



Wrangell, Alaska  
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# WRANGELL SENTINEL

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## Whooping cough cases continue to rise across Alaska and in Southeast

BY LARRY PERSILY  
Sentinel writer

State health officials have recorded 234 cases this year of whooping cough — also known as pertussis — through Sept. 9, more than were reported over the past seven years combined. About three-quarters of this year's cases came in the past three months.

Of the statewide total, SEARHC reports 11 in Southeast from June through early September, Lyndsey Y. Schaefer, communications director for the health care provider, said in an emailed statement Sept. 12.

Privacy rules prevent SEARHC from disclosing the communities with whooping cough cases, she said.

In Alaska, one infant has died from pertussis this year and more than a dozen patients have been hospitalized, mostly children younger than 2 years old, according to state epidemiologist Joseph McLaughlin.

Pertussis, a bacterial illness, can cause violent coughing fits that continue for weeks and even months.

The Anchorage School District reported infections in six schools as of Sept. 9, the first confirmed cases of the disease in recent years, according to the district's director of health care services.

"Pertussis is a highly contagious respiratory disease that can cause severe coughing fits and difficulty breathing, particularly dangerous for infants, the elderly and those with compromised immune systems," Dr. Cate Buley, SEARHC's chief medical officer, said in a statement last month.

"Early diagnosis and vaccination are key to preventing the spread of this illness," the doctor said.

SEARHC recommends that anyone experiencing symptoms such as persistent coughing or difficulty breathing should seek medical care immediately.

The Southeast health care provider also recommended parents confirm that their children have been vaccinated. For an appointment, call the Wrangell Medical Center at

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PHOTO BY SAM PAUSMAN / WRANGELL SENTINEL

## A better way to lift that bale

Lorne Cook, of the borough's Public Works crew, on Sept. 10 reattached a hydrant water line that had to be moved to make way for a new trash bale dumping operation at the waste transfer station. The borough has been using a temporary metal ramp and loading platform for forklifts to dump bales into 40-foot containers for shipment to a landfill in Washington state. A \$250,000 federal Denali Commission grant is paying for installation of a permanent, safer concrete path for the forklifts to reach the containers. Public Works Director Tom Wetor said the project should be done by late October. BW Enterprises is doing much of the work, with borough crews handling the utilities.

## Borough learns more about break in sewage outfall line

BY LARRY PERSILY  
Sentinel writer

A contractor using a remote-operated underwater camera was able to locate and video the community's damaged wastewater outfall line on Sept. 11, with the borough hoping to put together a game plan this week to repair the damaged pipe.

The six- or seven-foot section of damaged 12-inch-diameter plastic pipe is in 77 feet of water, about 1,500 feet from shore, said Tom Wetor, the borough's Public Works director.

Before a boat hooked the pipe when it was pulling up its anchor on Aug. 30, the outfall pipe carried flow from the wastewater treatment plant about 1,800 feet, discharging it into water 120-feet deep, providing enough dilution with the current to meet federal water quality standards.

The contractor, who was in Wrangell last week for other work, was able to pilot its underwater equipment to inspect the entire length of the pipe, Wetor said Sept. 13. "We

can see the damage and the kink" where the anchor bent and closed off the pipe. "We were able to get some pretty clear images of it."

Immediately after discovering Aug. 30 that the damaged pipe was blocking the outfall line from doing its job, causing a backup at the plant, the borough cut into the pipe on the beach near City Park to allow the flow to spill into the tidal area, where it is swept out twice a day.

The effluent coming out of the line has been treated at the plant — where all of the solids are removed — but as a safety precaution, the borough has closed the park beach to the public.

Wetor said the borough would work with its engineering contractor and the Environmental Protection Agency to put together a repair plan to resume deep-water disposal of the treatment plant's flow.

He is hopeful the borough can cut out the damaged section of pipe and reattach the two pieces to restore service far enough

away from shore and in deep enough water to meet EPA standards for dilution.

He was impressed with the capabilities of the underwater equipment, which he described as so small that it could fit in a suitcase. The borough chartered a boat from Muddy Water Adventures to take out the contractor for the inspection work.

"The technology definitely is very helpful," Wetor said.

Fortunately for the borough, the contractor had been scheduled for a work trip to Wrangell last week to inspect and clean the holding tanks at the wastewater treatment plant. The timing allowed for a quicker response time to inspect the outfall line.

While at the treatment plant, the crew put to work their remote-operated vehicle — with a cleaning attachment — to scrub down the tank walls, which hadn't been done in 18 years on the older tank, Wetor said, and had never been done on the newer tank that is 15 years old.

## School board votes 3-2 against buying electric school bus

BY SAM PAUSMAN  
Sentinel senior reporter

After much public scrutiny, the school board voted against accepting an Environmental Protection Agency grant that would fund the purchase on an electric school bus.

The board voted 3-2 against the purchase at a special meeting Sept. 9.

The district had selected Georgia-based manufacturer Blue Bird for the electric vehicle, which would have arrived in town next year.

The bus's \$423,000 price tag exceeded the \$378,000 in federal grant money, meaning the school district would have had to dip into its reserve fund to cover the remaining \$45,000.

In addition to covering the funding gap, the district would also have been responsible for constructing a building to store the vehicle and keep it heated. The building alone would cost somewhere between \$58,000 and \$93,000, according to Maintenance Director Kevin McCallister.

In total, the district would have needed to draw between \$103,000 and \$138,000 out of its reserve fund. Already, this fund is expected to drop by half to cover the district's operating budget revenue shortfall for the 2024-2025 school year, Superintendent Bill Burr said.

The electric bus figures were a point of confusion at the Sept. 9 meeting. Some board members believed the district would need to spend just \$50,000 to construct a bus barn while other board members believed the total figure to be higher.

Board members turned their heads and talked privately

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## Nolan Center stages romantic comedy 'You Can't Take It With You'

BY LARRY PERSILY  
Sentinel writer

After staging several musicals since the Nolan Center resurrected Wrangell's community theater in 2022, this fall's production is a romantic comedy about a man from a rich family who gets engaged to a woman from a very different family.

"It's high-energy hilarious," co-director Kristen DeBord said of "You Can't Take It With You."

Rehearsals are underway three days a week, with the cast and other volunteers working toward performances at the Nolan Center on Nov. 1 and 2, and maybe Nov. 3 if advance ticket sales are strong enough, said co-director Haley Reeves.

"The big motivation for doing a non-musical is to draw in new faces" for the cast, people who might have stayed away from singing parts, DeBord said.

Reeves said she and DeBord talked this summer about the next selection for the community theater, steering away from a traditional musical production, which she said can be more overwhelming to pull together than other plays.

"We had lots of new faces come down" for auditions Sept. 3-4, Reeves said.

This is the second time for DeBord in "You Can't Take It With You." She performed in the play at college 20 years ago, while a

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## Senior Center Menu

Open for in-person dining.

### Thursday, Sept. 19

Liver and onions, tomato rockefeller, creamy coleslaw, fruit, roll

### Friday, Sept. 20

Halibut olympia, peas and carrots, honey orange salad, roll

### Monday, Sept. 23

No meal service on Mondays.

### Tuesday, Sept. 24

Barbeque beef on a bun, mixed vegetables, potato salad, fruit

### Wednesday, Sept. 25

New England clam chowder, turkey and tomato and cheese sandwich, honey mustard coleslaw

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

#### Sunday, Sept. 22

Kennicott, 2:15 p.m.

#### Sunday, Sept. 29

Kennicott, 7:15 p.m.

#### Sunday, Oct. 6

Kennicott, 11:15 p.m.

#### Sunday, Oct. 13

Kennicott, 6 p.m.

### Southbound

#### Wednesday, Sept. 25

Kennicott, 8:15 a.m.

#### Wednesday, Oct. 2

Kennicott, 6 a.m.

#### Wednesday, Oct. 9

Kennicott, 10:15 a.m.

#### Wednesday, Oct. 16

Kennicott, 5:45 a.m.

Listings are scheduled departure times. Call the terminal at 907-874-2021 for information or 907-874-3711 for recorded information.

