-foot shelf, two 4-foot shelves, and several smaller shelves; \$50 takes it all. Also, two floor-stand display units, about 4½ feet high, with brackets for hanging items; \$50 each. Come see at the Sentinel, then call Anne at 907-518-1912 to make an offer.



FOR RENT

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

FOR SALE

1973 32' RAWSON, \$20K, 120 Ford Leyman engine, older boat with good potential. Major upgrades and improvements. Project boat. As is. Wrangell owner. 907-305-0559 or 874-3676. (4x5-20b26)

HELP WANTED

ROBERTS CONSTRUCTION is looking for carpenters and laborers. Pay DOE \$25-\$45 an hour. Call Doug at 425-785-

9283. (tfn5-20b17)

HELP WANTED

OBI Seafoods in Petersburg, AK, is looking for employees

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

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

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

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

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

CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to the City & Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, Borough Charter, Sec. 4, public notice is hereby given that the following ordinance listed by title only has been adopted by the Borough Assembly. Such ordinances are currently on file in the office of the Borough Clerk and may be inspected upon request.

ORDINANCE No. 998 OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL, ALASKA, AMENDING THE ZONING MAP TO EFFECT A CHANGE TO LOT 1, BRADLEY SUBDIVISION II FROM A CONTRACT ZONE COMMERCIAL TO COMMERCIAL AND FOR LOT D-A, PRUNELLA SUBDIVISION FROM OPEN SPACE/PUBLIC TO COMMERCIAL ORDINANCE.

Kim Lane, MMC, Borough Clerk City & Borough of Wrangell, Alaska

Publish May 20, 2021

for summer salmon season. We do have some early spots as

well. Call Lori or Martha at 907-772-4294 for details. (4x6-3b29)

CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL, ALASKA PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

The Regular Borough Assembly meeting will begin at 7 p.m. Tuesday, May 25. During the meeting, there will be a public hearing on the following items:

ORDINANCE No. 999 of the Assembly of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, amending Chapter 20.32 of the Zoning Code titled OS District - Open Space/Public Section 20.32.020 Conditional Uses, by adding municipal facilities and communication infrastructure as two new conditional uses

ORDINANCE NO. 1000 of the Assembly of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska amending the zoning map to effect a change to Lot 11a, Lot 11b, and Lot 10a, Block 5, Third Avenue Subdivision and Lots 12-15, Block 5, USS 2127, from holding to open space/public

ORDINANCE NO. 1001 of the Assembly of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska amending Chapter 6.05 of the Wrangell Municipal Code titled Marijuana Section 6.05.005 titled Hours of Operation; Penalty for Violation, by increasing the allowable hours of operation

Emergency Resolution No. 02-21-1564 allows for a modified plan for in-person meetings. Please contact the Borough Clerk to obtain a copy of the Resolution and Mitigation Plan. Public members are highly encouraged to attend the meeting by Zoom teleconference. For specific requirements, please contact the Borough Clerk so that she may send those to you.

For PERSONS TO BE HEARD: Kim Lane, Borough Clerk, will maintain a Persons to be Heard Sign-up Sheet for persons who are In-Person or attending by Zoom teleconference. If you would like to speak In-Person or by Zoom teleconference at the meeting, please contact Kim Lane, Borough Clerk, at 907-874-2381, or email clerk@wrangell.com so that you can be added to the list of Persons to be Heard.

To participate by Zoom, here is the log-in information. To join by computer: <https://zoom.us/j/9078742381?pwd=MTNqSEdncjRvakh2UjCtMVUNxMndYUT09> and enter the Meeting ID: 907 874 2381. Then enter Password: 99929

Kim Lane, MMC, Borough Clerk City & Borough of Wrangell, Alaska

Publish May 20, 2021

Sitka also faces deadline for safely shipping trash aboard barges

By KATHERINE ROSE

Radio station KCAW Sitka

Sitka, just as Wrangell, has been told that open-top trash containers are a fire risk aboard barges and cannot be used to send the community's garbage south.

The Sitka borough assembly last week heard about the reasons and options for the policy change from the city's solid-waste contractor, but the city is pushing back on paying the bill.

