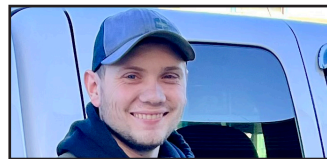


Auto mechanic goes to work in Wrangell, Page 3



Wrangell, Alaska
February 21, 2024

WRANGELL SENTINEL

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Permanent Fund could come up short in three years

By JAMES BROOKS
Alaska Beacon

The board in charge of the Alaska Permanent Fund is amping up its warnings about an impending state financial crisis.

Without action by the Legislature, there's a small but growing chance that within three years, the Permanent Fund — source of more than half of Alaska's general-purpose state revenue — won't be able to pay for services and the annual Permanent Fund dividend.

"We are facing a potential crisis, and it warrants the consideration of a change, whatever that change may be," said Deven Mitchell, executive director of the Alaska Permanent Fund Corp., which manages the \$78 billion fund.

"I think this is a clear and present danger, and we need to get it out there," said Craig Richards, a member of the corporation's board of trustees.

If financial markets crash, Alaska could be in crisis as soon as July 1, the start of the state's fiscal year.

"In six months, we could be looking at a problem," said board chair Ethan Schutt. "If it turns ... we're in boiling water on July 1 this year."

The problem is the unique structure of the Permanent Fund, which has a spendable account called the "earnings reserve" and a nonspendable account, referred to as the "principal."

Both accounts are invested in a variety of ways, but all of the earnings from both accounts are considered in the earnings reserve, which can be spent with a simple majority vote by the Alaska Legislature and the assent of the governor.

In 2018, the Legislature and then-Gov. Bill Walker set up a system of annual transfers from the earnings reserve to the state treasury to help pay for public services and the annual dividend to Alaskans. The transfer was set at what lawmakers thought was a sustainable level, but over the past six

years, withdrawals have exceeded new deposits.

In addition, legislators have repeatedly transferred more money from the earnings reserve to the principal than normally required.

This means that the earnings reserve could soon run out of money, which would be catastrophic for the state.

The annual transfer from the Permanent Fund is Alaska's No. 1 source of general-purpose revenue — more than oil revenue in every year but one since the transfer was established.

The state's savings accounts have dwindled, meaning that if the earnings reserve fails to make a payment, the state would instantly be forced to make unprecedented cuts to services and the dividend. Even if lawmakers wanted to raise taxes, there would not be time.

On Friday, Feb. 16, the board of the Alaska Permanent

Continued on page 4

Borough concerned about ongoing population loss

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

Borough officials are concerned that Wrangell continues to lose population, while those who stay in town grow older and leave the workforce.

As a whole, the state has lost more residents than it has gained in new arrivals every year since 2013, with only the birth rate keeping Alaska from showing a population decline.

However, unlike the statewide totals, Wrangell recorded more deaths than births between 2017 and 2022, adding to the community's overall population decline.

The state's latest estimate for Wrangell's population, as of last summer, is 2,039 residents. That is down from 2,084 in the state's summer 2022 estimate; down from the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau number of 2,127; and down from the 2010 census count of 2,369.

"We've got to get some residents here," Mayor Patty Gilbert said in an interview earlier this month.

The loss of working-age residents is a big part of the labor shortage in Alaska, including Wrangell.

Statewide, the labor force peaked in

Continued on Page 6



PHOTO BY MARK C. ROBINSON / WRANGELL SENTINEL

Heading out for crab opener

The Pacific Sea, stacked with crab pots and marker buoys and captained by Frank Warfel, headed out from Wrangell on Friday, Feb. 16, in preparation for the opening of the Southeast commercial tanner crab and golden king crab season on Feb. 17. The state has set a much higher guideline harvest level this year than last, particularly for the area around Kupreanof and Mitkof islands and the waters west of Zarembo Island.

Ballot measure required to pay assembly, mayor for their work

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

A majority of the borough assembly supports changing municipal law to pay the mayor and assembly a few thousand dollars a year for their work, but it would require a change in the municipal charter to adopt such a compensation plan.

"If this would get one or two more younger people (to serve on the assembly) ... to start giving us their ideas ... I'm all for this," Assembly Member David Powell said as members discussed the proposal at their Feb. 13 meeting.

"I think it would bring in a younger wave of people," said Assembly Member Anne Morrison.

Though members discussed a proposal put forth by borough staff to

adopt a pay structure by ordinance, borough officials later realized it would require an amendment to Wrangell's municipal charter.

The charter, which was adopted when Wrangell organized as a borough in 2008 and which is similar to the city charter that preceded it, specifically prohibits any compensation of assembly members or the mayor.

The assembly could vote to present a charter amendment to the public in any regular October municipal election or a special election.

"In the long term, you will attract more people to the assembly," Interim Borough Manager Mason Villarma said in presenting the pay structure as an or-

Continued on page 5

Assembly votes to proceed with \$25 million harbor grant application

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

The borough assembly has voted to proceed with an application for \$25 million in federal funding to rebuild the Inner Harbor, Reliance and Standard Oil floats, including a commitment that Wrangell would come up with \$5 million needed to fully fund the estimated \$30 million project.

"This is a little bit of a gamble," Mayor Patty Gilbert said at the Feb. 13 assembly meeting. Still, it's a good bet "if you can parlay \$5 million into \$30 million," she said.

"This is an ambitious project, but it's very much needed," Gilbert added. The harbor floats are decades old.

The borough expects to hear in August whether it will receive the grant.

"We've applied a couple of different times, and this year we feel we have a real great chance to get it," Interim Borough

Manager Mason Villarma told the assembly. "This will hopefully be 'three times is the charm.'"

A condition of the grant application is that the borough commit to covering all costs above the maximum \$25 million grant award.

Villarma said that if the project comes in at the engineer's preliminary estimate of \$30 million, and if the borough issues bonds for the \$5 million, the cost to repay the debt would come to about \$275,000 a year for 30 years, depending on interest rates.

Taking on debt is the last resort, he said. "We will pursue all alternate funding sources," including state and federal grants.

If the borough issues bonds, the debt would be repaid from harbor revenues.

The project would increase the num-

Continued on page 4

Senior Center Menu

Open for in-person dining. Must be fully vaccinated.

Thursday, Feb. 22

Halibut rice casserole, steamed broccoli, spinach salad

Friday, Feb. 23

Chicken pot pie, romaine and radish salad, roll

Monday, Feb. 26

Closed. Shelf-stable meal delivered on Friday, Feb. 23

Tuesday, Feb. 27

BBQ chicken, potato salad, roll, fruit slaw

Wednesday, Feb. 28

Chinese pork, steamed broccoli, garden salad, rice

Call the senior center at 907-874-2066 24 hours in advance to reserve a seat at lunch or to request delivery. The senior van is available to take seniors to medical appointments, errands such as collecting mail, getting prescriptions or other essential items.

Ferry Schedule

Northbound

Friday, Feb. 23

Kennicott, 8:45 p.m.

Friday, March 1

Kennicott, 4:30 p.m.

Monday, March 4

Kennicott, 5 p.m.

Friday, March 8

Kennicott, 7:30 p.m.

Southbound

Monday, Feb. 26

Kennicott, 7 a.m.

Monday, March 4

Kennicott, 1 a.m.

Thursday, March 7

Kennicott, 4 p.m.

Monday, March 11

Kennicott, 4 a.m.

All times listed are scheduled departure times.

Call the terminal at 907-874-2021 for information or call 907-874-3711 or 800-642-0066 for recorded information.

Tides

High Tides

Low Tides

	AM	PM	AM	PM
	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
Feb. 21	10:58	15.7	04:58	4.9
Feb. 22	00:00	14.2	05:42	3.9
Feb. 23	00:35	15.0	06:17	3.1
Feb. 24	01:07	15.5	06:48	2.4
Feb. 25	01:35	15.8	07:17	1.9
Feb. 26	02:00	15.9	07:46	1.6
Feb. 27	02:24	15.9	08:15	1.4



ALASKA AIRLINES CLUB 49 COMMUNITY EVENTS CALENDAR

HOMEBUYERS / BUILDERS and FINANCIAL LITERACY SYMPOSIUM, 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, Feb. 24, at the Nolan Center, hosted by the borough. No fee to attend. Contact Kate Thomas at 907-874-2381 for more information.

GET YOUR DUCKS IN A ROW 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 24, at the Episcopal Church parish hall. Hospice of Wrangell presents a series of speakers on end-of-life planning. Light lunch served. No charge, open to all.

TACO BAR and SOCIAL 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 25, at the community center multi-purpose room, presented by the Baha'is. Everyone is invited to a family-oriented celebration for the Ayyam-i-Ha festival; the special days are filled with good cheer, hospitality, acts of charity, gift-giving and social gatherings. Bring your favorite table games. No charge for the dinner. For more information call 907-209-9117.

SCHOOL BOARD MEETING 7 p.m. Monday, Feb. 26, at Evergreen Elementary School Room 101. A public hearing to gather input on the FY 2025 budget will begin at 6 p.m. Community members can email comments for the board meeting to kpowell@wpsd.us, or can sign up under guests to be heard at the meeting by emailing the same address before 3:30 p.m. Feb. 26.

SENIOR EXEMPTION DAY noon to 2 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 27, at the Irene Ingle Public Library, with the borough finance department available to help residents with their senior citizen property tax exemption application.

INDIAN EDUCATION ACT COMMITTEE MEETING 5 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 28, at Room 205 of the high school. The Indian Education Act is for Native/Indian students in Wrangell public schools. The meeting is open to everyone.

FREE TAX RETURN PREPARATION every Saturday through April 13 at the Nolan Center classroom. Open to everyone, regardless of age. IRS-certified volunteers will prepare and e-file your return for you at no charge. By appointment only. Call Paula at 907-874-3824 or 907-305-0309.

NOLAN CENTER THEATER no movies until March.

STORY TIME AT THE LIBRARY, 10 to 11 a.m. Fridays. Come enjoy the stories, crafts and snacks at the Irene Ingle Public Library. Call 907-874-3535.

VIRTUES MATTER activities for children, 2:35 to 4 p.m. Wednesdays at the elementary school music room. An interfaith effort hosted by the Baha'is of Wrangell and open to all. For more information and to register, call Kay Larson, 907-209-9117, or email wrangell@akbnc.org.

WRANGELL PARKS and RECREATION is offering multiple activities to get your body moving. For more information on any of the activities and more visit www.wrangellrec.com or call 907-874-2444.

- **YOUTH OPEN GYM** 10 to 11:30 a.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays at the community center gym for ages 0-10. \$3 for first child, \$2 for second, \$1 for third child, fourth plus is free. Bring clean gym shoes or take shoes off in the hallway.

- **WATER AEROBICS** 10 to 11 a.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday at the swimming pool for ages 18 years and up. \$5 drop-in fee, \$3 senior discount or facility punch card.