## Tides

### High Tides

### Low Tides

	AM		PM		AM		PM	
	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
Sept. 18	01:21	18.5	01:48	18.6	07:27	-2.4	07:48	-2.1
Sept. 19	02:06	18.5	02:24	19.2	08:04	-2.0	08:31	-2.8
Sept. 20	02:51	17.9	03:01	19.2	08:42	-1.0	09:14	-2.9
Sept. 21	03:37	16.8	03:40	18.7	09:21	0.3	10:01	-2.2
Sept. 22	04:26	15.3	04:22	17.6	10:02	1.9	10:52	-1.1
Sept. 23	05:20	13.6	05:11	16.2	10:48	3.6	11:51	0.4
Sept. 24	06:29	12.1	06:13	14.6	11:44	5.2	....	...



# ALASKA AIRLINES CLUB 49 COMMUNITY EVENTS CALENDAR

**STATE PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE** will be in Wrangell on Wednesday and Thursday, Sept. 18-19, and will see clients in the clinic and conduct hearing and vision screenings at Head Start and the elementary school. Immunizations, birth control and STD screening, well-child exams for kids up to age 7, TB screening and medication, Narcan kits and medication disposal bags will be offered. The Public Health Center is in the Kadin Building, 215 Front St. Call 907-723-4611 to make an appointment.

**RECYCLE SALE FUNDRAISER** for St. Frances Animal Rescue and BRAVE at the American Legion 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 21, and 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 22. Donations accepted at the Legion from noon to 4 p.m. Friday, Sept. 20. For more information call 907-874-4593.

**"SAVING MR. BANKS"** 6 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 24, at the Nolan Center. The 2013 biography comedy drama movie is free; presented by Island of Faith Lutheran Church as part of its retro-movie program. The concession stand will be open.

**NOLAN CENTER THEATER** - no movies until October.

**SUICIDE INTERVENTION SKILLS TRAINING** 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Sept. 27-28. Learn the skills to help save a life. Must attend both days. Limited space available. Free, but registration is required. Email [khoyt@searhc.org](mailto:khoyt@searhc.org) to register. Sponsored by SEARHC.

**COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD CELEBRATION** to honor Kay Larson, founder of BRAVE, one of five Alaskans to receive this year's Alaska Children's Trust Champion of Kids award. At 6 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 28, at the Nolan Center. Light refreshments provided; potluck dishes appreciated but not expected.

**WRANGELL KIDS CLUB** 2:30 to 5 p.m. Mondays at the community center for open gym, board games and coloring; 2:30 to 5 p.m. Wednesdays at the Irene Ingle Public Library for STEM activities and crafts; 2:30 to 5 p.m. Fridays at the Nolan Center for a movie in the theater. For ages 7 to 13 years old. Runs through Dec. 16. Free.

**PRE-K ART** 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. every Monday for ages 0-5 at The Salvation Army. Experience the arts each week with a special activity prepared by Capt. Belle. Call for more information at 907-874-3753.

**SKATER TOTS** 1 to 2:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays at the TouchPoint Ministries rink on Bennett Street. For ages 0-10 years old. Scooters, flat boards, skates for novice beginning skaters. Separate play area, toys and tumbling mats for infants. Parents/guardians must stay to supervise. Free.

**ROLL ON THE ROCK** roller skating 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Saturdays at the TouchPoint Ministries rink on Bennett Street. Children 9 and under must be accompanied by an adult. Skaters must complete a registration form. \$5 per person.

**TEEN GAME NIGHT** 6 to 8 p.m. every Thursday at The Salvation Army. All are welcome. Call for more information at 907-874-3753.

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

**WRANGELL PARKS and RECREATION** is offering multiple activities to get your body moving. For more information on any of the activities visit [www.wrangellrec.com](http://www.wrangellrec.com) or call 907-874-2444.

- **ZUMBA**, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Mondays and Fridays at the community center gym with Nene Wilson. For 16 years old and up. \$5 drop-in fee, \$3 senior discount, or facility punch card.
- **FUNCTIONAL FITNESS and TECHNIQUE** 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Tuesdays at the court in the pool building with Devyn Johnson. A guided workout. Learn how to use the gym equipment. For ages 18 years old and up. Daily entry fee, pass or punch card.
- **INDOOR SOCCER CAMP**, Tuesdays and Thursdays beginning Oct. 22. Sessions are 4 to 5 p.m. for kids in grades K-2 and for 5 to 6 p.m. for grades 3-5. \$40 registration fee. Coaches are needed to teach kids the fundamentals of soccer.

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

### Sept. 18, 1924

The old system of giving exams and grading papers under which it was possible to earn a grade on mere popularity, or where the mood that a teacher happened to be in had more to do with the grade than the actual work accomplished, has been discarded in Wrangell schools. The new system, which was put into operation with the beginning of the school year, makes it possible to have uniform grading throughout the entire system regardless of whether some teachers may give hard exams and others easy exams. The new system provides that exams be given in such a form that each

question or statement on the exam sheet may be answered by a single word. The result is that it will be either right or wrong.

### Sept. 16, 1949

Through a generous offer of cannery operator A. R. Brueger, Wrangell institutions and various other groups will receive about \$12 worth of canned salmon, free of charge, this year. Brueger offered the use of his canning facilities and his skilled employees to put up the salmon if the town would furnish workers to process the fish. Four boats, operating under a special permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, brought in about

12,000 fish, enough for 600 cases this week. Volunteer workers helped in slimming and canning this week and other volunteers will case up the pack.

### Sept. 20, 1974

City police will begin using the four-cell jail facility in the Federal Building on Oct. 1, according to Chief William Klein. A contract between the city and the federal General Services Administration office in Anchorage was reached recently for a city takeover of the virtually new-condition jail above the post office. The Federal Building jail has not been used since Alaska was a territory, Klein said. He said

the city's rent for the jail amounts to \$349 a month, but virtually all of this cost is being recovered through agreements between the city and the state troopers and state Department of Corrections for housing state prisoners in the jail.

### Sept. 16, 1999

The city held its gala ribbon-cutting ceremony for its new state-of-the-art, first-of-its-kind in Alaska water filtration plant. Gone is the muddy, red-tinted water familiar to all those using city water. The water now is much clearer (not muddy at all), and will become clearer over time as the pipes themselves are cleaned by use. The new plant

uses a combination of ozone and sand filtration in a gravity-fed system. It sits on a hillside overlooking the city not far from the water supply. It consists of two surface reservoirs with a combined capacity of 64 million gallons. According to Bob Caldwell, public works director, "The water runs through an ozone contact chamber, then is processed through a roughing filter before finally passing through a slow sand filter. The ozone reacts with the iron in the water and removes the brownish color. Because the system requires 90% less chlorination, it greatly improves the taste."

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FREIGHT FOR LESS

## Tlingit & Haida may use federal grant to boost composting effort in Wrangell

By LARRY PERSILY  
Sentinel writer

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has awarded a \$15 million grant to the Central Council of the Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska to expand composting operations in five Southeast Alaska communities — and Wrangell could be one of them.

To intent of the grant is to reduce organic waste in landfills, reduce greenhouse gas methane emissions generated from decaying garbage and promote local food production, said Brandi Tolsma, an environmental specialist with Tlingit & Haida in Juneau.

The tribal council plans to expand its composting operations in Juneau and four other Southeast communities.

Composting is a natural process of recycling food scraps, leaves and other organic material into fertilizer to enrich soil and plants.

“Right now, we have yet to select the communities,” Raymond Paddock III, Tlingit & Haida’s environmental director, said Sept. 9. “The Wrangell Community Association has expressed interest.”

Tlingit & Haida plans to decide on the communities later this fall, Tolsma said. “We want buy-in from the communities.”

A small-scale, cold-composting operation is available at the Wrangell community garden. The WCA is waiting for a replacement part for its larger equipment to resume its compost pickup program, said Alex Angerman, Tl’átk Earth Branch coordinator for WCA.

“We were interested in expanding that program, with approval from the tribal council, so we could strengthen the organic waste mitigation from our waste stream. It’s just an idea at the moment, we have not expanded on it or brought it to council’s attention yet,” she said Sept. 11.

In its application for the competitive EPA grant, Tlingit & Haida said increased composting will help communities reduce the expense of shipping trash to out-of-state landfills and cut fuel use in handling the waste, while also creating training and job opportunities for community members.

In addition to installing

new or expanded composting equipment, the five-year federal funding program will pay for staff and training to manage the operations, Tolsma said.