Last fall, Alaska Marine Lines announced it would start refusing shipments of solid waste in open containers as of June 1. Switching to closed containers and fully compacting the trash would require a significant investment in new equipment that could come with a big price tag.

The Wrangell borough assembly last month approved spending more than \$600,000 to buy and install a solid-waste baler so that the garbage can be mashed into tight blocks for loading into closed containers for safer shipment aboard barges.

Sitka, like Wrangell, contracts with Republic Services for its solid-waste shipping. The nationwide company delivers Sitka's loaded trash containers to AML barges for transport to Seattle, then hauls them by truck and rail to a landfill in Eastern Washington.

"We have three partners in Southeast Alaska — Sitka, Klawock and Wrangell — that are still currently utilizing open-top equipment," Republic Services spokesperson Matthew Pederson told the Sitka assembly May 11.

Shipping garbage in open containers poses a fire risk. The last time a Sitka container caught fire was in 2016. But last fall, a container from Wrangell caught fire in Ketchikan, and that spurred AML to set a firm deadline with Republic Services to stop shipping trash without a lid.

Pederson said Sitka needs a baler or a special compactor that compresses the trash into



PHOTO FROM A REPUBLIC SERVICES PRESENTATION TO THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

Sitka, like Wrangell, faces a deadline to stop shipping its trash out of town in open-top containers. The last time a Sitka garbage container caught fire was 2016 (above), while a Wrangell load ignited in the fall of 2020 as the barge was in Ketchikan. The request for safer practices is coming from Alaska Marine Lines and Republic Services, which hauls the trash under contract for both communities.

"loaves."

"It's very efficient and a known and trusted methodology to eliminate both underweight fees, saving the community dollars in the long run," he said, adding that it is the safest way to compact and ship garbage.

If the trash is compacted with one of these machines, it will fit into the containers Republic Services already owns and supplies at no additional cost. Without a compactor, someone would need to purchase special retrofitted or "shoe-box" container lids,

which would be a multimillion-dollar investment, the company told the Sitka assembly.

Republic Services said it's the city's responsibility to install a trash compacting system. Mayor Steven Eisenbeisz pushed back on whether compaction was

necessarily safer or even required.

"Will AML accept the closed-top containers without compaction? Without pre-load compaction?" he asked. "I think it would be very difficult to do," Pederson said.

Pederson said if no changes were made before June 1, Republic Services was contractually obligated to find another way to ship Sitka's garbage out of town. So far, the options the company has explored were pricey, and he said the additional cost would be on the city.

Wrangell Borough Manager Lisa Von Barga said last month that AML is flexible on the June 1 deadline as long as the city is making progress on a solution.

Sitka is moving slower. In an interview with KCAW, City Administrator John Leach said, "It's very complicated, and we're trying to stand our ground while reiterating that we're concerned about the fire risk safety."

The city has made some changes since the 2016 container fire to address risk, like regular inspections of the waste stream and signage discouraging disposal of flammable materials at the transfer station.

Leach said the city will continue exploring its options with Republic Services.

Legislature and Anchorage both lift face mask requirement

By the Associated Press

The Anchorage Assembly voted last Friday to immediately revoke the city's mask mandate. On the same day, legislative leaders voted to make mask-wearing optional at the state Capitol — and then shed their own face coverings after the vote.

The decision by the Legislative Council followed new guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

The new legislative policy recommends weekly testing for those who are not fully vaccinated and for those with COVID-19 symptoms or who return to Juneau after travel. The Capitol remains closed to the public.

The CDC last Thursday released guidance allowing people who are fully vaccinated to stop wearing masks outdoors in crowds and in most indoor settings. The federal guidance calls for masks on planes, buses and other forms of public transportation and at airports.

The next day, the Anchorage Assembly voted 8-1 in a special meeting to revoke the face mask mandate that had been in place since June.