- **WINTER WORKOUT CHALLENGE** through March 31 is built to encourage consistent movement, with a goal of completing at least 30 minutes of exercise 5 to 6 days per week. This challenge is for people of ALL fitness levels. The participant who completes the most workouts within the challenge dates will win a six-month pass to the Parks and Recreation facility; prizes donated by local businesses will be raffled off at the end of the challenge. For ages 14 and up. Registration required for this free activity.

PARKS and RECREATION www.wrangellrec.com

Open swim is open by appointment. Locker rooms are available.

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

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

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

Open swim, 6 to 7 p.m. Monday and Wednesday; 6 to 7 p.m. Friday; 1 to 2 p.m. Saturday.

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

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

AA MEETINGS: North Star Group meets from 7 to 8 p.m. Tuesdays and Fridays, St. Philip's Episcopal Church.

Want more attendance at your meeting or event? Send information for Roundup to wrgsent@gmail.com or call 907-874-2301.

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

Feb. 21, 1924

The new telephone system that was installed the first of the month instead of being considered an innovation and a luxury was straightway accepted as a necessity to the majority of citizens here. New subscribers have been added so rapidly that another directory is being issued. However, Manager J. K. Nevell announces he cannot give the best service possible unless people ring off when they are through talking. The logical one to ring off is the person who called the number, but the benefit is the same if the one who was called

rings off. A short visit to the central office will demonstrate why the ringing off is so necessary for quick service and the visitor will come away resolving that he will not again neglect that necessary procedure.

Feb. 18, 1949

If our local weather man (Art Nelson) is trying to equal or better the snowfall of 1947 when Wrangell had a record fall of 190.1 inches between October 1946 and April 1947, he can call the whole deal off now as far as a lot of disgusted snow shovelers are concerned.

He's within four inches of it right now, and it's only February. Up to Feb. 16, 186.2 inches had covered Wrangell's streets. Storm warnings were in the forecast for today and tomorrow from the U.S. Weather Bureau, which seems to be playing along into Nelson's hands.

Feb. 20, 1974

Despite efforts at cutbacks to conserve fuel, increased demands for light and heat obliged the city power plant to deliver a record 1.4 million kilowatts of power during

January, City Manager Herb McNabb said this week. The administrator blamed the increase on the cold snap and community growth. McNabb also disclosed that he has queried legislators about the availability of federal funds to help develop local sources of hydro power. Funds might be available, he said, from monies allocated by the president to seek new sources of energy in the United States.

Feb. 18, 1999

The Wrangell Wolves played host to the Metlakatla Chiefs

this past weekend. The games were the last home games of the year for the Wolves. With wins over the Chiefs, the Wolves would finish the home season undefeated and would clinch the top seed in the regional tournament. The final score on Friday was Wrangell 104, Metlakatla 81; Saturday was Wrangell 78, Metlakatla 69. The Wolves finished the season perfect at home with a 10-0 mark, and are currently 4-2 on the road, giving them a 14-2 overall record. The Wolves travel to Craig this weekend.

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PHOTO BY MARK C. ROBINSON / WRANGELL SENTINEL
Jared Becker has started his own mobile auto mechanic service in town called Busted Knuckles Auto.

New mobile auto mechanic knuckles down to his work

By MARK C. ROBINSON
Sentinel reporter

Jared Becker was new to Wrangell when he and his wife, Destiny, arrived from St. Louis Park, a suburb of Minneapolis, at the end of September. "We're Jehovah's Witnesses, so we like to help out with Bible education work," he said. "So that's what brought us here. We were just trying to find a way to sustain ourselves once we got here."

As he talked with residents over the next few months, he saw there was a need in town for auto repair services. "So, I decided to give it a try and see where it went."

With that in mind, Becker started his own mobile auto mechanic service called Busted Knuckles Auto, using the name of his old repair garage in Minnesota, posting flyers at places like City Market and IGA Supermarket.

"It's very new," he said. "I only really started the beginning of February, but so far it's going well as word has spread. It feels good to help people out."

Thus far, the repairs that Becker has done have been routine. "I'm really just kind of getting my feet wet," he said. "I'd like to get my hands on more complex stuff, but so far it's been more run of the mill."

He's still determining the range of his services.

"I've done everything except internal transmission and body and glass work. I'm figuring out what my limits are being mobile as opposed to being in a shop. It's kind of full service for the most part. ... I avoid all bodywork. Outside of that, I'm pretty comfortable with most things."

Becker has worked on cars since he was a teenager; professionally he's been a mechanic for about eight years. "I worked primarily at a shop, but I also worked in my own garage, but as far as being mobile that's not something I've done until now."

The name came from an off-the-cuff remark he made when he was starting his own garage in Minnesota and trying to decide on what to call his business. He had planned to just use his own name, but his sister thought that was boring. "I said, 'What do you want me to do, call it 'Busted Knuckles?'" and she said, 'Yeah, that's great!'"

While Becker hasn't ruled out eventually opening a brick-and-mortar garage or similar base of operations in town, for now being mobile keeps his expenses down. "It's not out of the question," he said. "It's not a goal at the moment."

For repair services or more information about Busted Knuckles Auto, call Becker at 763-688-0717 or email bustedknucklesauto24@gmail.com.

Repairs and improvements coming to borough parks and trails

By MARK C. ROBINSON
Sentinel reporter

The Parks and Recreation Department has a healthy list of work projects it wants to complete by June, including maintenance on the Mount Dewey trail, repairs to public restrooms and reinforcing the fire pit at City Park.

Replacing more trash bins with new ones better able to withstand curious bears is also on the list as the department looks ahead to people using the parks, trails and green spaces

come summer.

The alder removal process is ongoing in various parks and trails, cutting back excess vegetation that encroach on fencing and other spaces, said Lucy Robinson, Parks and Recreation director. That includes removing trees to prevent the risk of them falling onto structures or park and trail goers, sometimes replacing them with plants that don't need to be aggressively maintained, such as blueberry bushes.

Also continuing is Adopt-a-

Garden, she said, a beautification project in which volunteers weed, clean, water and maintain garden beds located throughout the downtown area.

Repairs are planned for public toilets in the downtown area and at Petroglyph Beach, which Robinson described as a continual undertaking, as they are not always treated well and sometimes subject to vandalism. They will also receive paint jobs and other improvements to make them more aesthetically pleasing.

Parks and Recreation staff are working with a contractor to help reinforce the fire pit in the main shelter at City Park and fabricate a ventilation hood for it, which Robinson estimated will be done between May and June.

New stairs will be installed by contractor BW Enterprises at City Park, leading from the road to the beach to increase accessi-

bility. "I'm hoping that they'll be done by the end of the fiscal year (June 30)," Robinson said. "Hopefully April, but maybe June."

Maintenance is planned for the Mount Dewey Trail by May; the boardwalk will need to be replaced in several areas, as it has sustained some damage. The non-slip mesh on the trail will be changed, as there have been complaints that it makes the trail more slippery, not less, Robinson said.

Drainage will be improved on the Volunteer Trail, but the staff will first need to identify each trouble spot and work out details with a contractor, she explained.

One completed project in this year's budget is the replacement of trash bins at parks and trails with ones designed as "bear safe." However, Robinson hopes to continue until all bins in the borough are replaced

with the newer model. "It might just be a gradual swap," she said. "They look nice, they're easy to clean and the birds don't get into them."

She added that while the bins are designed to be bear-proof, they also keep out another type of persistent creature. "It's really helped us with the birds. The ravens are really the issue."

She also wants to warn residents not to feed wildlife, as it encourages the animals to encroach on populated areas. Citing the feeding of birds as an example, she pointed out how they will stay in certain areas, waiting for people to feed them. While waiting, they can create a mess, such as when they pull out all the plastic dog waste bags from dispensers.

"The idea of feeding animals comes with good intentions but often bad things happen as a result," she said.

Boat insurance ordinance pulled back for more work

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

Assembly members agreed that a port commission proposal to require boat owners to carry marine insurance — or pay a monthly fee in addition to their stall rental — needs a lot more work.

The port commission has been discussing since 2022 the financial risk to the borough when an uninsured vessel catches fire or sinks in the harbor, requiring cleanup and removal.

The commission last month voted unanimously to recommend assembly approval of an ordinance requiring boat owners show proof of insurance or pay an additional monthly fee so that the Port and Harbors Department could build up reserves to cover uninsured damages.

While acknowledging the financial risk to the borough of cleanup and disposal costs, assembly members also voiced concern of the additional insurance costs to boat owners.

"I don't have the solution," Assembly Member Bob Dalrymple said during discussion of the proposed ordinance at the Feb. 13 assembly meeting.

"I don't think it's ready yet," Interim Borough Manager Mason Villarma said of the ordinance.

The assembly agreed to schedule a work session with the port commission for March 7 to further discuss details of the proposal.

"I know this needs a lot of work," said Assembly Member David Powell. "I know we have

to do something."

In a report to the assembly, Villarma and Harbormaster Steve Miller raised several questions about the proposal: What is the appropriate amount of insurance coverage to require; is the monthly fee reasonable in lieu of insurance; should smaller vessels be exempt from the provisions; and instead of an ordinance, "should the borough take a harder stance on vessels that have a higher risk of causing damage to the harbor facilities and other vessels or sink in one of the harbors?"

Dalrymple said part of the problem is that the borough has been too lax in allowing derelict vessels to stay too long in the harbor, increasing the risks of fire or sinking.

He is not in support of mandatory insurance, and also believes the monthly fee of \$5 per linear foot of vessel in lieu of insurance is too steep. He described himself as "not gung ho" or comfortable with requiring insurance, but agreed the borough has to take steps to protect its assets.

Powell said he is supportive of an insurance requirement but concerned about high costs for the owners, particularly to insure wooden boats.

"The borough has spent an average of \$27,000 per year on derelict vessel disposal over the past three fiscal years," Miller reported to the assembly. "In these cases, the borough is left to raise a sunken vessel or front the cost of disposal and likely

Continued on Page 5

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Too risky for Permanent Fund

By LARRY PERSILY
Publisher

The advice for Las Vegas gamblers is don't bet more than you can afford to lose. It's generally the same advice for investors: Don't take more risk than you can afford, even when the riskier bets look like they could pay off the same as 21 at the blackjack table.

The six members of the Alaska Permanent Fund Corp. board of trustees are not gamblers but they are getting a little too aggressive in accepting risk as they chase after higher investment returns.

Most every investment is a gamble — company stock can drop in price, bonds may be worth less if borrowers stop repaying their debts in full, real estate can fall in value, interest rates can move in an unexpected direction and start-ups can go belly up. But over the decades, the Permanent Fund has done an admirable job of balancing acceptable risk with healthy returns, growing to \$78 billion as of Feb. 15.

However, the board of trustees now wants to stick out the fund's neck a little more in hopes of earning a higher return. Granted, the fund shouldn't mimic a turtle and pull in its head every time the financial markets look menacing, but neither should the fund take unnecessary chances.

