

SEARHC shares consortium-wide testing numbers, says community-only information too specific

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

The Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium, according to several members of Wrangell's local government, has been doing a very good job of communicating with them during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Assembly Member David Powell said that communications between SEARHC, Mayor Steve Prysunka, and Borough Manager Lisa Von Bargen have been taking place almost daily. Prysunka and Von Bargen are really on top of things, he said. Assembly Member Drew Larrabee added that, in his opinion, communication between all state and local government and health entities has been well orchestrated during this pandemic. SEARHC and the city have both been regularly meeting and issuing press releases. However, some communities are receiving more information than Wrangell is.

The Petersburg Medical Center has been providing regular

community-specific updates as to the number of COVID-19 tests being run. As of March 31, according to Petersburg Pilot reporter Brian Varela, 37 tests have been submitted from Petersburg. Of these tests, 17 have come back negative and the rest are still awaiting results.

However, similar information is not being made readily available for Wrangell through the hospital. SEARHC operates the Wrangell Medical Center, and is also currently constructing a new hospital for the community. Maegan Bosak, director of marketing and communications for SEARHC, said she could provide consortium-wide numbers. Across all SEARHC facilities, in 20 communities in all, there have been 178 COVID-19 tests performed as of March 31. All of their clinic locations are equipped for the tests and are collecting samples for the tests, she wrote in an email to the Sentinel, "including Haines, Gustavus, Juneau, Hoonah, Angoon, Sitka, Kake, Wrangell, Klawock,



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Teachers on parade

Missing their students, due to the district being closed until May, teachers at Evergreen Elementary School organized a parade around town to see their students. Parents were encouraged to bring their kids out to porches and windows to wave at them as they drove through town, maintaining social distancing per COVID-19 safety requirements. The caravan of teachers went around the airport loop, through town, and even out the road to make sure they could see as many students as possible. Pictured here is 5th grade teacher Laura Davies.



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/WRANGELL SENTINEL

A screening tent was set up in front of the Wrangell Medical Center late last week. Hospital Administrator Leatha Merculieff explained that the tent is going to serve as a screening site for people visiting the hospital, part of the medical center's "surge plan" in the event COVID-19 spreads to Wrangell. The hospital is trying to keep people out of the emergency room as much as possible, she said, to keep it clear for people who really need it. SEARHC also has a trailer set up at the AICS clinic, on Wood Street, which Merculieff said is where tests for COVID-19 are conducted.

and Hydaburg." Aaron Angerman, PR specialist for SEARHC, explained why they could not provide community-specific testing numbers.

"As we serve dozens of small communities, including some with off-site COVID testing, disclosing community-specific numbers could potentially reveal those patients being administered tests," he wrote in an email to the Sentinel. "SEARHC has issued tests to patients meeting the CDC approved guidelines for symptoms and exposure criteria. Given that there is known community spread in the state and region, SEARHC began testing all who meet the symptomatic criteria (fever and cough, or shortness of breath) late last week, regardless of travel history or exposure to

confirmed cases."

Angerman added that there is daily communication between SEARHC and several other community organizations, including the city, the hospital, and EMS leadership. A joint community team also meets weekly to consolidate information, he wrote.

Larrabee said he understood SEARHC's stance about not releasing community-specific numbers, saying that in small communities testing numbers could be so small that they could potentially identify who has been tested.

Erin Michael, public health nurse based in Petersburg, said she could not give an opinion on whether or not organizations should be releasing community-specific test results. It is a decision each entity has to make on their own.

"It's up to each individual organization," she said. "I can't give a personal opinion."

During a March 24 borough assembly meeting SEARHC vice president and hospital administrator Leatha Merculieff did provide a few general numbers for Wrangell.

"There have been about 100 tests that have been performed throughout the consortium, throughout SEARHC," she said. "That's not including Bartlett or Ketchikan, that is just our SEARHC locations. In Wrangell we have had about a dozen, all that have come back negative. We can't specifically give out the numbers due to patient privacy in this community, as well as our

much smaller communities like Angoon where they only have a couple hundred, 300-400 people. To protect their privacy and provider privacy, we're not giving any exact numbers that I can tell you."

There are no known cases of COVID-19 in Wrangell as of March 31, according to Prysunka. He explained, on Facebook, that when somebody tests positive for COVID-19, the Department of Health notifies the person who was tested. The department also notifies the local emergency operations director.

In Wrangell's case, he said, that person is Captain Dorianne Sprehe of the fire department. Sprehe said that should a positive case be reported in Wrangell, she would then pass that information over to Von Bargen, who would then make sure the information got out to the rest of the community. In regard to receiving community-specific numbers, both Prysunka and Von Bargen said they had no reason to question SEARHC's judgment or their work during this pandemic.

According to the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, in a March 30 press release, there are a total of 119 COVID-19 cases across Alaska. According to the press release, the communities that have had laboratory-confirmed cases include Anchorage, Eagle River/Chugiak, Girdwood, Homer, Seward, Soldotna, Sterling, Fairbanks, North Pole, Palmer, Ketchikan and Juneau.

Uncertainties loom as tourist season draws closer

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

Tourism is an important industry for Wrangell, and one that has typically shown slow but steady growth over the years. A 2019 study by Rain Coast Data reports that the visitor industry accounted for nine percent of all private sector jobs on the island, and made \$2.9 million in workforce earnings the previous year. According to the study, a little over 20,000 tourists came to Wrangell in 2018, a six percent increase from 2017. Preliminary estimates of the 2019 tourist season indicated about 26,490 visitors. Predictions for the 2020 season, back then, guessed Wrangell could expect similar numbers. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has made

the outlook of the 2020 tourism season uncertain.

Carol Rushmore, Economic Development Director for Wrangell, said that she cannot say for certain how the season is going to go this year, especially when it comes to the cruise industry. Cruise ships make up the majority of tourist travel to Wrangell, according to the Rain Coast Data report. COVID-19 has forced many businesses and organizations to suspend operations. Many national, state, and local officials have also issued shelter in place orders, or have otherwise advised people to stay in their homes and avoid contact with others. In short, the virus has created an environment not conducive

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Tourist season

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for traveling.

Rushmore said that the early part of the season is not looking optimistic. UnCruise Adventures, she said, has recently cancelled all of their scheduled stops in Wrangell until May. She is in regular contact with other cruise lines to try and figure out what their plans are, as well, she said. Another sign of

a particularly rough tourist season is the recent announcement by the Port of Seattle that cruise season will be delayed.

"The start of Seattle's cruise season will depend on the status of the public health emergency and the advice of local, state and federal public health officials," the port's March 24 announcement reads. "The CDC has issued a nonessential

travel warning and a temporary no sail order for cruise ships, and the State and King County have imposed a number of strict limitations to limit the spread of COVID-19."