That could include “workshops and training sessions on proper composting techniques for community members,” according to Tlingit & Haida’s application.

The intent is to “work with local tribes to empower them to take charge and take ownership” of the composting program in their community, Tolsma said.

Depending on what each tribe wants for their community, that could include using the compost in a greenhouse, Paddock said.

“We know right now that there is not a big market out there in Southeast for compost,” but developing and promoting uses for the fertilizer could help ensure that the operations are economically sustainable after the federal money runs out, he said.

Tlingit & Haida already is involved in a composting and food sovereignty project in Juneau, which includes sites such as the Taay Hít greenhouse built in 2021.

The grant was announced Sept. 5. The funding is part of \$78 million in climate pollution reduction Grants awarded to tribes in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest, according to an EPA statement.

Other major Alaska grants include \$24.2 million to the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium to install two wind turbines and wind-to-heat boiler on the Toksook Bay grid in Southwest Alaska, and \$14.8 million to the Aleut Community of Saint Paul Island for three new wind turbines and upgrading three existing ones.

*The Juneau Empire contributed reporting for this story.*

## Three young humpbacks found dead last month at Prince of Wales Island

By ANNA LAFFREY  
Ketchikan Daily News

Three young humpback whales were found dead off the west coast of Prince of Wales Island in just two weeks at the end of August. One subadult female was found on Aug. 22 in waters south of El Capitan, while a subadult female and a young male were found in waters near Craig on Aug. 30 and Sept. 2, respectively.

On Aug. 30, longtime Craig resident whale-watcher Kathy Peavey heard about one of the whales, the subadult female that was found dead in Squam Bay north of Craig, from Michelle Dutro, an Alaska State Sea Grant fellow who helps monitor the marine mammal stranding hotline for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Protected Resources Division.

Peavey said Dutro called her after NOAA received an initial report about the dead humpback from fishermen.

When she heard about the dead whale, Peavey realized that her son, Steven Peavey, daughter-in-law Melyssa Nagamine and their newborn baby were out on their boat, Gail Renee, in the same area where the whale had been found.

Nagamine said Sept. 6 that she and her family had almost completed a dayslong run home to Craig from Juneau, where she delivered her baby in late August after wrapping up a gillnet fishing season, when Peavey called about the whale.

“We realized we were just 15, 20 minutes away from the whale so we turned around,” Nagamine said.

The family found the whale, wrapped a line around the tail and pulled her to shore with an inflatable Zodiac skiff and then pulled a line hand-over-hand from the beach to bring the whale to shore.

Two days later, on Sept. 1, Kathy Peavey, MaryAnna Murphy, Cheryl Fecko and Dolores Owen arrived to conduct sampling work because NOAA team members were not able to travel to Craig.

Fecko, a retired Craig High School science teacher, said Natalie Rouse, who works for Alaska Veterinary Pathology Services and is contracted by NOAA to coordinate stranding responses and conduct necropsies, “talked me through some of the specimens, tissue samples, basically, that she’d need for us to take.”

Fecko explained: “They wanted an eyeball and they wanted some barnacles. And they wanted blubber, a blubber sample. And they also wanted feces, a sample of feces.”

Rouse also requested “a number of photos looking for lesions or anything that might be of interest to somebody trying to determine cause of death.”

The work was sad and difficult, according to Peavey, who said that removing blubber from the whale is particularly challenging. Her sister, MaryAnna Murphy, stepped up to the task of removing an eyeball from the whale, which no one else in the group wanted to do.

Fecko said that the group sent the samples to NOAA in Juneau.

The next day, on Sept. 2, Peavey, Fecko and Owen were at the top of the harbor in Craig when they saw Heather Douville and her dad and brother pulling in with a load of sea otters they had harvested. Peavey said she told the Douvilles about the biopsy the amateur crew had conducted the day before.

“The (Douvilles) said, ‘What are you talking about? We just left the whale.’”

During their sea otter harvest, the Douvilles had encountered a dead humpback, a young male, which had washed up on a beach on Lulu Island, west of Craig, according to Peavey.

After hearing reports that a second humpback had been found dead in the same area, NOAA mustered a team to travel to Craig and conduct a field necropsy of the humpback found on Lulu Island.

The necropsy involved staff of the Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska’s Seacoast Indigenous Guardians Network. Heather Douville, who serves as senior project coordinator for the Indigenous guardians network, assisted in the necropsy.

NOAA is working to determine a potential cause of the whale’s death.

Peavey noted that the humpbacks found near Craig were at “nearly (the) same decomposition stage” and showed “similar mouth sores” that responders captured in photos. She added that a large pod of orcas was moving through the area about three weeks ago.

Dutro said a third dead humpback had been found off Prince of Wales Island earlier in August. On Aug. 22, a female subadult humpback whale was found dead in the inner channel south of El Capitan.

Dutro said no necropsy was done of that whale, but that a “local who reported it took some samples of it and collected some photos” after reporting the whale mortality to NOAA.

Whales “do sometimes die of natural causes, like old age, and wash up on our beaches,” Dutro wrote in an email to the Ketchikan Daily News. “However, there are also a number of compounding stressors that threaten these whales, such as viral and bacterial infections, disease caused by exposure to harmful algal blooms, entanglements in fishing gear and marine debris, injuries caused by vessel strikes, and predation by killer whales.”

NOAA relies heavily on members of the public and its Stranding Network partners to report stranded animals. Anybody who sees a stranded, injured, entangled or dead marine mammal is encouraged to call the NOAA Fisheries Alaska Statewide 24-hour Stranding Hotline (877) 925-7773.

### Correction:

The Sentinel failed to clear the net on accuracy when we reported Sept. 11 that the Wrangell Wolves girls volleyball team took second place in Southeast last year. The team won the Southeast regional tournament.

### Re-Elect

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Alaska's governor should pledge to do better

BY LARRY PERSILY
Publisher

Gov. Mike Dunleavy made the pledge and he's stickin' to it.

Too bad he is putting national anti-tax politics above tax fairness in Alaska.

Specifically, he vetoed legislation this month that would have taxed car rentals through on-line platforms the same as car rentals from brick-and-mortar agencies with local offices.

And he vetoed legislation two years ago that would have taxed vape and e-cigarette products the same as traditional tobacco products.

The car rental fairness legislation passed with 51 out of 60 state senators and representatives in support. The vape tax bill in 2022 passed with 49 out of 60 voting yes. But that overwhelming support did not overwhelm the governor's dislike for taxes.

"Unnecessary taxation of a new and growing industry is bad public policy," he wrote in his veto message of the car rental legislation that would have settled a legal dispute going back several years.

"A tax increase on the people of Alaska is not something I can support," he wrote in his veto statement about extending the tobacco tax to vape products. Yet it was not a tax increase, as he alleged, but merely catching up with technology and taxing all addictive nicotine the same, whether smoked, chewed or vaped.

Dunleavy's addiction to a pledge of "no new taxes" has won him an honored listing on the Americans for Tax Reform website. But that supposed badge of courage has left him unable or unwilling to understand the difference between burdensome new taxes versus fair tax policy that updates old laws to match new technology, such as smokeless nicotine and car-sharing rental apps on smartphones.

The two tax bills were not about increasing government spending; in total they might have raised a few million dollars a year. If anything, the car rental legislation would have made the

state whole - it has been losing revenue as more renters use the tax-free apps.

There is no good reason why someone who rents a car from Avis or Enterprise or Island Escape Rental Cars in Wrangell should be charged a 10% state tax - which has been in place more than 20 years - while a visitor who rents through an online platform like Turo can drive tax free.

The problem was that when the Alaska car rental tax was written into law, car-sharing platforms did not exist and they have argued the law does not apply to them. The law works just fine for Avis, which owns the cars it rents, but Turo does not own the cars. It handles the booking and payment for the car owner, much like Airbnb handles room and house rentals.

Turo took the position that the state needed to track down each individual car owner and get them to collect the tax from the customer. You can imagine how that has not worked out well. The Alaska Department of Revenue has avoided collection of the tax from car owners, exposing the state to a lawsuit over selective tax enforcement.

After much legislative work, lawmakers passed the bill to redefine the rental transaction in law so that Turo would collect the tax. The company was on board, writing that the legislation "will allow for Turo and other car-sharing marketplaces to accurately collect and remit" the tax owed to the state.