The trustees last week adopted a four-year strategic plan which includes seeking legislative approval to borrow money in hopes of investing that money and earning more than the fund would pay in interest on the debt.

The trustees propose borrowing up to \$4 billion. Minus six zeros, it's the same as an individual borrowing \$4,000 and putting the money into the market, thinking they can earn 8% on their investment, pay 4% on the borrowed money, and pocket the 4% profit without putting any of their own money at too much risk.

That is, unless the borrowed money fails to earn a

higher return than the interest payments, in which case the investor loses the difference.

It's not a new strategy, a lot of investors use borrowed money rather than their own cash. But that does not make it appropriate for the Permanent Fund. Alaskans depend on the fund's earnings to pay more than half of the state budget each year, which includes schools, roads, every other public

service — and the Permanent Fund dividend.

If the fund fails to meet its growth targets, its transfers to the state general fund will suffer. That's a risk too far.

The trustees described it this way in announcing their new strategic plan: "By borrowing capital, with the objective of generating returns that surpass the borrowing cost over time," the corporation "could utilize leverage as a strategic investment decision." The trustees added, "Leverage does magnify risks and must be tactically and strategically evaluated."

"Magnify risks" is a polite way of saying this could be a loser.

The trustees say they want to grow the fund to \$100 billion. No quibble with that. The bigger the fund, the more for public services. But the Permanent Fund Corp. already projects the fund will top \$100 billion in 2033, producing \$1 billion a year more for public services than it will spin off this year.

Betting on borrowed money to juice investment returns to reach 2033 faster may sound enticing. And it may be OK for investors who do not depend on their earnings to pay for schools, state troopers and an annual dividend to residents. But it's more risk than the Alaska public should accept.

The Legislature should study the cards and tell the Permanent Fund trustees to fold this hand.

Betting on borrowed money to juice investment returns to reach 2033 faster may sound enticing. And it may be OK for investors who do not depend on their earnings to pay for schools, state troopers and an annual dividend to residents. But it's more risk than the Alaska public should accept.

a higher risk, but Allen said that even a 5% chance of a "doomsday" scenario is alarming.

Imagine walking across the room, said Mitchell, the corporation's executive director. "What if there was a 1 in 20 chance that you broke your leg when you walked across the room?"

With a constitutional amendment, the problem goes away, he said. "No matter how bad the market gets, you're going to be able to pay out something."

While the doomsday scenario remains distant, the corporation's board of trustees is being driven to act now by the fact that it may take years to propose, analyze and pass a constitutional amendment.

Any amendment requires a supermajority vote of the state House, the state Senate, then approval by voters during a statewide vote.

"There's not enough time, when you hit the cliff, to pass a constitu-

tional amendment," Allen said, which means action is needed now.

"This is the first step of the process. Call it the first salvo. The Legislature has to take it up," said Adam Crum, commissioner of the Alaska Department of Revenue and a member of the board of trustees, after the board voted to release its analysis.

"Hopefully they're thinking about this issue, because they should be," Mitchell said.

Legislative committees have considered the issue for several years, but lawmakers have never agreed on how to solve the problem. Lawmakers have struggled to disentangle the long-term future of the Permanent Fund dividend from questions about the fund's structure.

The Alaska Beacon is an independent, donor-funded news organization. Alaskabeacon.com.

Permanment Fund

Continued from page 1

Fund Corp. voted to release a detailed analysis paper — one of only 10 since the corporation's inception in 1980 — that presents a menu of potential solutions to the Legislature.

The paper's top recommendation is a double-barreled constitutional amendment that would combine the two accounts of the Permanent Fund into one, then put a hard cap on the amount of money that could be withdrawn in a given year.

Greg Allen is the CEO and chief research officer of Callan Associates, the third-party adviser to the Permanent Fund Corp.

Under his analysis, without a constitutional amendment, there's a 5% chance that the fund isn't able to transfer money to the state treasury within three years.

An internal analysis by the Permanent Fund Corp. indicated

Harbor grant

Continued from page 1

ber of moorage spaces for 34-foot and 40-foot vessels, increase maneuvering space in the aisles and between float fingers, and provide new electrical hookups at boat stalls, new lighting and water utilities to the floats. The

work would also include new ramps, steel pilings, dredging and expanded parking areas.

The assembly voted unanimously Feb. 13 to submit the grant application, which is due Feb. 28.

There is \$1.5 billion available this year under the highly

competitive nationwide program administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation under the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The program is known as Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity, or RAISE.

EDITORIAL

It's a good idea and worth asking voters

Assembly members, the mayor and borough staff are right: It's time to pay elected officials a reasonable amount for all the hours they put into the job.

Yes, it's a public service, but it's still a job.

The assembly meetings, the homework, reading reports and financials and meeting with borough staff, state officials and the public — all of which are necessary for making well-informed decisions — take a lot of time. Public service is a good thing, but taking time off from work, paying for child care, missing out on time with family is a lot to ask of people serving for free.

Several assembly members during discussion of the proposal at the Feb. 13 meeting astutely noted that expecting all the work for free predetermines who will run for elected office — a lot of retired people. If Wrangell wants new candidates to step forward, younger residents to take a leadership role in the community with new ideas, a small payment per meeting is a reasonable approach to achieve that goal.

"If this would get one or two more younger people ... to start giving us their ideas ... I'm all for this," Assembly Member David Powell said.

"I think it would bring in a younger wave of people," said Assembly Member Anne Morrison.

Considering that the average age of Wrangell residents is almost 12 years older than the statewide average, the community needs to make an even stronger effort to draw younger people into leadership roles.

The proposal would pay the mayor \$225 per assembly meeting, with assembly members to receive \$150 per meeting. At those rates, assembly members could earn \$3,600 a year, with \$5,400 for the mayor. Not rich but a sensible amount the community could afford. It's less than a lot of small Alaska communities pay their elected officials.

Though the assembly last week considered adopting the compensation plan by ordinance, they later realized it would take a change in the borough charter, which will require putting the question before voters on the ballot. Which is what the assembly should do.

Being frugal with public finances is a good thing. But being so tightfisted that it makes it harder to attract a diversified membership on the assembly is shortsighted. Volunteering a few hours a month to clean up flower beds or pick up trash or lead youth activities is one thing; working for free dozens of hours a month to make good decisions on millions of dollars is asking too much.

Let's ask the voters to approve a modest compensation plan for the assembly..

— Wrangell Sentinel

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Rep. Ortiz commits to supporting extension of senior citizen benefits

As your representative in the Alaska Legislature, I have been and will continue to support legislation that advocates for our growing senior citizen population. That's why I am proud to cosponsor House Bill 242 which, if passed, will extend the Alaska Senior Benefits Payment Program until June 2034.

Alaska has a robust history of supporting its senior population, with the first efforts to help our seniors dating back to 1915. The territorial Legislature's approval of the old-age bonus program marked the beginning of decades of evolution in assisting Alaska's elderly residents.

In 1972, Alaska introduced the longevity bonus program amid burgeoning oil wealth. Initially encouraging older Alaskans to remain in the state, the program commenced with a \$100 monthly payment for seniors residing in Alaska for at least 25 years. Over the years, the program underwent various modifications, including a court-mandated adjustment allowing seniors with just one year of residency to qualify.

Transitioning to a needs-based approach in 2003 as the Senior Assistance Program and evolving into the Senior Care Program in 2004, these initiatives built upon the foundation laid by the Senior Assistance Program. With the conclusion of Senior Care in 2007, the Alaska Senior Benefits Program emerged.

Operating with income-based eligibility, it provides three payment levels tied to the federal poverty guidelines for Alaska. Despite facing budget challenges and caseload increases, the program has demonstrated resilience, adapting to ensure financial assistance reaches seniors in need.

Alaska's commitment to supporting its senior population has taken various forms, from the early 20th-century old-age bonus to the recent Alaska Senior Benefits Program. The state continues to evolve its approach to meeting the changing needs of its aging residents — individuals who have played a pivotal role in building and shaping Alaska.

Continuing this program is a testament to our dedication to assisting those who have contributed significantly to Alaska's rich history.

Rep. Dan Ortiz

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Legislature moves to reject change to ferry board

By JAMES BROOKS
Alaska Beacon

The Alaska Senate has taken the first formal steps needed to reject some or all of the 12 executive orders Gov. Mike Dunleavy issued at the start of this year's legislative session, including the order that would take away the Legislature's authority to name four members of the state ferry system advisory board.

Lawmakers in the Senate introduced 12 resolutions of disapproval on Feb. 12, and hours later the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee approved three of them. Those three resolutions would preserve the boards that govern massage therapists, barbers and hairdressers, and midwives. The nine other resolutions have been referred to other committees.

The Senate Transportation Committee has scheduled two hearings for this week — Tuesday, Feb. 20, and Thursday, Feb. 22 — on the executive order that would give the governor the sole appointing authority for all nine members of the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board. The Legislature created the advisory panel in 2021 to help guide the beleaguered

ferry system.

The governor proposed dissolving some state boards and changing some agency rules in order to improve efficiency, his office said. Since the initial proposal, people affected by the changes have been urging legislators to reject many of the ideas.

On their own, introducing the resolutions of disapproval doesn't stop the governor's proposed actions — doing so requires a vote in a joint session of House and Senate before mid-March — but Senate President Gary Stevens, of Kodiak, said the resolutions and committee hearings are intended to get ready for what he now sees as an inevitable legislative vote on the governor's actions.

"My goal is to make sure each and every one gets heard," he said, "subject to an up or down vote."

He suggested that there's tentative agreement between the House and Senate to call a joint session, but House Rules Committee Chair Craig Johnson, of Anchorage, said that "agreement might be a strong term."

Speaker of the House Cathy Tilton, R-Wasilla, said

the House majority caucus hasn't come to any decisions on supporting a joint session, but "I believe that at this particular time ... that there are some concerns with a few of (the executive orders). ... The midwifery board seems to be one that brings people together with concern."

Alaska has only about 40 licensed direct-entry midwives — childbirth experts who aren't nurses or doctors — but they delivered about 6% of Alaska's births in 2022, according to the state's annual statistical report.

The governor's proposal calls for dissolving the board governing those midwives, and turning over the board's responsibility to staff at the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development.

That's drawn alarm from licensees and others who deal with childbirth in the state; they've testified against the proposal during legislative hearings.

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NOAA reports 45 killer whales caught up in fishing gear since 1991

By YERETH ROSEN
Alaska Beacon

Over the past three decades, 35 killer whales were entangled in fishing gear in Alaska, resulting in 25 deaths, according to a report issued by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The report from NOAA Fisheries covers documented cases from 1991 to 2022. It does not include the unusually high number of

2023 cases, in which an additional 10 killer whales were found ensnared in fishing gear — mostly bottom-trawl gear — with nine of them found dead.