On top of all that, she added that they recently decided to largely cancel the Stikine River Birding Festival, a spring event that brings many tourists into Wrangell. Rushmore said they

were working to see if there was some way to host a festival of some sort, but many in-person events for the festival are unlikely to happen this year.

However, Rushmore said that it may not be all bad news all year. The later tourist season may see an uptick in travelers. If the pandemic is dealt with correctly and people become more confident, and things re-

turn back to normal, she said Wrangell could see tourism much like it has in the past. However, that is up to a number of factors out of their hands. Wrangell will just have to wait and see what happens.

"It's actually very hard to give a definitive answer," Rushmore said. "June, July, and August are the critical months."

Birthdays & Anniversaries

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

Thursday, April 2: Mark Wooden, Carson Kautz, Edward Kalkins. **Friday, April 3:** Steve Nesbitt, Raven Feller, Jim Nelson, Jr., Don Vergillo, Camden Messmer, Abby Rifenburg. **Saturday, April 4:** Tracy Churchill, "Sophie" Cummings, Edward Rilatos III, Suzie Byford, Jeff Good, **Anniversaries:** Steve & Cori Prunella, Deed & Chris Gillen, Bruce & Christie Jamison. **Monday, April 5:** Elias Decker, Katherine Byrd, Lucas Messmer, Darren Shilts, Stephanie Cook. **Tuesday, April 6:** Kyle McChaque, Joe Mork, **Anniversaries:** Kandy & Jeannie Easterly, Elmer & Marilyn Mork. **Wednesday, April 7:** Cori Prunella, **Anniversaries:** Brad & Tawny Fitzgerald, Damon & Eva Roher.

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

Senior Center Meals Menu Delivery Only

- Thursday, April 2**
Fish, Green Beans, Tossed Salad, French Fried Potatoes.
- Friday, April 3**
Sweet n Sour Pork, Peppers & Pineapple, Slaw, Rice.
- Monday, April 6**
Meatloaf, Broccoli, Toss Salad, Mash Potatoes.
- Tuesday, April 7**
Cinnamon Chicken, Sweet Potato, Garden Salad, Rice.
- Wednesday, April 8**
Fiesta Pork Chop, Peas, Carrot/Raisin Salad, Biscuit.
- Thursday, April 9**
Lasagna, Vegetables, Apricot Salad, French Bread.

Please call Wrangell Senior Center at 874-2066 by 10 a.m. for delivery. Senior van also available to transport seniors to medical appointments reasonable errands like collecting mail, getting prescriptions at pharmacies or other essential need items.

FERRY

Departures

Northbound

- Friday, April 14**
Columbia, 3:15 p.m.
- Friday, April 17**
Columbia, 9:15 p.m.
- Friday, April 24**
Columbia, 3:15 p.m.

Southbound

- Thursday, April 16**
Columbia, 07:30 a.m.
- Monday, April 20**
Columbia, 02:30 a.m.
- Monday, April 27**
Columbia, 03:30 a.m.

Arrival times may vary.

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

TIDES April 2-April 9

	High Tides		Low Tides		High Tides		Low Tides		
	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	
Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
April 2	08:02	13.1	09:48	12.1	01:30	6.3	02:42	2.1	
April 3	09:30	13.8	10:47	13.6	03:02	5.8	03:59	2.1	
April 4	10:39	15.1	11:35	15.3	04:23	4.4	05:01	0.0	
April 5	11:37	16.5	05:24	2.3	05:52	-1.1	
April 6	00:18	16.9	12:29	17.7	06:15	0.3	06:36	-1.8	
April 7	00:58	18.3	01:17	18.4	07:00	-1.6	07:18	-2.0	
April 8	01:37	19.2	02:04	18.5	07:44	-2.8	07:58	-1.6	
April 9	02:17	19.6	02:50	18.1	08:27	-3.5	08:37	-0.8	

Continuing Events

AA Meetings:
North Star Group Meeting, St. Philip's Church, Tuesday: 7 p.m., Thursday: 8 p.m., Friday: 8 p.m.

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

April 1, 1920
E.A. Rasmussen, president of the Bank of Alaska returned home from a business trip to the States having gone east as far as New York where he saw a number of the stockholders of his institution. Mr. Rasmussen had a rather exciting time on the steamer voyage. While his ship was in Wrangell he took advantage of the opportunity thus afforded of visiting the Bank of Alaska's branch at the port, and while in the bank the Princess pulled out and left him. The Spokane being in port and Northbound he went aboard, and as the Mary was compelled to anchor in the Narrows while awaiting the turn of the tide, the Spokane overtook her there and he was taken on board the Mary in one of that ship's boats.

April 6, 1945
Wrangell this summer will have an air terminal of the Wrangell-Petersburg Air Service with a full-time pilot on the job, according to announcement of Tony Schwamm, operator of the company. W.S. Wood, formerly with the Army ferry command and a former instructor at a B-29 school in Washington, arrived in Petersburg this week to start flying for the Wrangell-Petersburg Air Service and with Mrs. Wood will move to Wrangell as soon as hangar facilities are completed. Wood is a thoroughly experienced flyer with many hundreds of hours chalked up in his log book. With his permanent headquarters here. It is planned to give Wrangell a twice-a-week service by air to Kake, Pillar Bay, Tyee and Saginaw Bay besides charter trips and daily trips to Petersburg. A new transmitter has been installed in the Wrangell hotel and Schwamm said work is being started on a similar station in Kake.

April 2, 1970
Ed Scholtz, assistant to the president of Sheldon Jackson College, will be a guest speaker at the Presbyterian Church Sunday April 5. He also will be speaking at the Wrangell High School on Monday. Scholtz will preach at the 11 a.m. service at the Presbyterian Church and speak on the program of Sheldon Jackson College at a potluck dinner at 5:30 p.m. High school students who are interested in going to college are particularly invited to the potluck dinner as guests of the

church, the Rev. John Rogers said. Sheldon Jackson College is a two-year college offering credits that are transferable to other accredited colleges and universities. Besides a liberal arts program in commercial flying, computer training, secretarial science, forestry management, logging management, and fish and game management. Persons interested in any of these programs can get in touch with

Scholz on Sunday or Monday. **April 6, 1995**
Tourist season '95 opens for Wrangell Island Saturday when the 192-foot vessel Spirit of '98 docks with about 100 passengers. Operated by Alaska Sightseeing/Cruise West, the 96-ton ship is expected to dock at 7:45 a.m. and remain in port until 2 p.m. Spirit of '98 will be back in Wrangell April 18 and 28. Crown Dynasty is expected in Wrangell April 17.

WHS/SMS School Lunches: General Guidelines

- Order your school lunch online as usual through the WPSD School Website at wpsd.us
- Orders are due online by 8:30 A.M.