As part of the deal, the legislation set the tax on car-sharing rentals at 8%, giving them a break from the 10% tax on all other rentals. And there would be no retroactive collections.

"At its core ... (the bill) is about fairness and efficiency ... we are creating a more equitable system," said Big Lake Republican Rep. Kevin McCabe, chair of the House Transportation Committee and as staunch an anti-tax conservative as there is.

Too bad the governor took a ride on his national pledge. His veto was the wrong turn.

EDITORIAL

Now is not the financial time to buy electric school bus

The school board made the right decision last week to pull the plug on accepting a federal grant to purchase an electric school bus.

Just because the EPA grant would have covered 90% of the purchase price doesn't mean it was a good fit for Wrangell at this time. In this case, board members discussed it at a public meeting and voted down the idea.

But it was a close vote, with two of the five board members wanting to go ahead with the purchase.

It was a close vote because there are good reasons to run an electric bus rather than continue burning diesel. Climate change emissions, of course, but also the expense of filling the tank versus the lower cost of plugging into a charger. And if Wrangell is ever going to switch from diesel to an electric bus, getting the federal government to pick up 90% of the cost of a new bus is a strong argument in favor of doing it.

Yet the questions outweigh the benefits, at least for now.

There would be the additional cost of putting up a structure to keep the battery-powered bus warm, to ensure maximum range. The school district does not operate its bus service; Taylor Transportation does that under contract. Unless the district wants to get into the pupil transportation business, it needs to have its contractor on board to operate the electric bus - and that was not the case last week.

And even with the \$383,000 EPA grant, the district still would have needed to draw down its dwindling reserves by more than \$100,000 to cover the balance owed on the bus and to build a shelter to house the vehicle. The school district already plans to pull more than \$600,000 from its reserves to cover spending for the 2024-2025 school year. It can sustain that level of drawdown one more year before it hits empty, unless the state and borough increase their contributions to the district operating budget.

No question the community needs both the state and borough to boost their school funding. But as state funding is at the discretion of the Legislature and the whim of the governor's veto pen, and as borough funding is constrained by its own limited finances, now is not the time to take more money out of the school district reserves for an electric bus.

- Wrangell Sentinel

GUEST OPINION: Save the state ferry system by splitting it in two

BY FRANK H. MURKOWSKI

In early August an ad hoc meeting was held in Ketchikan by a group consisting of knowledgeable residents who had followed the Alaska Marine Highway Service since its inception in the early 1960s. The purpose of was to discuss how to revise the system.

We addressed AMHS maintenance. We discussed using money made available to AMHS through the federal infrastructure legislation to restructure the system. Finally, we discussed the need to reestablish the run to Prince Rupert, British Columbia.

Operationally, we currently have only one vessel, the Kennicott, operating on the mainline to Bellingham, Washington. This vessel will be pulled out of service in November for major work. The Columbia will take its place,

after it has been in the yard for repairs for more than a year.

Another issue has been crew shortages. A partial reason for crew shortages is the AMHS reduction in operational ships and the cancellation of sailings due to the inability to maintain them. This has resulted in a lack of job security for marine employees as vessels disappear from service and sailing schedules appear to be at random.

Many AMHS personnel have had to leave Alaska for outside marine employment opportunities, though many would likely come back if they had certainty of employment.

Another explanation for the lack of operational vessels and sailings is that the vessels are 60 years old and are too costly to maintain. A workable approach would be to determine the necessary costs to bring

them operational for a period of three to four years.

Money to perform the maintenance has been made available by our federal delegation through the infrastructure legislation that passed Congress.

Federal funding for the marine highway totals \$417 million over several years for operations, maintenance and a new ship, with the state's required match at \$123 million. Apparently, the state intends to produce its share of the funds by a potential but shaky source. This needs to be clarified.

Meanwhile, with the availability of federal funding, we now can restructure the ferry system and particularly the mainline route for year-round operation. The most satisfactory approach would be to set up two divisions for schedul-

ing and operations.

First, after getting the Columbia and Matanuska operational, the Kennicott would move to western Alaska along with the Tustumena. The Southeast division would continue to provide service with the Columbia on the Bellingham route. The Matanuska would go to Prince Rupert, Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg, Sitka and Juneau on a regular schedule, allowing a stop nearly every other day to those communities.

Haines and Skagway would be served by a day ferry out of Juneau.

This level of regular scheduling would provide a level of certainty to AMHS employment. It would also increase ridership.

It is obvious to residents of Southeast Alaska that their economy is in decline as they

look at jobs and school enrollment. There is very little in the way of new payrolls and resource development. We are now highly dependent - some say overly dependent - on tourism. The most significant contribution to the economic viability of Southeast that is within reach is to again run ferries to Prince Rupert.

For over 50 years Prince Rupert served as the highway gate from the U.S.-Canadian road system to Alaska. This routing was successful and proven.

Let's bring back the successful highway we once enjoyed and do it now. We have done a good deal of planning, now it's time for implementation.

Frank H. Murkowski is a former U.S. senator (1981-2002) and Alaska governor (2002-2006).

Oldest continuously published paper in Alaska

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# Alaska in 12th year of losing more residents than it gains

BY YERETH ROSEN  
Alaska Beacon

As Alaskans from different organizations convened at the University of Alaska Anchorage to brainstorm ways to reverse the state's continuing population outmigration, a leading state economist delivered some bad news.

Dan Robinson, research chief at the Alaska Department of Labor, revealed that the latest data shows that Alaska has now had 12 consecutive years with more residents leaving than arriving.

That is unprecedented, he said.

"This is not normal for us. It hasn't happened before," Robinson said on Sept. 5 at the start of the two-day meeting. The longest prior streak was four years, he said.

Robinson spoke at a meeting organized by Alaska Rep. Mary

Peltola, UAA's Institute of Social and Economic Research, the Alaska Federation of Natives and the First Alaskans Institute

Behind the outmigration statistics are specific patterns, he said.

The driver is not really the Alaskans who are leaving, he said. In 2023, 40,924 people moved out of the state, a smaller total than in any year since 2010, according to the department's data. Rather, he said, is it the lack of people who are coming to Alaska. Less is known about them than about neighbors moving away, he said.

"It's harder to tell stories about the people who don't come," he said.

Particularly important is the age of those who are not coming to Alaska, Robinson said. "Historically, our biggest net gains have been people in the second half of their 20s and 30s," he said.

Part of that is because of the military, and partly that is because Alaska is "an adventurous kind of place," he said.

Added to the lack of new young adult Alaskans is the continued issue of college-age Alaskans who leave the state to attend school in the Lower 48, he said. The result is less economic vitality, he said. "It's not a healthy sign," he said.

Wrangell is suffering the same declining population count as many of the state's communities. From almost 2,400 residents in the 2010 census, the community was down to just over 2,000 this year, according to state estimates, with the Department of Labor projecting 1,400 residents in 2050.

Even before the current outmigration streak started, Alaska's population ebbs and flows were the subject of a lot of study. Mike Jones, an assistant economics professor working at

ISER, ran through some of the Alaska population findings that have emerged over the years.

Within Alaska, factors affecting migration from rural to urban areas or between rural areas include reliance on and success with subsistence food harvests, availability of water and sewage service and rates of violent crime, past research has found, he said.

Within urban Alaska, there are also patterns.

Some of the most recent analysis reveals that population loss in Alaska's largest city appears to be driven by military personnel reductions, according to a new analysis in Alaska Economic Trends, the monthly magazine of the Department of Labor's research division.

The outflow of Anchorage residents over the past 14 years has largely been driven by reductions at Joint Base Elmendorf-

Richardson, that analysis found. The combined U.S. Air Force and U.S. Army base lost more than 2,600 people from 2010 to 2023, more than Anchorage's overall loss of 2,173 people during the same period, according to the analysis.

Meanwhile, Alaska's long-term overall demographic outlook appears dim. State demographers, in their most recent forecast, are predicting a population decline by mid-century that is driven by outmigration, reduced birth rates and the aging of residents.

Peltola, during a break in the sessions, said she was inspired to help organize the event because of widespread concern about Alaska's dwindling working-age population.

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

## Whooping cough cases

Continued from page 1

907-874-7000. Booster shots are available for adults.