That raises the total caught in gear since 1991 to 45 killer whales, with 34 dead.

The high 2023 numbers sparked a special examination by the agency.

The cases documented in the report from 1991 to 2022 involved a variety of fishing

gear. Trawl gear caused 20 of the entanglements, longline gear caused 10 of them and assorted other gear was implicated in other cases.

Killer whales, also known as orcas, are found in oceans around the world but generally favor colder waters. Several populations of killer whales swim in Alaska waters; some eat fish exclusively and some feed on hunted marine mammals. They are among the ma-

rine mammals that are occasionally killed by human activities in marine areas.

Killer whales are known to follow vessels to feed on the fish caught by net, hook, pot or trap, sometimes at their peril. Some die from asphyxiation because they become pinned in place underwater, and even if they escape alive, some wind up with serious injuries

Continued on page 9

Assembly pay

Continued from page 1

dinance.

The proposal would pay the mayor \$225 per assembly meeting, with assembly members to receive \$150 per meeting. Members would be paid only for the meetings they attend.

The assembly generally meets twice a month, with just one meeting in August and one in December.

At the proposed rates, assembly members could earn \$3,600 for attending 24 meetings a year,

with \$5,400 for the mayor.

The proposed amounts for Wrangell are the same that Petersburg pays its assembly members and mayor.

More than a dozen cities and boroughs in Alaska pay a monthly stipend to their elected officials, with Sitka at \$250 a month for assembly members and \$500 a month for the mayor. The city of Ketchikan pays \$300 a month to the mayor and council members.

The Ketchikan Gateway Borough pays both a monthly rate and a per-meeting amount.

Villaroma noted that in addition to the assembly meetings, Wrangell's elected officials spend a lot of time in committee meetings, studying their homework and holding discussions with borough officials and the public.

The assembly also discussed that younger residents with families could incur child care expenses to attend meetings, deterring them from running for office.

"I in no way view this as a paid job," Assembly Member Bob Dalrymple said, adding that he would prefer to send the ques-

tion out to the public.

At the suggestion of Assembly Member Jim DeBord, the members voted that any assembly member should be able to opt

out of being paid for the work, though that proposal will have to be considered again if the assembly decides to seek a charter amendment.

Insurance

Continued from Page 3

not get reimbursed."

Joe Holden testified in support of the ordinance Feb. 13. "I think it's a great idea to have people insured. ... What if somebody burns my boat?" He

added, "Insurance is not a bad thing."

Holden also suggested another solution to protect harbor users: Designate an area exclusively for uninsured vessels. "Keep them away from my boat."



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Help Wrangell's economy GROW. SHOP LOCAL!

KSTK asks donations of artwork for annual fundraising auction

By MARK C. ROBINSON
Sentinel reporter

KSTK is accepting donations of artwork for its annual fundraising auction, set for Friday evening, March 22, at the Nolan Center.

"We have artwork from all kinds of different artists from around Alaska," said KSTK Development Director Kimberly Ottesen, adding that past auctions have showcased a wide variety of artwork. Any medium will be accepted, including photography, paintings, sculptures and crafts.

Ottesen said it all began in 2000, when the station invited residents to compete with their favorite chilis. Around 2002, an over-the-air art auction was added to the chili competition. "Later this evolved into an art auction for the last five years; for the last three years it has been at the Nolan Center."

The event used to take place in the fall or winter. When COVID hit in 2020, it became an online event. It's been held in the springtime ever since live auctions re-

sumed in 2021.

Beer will be donated by the Juneau-based Alaska Brewing Co. (Alaska Marine Lines has donated shipping for the beer) and wine will be donated by Wrangell IGA Supermarket.

The event will run for several hours, with doors opening at 6 p.m. and the live auction

beginning at 7 p.m. Entry tickets are \$25 each, which will provide one beer or wine beverage of choice, or the ticket can be used to enter a drawing for prizes that have yet to be deter-

mined. Additional beverages and drawing tickets will be \$5 each.

Attendees also have the option to purchase a "golden ticket" for \$50, and the winner of the golden ticket drawing will have the chance to select any piece of art of their choice before the auction begins.

Appetizers and non-alcoholic beverages will be included in the \$25 ticket purchase.

Children must be accompanied by an adult.

For more information, call KSTK at 907-874-2345.

'We have artwork from all kinds of different artists from around Alaska.'

KSTK Development Director
Kimberly Ottesen



PHOTO BY MARK C. ROBINSON / WRANGELL SENTINEL

Hands-on artwork

Ketchikan fabric artist and basket-weaving expert Kathy Rousso displayed samples of her work during a presentation at the Irene Ingle Public Library on Friday evening, Feb. 16, including this small bag. In addition to the presentation, she taught basket-weaving classes Saturday and Sunday in the multipurpose room at the community center. The library sponsored her visit to Wrangell.

Population

Continued from page 1

2013 at 479,000 but by 2022 had declined by almost 26,000, or 5.4%, the sharpest among all states except for West Virginia and Wyoming, according to the Alaska Department of Labor.

Wrangell is among the communities hardest hit by the decline in working-age residents, recording more than a 20% drop in the 18- to 64-year-old workforce between 2013 and 2022, according to the department.

"Outmigration of residents in the state of Alaska is one of our biggest threats," Kate Thomas, the borough's economic development director, told the assembly at its Feb. 13 meeting, adding that Wrangell probably has suffered from outmigration longer than the state's overall numbers.

"It feels a little scary when you start talking about that," she said.

The community needs "to be thinking seriously" about what it can do to encourage more residents to stay, while attracting new arrivals to move to town, Thomas said.

A lack of housing is a constant issue, she acknowledged. The borough later this year will sell 20 residential lots at the new Alder Top Village (Keishangita.'aan) subdivision near Shoemaker Harbor, with an additional 20 lots possible in a second phase if there is sufficient demand.

The borough will have spent about \$2.4 million to clear and survey the land and put in streets and utilities for the first 20 residential lots. It could recover about half that from the land sale.

Gilbert is confident the money

is a good investment. "Eventually, we will get our money back," she said of property tax revenues when the lots transfer into private ownership and from sales taxes paid by homeowners as they fill up their houses.

"It doesn't pencil out yet, but in years it will," the mayor said.

"If the (first 20) lots sell as fast as we think they will," Gilbert wants to proceed with the second round of an additional 20 lots at the subdivision, thinking maybe a private developer would take over the second phase and cover the street and utility costs rather than the borough fronting the money.

In addition to making more housing available, the mayor said the community needs child care services. There is no state-licensed child care center in Wrangell, with parents relying on friends, families

and individuals to help.

With fewer births and not enough families moving to town, Wrangell has seen a decline in school enrollment, cutting into its funding from the state, which covers about 60% of the school district operating budget.

The community's average age, as of state estimates for 2023, was 48.4 years old — one of the highest in Alaska. The statewide average was 36.5 years old.

If the trends continue, Wrangell's population could fall to 1,724 by 2050, according to Alaska Department of Labor estimates.

"I'm really afraid for our community," Interim Borough Manager Mason Villarma told the assembly earlier this month.

He said the community needs to take "bold moves" in the next

five years to stop and, hopefully, reverse the population decline.

"There've got to be little maneuvers we can make to start the ball rolling," the mayor said. "I don't want to be so timid not to try something."

That could include marketing the town for "summer birds," a seasonal opposite of snowbirds, she said of attracting retirees with disposal income to spend their summers in Wrangell to avoid the heat of their hometowns in the Lower 48.

The mayor is open to most any ideas. "I'm always intrigued by what people see in Wrangell that I may be missing," Gilbert said, pointing out that the town needs to come up with its own ideas. "Nobody is knocking on our door."

HOME WISE INFORMATION FAIR

WHEN?

Saturday, February 24, 2024 from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM

WHY?

To facilitate a one-stop-shop opportunity for community members to learn about the resources, requirements, and financial planning tactics that empower individuals to purchase or construct homes on the island.

WHO?

Lenders, educators, builders, contractors, financial advisors and tax accountants, municipal staff. This includes First Bank, Tongass Credit Union, Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, Tlingit and Haida Regional Housing, Real Estate Agents, Collin Dando of Dando Financial LLC, CPA, Kelley Decker of Somkin Books Accounting, and more

WHERE?

City and Borough of Wrangell- James and Elsie Nolan Center

AGENDA

At 9:00 AM, there will be a presentation on the Alder Top Subdivision Development Starting at 10:00 AM, the vendor and education open house will begin. This will be a time for engaging with regional experts in housing and finance as well as contractors and builders.



CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL
GATEWAY TO THE STIKINE

Concrete work is underway at new water treatment plant

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

Site prep work is finished and concrete foundation work has started on a new multi-million-dollar treatment plant to improve water quality and quantity for Wrangell.

"We're actually pouring our first footings," Amber Al-Haddad, the borough's capital facilities director, said Feb. 14.

The metal building that will house the water treatment system is scheduled for mid- to late-March arrival, she said, with the equipment to follow later.

Completion is planned for June 2025 under the terms of federal funding for the project.

The new plant will remove impurities from the town's water supply by sending streams of bubbles through the water to attach to solids, floating them to the surface for removal. It will have the capacity to produce up to three times as much clean water per day as the existing treatment plant, to accommodate growing demand and ensure sufficient supplies to meet

the heavier needs of the seafood processing industry each summer.

Site work started in November, Al-Haddad said.

Rock-n-Road Construction out of Petersburg was a subcontractor on the site work to remove a rock bluff, which included some blasting, to make room for the new building, she said.

Ketchikan Ready-Mix & Quarry was also a subcontractor, handling excavation work. McG Constructors out of Sitka is the main contractor on the job. McG's contract with the borough is for \$19.6 million, with the balance of the \$23 million project total going to design, inspection and administrative costs.

The borough has been working toward the new water plant for more than seven years, assembling a mix of federal and state grants and loans, with more than half of the cost covered by grants.

The borough was able to gather up the funding with only

a minimal local contribution of \$119,000 from the municipality's water fund. Water utility fees will cover loan repayments over 40 years.

The project encountered a potential delay earlier this winter when new federal requirements under the Build America, Buy America (BABA) Act of 2021 threatened to delay ordering of the water treatment system from its Canadian manufacturer.

Although the borough already had received a waiver from the requirement, allowing it to order the equipment and remain on schedule, it now needs another waiver after the new BABA rules were adopted, Al-Haddad explained.

While waiting for the second waiver, and because of the long lead time to order the equipment and avoid any risk of delay to the construction schedule, the borough shifted around project funds to make the required 25% down payment on the equipment from other money outside of the BABA requirement.

Proposed fine for illegal use of harbor dumpsters set for public hearing

Sentinel staff

The public will have a chance to voice their opinions Feb. 27 on a pair of proposed municipal ordinances that would limit the use of harbor dumpsters to boat owners only and for their household trash only — with a \$150 fine for violations.