The following guidelines are for the pick up of lunches:

- Monday-City Market:**
Lunch pickup after 12:00 PM from the deli area
Provide name to server
- Tuesdays and Thursdays-I&W's**
Lunch pickup at high school main doors off Reid St. after 12:00 PM

- Wednesdays and Fridays-Wrangell IGA**
Students may pick their lunches up after 12:00 PM from the deli area
Students then proceed to the office to provide their name so they may mark your name off the list


Should you have difficulties in carrying out any of these directions please email kreeves@wpsd.us or mpowell@wpsd.us or call the appropriate number below.
SMS Office at 874-3393 or WHS Office at 874-3395

Students, please continue to monitor your school Gmail account and parents monitor your personal email accounts for pertinent information regarding school updates, academics and other school information.



Wrangell Weather

Date	High	Low
Mar. 23	47	38
Mar. 24	45	32
Mar. 25	43	30
Mar. 26	40	33
Mar. 27	43	37
Mar. 28	36	30
Mar. 29	34	30
Mar. 30	36	31



Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Daylight
Apr. 2	6:16a	7:28p	13:12h
Apr. 3	6:13a	7:30p	13:17h
Apr. 4	6:11a	7:32p	13:21h
Apr. 5	6:08a	7:34p	13:26h
Apr. 6	6:06a	7:36p	13:30h
Apr. 7	6:03a	7:38p	13:35h
Apr. 8	6:00a	7:40p	13:40h
Apr. 9	5:58a	7:42p	13:44h

Fire at 8 mile, second house fire in a month

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

The Wrangell Fire Department and other public safety officials were called out the road Thursday afternoon, March 27. Dorianne Sprehe, with the fire department, said they received a direct call about a house fire at 2:03 p.m., had a fire engine out of the station three minutes after that, and were on-scene by 2:14 p.m.

According to Sprehe, the blaze was a chimney fire in a house at 8 mile on Zimovia Highway. The home belonged to the Naumann family, resident Robert Naumann confirmed. The fire was put out by 3:03, Sprehe said, and there were a total of 21 people responding. They were called back out there later that evening to check

on some hot spots along the roof, but found nothing to worry about.

"It was a super group effort," she said. Fortunately, Sprehe said, the fire was mostly contained to the attic and there was minimal damage to the building's structure. No injuries were reported.

Sprehe commented that there seemed to be more fires than usual in Wrangell right now. This is the second house fire this month. The department also responded to a vehicle fire on March 17. She asked that everybody remember to check their smoke detectors and to have their chimneys swept regularly.

"We'd just like to thank the fire department and everyone else that helped," Naumann said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RICH EINERT

There was a chimney fire at the Naumann residence last week at 8 mile Zimovia Highway.

Principal Macri resigns, Jack Carney named interim principal

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

David Macri was brought on as the new principal of Stikine Middle School and Wrangell High School in August of 2018. One year and seven months later, however, he has resigned from the position. Teacher Jack Carney has taken over the role as interim principal for the re-

mainder of the school year. "Effective immediately, Jack Carney will be the principal for Stikine Middle School and Wrangell High School," Superintendent Debbe Lancaster wrote in an email on March 25. "This arrangement will end on May 31, 2020. Please forward all questions, comments, and concerns to him from this point for-

ward. He will be working in PLC groups, assisting staff during our online education process for grades 6-12, and working with parents to coordinate graduation for our seniors."

"It was his [Macri's] decision to resign, it was my decision to accept it," Lancaster added in a later interview.

Lancaster explained that

Macri offered his resignation to her on March 16, which she accepted. His resignation was set to take effect on June 5. Macri said there were a variety of reasons for his decision to resign. One reason, he said, is his father's health has been declining and he wants to move closer to help care for him. Macri said he had a phone conversation with his father the Monday before resigning, and the next day his father reportedly had no recollection of that conversation. That was a sign that he needed to move closer to help care for him, he said. He did not go into details about his other reasons for leaving, but said he had done all he could for the district. He had used all his favors he had on hand, he said, and it was simply time for him to move on.

"I took that school as far as I could under the current circumstances," Macri said.

Despite his resignation not taking effect until June, Macri said that he was put on administrative leave on March 24. However, Macri said he did not want to go into detail about why this action was taken.

"It wasn't what I would call both sides verbally agreeing to it," Macri said. "It was more vicarious ... we parted amicably."

Lancaster said she could not confirm nor deny that Macri was put on administrative leave. She did not want to violate anybody's personal rights or privacy, she said. However, she did say that as superintendent she

always has the right to put school staff on administrative leave until the end of their contract, for a myriad of reasons. Macri said his father lives in Ohio, and he will be moving to that area as soon as possible.

Carney has been working for the Wrangell School District since 2012, he said, and is in his eleventh year teaching in total. On the district's website, the high school classes he teaches include Alaska Studies, U.S. History, World History, Government, Economics, Physical Education, Strength Training and Health, and middle school English. He said that he has three main points of focus for his time as interim principal. He wants to make sure students are staying safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, that they are receiving a good education through their online curriculums, and that senior students are accomplishing their final projects and will have a memorable graduation.

"Obviously there was a need for me to step in," Carney said. "As far as next year goes, I'm not interested in being principal next year."

Carney encouraged parents and students to regularly check their emails and online classes. If they have questions, he asked that they call or email him or a teacher. He wants the student body to end this school year strong, he said, and wants to do his part to help them reach that goal.



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United States*
Census
2020

Police report

- March 23**
Speed Complaint.
Traffic Stop.
Agency Assist: Ambulance.
Agency Assist: Search and Rescue.
- March 24**
Suspicious Circumstance.
False Alarm.
Citizen Assist: Vehicle Unlock.
Civil Issue.
Trespassing.
Citizen Assist.
- March 25**
Civil Issue.
Dog at Large.
Paper Service.
- March 26**
Civil Matter.
Agency Assist: Alaska State Troopers.
- March 27**
Agency Assist: House Fire.
Civil Issue.
Welfare Check.
- March 29**
Agency Assist: U.S. Forest Service.
Abandoned bike.
- March 28**
Harassment
Suspicious behavior.
- March 29**
Trespass.
- Found Property:** Set of keys turned in.

Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

While I know the novel coronavirus has rightly captured our attention, I think it's important that we don't forget the marine highway. In recent months, I've read disappointing reports of communities throughout the Inside Passage being unable to obtain food and vital supplies. Having represented Hoonah, Angoon, and Kake in the legislature for many years, I found it surprising that these self-reliant communities were supposedly struggling so severely. But after calling a few local friends, I learned the situation was far different than what some were representing. The people were not starving. Chartered barges have continued to deliver goods and supplies to Hoonah and Angoon; landing craft were quick to restore depleted grocery shelves.

One friend told me they are gatherers and have been ready since November. After the weather cleared, I visited these communities myself and was relieved to find they were doing fine given the circumstances. That said, the outpouring of

support from Petersburg and elsewhere was greatly appreciated.