Alaska state law requires that families vaccinate their children against pertussis to enroll them in school, or apply for a medical or religious exemption. Families must sign and notarize a form that says vaccination "conflicts with the tenets and practices of the church or religious denomination." The law says: "Personal or philosophical exemptions are not allowed."

SEARHC has noticed an increase in the number of children who fell behind in their immunizations during the COVID-19 pandemic, Schaefer reported last month.

Alaska is in the midst of a pertussis epidemic. By comparison, the year with the most cases before now

was 2016, when 149 cases were reported statewide. Alaska already is 50% above that number, with more than three months left in 2024. Just over two dozen cases were reported last year.

The same higher case counts are coming in nationally, McLaughlin said. After several years of low rates during the coronavirus pandemic, the illness is resurgent and circulating.

In August, four times as many cases were reported across the U.S. as the same time in 2023, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Part of the reason may be the suppression of pertussis during the COVID-19 pandemic due to mitigation measures such as masking and distancing, the CDC said.

"Pertussis is cyclic in nature, with peaks in disease every three to five years," according to the Alaska Department of Health.

Whooping cough is spread through respiratory droplets, including by coughing, sneezing or sharing saliva. An infected person can spread the illness to others during the first three weeks of infection unless they have been treated for five days with antibiotics, according to the state health department.

The first symptoms to appear are often a runny nose, low-grade fever or mild cough, but severe coughing fits can follow.

*Michelle Theriault Boots of the Anchorage Daily News contributed reporting for this story.*

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## Electric bus

Continued from page 1

with each other at one point in the meeting, trying to figure out how much the bus was actually going to cost in total and, more importantly, how much of its own money the district would need to contribute.

McCallister and Burr, per board policy, are only permitted to volunteer information when a

board member requests it. But because neither the president nor any board member requested such information explicitly, neither was able to provide the board with a definitive total cost estimate.

Members were still uncertain of the pricing when Board President Dave Wilson called for a vote on the purchase. Only he and board member John

DeRuyter voted yes, and the bus purchase failed 2-3. Angela Allen, Brittani Robbins and Elizabeth Roundtree voted no.

Allen explained her dissenting vote, citing concern about both public opinion and financial tenability.

"I didn't think it was financially feasible for the school district in the long term," Allen said. "I also heard a lot of negative

feedback from the community."

DeRuyter cited a need to move off the district's nearly \$1 million five-year transportation contract as his reason for voting to accept the EPA grant. DeRuyter said that if the district owned its own transportation, it could prove to be a major money saver in the long run.

Under the district's current contract, Taylor Transportation owns and operates a diesel-fueled school bus. The contract is in its final year.

After the meeting, Wilson admitted the board's confusion on the costs. "Not everyone had the same number for the cost," he said.

The board vote appeared to be in line with the public's social media opinion of the bus purchase.

Twenty-eight people commented on the Sentinel's Facebook post announcing the bus plans. Of those, two expressed a positive attitude toward the bus purchase, five appeared neutral and 21 commentors expressed a negative attitude toward the purchase.

Three members of the public attended the meeting and all expressed negative sentiments about the purchase of an electric bus.

One speaker, Zach Taylor, of Taylor Transportation, expressed several concerns. He worried about the longevity of the bus's battery and he also pointed out that the Blue Bird bus has an air-brake system, something no one in town is currently licensed to operate.



## CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL ALASKA

### VOTER PAMPHLET

### for the October 1, 2024, Local Election

The Voter Pamphlet for the upcoming October 1, 2024, Regular Local Election is available by clicking on the QR Code. Paper copies are also available at City Hall. The voter pamphlet provides information about the two propositions up for vote.

#### PROPOSITION 1

#### **Ratification of Ordinance 1063**

Amendment to Section 2-3 of the Home Rule Charter to remove the prohibition on compensation for assembly members as set forth in Ordinance 1063.

#### PROPOSITION 2

#### **Ratification of Ordinance 1065**

General obligation bond for major renovation of Public Safety Building as set forth in Ordinance 1065.



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

# SENTINEL SPORTS

## Wrangell runners clock personal bests at Sitka meet

By SAM PAUSMAN

Sentinel senior reporter

In their third race of the season, the Wrangell cross-country team boasted several personal-best times at the Sitka Invitational on Sept. 14.

Standout junior Boomchain Loucks was the boys highest finisher, crossing the line in second place with a personal best of 16:42.46. Loucks, who won the season's previous two races, has improved on his time every race so far this year.

The boys team finished third behind the much larger schools from Ketchikan and Sitka — which won their home race. The boys bronze medal finish was spurred on by Ian Nelson, Jackson Carney, Daniel Harrison and Jackson Powers, all of whom finished one after another with Nelson leading the Wrangell pack in 12th place. Powers, Carney and Lucas Stearns all finished the race with personal-best times. Stearns crossed the line in

24th.

Junior Kaylee Herman continued to prove to be the girls fastest runner. Herman finished 15th with a time of 24:23.60. Kourtney Barnes and Kailyn McCutcheon finished in 20th and 21st, respectively; both times were personal bests.

"The girls team keeps getting better each race," head coach Mason Villarma said. "This team has been training really hard and logging a lot of quality mileage."

At the top of the results, Sitka dominated the girls race; six of the top seven runners were from Sitka. Ketchikan and Mt. Edgecumbe rounded out the girls team podium, though neither team was close to closing the gap to Sitka.

Villarma said the boys team's results were "a bit disappointing" but cited intense training ahead of the meet as a large driver of the results.

"We will readjust and won't be rolling into Juneau with tired

legs. One thing is for sure with this team: they always want

more," Villarma said.

Next up, the team will travel

to Juneau for their fourth race of the season on Sept. 21.



PHOTO BY SAM PAUSMAN / WRANGELL SENTINEL

### Bump, set, spike

Adaline Andrews (background, closest to the net) gets in position to drive the ball over the net during warm-ups at volleyball practice on Sept. 13. The high school girls volleyball team started practices last week and will travel to Juneau for their first tournament of the school year on Oct. 4-5.

## Open season: Moose season is officially underway

By SAM PAUSMAN

Sentinel senior reporter

Wrangell's moose season opened last week. The one-month window runs from Sept. 15 through Oct. 15.

Those hunting on Wrangell, neighboring islands and the mainland are permitted to harvest one bull this fall. There are no regulation changes from last hunting season, and Frank Robbins, Petersburg-Wrangell area biologist with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, said he has not seen any notable changes to the health of the central Southeast herd.

Last year's Petersburg-Wrangell area harvest was a record 141 moose, exceeding the previous high of 132 in 2021. Over the past five years, the average harvest has been 127 moose, Robbins said. He expects this year's tally will be similar to 2024.

To be legal for hunting, a moose bull must either have spike fork antlers or 50-inch antlers. Bulls boasting antlers with either three brow tines on one side or two brow tines on both sides are also eligible for harvest. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game provides diagrams explaining harvest legality at <http://hunt.alaska.gov>. The department encourages all hunters to get a head-on view of any moose before they shoot.

All hunting is by permit only and hunters are required to always carry their state hunting license and permit. Robbins said it's important that hunters also acquire a permit for area RM038, which encompasses the islands and mainland around Wrangell. The permit is free and can be found online at Fish and Game.

Nonresidents must pay an additional \$800 for a moose tag in addition to higher hunting license fees.

The month-long window is the same for both residents and nonresidents as well as for bow hunters and rifle hunters.

Fish and Game urges moose hunters to be safe and to remember that "the most important thing to keep in mind is that moose are huge."

The department estimates that that most successful hunters will have between 400 and 700 pounds of meat to harvest, so it is important to establish an easily accessible location for hunting and bringing the meat back out.

## SAMPLE BALLOT FRONT

**INSTRUCTIONS TO VOTER:** To vote for the issue/candidate of your choice, fill in the oval next to the issue/candidate you want to vote for. Place your ballot inside the secrecy sleeve and then take your ballot to the ballot box.

If you make a mistake while voting, return the ballot to the election official for a new one. **A vote which has been erased or changed will not be counted.**

**CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL  
OFFICIAL BALLOT  
REGULAR ELECTION  
OCTOBER 1, 2024**

**Instructions:**  
To vote, completely fill in the oval next to your choice like this: ●  
Use a blue or black ink pen to mark your ballot. NO RED INK. If you make a mistake, ask for a new ballot.  
To vote for a person whose name is not printed on the ballot, fill in the oval and print the person's name on the blank line provided for a write-in candidate.