The public hearing will be part of the evening's borough assembly meeting, which will start at 6 p.m. at City Hall.

Assembly members voted Feb. 13 to advance the ordinances to the Feb. 27 hearing. The assembly could take action on the measures after the hearing — either approve, reject or amend.

The first ordinance would specifically restrict use of the dumpsters to port and harbor users for household trash, "strictly prohibiting the dumping of hazardous

waste, oil products, gasoline, large commercial fishing gear, construction debris, furniture and any other bulky or dangerous items," Harbormaster Steve Miller explained in his report to the assembly.

Through the years, people have dumped car parts, kitchen appliances, waste oil, bags of cement and construction debris in the dumpsters.

The second ordinance would impose a \$150 fine per violation of the dumping rules.

The port commission has recommended assembly approval of the new rules.

Surveillance cameras which are being installed at all of Wrangell's port and harbor facilities will help with enforcement of the rules, port commissioners noted.

State's legal fights against federal government double since 2019

By JAMES BROOKS
Alaska Beacon

The number of legal conflicts between the state of Alaska and the federal government has risen significantly over the past decade, according to a review of annual reports filed by the Alaska Department of Law.

Since 2013, the department has been required to inform the Alaska Legislature annually about legal disputes between the state and the federal government. This year's report includes 53 such conflicts, the largest number since reporting began.

"There absolutely is a trend there," said Attorney General Treg Taylor.

Since 2021, Gov. Mike Dunleavy's annual budget request to the Legislature has included money for "statehood defense," a line item that generally funds lawsuits against the federal government. This year's budget request includes \$2 million for the Department of Law and an additional \$2 million for other state agencies as part of the effort.

"Our case counts (in statehood defense) have traditionally been between 30 and 40. But we're hitting 50 and 60," Taylor said.

The number of conflicts has risen steadily since 2019, when that year's report listed 25. Dunleavy was first elected governor

in 2018.

The Biden administration's policy on environmental issues tends to put it at odds with the Dunleavy administration and the Alaska Legislature, which favors mining, drilling and other forms of resource development.

Lawmakers in the state Capitol have repeatedly — and on a bipartisan basis — funded the governor's requests for statehood defense money, though they do differ on how that money should be spent.

Policies that make sense from a national perspective don't always work in Alaska, Taylor said, and Alaskans want policies to be determined locally.

"I think of our statehood defense (policy), as sort of allowing Alaska to determine Alaska's destiny. We want to make the decisions that are going to determine our future; we don't want that future determined by bureaucrats," he said.

One of the biggest ongoing issues shown in the reports is the issue of land ownership.

When a navigable river flows through federal land, U.S. Supreme Court precedent says that the state should have possession of the riverbed.

But trouble arises when the state and federal government differ on whether or not a lake or river is navigable. In dozens of lawsuits, the state has claimed

navigability that's denied by the federal government.

The next major hurdle on the topic is slated for later in February, when oral arguments are scheduled in litigation over ownership of Mendenhall Lake in Juneau, site of Alaska's most popular tourist destination, the Mendenhall Glacier.

The lawsuit claims the state owns the submerged lands beneath the lake and river, and thus the navigable waters above, which the federal government does not recognize.

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Boss of proposed gas pipeline project is highest-paid state executive

Alaska Beacon

The head of the state corporation in charge of a long-dreamed Alaska North Slope natural gas pipeline is once again Alaska's top-paid public executive.

Frank Richards, president of the Alaska Gasline Development Corp., received \$479,588 in compensation during 2023, according to the state's annual executive compensation report, released in January.

The state took over develop-

ment of the proposed gas pipeline in 2016 when North Slope producers walked away from the venture, saying it was not economically viable. Richards was hired as president in 2020.

Since taking over the project, the state has spent several hundred million dollars to finish permitting work as it continues to search for partners, investors and customers. The state contends buyers in Asia are the most likely customers for Alaska gas that

would be liquefying and shipped across the ocean aboard tankers. But so far, no customers have signed on.

The numbers in the state compensation report includes salary as well as things like cashed-out leave, moving expenses and travel costs. Richards has been Alaska's top-paid executive since 2021.

The annual compensation report includes only executives, not all public employees, but the gas line boss has traditionally topped

the list among all employees as well.

The state's second-highest-paid executive in 2023 was University of Alaska President Pat Pitney. She was compensated \$403,848.

Pitney was followed by Alaska Railroad President and CEO Bill O'Leary, at \$382,616; Alaska Housing Finance Corp. Executive Director Bryan Butcher, \$356,387; and Alaska Permanent Fund Corp. Executive Director Deven Mitchell, \$350,134.

Gov. Mike Dunleavy received \$144,536 in compensation during 2023, the report said. Under a plan adopted last year by a state commission appointed by Dunleavy, the governor's salary will rise to about \$176,000, and the salaries of state commissioners will be about \$168,000.

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State offers grants for locally grown food efforts

Sentinel staff

The state is offering an additional \$2.2 million in small grants this year for individuals and groups around Alaska to increase the quantity and quality of locally grown food.

The grants of up to \$5,000 for individuals and \$10,000 for organizations can go toward greenhouses and small-scale gardening projects, efforts to promote and provide subsistence foods and even livestock.

The Alaska Division of Agriculture is distributing the federal money through its Micro-Grants for Food Security Program.

Priority for the competitive

grants will be given to rural Alaska communities "that have significant levels of food insecurity," including cities and villages that experience food shortages or supply issues, or have a higher percentage of lower-income households.

The grant application deadline is 5 p.m. Friday, March 15. Applications must be submitted online. More information is available on the Alaska Department of Natural Resources website dnr.alaska.gov under the "NEWS" tab on the top right.

Or for more information, email dnr.ag.grants@alaska.gov and include "2024 MGFS" in the subject line.



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**WE HAVE
MOVED**

Church given to tribe after century of Presbyterian ownership

By LEX TREINEN

Chilkat Valley News, Haines

The church, originally known as the Klukwan Presbyterian, has been holding regular Sunday services for nearly a century. But one thing about the church has changed: its owner.

More than a year ago, a national denomination of the Presbyterian Church transferred the deed to the Klukwan tribe as part of the denomination's effort to reconcile past abuses by clergy members and teachers against Alaska Native people.

The formal ceremony, which had been delayed by COVID-19 concerns, was held in October.

Tribal and church leaders said it was an important step toward self-determination for the Chilkat Indian Village, the federally recognized tribe in Klukwan.

"It just kinda hits you dead center — the church is ours," said Jones Hotch, a longtime church member and a member of the Klukwan tribal council.

The idea was first floated years ago under then-Pastor Jami Campbell after she witnessed a statewide apology made by the Presbyterian Church at the Alaska Federation of Natives conference in 2016.

Campbell later moved away from Klukwan but returned for the transfer ceremony.

"Being part of healing is a pretty amazing thing," she said in a phone interview from Washington state, where she now lives. "They've gained some of their power back."

Lani Hotch, another longtime church member and culture bearer in Klukwan, said some of her earliest memories are with the church. While she spent her early years in Haines, Hotch remembered coming to services with her grandmother, Jennie Warren, who wore a dress on Sundays. They walked over the wooden sidewalks to the wooden building, Warren keeping a strict eye on the rambunctious children.

Hotch said she loved the



Photo courtesy Jami Campbell

A formal ceremony was held in October to transfer ownership of the Presbyterian church building in Klukwan to the local tribe. Jami Campbell (center), who had served as Presbyterian pastor, was joined for the event by longtime church member Kath Hotch (left) and Joann Elsie Spud (right).

services and the connection it brought to her family and the history of the region. Her great grandfather James Katchkanuk had purchased the cast iron bell in 1903. She continued to attend church through adulthood.

Campbell said she quickly felt the importance of the church after she was recruited as pastor at the end of 2017.

She tried to integrate into the community as quickly as she could, but the darker sides of the church's history in Alaska gnawed at her. She remembered seeing a document at the Jilkaat Kwaan Heritage Center to prove they were no longer Indigenous. It required a signature from five non-Native Alaskans to prove they were "civilized."

The Presbyterian Church was a major force in several regions in Alaska, including in the Chilkat Valley.

The church was particularly active in missionary boarding schools, taking Alaska Native children away from their families to boarding school and prohibiting local languages as part of a "civilizing" mission.

Shortly after taking up the ministry in Klukwan, Campbell stumbled across a YouTube video of an apology from the Presbyterian USA denomination of the church for abuses at boarding schools in Alaska. The speech was delivered by Rev. Curtis Karns at the Alaska Fed-

eration of Natives conference in Fairbanks in 2016.

"To those individuals who were physically, sexually and emotionally abused as students of the Indian boarding schools in which the (Presbyterian Church USA) was involved, we offer you our most sincere apology. You did nothing wrong; you were and are the victims of evil acts that cannot under any cir-

cumstances be justified or excused," Karns told the AFN convention, according to an Anchorage Daily News account at the time.

The discovery had a deep effect on Campbell, who decided the Klukwan church should make its own apology. In May 2019, she gave a speech to the congregants at the Klukwan heritage center based on the Presbyterian USA apology from 2016.

The ceremony wasn't publicized at the time.

"They decided they wanted it to be intimate," said Campbell. "They decided not to inform local media at the time so it could be a personal, genuine moment."

Campbell said she felt like it was a milestone for the church's role in the community. She said she's had people who weren't even at the ceremony come up to her and recite portions of it

word for word.

Lani Hotch, a longtime church member and culture bearer, said it was bittersweet for her. "It was great there was an apology after the fact, but in my heart, I had already moved on."

Hotch had completed a Klukwan Healing Robe, a Chilkat weaving project in 2001 that marked a focal point in throwing off cultural oppression and

embracing Tlingit heritage for the community.

The text of Campbell's apology to Klukwan still hangs on the wall of the church.

Shortly after the apology, Campbell started hearing about a movement within the Presbyterian USA denomination of returning

church lands to Indigenous peoples. She wondered if the church would be willing to do the same for Klukwan church.

The property where it sat, about halfway between the banks of the Chilkat River and the Haines Highway, was the sole piece of land still owned by non-tribal members in Klukwan. Campbell reached out to Presbyterian USA over email.

"Would you please consider gifting the Klukwan, Alaska church building to the Chilkat Tlingit people of Klukwan?" she wrote. "This transaction can easily be done by donating, gifting or selling for \$1 to the Chilk-

To those individuals who were physically, sexually and emotionally abused as students of the Indian boarding schools in which the (Presbyterian Church USA) was involved, we offer you our most sincere apology. You did nothing wrong.

at Indian Village."

Within a week, she had a phone call.

"I didn't even know there was a church there," said Dean Strong, the clerk for the Northwest Presbytery at the time.

Strong combed through records Presbyterian USA kept in New York state to find the property. It was hardly a question of whether to return the property, Strong said.

"Once we found out about it, we were happy to have the Native American tribe own it. It was their property, their community center," he said. "We've been trying to do this with all our churches on all our native properties and reservations."