Of course, most places in Alaska and the country are now facing supply issues because of the coronavirus, but these temporary stocking issues are unrelated to the ferry system. None of this is to understate the importance of fixing the Alaska Marine Highway System. Earlier this year I spent nine weeks cooped up in Juneau as ferry cancellations and weather-related flight delays prevented me from going home to Haines. And while I know our communities are home to many generations of skilled gatherers of both land and sea, I realize that ferry service is integral to modern life.

Thankfully, service is already being restored. The brand-new Tazlina is providing service to Angoon, Hoonah, and upper Panhandle communities like Haines and Skagway with other ferries soon to follow. Emergency funding has been requested by the governor, and a work group is developing a detailed, long-term plan.

But it's important to keep in

mind that the marine highway's problems built up over decades. Way back in 1963, I sailed with my future wife, Joyce Marie, aboard the very first ferry into Alaska (we were flown down for the inaugural voyage alongside Governor Egan and the Chilkat Dancers from Haines). That vessel, the Malaspina, remained in service until just a few months ago. The mechanical deterioration that placed it out of commission happened over many years. Likewise, the LeConte and Aurora, built in 1974 and 1977 respectively, suffer from years of rust damage. Long-term planning has been equally problematic.

Beginning in the 1970s, we stopped building boats for 21 years. When we did construct several aluminum ferries in the early 2000s, they were a bad fit for Alaskan waters. Clearly, we need to take a step back and develop a sustainable, thoughtful course for our ferry system. Other troubles, like the breakdown of the Matanuska's brand-new reduction gear and the bulkhead failure and electrical issues aboard the

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WRANGELL HEALTH FAIR POSTPONED

In the interest of public safety, the 2020 Wrangell Health Fair, formerly scheduled for April 4, 2020, is being postponed until further notice.

SEARHC is taking precautionary measures to provide safe and secure environments for all residents in response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). More information on the virus can be found at covid19.searhc.org.

Wrangell Medical Center leadership appreciates your understanding and is working to develop a solution to make low cost blood draws available to our community soon.

For more information, please call 907.874.7000.



Editorial

Testing numbers are relevant

by Ron Loesch, Publisher

While we applaud the work of Wrangell's health care providers as they prepare for the uncertain times before us, it's important to remember that they need us as much as we need them.

Every citizen has a part to play in flattening the curve so small hospitals like Wrangell's aren't overwhelmed with stricken patients from COVID-19 infections.

Key to flattening the curve is testing symptomatic patients, proper hand washing and social distancing or isolation.

Presently SEARHC does not release testing numbers to the public except in aggregate totals from all of their facilities. While they certainly have the latitude by law to release information as they see fit, we point out that the organization needs to be as transparent as possible so the public knows the extent of testing taking place in Wrangell. SEARHC officials maintain that community specific numbers cannot be released so they can maintain patient confidentiality in line with HIPPA requirements. We feel the chances of health care providers violating patient privacy by the releasing of test numbers is very highly unlikely.

We believe test numbers for Wrangell should be announced daily just as they are in many communities, large and small, throughout Alaska.

An infection prevention professional explained why testing numbers are important to health care providers and the public.

"They're important numbers that can be the first indicator of what's going on in a community. If test numbers jump from 2 or 3 per day to 15 a day, we look to see what's going on," said the professional.

Conditions from the common cold to COVID-19 reveal themselves to hospitals in the form of phone calls, visits to the clinic or emergency room and in requests for testing. "Really, the number of tests is telling," the professional explained.

The more COVID-19 tests that are given, combined with repeated negative results are important because they indicate to the public that hand sanitizing and social distancing are working. If no tests are being conducted, there is no accurate measure of virus spread within a community. The public must be given timely test information regularly so each person is aware that their hunkering down is working, or when the percentage of positive tests is on the rise, more people need to shelter in place.

Coronavirus test numbers for individual communities are important for the public to know. Given that this coronavirus pandemic is expected to kill in excess of 200,000 persons across the U.S., this testing data is a critical piece of information that can easily be provided to the public, without the risk of HIPPA violations.

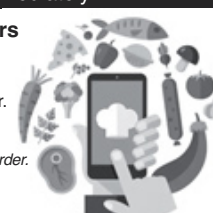
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Letter to the Editor

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Tazlina, can only be chalked up to misfortune.

As a commercial fisherman of some 50 years, I've seen firsthand how unexpected setbacks often occur at the worst of times. Fortunately, most folks I spoke with during my recent trip were boat people and understood these unpredictabilities. Even this virus is working against us as worried shoppers clean out store shelves.

But much like hoarding toilet paper is unlikely to slow the pandemic, spreading exaggerated information about impacted communities isn't going to cure the marine highway. Everyone is hard at work on short-term fixes, and long-term solutions are on the way.

We need to work together instead of blaming each other for a problem that's nearly as old as our state. My good friend Clay Koplin of Cordova said it best: "I want to be part of the solution, not the problem."

Bill Thomas

Grocery stores taking virus struggles in stride

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has caused many lifestyle changes in communities across the world, including here in Wrangell. With social distancing and self-quarantining, many people are doing their part to keep the virus from spreading in Wrangell.

The city's grocery stores, City Market and Wrangell IGA, are also taking steps to lend a helping hand, and mitigate their own risks, during this time.

Jake Hale, with City Market, said he has heard from some community members about concerns of food shortages. This is not something to worry

about, he said. Choices may become limited as time goes on, but this is beyond City Market's control. Manufacturers are focusing on their top selling items at this time, he said, so options could be limited. Running out of food, however, is not something to worry about at this time. Hale also added that they have not run out of toilet paper either.

"Food supplies have been doing pretty good," said Hale. "We're not going to run out of food."

As far as safety concerns go, Hale said that City Market employees are wearing gloves, and some are also choosing to wear masks while they work. Some employees had to leave, he said,



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Rainforest Islander to sail again

After years of sitting idle in the shipyard, the Rainforest Islander was put back in the water last Friday, March 27. Eric Yancey, of Breakaway Adventures, purchased the ship to launch a new business, Breakaway Ferry and Freight LLC. The ship was built back in the 1990s, Yancey said, and was used for a number of different jobs across Alaska through the years. A crack in its hull put the Islander in Wrangell's shipyard around 2015, he said, and due to the high cost of repairs it stayed there. Ownership of the Islander came to the community of Coffman Cove, Yancey said, which he purchased the ship from. Yancey said once he has fully

completed repairing the ship, Coast Guard paperwork, and the current COVID-19 pandemic winds down, he will begin shipping passengers, freight, and assisting Wrangell's fuel barge on a regular basis. His runs will be between Coffman Cove, Wrangell, and south Mitkof Island. "Shipping freight around, passengers around, fuel barge, Southeast Alaska is at my disposal," Yancey said with a laugh. "I'm going to make millions, or at least 10 bucks."