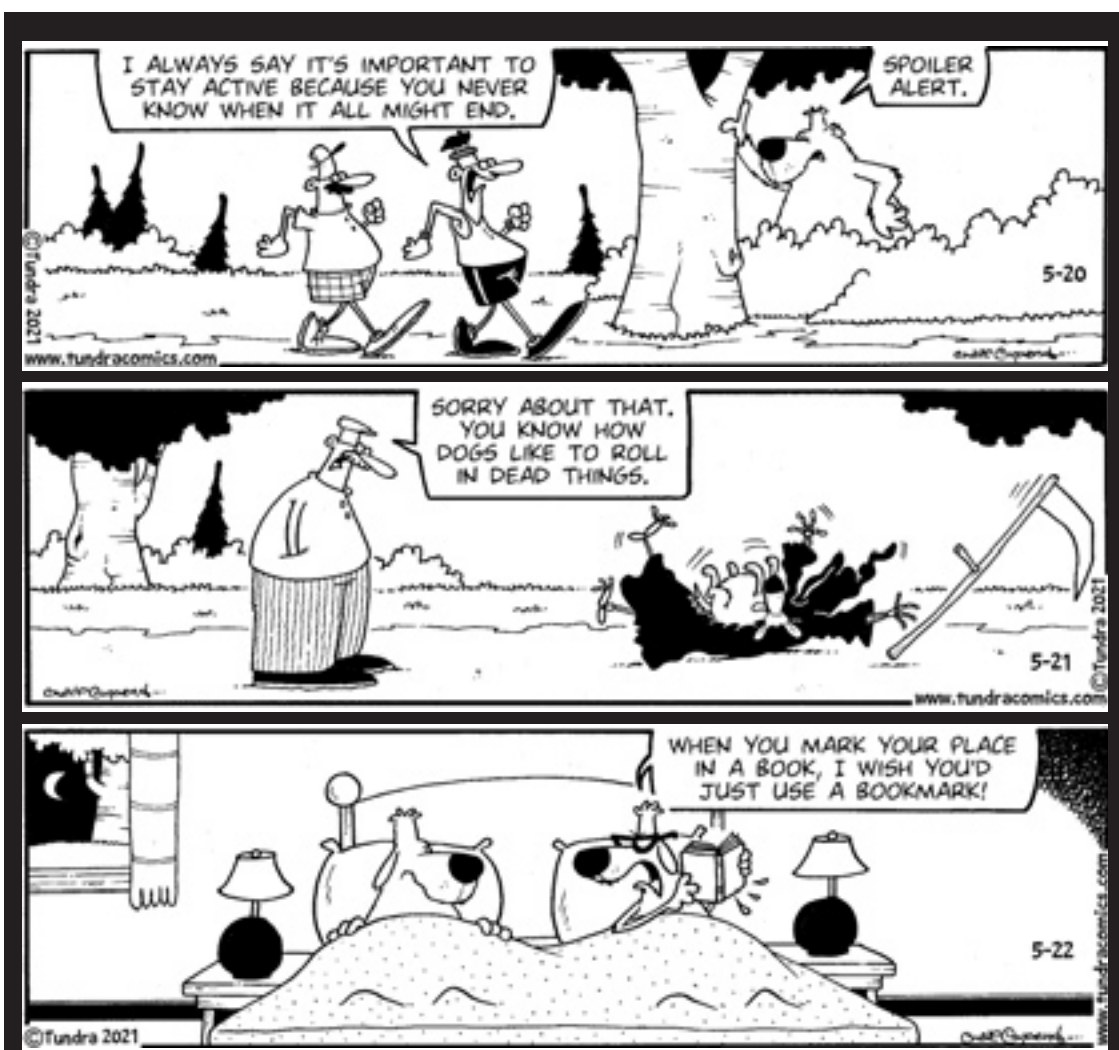
The Anchorage mayor's office said people who are not vaccinated against COVID-19 are encouraged to wear masks. The office said businesses in Anchorage still can require mask-wearing if they want.

In Juneau, municipal restrictions remain for those not fully vaccinated. Those who

are fully vaccinated no longer have to wear masks in indoor public areas or at crowded outdoor events and do not have to wear masks at gyms, under revised rules announced last Friday.