Getting it through the tribal council took a bit longer, but not for lack of support. Jones Hotch said there were minor technical issues.

By 2022, the council had approved the transfer and the church became part of the tribal land.

Unfortunately, COVID concerns were still present in the village, and the tribe decided to delay a formal ceremony until the fall of 2023.

"Not too many empty seats that day," said Pat Warren, a church elder. "There was fish and side dishes. It was a festive time."

"It was just very warm, very celebratory and very reflective and an excitement of moving forward," said Al Giddings, who was welcomed as the new pastor of the church during the ceremony.

Former pastor Campbell said it was a celebration "but not necessarily people jumping around whooping and hollering. ... It's the kind of celebration of recognizing broken things coming back together."

Campbell said making the trip back to see the culmination of years of effort was emotional.

"Being part of healing is a pretty amazing thing," she said. "The village worked so hard for healing to sustain their culture and their way of life. Now the church isn't standing in the way, it's an ally for them."

Practically, there are small but significant differences. Lani Hotch said the church can now choose which denomination to have preaching. Right now, Giddings' services are non-denominational.

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Application Deadline
March 15, 2024

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

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Head of troopers says state lacking in rural communities

By CLAIRE STREMPLE
Alaska Beacon

Alaska Department of Public Safety Commissioner James Cockrell told lawmakers on Feb. 6 that he doesn't know how the state can justify the relative lack of resources it has provided to rural Alaska.

"Since statehood, the state has followed a false pass on how we provide law enforcement services around this state," he said. "We certainly have disproportionate resources in rural Alaska. And it's shameful."

As bills to address the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous people in Alaska move through the legislative process, the state is reckoning with systemic issues that have hindered its response. Cockrell said during a Senate State Affairs Committee hearing that the Department of Public Safety has taken steps to reduce the inequities, but he would like lawmak-

ers to give him the ability to move resources from urban areas to rural ones.

"We've closed our eyes and allowed rural Alaska to be seriously victimized," he said.

Alaska Native people experience the highest rates of domestic and sexual violence in the nation, even compared with the high rates for other tribes in the U.S. But remote communities in Alaska are notoriously lacking in law enforcement, especially Alaska Native villages that are off the road system.

Tami Truett Jerue, executive director of Alaska Native Women's Resource Center and a member of the national Not Invisible Commission, has worked to increase awareness and resources around this issue for decades. She said Alaska's nationally high rates of domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking are deeply linked to the high rates of missing

and murdered Indigenous people. "It's challenging to understand why the statistics are so high," she said.

Jerue pointed out that the federal Violence Against Women's Act now has an Alaska-specific chapter because of those challenges — and the heightened rate of victimization here. The federal law was amended to add the chapter in 2022.

Joel Jackson, president of the Organized Village of Kake, said the specter of crime in his village keeps him up nights because there is no law enforcement in his community.

He said there have been two active shooters in Kake in the past year, but no one to respond to them. After two young women were murdered there about a decade ago, he said a group of locals patrolled the village to calm people's fears while they waited for

law enforcement.

"We've been talking about this issue for how many years now? How many more people are going to die? How many more of our tribal citizens are going to die because of lack of law enforcement?" he asked legislators. "Enough is enough. I've heard all kinds of answers today. Budget issues. OK, how much? How much is the human life worth? You tell me."

He noted that two village police officers are in training and slated to come serve in Kake.

Cockrell said his department covers about 50 villages with village public safety officer (VPSO) presence, but he has requests for law enforcement from more than 150 villages that do not have coverage.

"When you hear the stories and all they want is a trooper or VPSO and you can't give it to them — it changes your perception in law enforcement," he said.

He acknowledged that the conversation is uncomfortable — and even made a few remarks about potentially losing his job for addressing it — but he said that too many resources go to urban areas like the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and too few go to the more remote villages.

"With the resources they have available, they could tax and have their own police department or they could pay for what we're doing," he said of the Mat-Su.

He estimated that the Public Safety Department spends \$2 million for dispatch and about \$1 million for office space and storage in the borough of 110,000 residents, and said that money cannot be used elsewhere in the state.

"We're a state police agency, not an urban police agency. And they're running our troopers ragged," he said.

In the past, the department has danced around the issue of the resources spent in urban areas, Cockrell said. "You got to say it, right? You got to do it. That's why we're here, is to make a change," he said.

There are three bills aimed at increasing response and better serving remote villages this year.

Bethel Rep. CJ McCormick filed bills that would require special training for law enforcement that handle cases involving missing and murdered Indigenous people and a special commission to investigate the state's handling of those cases, as well as a bill that would require missing persons reports to be posted to a national database within a month.

A bill filed by Sen. Donny Olson from Golovin, east of Nome, would create a special commission to review unsolved cases involving missing and murdered Indigenous people and submit a report with recommendations for improvement.

Kai Monture, from Yakutat, told lawmakers at a Senate committee hearing on Olson's bill on Feb. 6 that he is a brother, cousin, uncle, nephew and friend to multiple women and girls that have survived assault. He said the Tlingit people are matrilineal people, so his access to the history of his clan, culture and language comes through his female relatives.

"I have a lot of shame and grief that our women suffer so much. And they're hurt so much, and targeted for all these evil things," he said. He said no one entity can protect Alaska Native women, and he urged lawmakers to take action.

The Alaska Beacon is an independent, donor-funded news organization. Alaskabeacon.com.

Haines loses appeal of census count that showed 17% population drop

By LEX TREINEN

Chilkat Valley News, Haines

The U.S. Census Bureau has rejected Haines' appeal of the agency's 2020 count, which showed the Southeast Alaska community's population dropping by 17%, or 428 residents.

"I'm deeply disappointed. I really thought that our response was compelling," said Borough Clerk Alekka Fullerton, who worked on the appeal. "I was mad. It's a big deal to our com-

munity."

Multiple federal funding programs are based on the census count.

The Census Bureau counted 2,080 residents in Haines in 2020, down from 2,508 in 2010. The borough appealed that number in June.

The federal bureau also reported a drop in population in Wrangell from 2010 to 2020 — an 11% decrease, going from 2,369 to 2,127 residents. Wrangell did

not appeal the census count.

Though the Census Bureau acknowledged it had found some errors in its Haines work, "the corrections did not change the counts for your total housing and population, so there is no change to your official 2020 Census counts," Deborah M. Stempowski, an associate director for the Census count, wrote to the Haines mayor.

Fullerton said the borough still didn't believe it had lost nearly 20% of its residents since the 2010 census. She said the challenge took hours of painstaking work reviewing housing units.

Killer whales

Continued from Page 5

that could result in death later, the report said.

But there are gear modifications and devices that have the potential for reducing harm to the whales, the report notes. Barrier ropes that prevent whales from swimming into nets, sleeves that cover hooked fish being pulled up on longline gear, acoustic instruments that ward off whales and other devices should be further studied to see if they can effectively reduce the toll on killer whales, the report said.

In addition to the 35 reported entanglements over the three-decade period that involved fishing or marine gear, two other whales were determined to have been entangled in strings of kelp. Those determinations were based on analysis of photographs — demonstrating the importance of collecting photo evidence, the report said.

Killer whales and other whales are known to interact with kelp and have been observed playing with it. There is also evidence

that rubbing against kelp soothes whales' skin. It is likely that there were many more kelp entanglement cases than the two that were documented, the report said.

The affinity for kelp is a signal of a potential future problem as kelp and seaweed farming proliferates, the report noted. "Killer whales have the potential to interact with kelp farms' anthropogenic material as well as crops," it said.

Alaska killer whales are classified by stock and by prey type. Resident whales are fish-eaters, while transient whales hunt marine mammals. Multiple stocks are found in Alaska waters.

NOAA Fisheries estimates that there are 1,920 killer whales in the Eastern North Pacific Alaska Resident stock, which swims in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea, and 587 in the Eastern North Pacific, Gulf of Alaska, Aleutians Island and Bering Sea transient stock.

The Alaska Beacon is an independent, donor-funded news organization. Alaskabeacon.com.

Police report

Monday, Feb. 12

Agency assist: Hoonah Police Department.
Vehicle theft: Recovered.

Tuesday, Feb. 13

Agency assist: Hoonah Police Department.

Wednesday, Feb. 14

Dog complaint.
Threats.

Thursday, Feb. 15

Theft.

Friday, Feb. 16

Letter served for removing person from a licensed establishment.
Assault.

Letter served for removing person from a licensed estab-

ishment.

Letter served for removing person from a licensed establishment.
Welfare check.

Saturday, Feb. 17

Civil issue.
Traffic stop: Citation issued for failure to provide proof of insurance and verbal warning for expired registration and taillight out.

Agency assist: Hoonah Police Department.

Sunday, Feb. 18

Suspicious circumstance:
Search and Rescue.
Agency assist: Line crew.
Hit and run: Citation issued.
Agency assist: Ambulance.

The Wrangell Sentinel and Wrangell Convention and Visitor Bureau are working together to create a visitor guide showcasing all that Wrangell has to offer!

The guide will be available online year-round, in addition to 10,000 high-quality printed copies to mail out, take to trade shows and hand out to spread the word of Wrangell as a great destination.



The deadline to reserve your ad space is March 1.

Call or email Amber at the Sentinel today to ask about advertising in the guide.

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**CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL
NOTICE OF JOB OPENING
Borough Manager**

The City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, is looking to hire a dynamic, motivated individual to be our Borough Manager. This is a full-time, permanent position with all City and Borough benefits.

Wrangell operates under an Assembly-Manager form of government. The Assembly and community expect you to chart the path forward toward new opportunities and growth. Come join us as we continue our journey.

Preference is given to candidates who hold a degree from an accredited four-year college or university, with a master's degree in public administration or business administration. A combination of related education and/or municipal experience may be considered.

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

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

This position will be open until filled, with the first review date of March 1, 2024.

Publish Jan. 31, Feb. 7, 14 and 21, 2024

**CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL
NOTICE OF JOB OPENING
WRANGELL POLICE DEPARTMENT
Correctional Officer/Dispatch**

The City and Borough of Wrangell is accepting applications of employment for the position of **Correctional Officer/Dispatch** through Feb. 23, 2024, at 5 p.m. This is a permanent position with all City and Borough benefits.

The Dispatcher/Corrections Officer receives emergency and routine calls and assists with all aspects of Corrections. The position performs telephone investigation, preparation of call information, operation of computer terminals, operation of telephone equipment, and includes considerable contact with the general public and public service agencies. The position also assists with booking, processing and surveillance of inmates.

This is a full-time, hourly position with full benefits, paid at Grade 14. Employment is based on a successful background check and pre-employment drug screening, including additional prerequisites outlined in the job description.

Applications and job descriptions may be obtained and returned to Rob Marshall at City Hall, 205 Brueger Street (P.O. Box 531), Wrangell, AK 99929 or via email at rmarshall@wrangell.com.