The Rainforest Islander is 75-feet long by 21-feet wide. The ship is capable of carrying 28 passengers and 2 crew, he said, and has a 45,000 lb. load limit.

because they live with elderly relatives and didn't want to put them at risk.

He said City Market will be closed on Sundays for the time being, to make sure there is adequate staff the rest of the week. Hale also added that for those who are concerned about visiting a grocery store during this time, City Market offers grocery deliveries. They have also recently instituted a "senior shopping day" for elderly residents, every Thursday morning from 8 to 10 a.m.

"We're going to get through this," he said. "We're in a lot better shape than cities in the lower 48."

Wrangell IGA has been facing some similar problems with their suppliers as City Market,

according to owner Mike Ward. However, he said that their supply chain has largely corrected itself and their stores should be fully stocked with their usual groceries in the near future.

"It's been some interesting times here in the grocery business, and life in general," Ward said.

IGA is taking, or is currently considering, several options to ensure their customers and employees stay healthy. Ward said that he is keeping up with all state mandates and CDC guidelines. They are considering temporarily suspending deli service, he said, but this action has not been taken as of yet. They are also considering limiting the number of people they allow into their stores at the

same time. Ward asked that the public please keep social distancing in mind while they shop, and to stay home if they have just arrived in town or are feeling sick.

Caroline Bangs, with IGA, said that the store offers deliveries six days a week. They have recently taped down arrows on the store's floor, to make their aisles one-way. This will help people maintain their six-foot distance from each other, she said. She also encouraged elderly residents to come in and shop during the first hour the store is open in the morning when the store is at its cleanest and usually its emptiest. IGA employees are constantly cleaning throughout the day, as well, added Travis Bangs, with IGA.

Wrangell CHURCH INFORMATION

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST

Digital Church: facebook.com/bradtraxler.
Zoom meeting ID: 721-835 1448, with online sermons at wrangellsda.org.

HARBOR LIGHT ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Sunday Services: Live feed on Facebook 10:30 am Sundays, podcasts of sermons available on iTunes & Spotify under the Harbor Light Church App & website at www.harborlightchurch.

ST. ROSE OF LIMA CATHOLIC CHURCH

Resources for online Mass for the State of Alaska at www.dioceseofjuneau.org. The Chrism Mass will be livestreamed from Our Lady of Guadalupe Co-Cathedral in Anchorage on Wednesday, April 1, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Call 907-470-0806 or check Communion services at www.pcusa.org. The building is closed at this time.

ST. PHILIPS EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Services through the Zoom App. ID: 849-209-429, Sunday at 10 am
Website: www.stphilipswrangell.com.

WRANGELL BIBLE BAPTIST CHURCH

Prayer meetings & additional Bible studies via Zoom. Children's things on Eagle's Nest Facebook page. Questions, email rev210@gcl.net

B'HAI

Daily virtual devotional gathering: www.zoom.us/j/894428842 or website: www.bahai.us/virtual-prayer-sessions-held-daily.
Local contact Kay Larson, Secretary 907-209-9117.

WRANGELL SALVATION ARMY

Live devotions and messages through Facebook page: www.facebook.com/wrangellcorps/ with live sermons every Sunday at 11:00 a.m.

If you want to update information email us at wrgsent@gmail.com

Dan's Dispatch

By Representative
Dan Ortiz

This past weekend, the Alaska Legislature passed a state budget. The budget is relatively flat funded from last year. We continued to make some cuts, but we also fought to protect vital services. Below is a breakdown of some of the biggest results of the budget: We included nearly \$90 million in COVID-19 response funding, in addition to passing Senate Bill 241 "Extending COVID-19 Relief" and House Bill 308 "Unemployment Benefits for COVID-19." The Legislature voted to continue the \$30 million additional funding in the Base Student Allocation to provide for classroom needs. We also fully funded School Bond Debt Reimbursement, instead of forcing local communities to pick up the tab. We restored funding for Alaska Public Radio at Fiscal Year 2019 levels. We will continue funding the Senior Benefits program, and if accepted by the Governor, Pioneer Home rates will decrease. Our Troopers and our Village Public Safety Officers will receive an increase in their budget as we continue to prioritize safety in our communities.

The Legislature also voted to increase funding for the Alaska Marine Highway System. We not only increased funding for maintenance and repairs to keep our fleet in adequate condition, we also increased funding for service. The additional funding should allow for our ferries to run at 25% more service over Fiscal Year 2020 levels. The Legislature creates a budget based on the

Fall Revenue Forecast. However, we were unable to rely on the revenue forecast this year because of some very recent concerns. Oil is consistently under \$30 per barrel; in contrast, the Fall Forecast assumed it would be about \$60 per barrel.

Additionally, with the downturn of the stock market, the Permanent Fund lost about \$8 billion in value recently. Without being able to rely on oil revenue or the growth of our earnings, our projected revenue shrank in a matter of months. With this very small revenue, we still need to be able to pay for COVID-19 assistance, vital government services (such as schools, roads, ferry service, public safety), and a Permanent Fund Dividend. A dividend of \$1000 for every Alaskan will be distributed in October. Although it is smaller than many had hoped, the amount chosen reflects our current fiscal situation. In the interest of protecting the value of the fund, and the dividend, for generations to come, it would have been irresponsible, and depending on the amount, impossible, to pay a larger dividend. The October dividend will provide support to families, give a boost to the economy, and be a balanced addition to the federal stimulus check expected this spring. If you have any comments or questions regarding the budget, or any legislative topic, please contact me at Rep.Dan.Ortiz@AKLeg.gov. Myself and my staff have begun to "hunker down" and are working from home, but are also checking voicemail regularly, which you can call at 907-465-3824.

CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL

Pursuant to the City & Borough of Wrangell Code, Sec. 3.04.808, notice is hereby given that the regular assembly meetings of the assembly shall be held on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month and shall begin at 6:00 p.m. As per Emergency Resolution No. 03-20-1520, Borough Assembly Meetings shall be held by teleconference/videoconference until further notice. If any such Tuesday shall fall on a legal holiday as defined by the laws of the State of Alaska, the meetings scheduled for that day shall be held at the same hour on the next succeeding day which is not a holiday. Separate notice for the regular council assembly meetings shall not be required. There will be no regular meetings the second Tuesday in July and August and fourth Tuesday in December.

If a work session is scheduled preceding the regular assembly meeting, publication shall be made on the website and posted at city hall and the post office that the regular assembly meeting shall begin at 7:00 p.m.

Kim Lane, Borough Clerk
City of Wrangell, Alaska

Publish: April 2, 2020

Classified/Legals

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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN

that due to recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and its social distancing guidelines, the Southeast Alaska Power Agency's (SEAPA) Swan Lake and Tyee Lake Hydroelectric facilities are temporarily closed to public access until further notice for the protection of SEAPA employees and to help ensure continuity of electric service. If you have any questions, please call 907.228.2281.