Masks are required regardless of vaccination status in Juneau in places like the hospital, school district facilities and other settings that choose to require them, according to a statement from the city.

Wrangell's face mask requirement expired April 30, although the borough continues to request "that community members mask up to help stop the community spread of COVID," and recommends, "always have a mask on when you are around people outside of your household."



Fish factor

Continued from page 10

vation is in the use of the net combined with the melted plastic to create an extruded recycled plastic lumber, and the packaging into this mobile platform."

Along with old fishing gear, Simpson plans to pick up plastic materials that wash up on coastlines. He hopes to gather the goods collected in community beach cleanups before it goes to landfills. Plastics come in many forms, he said, and the kinds used in milk jugs or bottles are different from those used in nets or ropes.

"I'm able to take the polyethylene and polypropylene and I'm melting those, and then I'm shredding net nylon and using it as a reinforcement, the fibers, to create a recycled plastic lumber. Then I'm going to sell that locally," he said.

Simpson said the lumber could be best used for decks, fences or roofing tiles.

He is hoping to get a more sizable grant that would enable him to use drones to locate plastic debris on coastlines.

Elsewhere, Radio Canada reports that Goodwood Plastic Products in Nova Scotia has commercialized synthetic lumber made out of derelict fishing gear and other plastics, using a nearly half-million-dollar grant from the government. It's part of a more than \$8 million Innovative Solutions Fund that includes fishermen and divers eager to help.

The recyclables are shredded, melted and pushed through molds to create planks and posts for decks, park benches and picnic tables.

Goodwood now employs 10 people and hopes to recycle more than 22 million pounds of plastics annually.

State sending out rental relief payments

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

As of last week, almost half of the 99 Wrangell applications for financial help with rent and utilities had been approved or were pending a final decision, according to the state agency running the federally funded program.

The Alaska Housing Finance Corp. received about 30,000 applications for assistance from across the state for \$200 million in federal pandemic relief funds available under Alaska's state and municipal allocation.

The program closed to applications March 5, and AHFC staff and its contractor have been working to verify income information, rent and utility bills, and eligibility to start moving out the money. The payments go directly to landlords and utilities.

As of May 12, AHFC had sent out \$20.3 million to more than 5,000 eligible households, reported Daniel Delfino, the

agency's director of planning and program development.

"In total, we have approved 9,500 applications for payment. There was a bit of a lag in checks getting out for approved applicants, but the teams have been aggressively rebalancing staff to close that gap and the distance between those two parts of the program is closing daily," Delfino said in an email May 12.

The housing agency had said it would process applications in batches, giving priority to people who earn less than half the area's median income and who have been unemployed at least 90 days. Half the annual median income in Wrangell is about \$28,500 a year.

Of the 99 applications from Wrangell households, as of last week 27 had been approved for payment, 21 were pending review, and 41 were in the "active" queue to verify information, according to Stacy Barnes, AHFC's director of governmental relations and public affairs.

Only 7 of the 99 applications from Wrangell had been rejected or determined ineligible as of last week, Barnes said. A few more withdrew their application or did not respond to requests for more information.

The 99 applications from Wrangell represent almost 10% of the community's total number of households, according to U.S. Census data.

AHFC is managing the state's share of the \$25 billion federal housing aid program approved by Congress in December. The program is open only to renters, not homeowners. The agency also is working with several regional housing authorities to administer additional rental relief funds for tribal members, Barnes said.

Past-due rent and utilities will be paid first under the program, with future rent and utilities distributed in three-month increments as recipients submit current financial information to verify their continuing need.

AHFC's call center was receiving between 400 and 500 calls per day, Delfino told Anchorage TV station KTUU earlier this month, with more than 130 workers taking calls and reviewing applications.

AHFC sends qualification letters to prescreened applicants verifying their eligibility, and Delfino said the letters can help landlords know that the money is on the way.

This is the second housing assistance program managed by AHFC since last summer — and a third is on the way. The American Rescue Plan, signed into law by President Joe Biden in March, allocates more than \$180 million in additional aid for Alaska homeowners and renters, Barnes said. Distributing that money requires legislative approval.