The City and Borough of Wrangell is an equal opportunity employer.

Mason Villarma, Interim Borough Manager
City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska

Publish Feb. 14 and 21, 2024

**CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL
WORK SESSION and PUBLIC HEARING
PUBLIC NOTICE**

The Borough Assembly will hold a Work Session on Tuesday, February 27, 2024, from 6 to 7 p.m. in the Borough Assembly Chambers, on the following item(s):

Wrangell Cooperative Association Board & Staff

Although there will be a quorum of the Borough Assembly present at the Work Session, there will be no action taken.

Following the Work Session there will be a Regular Assembly meeting starting at 7 p.m. During the Assembly Meeting, there will be a Public Hearing on the following:

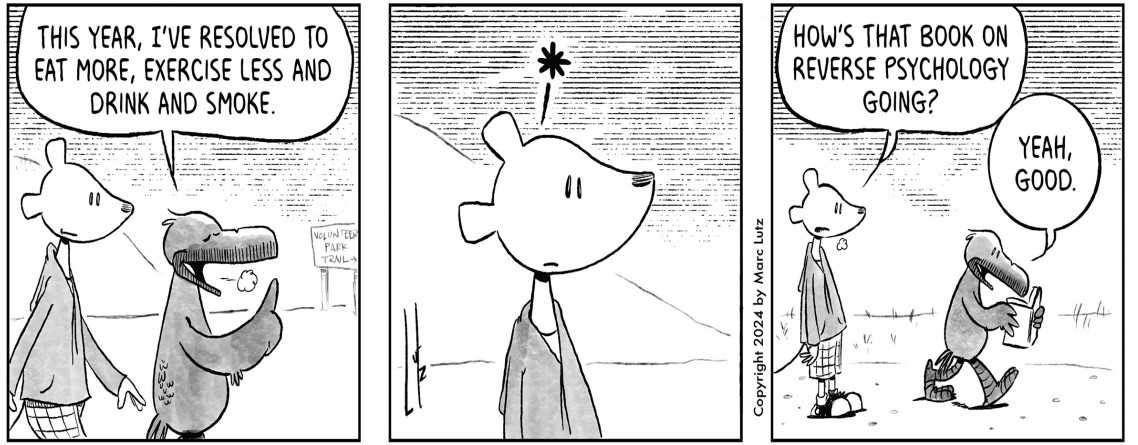
- a. **Ordinance No. 1050** of the Assembly of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, adding Section 14.09.042, Use of Port and Harbor Dumpsters, in Chapter 14.09, Prohibited Practices, in the Wrangell Municipal Code.
- b. **Ordinance No. 1051** of the Assembly of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, amending the minor offense fine schedule in Chapter 1.20, General Penalty, in the Wrangell Municipal Code.
- c. Request for the exchange of Borough-owned real property described as a portion of Parcel 7, A.S.L.S 84-83, zoned Commercial, adjacent to the Torgramsen-Glasner Subdivision, for a utility easement on real property described as a portion of Parcel 03-002-306, owned by Don Glasner, in accordance with WMC 16.12.080, for the purposes of preserving a utility easement demonstrating Borough site control for the Water Treatment Plant Improvement project.

Kim Lane, MMC, Borough Clerk
City and Borough of Wrangell

Publish Feb. 21, 2024

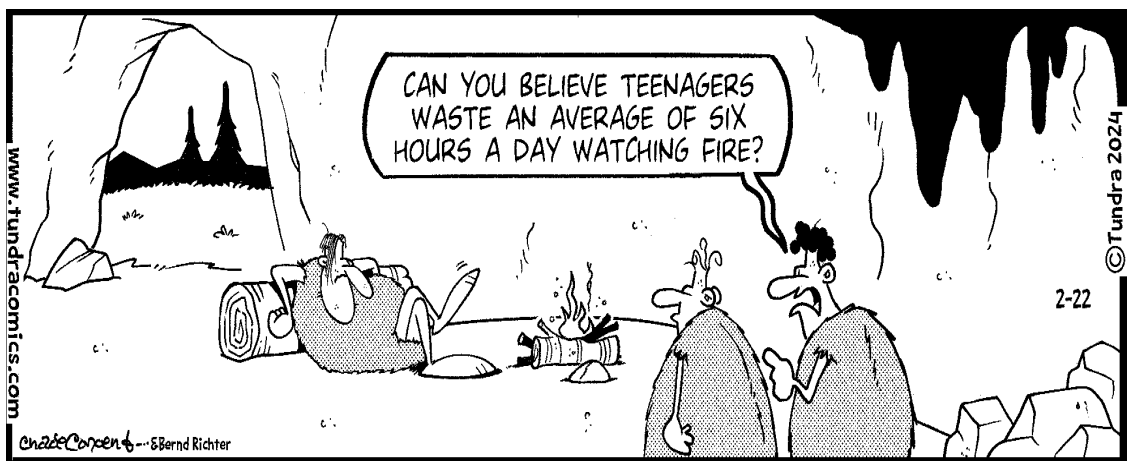
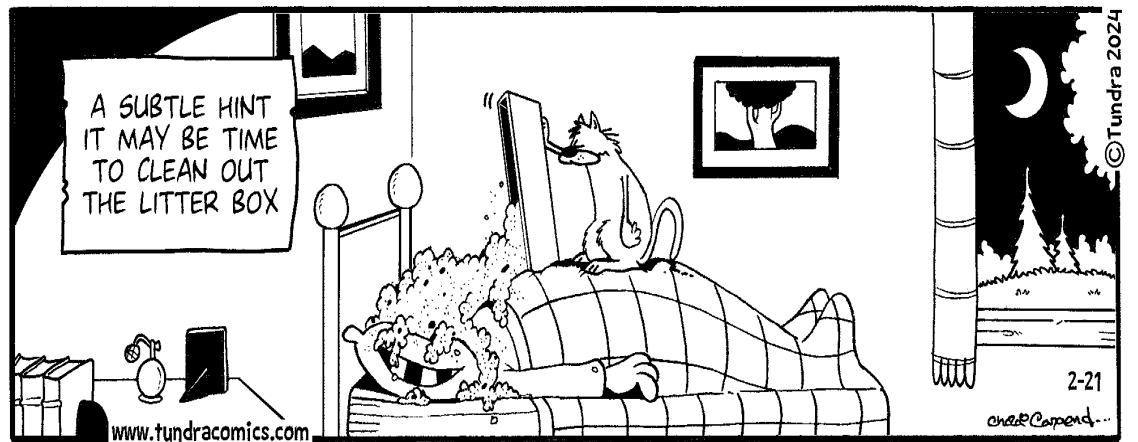
Ritter's River

by Marc Lutz



Tundra

by Chad Carpenter



CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL

During the Jan. 23 Regular Assembly Meeting, the Borough Assembly approved writing-off delinquent account balances and sending them to collections. To avoid getting sent to collections, listed individuals below must pay their account balance in full prior to 4 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 28, 2024.

Name	HARBOR					Balance
	Current	30-60	60-90	90-120	120+	
Allen, William	247.17	243.57	240.03	236.53	1868.83	2836.13
Barker, Justin	0	0	0	0	3283.54	3283.54
Berglund, Hilary & Eric	18.22	17.96	17.7	17.44	1179.7	1251.02
Botsford, Tristan	256.07	252.33	249.39	245.76	1136.38	2139.93
Duncan, Elmer	0	0	0	0	3795.61	3795.61
Easterly, Wayne	761.8	1126.47	104.07	102.55	3341.65	5436.54
Far West Vessels	109.43	1096.45	1136.98	1120.41	943.75	4407.02
Gerard, Steve	321.72	317.03	312.42	307.76	1218.02	2476.95
Gore, Matthew	22.51	22.18	21.86	21.54	1457.42	1545.51
Grey, Russell	10.87	10.71	10.56	10.4	703.81	746.35
Hergert, Doug	14.94	16.9	19.13	21.29	655.52	727.78
Jenkins, James	10.23	10.08	9.94	9.68	662.38	702.31
Jenkins, Josh	10.88	10.74	94.84	72.27	557.92	746.65
Lindsey, Patrick	75.77	74.67	73.58	72.51	4905.28	5201.81
Mundt, Corey	645.49	644.83	644.09	649.35	1963.39	4547.15
Shiple, Marie	6.96	9.78	12.55	15.3	436.37	480.96
Stevens, Mark	138.71	136.69	134.74	132.74	2594.26	3137.1
Watts, Jonathan	22.76	22.43	22.1	21.78	1323.23	1412.3
Young, Brett	14.47	18.63	22.31	24.91	617.37	697.69
Zarro, Alberto	1.43	1.41	1.39	1.37	92.54	98.14

CLASSIFIED

HELP WANTED

Petersburg Indian Association is accepting applications for a full-time Tribal Administrator. Position will be responsible for general oversight of operations and staff at PIA. Job description and application available at the PIA office or at www.piatribal.org. Open until filled. Interviews will be scheduled starting on March 1, 2024. Salary \$75K to \$90K DOE. Native preference applies.

HELP WANTED

Wrangell Public Schools is accepting applications for the following positions for the 2023-2024 school year:

- Indian Education Act Director/Tutor: This is a part-time position working with students in Grades K-12, 5.75 hours per day, in the Indian Education Program at Wrangell Public Schools. This position is also responsible for writing and coordinating the IEA grant in collaboration with the superintendent and school principals. A high school diploma or equivalent is required. An associate degree, equivalent credits, or the ability to pass the para pro assessment is also required.

- Paraprofessional: This is a part-time, 9-month classified position working 5.75 hours per day in the Special Education Program at Evergreen Elementary School. A high school diploma or equivalent is required. An associate degree, equivalent credits or the ability to pass the para pro assessment is also required.

- Middle School Volleyball Head Coach: This is a part-time contracted position coaching volleyball for students in grades 6 through 8. Knowledge of vol-

leyball is required; coaching experience is preferred.

For more information and detailed job descriptions, please contact the District Office at 907-874-2347. These positions are open until filled.

It is Wrangell Public School District policy to not discriminate based on age, race, color, national origin, sex or disability.

FREE ADS

Do you have something to sell? Having a garage sale? Looking to buy something? Classified ads for individuals and community groups are free in the Sentinel. Contact Amber at 907-874-

2301 or email wrgsent@gmail.com.

STAY UP TO DATE

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FREE

Moving? Need fire starter? Art projects? Stop by the Wrangell Sentinel to pick up free recycled newspapers.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

In the matter of the estate of Otto Heinz Florschutz III, Notice to Creditors is hereby given that Christina Florschutz has been appointed personal representative of the above-named estate. Pursuant to Alaska Statute Title 13.16.450, all creditors are hereby notified to present their claims within four months after the date of first publication of this notice or said claims will forever be barred. Claims must be presented to:

Christina Florschutz
PO Box 547
Wrangell, AK 99929

Publish Feb. 14, 21 and 28, 2024

CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL

During the Jan. 23 Regular Assembly Meeting, the Borough Assembly approved writing-off delinquent account balances and sending them to collections. To avoid getting sent to collections, listed individuals below must pay their account balance in full prior to 4 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 28.