Published: April 2, 2020

THANK YOU

I would like to put out a special thank you to the Marine Bar/Hungry Beaver Pizza and Bruce and Patty Kautz. Patty has been a blessing to our community in so many ways for so many years. The most recent example was the buffet they put on to benefit the Ferdinand girls after the recent tragedy. The meal was amazing, it was well attended. Patty has been putting out various meals for a number of years to anybody who wants it; not limited to beef stews every Friday to big bustling buffets for Thanksgiving and Christmas. I have seen Easter buffets and other various holidays. I sure want to thank them for their tireless efforts to keep Wrangell from going hungry. Thank you again Bruce and Patty. You Are Appreciated. Alan and Leslie Cummings.....4-2dh

CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL, ALASKA LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the **2020 Assessment Rolls** for the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, as of January 1, 2020, have been completed. The Borough Assembly shall sit as a **Board of Equalization on Monday, May 11, 2019, 5:30 p.m., Wrangell Assembly Chambers**, and continue each day thereafter until its scheduled business is completed.

NOTICE OF APPEAL (with respect to any alleged error in the valuation, overcharge, or omission of the assessor) shall be filed with the Board of Equalization within thirty (30) days after the date on which the assessor's Notice of Assessment was given to the person appealing. The Notice of Appeal shall be in writing, on the designated form, specifying the grounds for appeal.

Appeal Forms are available at City Hall or online at www.wrangell.com.

IT IS THE TAXPAYER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO NOTIFY THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL OF:

- 1. Properties not included in assessment notices
- 2. Change of ownership of property not shown on assessment notices

NOTICE OF APPEALS MUST BE FILED ON OR BEFORE APRIL 20, 2020.

Joyce Mason
Finance Director
City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska

Publish: March 26, April 2, 9 and 16, 2020

CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL

WRANGELL PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT SEASONAL JOB POSTING

The Wrangell Parks and Recreation Department will accept applications for the positions of **Summer Recreation Staff** until the position has been filled. First review of applications will take place on April 15, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

Successful applicants will assist with planning and implementing comprehensive recreation enrichment programs for children, ages 6 to 11. Program activities include, both indoor and outdoor, well-rounded recreational and educational activities. Pay range is from \$10.00-\$13.00/Hr., DOE.

There are currently five seasonal positions open with a limited term of employment. These positions require candidates to be available to work 30-35 hours per week with shifts that are scheduled between the hours of 09:00 a.m. and 04:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Applicants must be at least 16 years old and hold a valid Alaska Driver's License.

Applications may be obtained at and returned to Wrangell City Hall, 205 Brueger Street (P.O. Box 531), Wrangell, AK 99929.

The City and Borough of Wrangell is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer.

Lisa Von Bargaen
Borough Manager

Publish: March 5 and April 2, 2020

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CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL

WRANGELL PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT SEASONAL JOB POSTING

The Wrangell Parks and Recreation Department will begin to accept applications for the position of **Recreation Assistant** to establish an open pool of applicants for temporary help. Applications will be accepted beginning February 26th through December 31st at 5:00 p.m.

Applicants selected for this position will serve as a *Recreation Assistant* at Parks & Recreation and will be involved in recreational activities including department recreation programs, community events, facility rentals and other similar recreational services.

Duties include providing oversight of facilities and activities, ensuring adherence to regulations and procedures, monitoring the security of premises, maintaining routine reports, clerical duties and general custodial duties.

The Parks and Recreation Department will be hiring from these applications, as needed, throughout the year. At the end of this open enrollment period applicants would need to file a new application.

This position requires candidates to be available to work a minimum of 6 hours per week with shifts scheduled throughout the week, including weekends. Applicants must be at least 16 years old. This position is paid hourly at a Grade 1 ranging from \$10.19 to \$13.79 per hour. The full job description and employment application can be found online at www.wrangell.com/jobs. Applicants will have to pass a pre-employment drug screening and a criminal background check.

Applications may be returned to Wrangell City Hall, 205 Brueger Street (P.O. Box 531), Wrangell, AK 99929. For more information contact Kate Thomas at 907-874-2444.

The City of Wrangell is an equal opportunity employer.
Lisa Von Bargaen
Wrangell Borough Manager

Publish: March 5 and April 2, 2020

CITY OF WRANGELL

In-House and Public Announcement

ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE POSITION LIFEGUARD PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

The Wrangell Parks and Recreation Department will begin to accept applications for the position of Lifeguard to establish an open pool of applicants for temporary help. The Parks and Recreation Department will be hiring from these applications, as needed, throughout the year. The position includes Lifeguarding, facility custodial and clerical duties.

The lifeguard position assists and supports in providing a safe and recreational swimming pool environment for the community. The position requires the knowledge and ability to encourage compliance with pool policies and facility expectations for users. Lifeguards are expected to perform the necessary rescue techniques in the event of a land and/or water-based emergencies, which requires leadership and knowledge of the national lifeguard standards and best practices, along with facility procedures. This position also supports in the facilitation and instruction of the Learn-to-Swim lessons held throughout the year.

The lifeguard position will appeal to a candidate who thrives in a mission driven, team-centered environment while interacting with members of public including young children. The successful candidates must be sixteen and are required to possess a nationally recognized Lifeguard and CPR/AED certification or an ability to gain one upon hire. Wrangell Parks and Recreation offers lifeguard certification courses that are open to the community and employees of the department. The department offers opportunities for pay advancement through the part time employee progressive pay policy.

Applications will be accepted beginning February 26, through December 31, 2020, at 5:00 p.m. At the end of this open enrollment period applicants would need to file a new application.

This is a temporary part time (20 hour) position, paid hourly at a Grade 1 ranging from \$10.19 to \$13.79 per hour. The full job description and employment application can be found online at www.wrangell.com/jobs. Applicants will have to pass a pre-employment drug screening and a criminal background check.

Applications may be returned to Wrangell City Hall, 205 Brueger Street (P.O. Box 531), Wrangell, AK 99929 or via email to amollen@wrangell.com. For more information contact Kate Thomas at 907-874-2444.

The City of Wrangell is an equal opportunity employer.

Lisa Von Bargaen
Wrangell Borough Manager

Publish: March 5 and April 2, 2020

Alaska Fish Factor

By LAINE WELCH Fisheries columnist

U.S. seafood industry received \$300 million assist from \$2 trillion COVID-19 relief package passed by Congress

The U.S. seafood industry received a \$300 million assist from the \$2 trillion COVID-19 relief package passed by Congress on March 27, and a wide coalition of industry stakeholders is hoping for more.