<p><b>BOROUGH MAYOR TWO YEAR TERM</b></p> <p>VOTE FOR NO MORE THAN ONE</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Patricia (Patty) Gilbert <input type="radio"/> David Powell <input type="radio"/> WRITE-IN</p>	<p><b>ASSEMBLY MEMBER THREE YEAR TERMS</b></p> <p>VOTE FOR NO MORE THAN TWO</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Bob Dalrymple <input type="radio"/> Jim DeBord <input type="radio"/> WRITE-IN <input type="radio"/> WRITE-IN</p>
<p><b>SCHOOL BOARD THREE YEAR TERMS</b></p> <p>VOTE FOR NO MORE THAN TWO</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Angela Allen <input type="radio"/> Dan Powers <input type="radio"/> Brittani Robbins <input type="radio"/> WRITE-IN <input type="radio"/> WRITE-IN</p>	<p><b>PORT COMMISSION THREE YEAR TERMS</b></p> <p>VOTE FOR NO MORE THAN TWO</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Chris Bunes <input type="radio"/> Tony Guggenbickler <input type="radio"/> Antonio Silva <input type="radio"/> Eric L. Yancey <input type="radio"/> WRITE-IN <input type="radio"/> WRITE-IN</p>

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# THE MAYORAL CANDIDATES

## Gilbert cites economic development in reelection bid

By SAM PAUSMAN

Sentinel senior reporter

Mayor Patty Gilbert ran for the office in 2022 with two goals in mind: economic development and improvements to the community's infrastructure. As she looks to win reelection this year, her goals haven't changed.

Before becoming mayor, she served on the city council and borough assembly for 14 years. She also served on the school board between 2020 and 2022.

A lifelong teacher with a classroom career spanning across six decades, Gilbert is confident she can continue to move Wrangell forward in a second term.

"I've got the drive, the time, the knowledge and the desire," she said. "I'm fearless."

She is proud of her track record as mayor: In the past two years the borough says it has acquired a record amount of project-specific federal funding.

Gilbert also advocated for converting the Economic Development Board from the ad hoc committee she inherited to its current iteration: a regularly meeting board. She sees the board not just as a way for the borough to promote economic momentum, but as a conduit for community input as well.

However, she admits there is a lot of work that still needs to be

done. If Congress approves additional funding for Wrangell in next year's budget, such as repairs to the Public Safety Building, the borough will have received \$40 million in federal funding in 2024-2025. The feat, while impressive for a small town, is also an economic catalyst that Gilbert sees as unsustainable.

"We have probably maximized outside funding," she said. She believes that an energized and more active Economic Development Board will help attract further economic opportunities for the town.

And while she acknowledges there are limits to relying on federal aid to pay the bills, Gilbert does not support any increase in the borough property tax rate of 9.75 mills, which works out to \$975 per \$100,000 of assessed value.

Her emphasis on infrastructure remains strong. In a second term, the mayor hopes to establish both short-term and long-term plans for the borough's roads and sidewalks.

"I want there to be a plan for which roads we are going to repave every summer, and then which ones we are going to fix the year after that," Gilbert said.

She feels passionately about transboundary river issues,



Patty Gilbert

specifically the Canadian mines that tribal and environmental groups say risk environmental damages downriver in Southeast.

"We need to pay more attention and make sure Wrangell is represented in those conversations," she said of U.S.-Canada talks. She emphasized the importance of working with WCA on this topic especially.

In her next term, Gilbert said she will advocate for moving the barge dock to the borough-owned former mill property at 6-Mile. She hopes this would help improve the visual appeal of Wrangell's downtown waterfront.

She also plans to work with Police Chief Gene Meek to "increase school security."

As for the ballot measures in the Oct. 1 municipal election, she

endorsed voting yes on both questions.

She encourages people to approve the \$3 million bond issue for Public Safety Building renovations. The mayor, who has been outspoken in assembly meetings about the building's poor condition, emphasized the importance of the "much needed" renovations on the 37-year-old structure.

Gilbert also implored voters to vote yes on the other ballot question, which would open the

door for assembly members to receive compensation. She noted that her motivation is not based on personal gain. Instead, she hopes it will make the assembly more inclusive by attracting new members.

"If it entices people to run for office that would not have previously ran for office, we should do it," she said. She believes that compensation will help increase the "diversity of thought" on the assembly.

## Powell likes new ideas to help town's economy

By SAM PAUSMAN

Sentinel senior reporter

After 58 years in Wrangell, nine years on the assembly and two separate stints as vice mayor, David Powell decided now is the time to run for Wrangell's highest elected position.

And while he is up against incumbent Patty Gilbert, Powell wants it known that he is not running against Gilbert in a typical fashion. When asked why voters should check the box next to his name on Oct. 1, he hesitated to give a response — not because he wasn't sure why people should vote for him — but because he didn't want to seem like he was vilifying his opponent.

"Man, that is tough. I have a lot of respect for Patty (Gilbert), but I feel that I can push things harder. ... But why would you check the box for me? Because my heart is in Wrangell," he said.

Initially he joined the assembly to promote the sale of borough land, hoping it would prompt construction of much-needed housing in town.

Twenty lots at the Alder Top Village (Keishangita.'aan) subdivision, where the Wrangell Institute once stood, will be up for sale in the spring of 2025. Additionally, the borough has plans to make eight small industrial lots available for purchase just off Bennett Street.

These land sales are just the start, Powell said. He also hopes to get the former sawmill property at 6-Mile off the borough's books and supports moving the barge ramp and staging area out the road to open up the downtown waterfront for tourism opportunities.

In his mayoral campaign, Powell's priorities have evolved. This time around, he wants "to fund the schools no matter what," work collectively with other Southeast communities to revitalize the state ferry system and find "out-of-the-box" ways to help boost Wrangell's economy.

Powell also wants to see a data center come to town. Data centers are large-scale server farms that provide computing power and storage for cloud-based service providers.

Powell said one advantage Wrangell offers over other potential host sites is that "we have very low-cost power; that's what these companies need."

He also suggested that Wrangell expand its mariculture industry. He believes encouraging and supporting similar projects is crucial to bringing more money into the community.

He also pointed out that Juneau residents will vote in October whether to ban cruise ships on Saturdays. "Well, those ships have to go somewhere," Powell laughed. "Maybe we can get a couple of them."

As for improving state ferry service, he is certain the demand is there. The vice mayor, who has been the manager of the Bay Co. for over 20 years, said he had boat trailers on standby to board the ferry five times in the past three months alone, none of which were able to get space on the vehicle deck.

On the two questions on the Oct. 1 ballot, he will be voting yes on both measures. Powell said the only alternative to repairing and renovating the Public Safety Building would be the construction of a new building, a solution the borough cannot afford.

He is also advocating for a change in the municipal charter to allow assembly compensation.

"I'm 100% for it, but I'm thinking about it in terms of the future when I'm not there. I know that our assembly is primarily older people. I would like to entice young people too," he said.

Beyond the confines of the mayoral race, Powell encouraged folks to attend assembly meetings as frequently as they can.

"I cannot say it enough. If people show up to the meetings, it makes our job so much easier. Our meetings work really well, but what we're missing is people telling us what we're doing wrong and what we're doing right. Too often we hear it after the meetings."



David Powell

## SAMPLE BALLOT BACK

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If you make a mistake while voting, return the ballot to the election official for a new one. A vote which has been erased or changed will not be counted.