UTILITIES

Account #	Name	Current	30-60	60-90	90-120	120+	Balance
10930-08	Allen, Lorraine	\$15.24	\$15.24	\$15.24	\$15.24	\$1,774.99	\$1,835.95
10360-27	Ambrose, Calvyn F	\$5.32	\$5.32	\$5.32	\$5.32	\$627.49	\$648.77
13177-02	Anderson, Jannette G	\$2.01	\$2.01	\$2.01	\$2.01	\$254.86	\$262.90
10464-28	Barcelo, Sherry A	\$6.07	\$6.07	\$6.07	\$6.07	\$737.09	\$761.37
12343-11	Bartlett, Darryl J	\$2.56	\$22.38	\$2.38	\$2.38	\$301.07	\$330.77
13896-03	Berglund, Hilary C	\$0.80	\$0.80	\$0.80	\$0.80	\$115.84	\$119.04
14079-04	Berglund, Hilary C	\$0.37	\$0.37	\$0.37	\$0.37	\$59.13	\$60.61
12085-28	Boakes, Spencer	\$1.43	\$1.43	\$1.43	\$1.43	\$205.15	\$210.87
12403-09	Coddington, Bob	\$1.05	\$1.05	\$1.05	\$1.05	\$145.32	\$149.52
10361-39	Coicoechea, Cory M	\$2.62	\$2.62	\$4.33	\$184.84	\$114.09	\$308.50
12327-14	Crandall, Justin S	\$6.30	\$6.30	\$6.30	\$6.30	\$753.49	\$778.69
11622-06	DeLong, Lonny	\$4.99	\$4.99	\$4.99	\$4.99	\$794.36	\$814.32
13162-24	DeLong, Lonny	\$2.04	\$2.04	\$2.04	\$2.04	\$272.76	\$280.92
14073-06	Duncan, Elmer G	\$1.44	\$1.44	\$1.44	\$1.44	\$172.12	\$177.88
11681-14	Emens, Cary	\$6.15	\$6.15	\$6.15	\$6.15	\$797.07	\$821.67
12458-05	Emens, Cary	\$1.95	\$11.50	\$11.41	\$11.33	\$207.89	\$244.08
12080-23	Foster, Kelly	\$0.58	\$0.58	\$0.58	\$0.58	\$82.77	\$85.09
11018-12	Gadd, Caleah	\$4.63	\$4.63	\$4.63	\$4.63	\$569.02	\$587.54
10642-25	Gillen, Matthew	\$9.90	\$29.72	\$9.72	\$9.72	\$1,166.50	\$1,225.56
10049-03	Goodman, Robert	\$0.54	\$0.54	\$0.54	\$0.54	\$69.00	\$71.16
11432-03	Goodman, Robert	\$3.06	\$3.06	\$3.06	\$3.06	\$392.92	\$405.16
11446-01	Griffis, Daniel	\$6.83	\$6.83	\$6.83	\$6.83	\$837.90	\$865.22
10323-12	Hale, Jacob O	\$1.04	\$1.04	\$1.04	\$1.04	\$127.48	\$131.64
10196-17	Johnson, Debrah D	\$6.24	\$6.24	\$6.24	\$6.24	\$804.00	\$828.96
10124-03	Keith, Paula	\$2.91	\$2.91	\$2.91	\$2.91	\$378.07	\$389.71
10461-41	Krages, Thomas	\$1.10	\$1.10	\$1.10	\$1.10	\$130.59	\$134.99
10461-38	Larsen, Nels J	\$0.76	\$0.76	\$0.76	\$0.76	\$93.35	\$96.39
10450-41	Lemma, Matthew W	\$4.04	\$4.04	\$4.04	\$4.04	\$519.55	\$535.71
11005-10	Lewis, Nicholas D	\$7.64	\$7.64	\$7.64	\$7.64	\$999.55	\$1,030.11
10325-31	Loomis, Christina R	\$4.09	\$4.09	\$5.83	\$185.99	\$284.32	\$484.32
12058-21	Martin, Adrian J D	\$0.38	\$0.38	\$0.38	\$0.38	\$45.53	\$47.05
12018-11	Mathieu, Jason Devyn	\$2.58	\$88.31	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$90.89
10247-03	Mickey, Diane R	\$1.42	\$1.42	\$1.42	\$1.42	\$180.30	\$185.98
14013-06	Nestle, Kevin	\$1.42	\$1.42	\$1.42	\$1.42	\$177.73	\$183.41
13178-25	Notley, Theresa Marie	\$8.06	\$9.16	\$9.16	\$9.16	\$957.75	\$993.29
10368-25	O'Connor, Dominique	\$5.96	\$5.96	\$5.96	\$10.34	\$718.96	\$747.18
10464-26	Oglend, Pamela	\$15.09	\$15.09	\$15.09	\$15.09	\$1,987.39	\$2,047.75
10462-35	Oyler, Barry J	\$3.02	\$3.02	\$3.02	\$3.02	\$385.77	\$397.85
11592-42	Richter, Connor M	\$3.20	\$3.20	\$3.20	\$3.20	\$428.19	\$440.99
12141-04	Ridgeway, Jennifer D	\$0.20	\$0.20	\$0.20	\$22.39	\$0.00	\$22.99
10247-05	Rincon, Colleen R	\$5.87	\$5.87	\$5.87	\$5.87	\$695.68	\$719.16
11015-11	Rue, Bill	\$7.37	\$26.46	\$58.27	\$212.90	\$568.79	\$873.79
12360-09	Saunders, David	\$13.35	\$13.35	\$13.35	\$13.35	\$1,609.72	\$1,663.12
12353-22	Sims, Benjamin	\$0.37	\$42.02	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$42.39
10940-09	Smith, Chris L	\$2.00	\$2.00	\$2.00	\$2.00	\$247.77	\$255.77
13323-08	Steinbrueck, Steven R	\$4.78	\$4.78	\$4.78	\$4.78	\$622.06	\$641.18
12353-21	Templin, Donald C	\$0.28	\$0.28	\$0.28	\$0.28	\$36.14	\$37.26
10195-11	Tennant-Miller, Monica	\$0.89	\$0.89	\$0.89	\$0.89	\$117.01	\$120.57
10140-13	Van Evey, Rick	\$1.21	\$1.21	\$1.21	\$1.21	\$151.75	\$156.59
14260-01	Vertical Bridge Development LLC	\$1.74	\$1.74	\$1.74	\$1.74	\$215.78	\$222.74
12327-13	Watts, Jonathan E	\$0.78	\$0.78	\$0.78	\$0.78	\$127.63	\$130.75
12018-10	Williams, Reginald K	\$2.41	\$2.41	\$2.41	\$2.41	\$280.97	\$290.61
11621-11	Zeutzius, Andrew J	\$4.69	\$5.79	\$17.15	\$17.15	\$613.12	\$657.90

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'There was a need'

Student figures out how to upgrade livestreams from school gym

By MARK C. ROBINSON

Sentinel reporter

What began about a year and a half ago as a side project for high school student Spencer Petticrew would eventually evolve to become his senior project: the livestreaming video setup at Wrangell High School for events, including all sports games, musical concerts and graduation ceremony.

"Basically, if it takes place in the gym, and people want to watch it, I'm the guy that handles the livestreaming of it over platforms like YouTube," he said.

Petticrew credits the high school's former IT director Bob Russell with igniting his interest in videography during the volleyball regionals in 2022, as the student had some experience in broadcasting through a previous internship at KSTK as well as a lot of tech projects. "One day, he just asked me out of the blue, he was like, 'Hey, do you want to help me stream these volleyball games?'"

While Petticrew had no experience in video or livestreaming, he soon discovered how many people use the high school's YouTube channel to watch local sports and other events at the gym, including those who might not be able to attend in person. "A lot of people watch their grandkids play," he said. "So, there was a need. We see upwards of 100, 120 viewers at times. Even, one time I saw 150. Our platform is utilized."

However, he felt the previous setup left much to be desired. "At that time, it was an iPad and two cameras that are older than me," he said. "As you can imagine, it wasn't that good of quality."

That gave Petticrew the impetus for his senior project. He wrote a \$1,000 grant proposal to the Upward Bound program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, which provided the school with a high-resolution digital camera. "That was a big upgrade," he said. "You can see even the players' numbers on the back."

As he worked with a hodgepodge of equipment, he made



PHOTO BY MARK C. ROBINSON / WRANGELL SENTINEL

Student Spencer Petticrew shows off the video production booth he helped upgrade to livestream events from the high school gym.

improvements in piecemeal fashion, progressing from a cropped webcam video feed of the scoreboard during games to the current digital scoreboard overlay, using one of two monitors that can be constantly updated and configured.

Previously, one person was needed to operate the computer while another controlled the camera. Petticrew provided a simple fix, using a stick he found outside and taping it to a boom arm, which allowed him to pan the camera back and forth while still seated at the computer. "Now, it's essentially a one-man show," he said.

The current computer used

for livestreaming was donated by Kaelene Harrison, built by her daughter Kiara several years ago while still in high school through the Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program at the University of Alaska Anchorage. "That thing's kitted out. I'm talking like 64 gigabytes of RAM," he said.

Petticrew also got help from a friend and classmate. "Ander Edens, he's helped me a lot with this," he said.

He said the most fun parts of the project were learning about videography and the adrenaline rush of troubleshooting problems while shooting live events. "Previously, I didn't re-

ally know how to livestream, I didn't really know much about cameras, even, and now I'm like a huge nerd for them."

The most challenging part of the project was dealing with the trial and error of operating unfamiliar equipment or software. "Sometimes, it just wouldn't work," he said. "I would click 'stream' and it just wouldn't connect. Trying to figure that out is probably the hardest part. I don't like Google software."

Petticrew predicts the current video setup will last at least five years, but his overall goal is for other students to follow in his footsteps, those who

may not be interested in athletics, and get them involved in school activities through video production.

"I want it to be like a revolving door of students who are kind of interested in live production," he said. "I want to get everyone involved, somehow, and I feel like our tech program really needs that student engagement."

After graduation, Petticrew plans to attend Boise State University to study chemistry. "I have no actual interest in pursuing a career in (video) production," he said. "I mean, it's a dream job for me, but I want to make money. ... But I feel like digital storytelling will always be a passion of mine."

He'll miss the tight-knit relationships he formed in high school. "Everyone in this building, I can walk up to them, and I know everything about them," he said. "You can just have a conversation with someone, and you just pick up where you left off."

As for what he won't miss about high school years, it's the lack of franchises and chain stores. "There's no Walmart here," he said with a smile.

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