Fishery recipients in the relief bill include tribes, persons, communities, processors, aquaculture and other related businesses. SeafoodNews.com reports that those eligible for relief must have "revenue losses greater than 35 percent as compared to the prior 5-year average revenue, or any negative impacts to subsistence, cultural, or ceremonial fisheries."

The funds will be provided on a rolling basis within a fishing season through September 30, 2021. Two percent can be used for administration and oversight activities.

The package follows a bipartisan letter sent on March 23 to Congress by Democratic Senators Elizabeth Warren and Edward Markie of Massachusetts and Alaska's Republican Senators Murkowski and Sullivan. They asked, among other things, that fishermen be able to collect unemployment insurance, get help with vessel loan payments and ensure that the global pandemic does not compromise management of U.S. fisheries.

Also last week a coalition of nearly 200 seafood stakeholders sent a 12-page letter to the White House and Congress asking the government to purchase at least \$2 billion worth of seafood and provide another \$1.5 billion in relief for businesses and fishing communities.

The letter states that nearly

70% of the more than \$102 billion that consumers paid for U.S. fishery products in 2017 was spent in dining out as opposed to eating it at home. As a result, they said that for many fisheries the sudden shutdown of restaurants and other storefronts has caused demand to evaporate overnight, "threatening the economic viability of the entire supply chain."

Undercurrent News reported that the letter also asks the government to appropriate a minimum of \$500 million to purchase surplus seafood that can be shipped overseas or supplied to U.S. hospitals and state and local government programs.

And while the Department of Homeland Security has declared that fishermen and processing workers are "essential critical infrastructure," the letter asks that support staff also receive the same designation in order to continue operations amid any self-quarantine orders.

The stakeholders also urge the government to launch a "Buy American" campaign to promote consumption of seafood, along with expedited visa plans that will help to quickly staff and reopen businesses and fishing operations when travel restrictions are reduced.

Meanwhile, in Alaska the Governor's Economic Stabilization Task Force is organizing a fisheries sub-committee to address safety provisions. Staff at the office of Rep. Louise Stutes (R-Kodiak) is in contact with the Dunleavy administration about forming groups to report on the needs of each region.

Fish for the needy - Eighteen

truckloads of over half a million pounds of donated breaded pollock portions went to 16 food banks in 12 states this month, and more seafood is on its way.

"We did a press release and it's actually grown to the point that another company, Gorton's Seafood, has come up with 120,000 pounds at cold storages around the country. Our donors are so generous and everybody's calling and asking how they can help. It's rewarding to be in this business right now," said Jim Harmon, executive director of SeaShare, a nonprofit that works with fishermen, processors, logistics and distribution partners to provide top quality seafood to Feeding America, a network of 200 large food banks in every state that services up to 500 smaller agencies.

SeaShare dates back to the early 1990s when Bering Sea industry members banded together to turn mandatory discards of groundfish (bycatch) into frozen portions for food banks.

"We've been doing it for 25 years and grown to the point where bycatch represents only about 10% of our total donations," Harmon said.

Products have broadened to include a wide variety of species, such as salmon, shrimp, rockfish, halibut, catfish, and tilapia. Most are frozen although canned and other shelf stable items are included.

SeaShare also distributes seafood throughout Alaska where industry donations have put freezers in hub centers such as Bethel, Dillingham and Juneau. The fish is then sent to

over 30 remote communities.

During the coronavirus crisis the less fortunate are especially at risk, Harmon said, and SeaShare is getting requests for fish from all over the world.

Anyone with products available in any quantity as a donation or at a low cost is encouraged to contact SeaShare as it has some resources to help access seafood that might not be available for free.

"We're asking everyone we know to pull on the oar with us," Harmon said. "We're hoping that getting the message out about the 18 truckloads of pollock and the 120,000 pounds from Gorton's will resonate with others and get people thinking about how they can get on board."

"I'm so thankful and proud of our seafood partners who really come together when emergencies happen. It also takes financial support along with the efforts by seafood processors and fishermen," Harmon added.

A donation of just one dollar provides eight servings of seafood. www.seashare.org

PWS aims to expand fisheries - Prince William Sound's Tanner crab fishery has been underway since March 2 for the third year running. Sixteen boats have pulled up more than 54,000 pounds so far fetching \$3.50 a pound. That's about half of last year's 124,000 pound catch.

"Things are going well and we'll just let it click along and we'll be monitoring it every day," said Jan Rumble, PWS and Cook Inlet manager for shellfish and groundfish for the Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game at Homer. A test fishery also is underway in unfished areas in hopes of eventually expanding the Tanner fishery.

"We're collecting information and we're hoping to combine that with our trawl survey data and historical harvest information to provide a more expansive harvest strategy than what we have in regulation currently," Rumble said.

Tanner crab fishermen also are recording the numbers and where they pull up golden king crab to provide more data for a potential fishery. Golden's appear to be on an upswing in some areas, but no stock assess-

ments have been done since 2006. Two proposals to open a commercial fishery were denied this month by the Board of Fisheries but Rumble said ADF&G and local harvesters are committed to gathering more information.

ADF&G already manages 25 shellfish and groundfish fisheries in the region and there's no money in the budget for surveys, but Rumble said a test fishery, hopefully this year, might help get the data they need.

"People bid on the test fishery and that could provide us with revenue where we could send observers aboard a vessel to collect biological and abundance information. So that's kind of the route we're pursuing right now," she said.

Another potential fishery for Prince William Sound is sea cucumbers. Rumble, a former diver for the state's largest cuke fishery in Southeast Alaska, is working with local fishermen on a pilot survey for this summer.

"With dive fisheries, you're allowed to tax the product, it's in the state statutes. So that creates a situation where you are providing funds for stock assessment through the taxation of the fishery," she explained. "If things go well with the survey, we're hoping to expand it throughout the Sound, and to continue stock assessments and development by using proceeds from anything that's sold."

In 2018, sea cucumbers in Alaska averaged \$5.29 per pound and a harvest of roughly 1.4 million pounds was valued at \$7.4 million to divers.

FBUP next in Prince William Sound is the popular pot shrimp season starting in mid-April with a harvest of 68,100 pounds.

Registration is open through April 1 and shrimpers must first get a Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission card before they sign up with ADF&G. The big spot shrimp can pay fishermen \$10 to \$16 per pound in what Rumble calls a very local fishery.

"We provide shrimp to people on the street and people sell it through Facebook and to local restaurants," she said. "It's local sales that drive this fishery and I think that we would all say that we're pretty proud of it."

KNOW

Coronavirus

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Tips For Staying
Hometown
Healthy

Staying home is the best thing we can do to avoid the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. It is also important that we take time to take care of ourselves while we limit our contact with others. Here are some tips to staying healthy during this time:

- Stay in touch with friends and family via phone or the web.
- Exercise at home with online videos or do some yard work.
- Get outside while maintaining a safe distance from others.
- Take a break from news and social media to reduce stress.
- Stick to a meal schedule and avoid boredom eating.
- Get plenty of sleep, take deep breaths and meditate.