<p><b>PROPOSITION NO. 1</b></p> <p><b>Explanation</b></p> <p>Section 2-3 of the Home Rule Charter for the City and Borough of Wrangell provides: "No assembly member may receive any compensation for serving on the assembly, but may be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the discharge of his or her official duties. Unless otherwise provided by ordinance, an assembly member may hold no other compensated borough office or employment." The Assembly adopted Ordinance No. 1063 proposing an amendment to the Charter to amend Section 2-3, removing the prohibition on compensation to assembly members. If approved by voters, the assembly will need to establish such compensation by ordinance.</p> <p>Shall the Home Rule Charter of the City and Borough of Wrangell be amended as set forth in Ordinance No. 1063?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> YES</p> <p><input type="radio"/> NO</p>
<p><b>PROPOSITION NO. 2</b></p> <p><b>GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS FOR MAJOR RENOVATION OF PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING</b></p> <p><b>Explanation</b></p> <p>Shall the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, incur debt and issue general obligation bonds in an amount not to exceed three-million dollars (\$3,000,000) for the purpose of paying the costs of construction of major renovation of the public safety building and related capital improvements?</p> <p>The bonds shall be secured by a pledge of the full faith and credit of the Borough (Ordinance No. 1065)?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> YES A "YES" vote approves the issuance of bonds.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> NO A "NO" vote opposes the issuance of bonds.</p>

**TURN BALLOT OVER - VOTE BOTH SIDES**

# THE ASSEMBLY CANDIDATES

## Dalrymple wants to continue progress toward resolving challenges

BY LARRY PERSILY  
Sentinel writer

Bob Dalrymple likes what the borough has managed to get done the past few years, particularly its focus on maintenance of public facilities and developing new capital projects, such as winning a federal grant to rebuild the downtown harbor floats.

"I'd like to keep up with that momentum," said Dalrymple, who is running unopposed for a second three-year term on the assembly. "There are some real challenges coming up."

He lists among the challenges finding a way to dispose of the former hospital property, which the borough has been trying to sell for more than two years, and also attracting a buyer or long-term tenant for the borough-owned former sawmill property near 6-Mile.

The planned sale of 20 borough-owned lots at the Alder Top Village (Keishangita.'aan) residential subdivision, tenta-

tively set for next spring, is another item he wants to see through to completion.

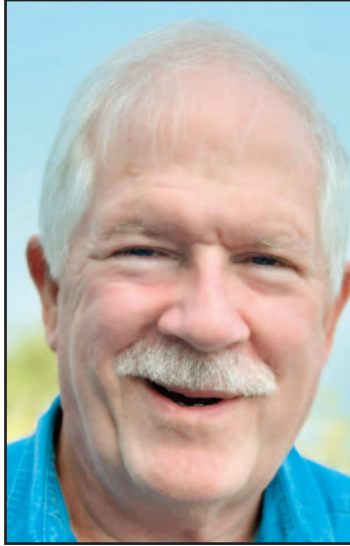
Finding a way to increase local funding for the school district is on the list of challenges, too, he said.

The district is drawing down its reserves as state funding has been essentially flat for seven years and the assembly has its own concerns about maintaining adequate financial reserves for the borough, constraining how much it can appropriate for schools.

Many of the challenges focus on "broadening out the economy as much as we can," Dalrymple said.

That includes "figuring out how tourism, especially cruise ship tourism, is going to fit in." The task will be gaining the benefits of increased tourism — jobs, sales tax revenues and passenger fees — without changing the character of the community, he said.

Promoting more housing construction, particularly homes that are affordable in



Bob Dalrymple

the community, is on his work list too.

The borough owns buildable land but lacks enough money to develop the utilities and roads needed to create residential lots. Maybe the government could partner with private developers to open up land for new construction, he said.

"I don't see us becoming a

housing authority," taking on alone the responsibility of financing and building new housing.

He hopes the former hospital property, which has been unused since SEARHC moved to its new facilities in 2021, can somehow be turned into housing, whether for residents or out-of-staters looking to cool off. "The idea of heat refugees is going to come into play," Dalrymple said, referring to people living in the Lower 48 who want a summer home to escape rising temperatures.

"There are people out there with ideas" for the property, and it will be up to borough officials and the assembly to find and strike a deal for the best idea.

Another piece of borough land, the former 6-Mile mill

site, is "an amazing property with potential," he said, but it needs a private developer with the financial wherewithal to rebuild the dock and invest in the new construction that will be needed for whatever could be built at the site.

The borough bought the property for \$2.5 million in 2022 to keep the 40 acres intact in hopes of attracting a new user.

Dalrymple retired from the U.S. Forest Service in 2019, after 43 years with the agency, working his last 10 years as district ranger in Wrangell.

He served a couple of short stints to fill temporary vacancies on the assembly, later winning a three-year term in 2021. He also serves on the borough's Economic Development Board.

## DeBord seeks reelection to second term

BY SENTINEL STAFF

Jim DeBord is running unopposed for election to a second consecutive three-year term on the borough assembly.

He declined a Sentinel request for an inter-

view.

In addition to winning election to the assembly in 2021, DeBord served a one-year term 2018-2019.

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# THE SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES

## Allen wants more community input at school board level

By SAM PAUSMAN

Sentinel senior reporter

If she wins a second term as school board member, Angela Allen said she wants to go after specific grants, encourage home-schooling parents to enroll their children in the public school system, and open the doors for communication between parents and the school board.

She is up against fellow incumbent Brittani Robbins and newcomer Dan Powers. The seats will go to the two candidates with the most votes in the Oct. 1 municipal election. Terms will run through 2027.

Allen moved to Wrangell for her senior year of high school in 1998 and never looked back. Currently, she has two kids in the school district — a senior and a

third grader. Her eldest son graduated from Wrangell High School in 2023.

After graduation, Allen began working in Wrangell's health care sector. She currently works for SEARHC in several capacities, including as a clinical assistant, referral care coordinator and as a technician.

Allen has been on the school board since 2021.

She said that if money was not an issue for the school district, she would expand the number of professional teacher aides, as well as the STEM options available to students.

Already, Wrangell has a strong relationship with T3 (Teaching Through Technology), a STEM-oriented student learning program out of the Univer-



Angela Allen

sity of Alaska Fairbanks. Allen said she would push to expand similar offerings.

In a second term, she also hopes to see greater input from the community.

"People with concerns should come to meetings and send letters to the school board," Allen said. "It's a lot better than (airing concerns on) Facebook."

She hopes to build "deep relationships" with not just teachers, but with parents and students too.

"The best way to do that is listening," Allen said. She wants the district's School Advisory Committees to present the board with a regular newsletter informing them of community concerns, though the committees' access to the board has been limited in recent years.

As for finding solutions to the district's ongoing funding woes, Allen thinks that identifying and seeking targeted grants is the best way to fund district projects.

While she voted against the district accepting a federal grant to purchase an electric bus on Sept. 9, she cited these types of specific grants as a good way to bring outside funding into the district.

Allen also wants to encourage parents who currently homeschool their children to instead enroll them in the public school system. Doing so would help boost state funding, which is calculated every year on the number of students enrolled in each district, as well as other factors.

One money-saving solution that has been discussed among school board members is consolidating the three schools into two. Allen is wary of this idea, and said the "age gap would not be appropriate."

## Robbins says state needs to change funding formula for schools

By SAM PAUSMAN

Sentinel senior reporter

Brittani Robbins is running for a three-year term on the school board in a contested election against fellow incumbent Angela Allen and newcomer Dan Powers. The top vote-getters will win the two seats.

In addition to serving on the school board since 2021, Robbins also serves on the borough assembly, a seat she won in 2022. She has worked as executive director for Wrangell's chamber of commerce and served as chair of the school district's budget and finance committee.

A graduate of the Wrangell school system, Robbins was born in town. She has kids in the school system and believes that gives her an advantage on the board.



Brittani Robbins

She said her biggest priority in a second term on the school board would be to "promote equity in the school district," though she admitted this is a difficult task in practice.

"You're not going to make everyone happy. If there was a magical solution that just made everything perfect, we would already be doing that."

The incumbent also discussed financial issues facing the school district. The district's reserve fund is dwindling and is likely to run out of money in a couple of years unless the state or borough increase their contributions to the district's operating budget.

Robbins attributes this to an outdated per-pupil allocation formula set by the state. She said statewide reform of the formula and additional funding from the Legislature and governor is the only way to increase the state's contribution.

She believes she is the best person for solving this problem, citing her time on the assembly in addition to the school board as an advantage over the other candidates.

"I know a lot of different things that happen within the state on the political side that

maybe others don't because of my time on the assembly, and because I... enjoy politics," she said.

Robbins discussed cost-saving measures for the schools. She said the school board contemplated consolidating the middle and high schools but she is against it. She cited both upfront financial costs and student well-being as reasons to not explore that concept further.

She also said she "wants to see a stronger electives program" offered to students, adding that if there were unlimited school funding, an expansion of elective offerings should be the first recipient of funding.

Robbins came to local government with a bit of a unique background.

"I have a bachelor of fine arts in acting in directing. I was

a theater nerd, a music geek," she said. "I taught drama, public speaking, debate and health."