Gov. Mike Dunleavy last week called a special session for August for lawmakers to approve spending the latest round of federal relief aid — if legislators are unable to get the work done before then.

Trident will require vaccination of Petersburg workers

By the Petersburg Pilot

Trident Seafoods in Petersburg will require that its cannery employees are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to work this season, while Petersburg's Tonka Seafoods is leaving the decision up to employees.

"Like last year, we are making the health and safety of our employees, fishermen and community members our top priority," said Trident Seafoods spokesperson Shannon Carroll, in an email.

Trident also will have mitigation strategies in place, such as daily health and wellness monitoring and personal

protective equipment requirements.

All outside workers will be tested for COVID-19 before arriving in Petersburg, and all Trident employees will be tested regularly throughout the summer, Carroll said. Any employee who tests positive for the virus will be placed in isolation and have to follow state protocols.

"Because our employees will be fully vaccinated, they will be allowed to leave campus this summer with some restrictions on where they can go, and also depending on the local risk level," Carroll said. The company last summer maintained a

"closed campus" at its Petersburg plant.

Trident also owns a seafood processing plant in Wrangell, but will keep it closed this summer for the second year in a row, blaming projections of low salmon returns.

Sea Level Seafoods in Wrangell, which started operations earlier this month, did not respond to an email asking about its vaccination policy.

Tonka Seafoods in Petersburg is currently operating with 10 employees, five of which are from out of town, said Wendel Gilbert, one of the owners. Four of the five workers from out of

town have been vaccinated against COVID-19, and only a few of the local workers have received their vaccination.

Although Tonka Seafoods' workers are not required to get the COVID-19 vaccine, Gilbert said they will have to wear a face mask at all times while in the plant and practice social distancing. Those who are vaccinated can decide for themselves if they want to practice any mitigation strategies.

"They are fully vaccinated," said Gilbert. "We're not going to press them to wear a mask if they don't really want to."

Special sessions

Continued from page 5

the dividend amount that year. Legislators have debated the formula ever since. Dunleavy won the gubernatorial election in 2018 with a pledge of the larger PFD.

Dunleavy said last week that his proposals would help settle long-running debates over issues that have become political footballs.

"Imagine a world where we're not wrestling over the Permanent Fund again," he said. "Imagine a world where we're not wrestling over the PFD or the earnings reserve or PCE." To further protect the Power Cost Equalization (PCE) program, the governor's proposal would move the \$1 billion account into the Permanent Fund, rather than continue to maintain it as a separate endowment to subsidize the high cost of electricity in rural communities.

Though Dunleavy's plan would move the \$1 billion under the constitutional protection of the Permanent Fund, the annual PCE spending to help rural residents still would be subject to annual legislative appropriation.

Dunleavy was joined at a news conference by more than 20 legislators, mostly fellow Republicans.

Senate Majority Leader Shelley Hughes, a Palmer Republican, said compromise is needed. Legislators who dug in on their positions are "now willing to pull their heels out of the mud, that's a good thing."

She said reaching resolution

on the dividend is key to addressing the state deficit. "Because until this matter is settled, you cannot figure out how to close the rest of the gap," she said. Discussions on spending and revenue will follow, she said.

House Speaker Louise Stutes called Dunleavy's proposal a "starting point." Stutes, who leads the House majority caucus comprised mostly of Democrats, told reporters there is a "general consensus among all legislators we need to address" the dividend formula in some way.

"Even though there's not a solution yet, there's an optimism that we're at least talking about a solution," the Kodiak Republican said.

Juneau Democratic Sen. Jesse Kiehl, who serves on a committee that heard the governor's proposal to take an additional \$3 billion from the Permanent Fund to cover larger PFDs and the budget, called it a "raid" on the account. While he supports putting a dividend of some kind in the constitution, it needs to be "reasonable" and sustainable, he said, questioning the cost of the 50-50 split.

WRANGELL EYE CARE PRISM OPTICAL OF ALASKA



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May 30

Eye exams, contact lenses
& fashionable eyewear

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For an eye exam appointment or questions,
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