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Nicole Olsen

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Assembly approves alternative for reservoir bypass project, hear COVID-19 response update

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

The Wrangell Borough Assembly met via teleconference last Tuesday evening, March 24. Since the COVID-19 pandemic has spread to Alaska even though not in Wrangell, city officials have taken precautions to mitigate any risk of the virus spreading in Wrangell by cancelling unnecessary meetings, and only holding necessary ones remotely. During last week's meeting, the assembly approved of a preferred alternative to a reservoir bypass project.

The city is under contract with Shannon & Wilson Engineers to develop an "Upper Reservoir Dam Tap Alternative Analysis," according to the meeting's agenda packet. The dam tap would create a direct connection between the city's upper reservoir and water treatment plant, which Borough Manager Lisa Von Bargen said currently only directly connects to the lower reservoir.

"Having this second water intake line will improve raw water intake for the community, in that either reservoir could act as a backup in the event one is offline for maintenance or water levels are low enough to impact flow to the treatment plant," the agenda packet reads.

There were five proposed alternatives for this project: A spillway trench and siphon, horizontal direct drilling, sliplining the two existing drain lines, cured in place pipe lining of the two existing drain lines, and to pump around. Several of these alternatives were not recommended, however, largely due to high costs or large amounts of construction work. The highest-recommended option was the "pump around" option, which would increase flow rates to the water plant through pumps

with variable frequency drives. However, this option came with a very high life cycle cost and capital cost. According to the agenda packet, this would be about \$2 million.

The assembly's preferred alternative was the second-highest recommended, the spillway trench and siphon. This option would have an existing spillway trenched at a depth of seven feet below the reservoir surface and installing a siphon. After some discussion, the assembly agreed to move forward with this as their preferred alternative.

During the meeting, the assembly also heard reports from several officials about what their organizations are doing to prepare for any future spread of COVID-19 to Wrangell. Leatha Mercurieff, representing the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium and the Wrangell Medical Center, said they are prepared for any local outbreak. At the corporate level and locally, she said they are continuously meeting and sharing the latest information. The hospital is completely on lockdown, she said, and hospital staff are being kept separate from the Long Term Care staff. They are planning alternative care sites if they become necessary, she said, and also have a plan in place to safely move Long Term Care residents out of the hospital if the extra space is needed. Anybody needing medical attention is asked to come through the emergency room, where people will be initially screened in a tent outside of the hospital. Several community members have also started donating face masks for hospital staff to use, she added.

"Right now we are currently planning for Tier 3, which the definition of Tier 3 in our disaster plan is one positive confirmed case admitted to the



COURTESY OF LAURA HOLDER

Keeping up with homework

While schools are not open for the time being, Wrangell kids are still keeping up with their education. Pictured here are Maria and Dakota Holder starting their homeschooling. "The staff at the elementary school has been incredible, helpful, and supportive during this entire transition," wrote Laura Holder in an email to the Sentinel. "We are so grateful to them."

hospital and members of the community," Mercurieff said. "Numbers being still very vague, I don't have an exact definition of how many would be in the community. We are planning for alternate care sites, if needed, and planning for our surge capacity."

Dorianne Sprehe, with the Wrangell Fire Department, talked about what her organization is doing for any cases of COVID-19 coming to Wrangell. Their main goal right now, she said, is to make sure EMS and firefighters are properly trained on all the latest safety protocols. Providing information and holding meetings via telephone and internet resources was initially challenging, she said, but it is going fairly well now. Providing public information through social media and Nixle has been going very well, as well.

"We're not responding with our 10-15 folks like the community is used to, we're really limited that, to limit our exposure," she said.

Police Chief Tom Radke said

his department is taking an educational approach to the situation. Officers are encouraging people to stay home as much as possible, he said, and to follow local and state mandates regarding self-isolation.

"We're at the airport when planes come in, we're fielding complaints from the community about people not understanding the rules regarding isolation, we've reached out to certain people that have been reported to us, again in an educational role," he said. "We're not there as a confrontation or talking

down to people. We're trying to be educational and positive."

During the meeting, the assembly also adopted a hazard mitigation plan, amended the job description of the assistant diesel mechanic position, and approved a purchase of a Quantifit Respirator Fit Testing System in the amount of \$8,373.10.

COVID-19 stakeholders discuss mandates, surge plans, virtual care

On Wed., March 25, Wrangell COVID-19 responders participated in their weekly joint meeting to discuss the latest actions made in preparation for the coronavirus reaching the island.

City and Borough of Wrangell (CBW) leadership discussed state travel mandate advertisement and enforcement, while Wrangell Medical Center (WMC) administration provided information on the surge plans, should the local healthcare facility see unprecedented levels of admittance due to the coronavirus.

Representatives from the AICS Clinic and Public Health Center informed team members of responses taking place at their respective organizations. As part of a special meeting on Sunday, March 22, the CBW Assembly approved a shelter in place order, urging residents to stay home and requiring non-critical supply chain and service businesses to close for an extended period.

CBW Manager Lisa Von Bargen informed joint community team members of the local signage push, made to increase visibility of state mandates and encourage social distancing. Nonadherence to the recent travel mandate could be punishable by arrest or fine, if persons are found to not have self-quarantined for 14-days upon arrival in Wrangell.

Leatha Mercurieff, SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC) Vice President and WMC Hospital Administrator, stated WMC is solidifying their Tier 3 surge plan. Hospital leadership estimates the hospital could care for a maximum of up to 30 patients in the event of mass

admittance, while available staffing suggests 16 patients being a more manageable number. Recently installed doors could create additional points of isolation and flex the size of a dedicated COVID-19 wing, should it be needed.

A temporary shelter has been erected near the lobby entrance for use as an alternate screening site away from the emergency room in the event of a patient surge. "At WMC, we've remained proactive throughout the COVID-19 outbreak," said Mercurieff. "Details of our Tier 3 plan have been in the works since mid-February and the plan was completed this week. For the continued safety of residents and staff, we will escalate the Tier 3 response as soon as the virus poses a threat to hospital operations."

Clinic Manager and SEARHC Director of Southern Primary Care Clinic Operations Carly Allen discussed the recent introduction of alternative visits. In order to reduce close-contact and potential contamination, AICS Clinic and Behavioral Health patients will be scheduled for phone, video, or potentially at-home appointments.

The AICS Pharmacy has implemented delivery and curbside pickup for all prescriptions.

Public Health Nurse Erin Michael discussed a potential partnership with the Coast Guard to alert all harbor traffic of the active travel mandate and self-isolation requirement. Michael also spoke of the interview and investigation protocols for eventual confirmed COVID-19 cases in Wrangell, which would be handled by herself or an assigned Public Health Nurse.

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