She believes this time spent inside classrooms allows for a greater understanding of how to properly run schools from the administrative side.

When asked why the public should check the box next to her name, the candidate's response was direct: "I'm not afraid to be a voice. I'm not afraid to stand up for what I believe in. I'm not afraid to listen to what other people believe in, and I'm not afraid to hear other people's opinions and maybe change my mind."

She believes the purview of the school board extends beyond Wrangell.

"I want to be a voice for education, not just in Wrangell, but in the state."

## School board candidate Powers emphasizes transparency, community

By SAM PAUSMAN

Sentinel senior reporter

Dan Powers does a little bit of everything.

In the mornings he drives the school bus. During the day he owns and operates a local tour service called Experience Wrangell. Some days he is managing his rental properties and other days he is playing gigs alongside his wife and longtime musical partner Shelley Powers.

And in the evenings, well, Powers has seven kids (and one on the way), so things can get unpredictable.

But now, he just wants to make the peace.

"I'm a peacemaker," he said before clarifying the nuance of the phrase. "A peacekeeper is someone who keeps their mouth shut to keep the peace. The peacemaker has to go directly toward confrontation in order to find resolution."

Powers decided to seek a school board seat this year after several friends encouraged him to file. He is up against incumbents Brittani Robbins and Angela Allen. The top two vote-getters in the Oct. 1 election will be elected to a three-year term.

Born in Wrangell, Powers moved back to town in 2021. Upon returning, the now 41-year-old quickly noticed some places for improvement within the functionality of the school board.

"There seems to be a gap between the community and the board," he said.

Each School Advisory Committees is supposed to serve as a bridge between the two entities. However, the community-led committees have struggled to get its voice heard in recent years, committee members said during its Sept. 9 meeting. If elected, Powers wants to explicitly outline and further expand avenues of communication between the board and its advisory committee.

His emphasis on community input is not limited to the role of the committee. When



PHOTO BY SAM PAUSMAN / WRANGELL SENTINEL

Dan Powers

asked what he would do with a blank check made out to Wrangell schools, Powers responded promptly.

"We're elected by the people of Wrangell," he said. "They put their trust in us, so it doesn't seem appropriate to me if we told them, 'Sorry, you don't have any say in this.'"

Powers believes the school board has two key roles. The first is allowing for strong com-

munity representation; the second is to support the teachers, principals and superintendent.

"I would try to make it so that teachers and principals and administrators feel crazy supported by being here," Powers said. "I want them to be comfortable committing to live in this kind of place."

He hopes support — whether its financial or something else — can help reduce the recent high turnover among principals. Powers said there have been three secondary school principals in his three years back in town.

"With the turnover rate, it makes it so hard to keep any momentum. That's a huge deficiency."

Powers has driven the school bus for the past three years, but his commitment to Wrangell's students extends beyond the bus ride to school every morning.

"Driving the school bus, serving at the youth group, volunteering at the schools — there's a lot of young people here that probably need an advocate of some sort. And I've been getting to know them and their families."

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# Fall theater production

**Continued from page 1**  
 student at Appalachian State University in North Carolina. And she is not the only one from the school involved in the Wrangell production. Cody Anderson, who also went to Appalachian State, will play Tony Kirby, a vice president in the family company that is trying to buy up property for a factory, but his dad is not the most reputable businessman around. The son falls in love with a

stenographer at the family business and proposes marriage, setting off the comedy between two very different families. The play, which won the 1936 Pulitzer Prize, was made into a movie directed by Frank Capra and starring James Stewart, Lionel Barrymore and Jean Arthur, winning two Oscars in 1938. The play's target audience is 14 and older, Reeves said. The theater plans to return to a children-friendly musical for its

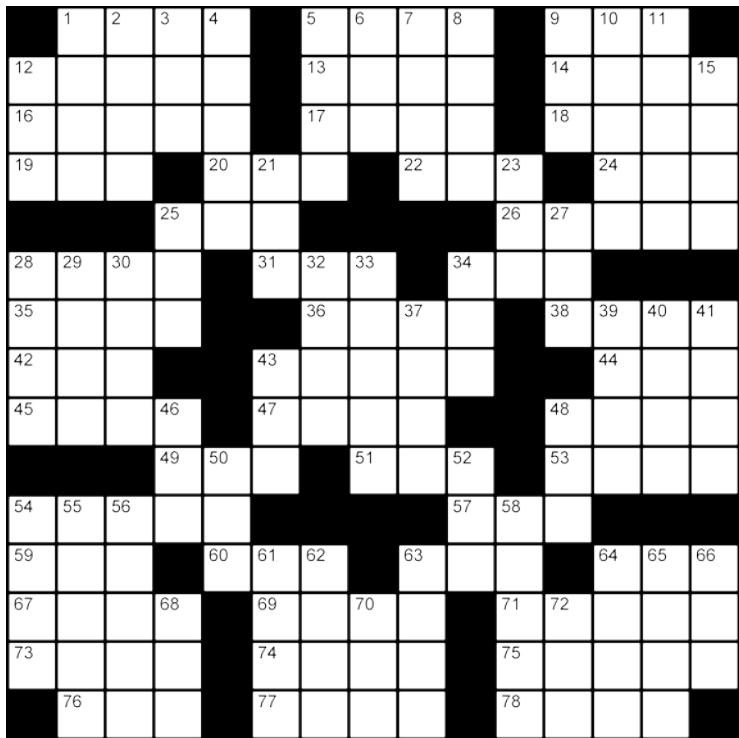
spring production. "We want to make it a fun night out," she said of the older audience for the November production. In addition to Anderson, the Wrangell cast includes Erin Everett, Matt Nore, Sarah Scambler, Tyler Baldi, Eva Roher, Dan

Powers, Harrison Steckman, Nicole Hammer, Chase Green, Ellen Jellum, Matt Henson, Tyla Nelson, Nick Cole and Angelina Respecia. Reeves said Bonnie Ritchie is stage manager; Nelson and Damon Roher are in charge of the sets; Powers is handling the

sound; and Joan Sargeant and Artha DeRuyter volunteered to handle the costumes. The play has all its cast and other volunteer roles filled, Reeves said, but the organizers will be asking the community for financial sponsors as the production gets closer.

## Crossword

Answers on page 12



### CLUES ACROSS

- 1 #
- 5 Conversation
- 9 P C to web link company
- 12 Persian Gulf port
- 13 Gypsy people
- 14 Immediately, in hospital
- 16 Edgar --- Poe
- 17 Upon
- 18 Insect destructive of clothes
- 19 Negative
- 20 One coming out
- 22 Big beer can
- 24 --- Grande
- 25 Solar system center
- 26 Casing
- 28 Electrical connector
- 31 Passed away (Abbr.)
- 34 Old card game
- 35 "Would it be ---?" (Presley: "Can't help falling in love")
- 36 Father's sibling
- 38 Physicians
- 42 So far
- 43 Sour-smelling
- 44 Sticky stuff
- 45 Junction
- 47 Not us
- 48 Killer whale
- 49 Rotational speed measure
- 51 Bashful
- 53 Top
- 54 Harsh treatment
- 57 Applicable
- 59 Entertainment
- 60 Bench with a back
- 63 Letters on Royal Navy ships
- 64 E.g. a street kiss
- 67 Horse controller
- 69 Spanish fashion designer -- - Rabanne
- 71 Long
- 73 Aware of
- 74 Overnight stops
- 75 Law
- 76 Fight against underwater threats
- 77 Penny
- 78 U R L starter

### CLUES DOWN

- 1 Kind of hoop
- 2 Competently
- 3 Cape Town carrier
- 4 One of the Indian majority
- 5 Quarrelsome grouch
- 6 Very fashionable
- 7 Hog-wild
- 8 Recording medium
- 9 Belief system
- 10 Bad weather
- 11 Paved outdoor area
- 12 Karate degree
- 15 Hammer god
- 21 Aim
- 23 Federal fiscal watchdog
- 25 One of a hundred in D C
- 27 Eye cell
- 28 Methods
- 29 Statement of understanding
- 30 The Beatles' lovely meter maid
- 32 Apiece
- 33 Antidotes
- 34 Classic Ford model
- 37 Type of rechargeable cell
- 39 Man-eating giant
- 40 Stimulating South American shrub
- 41 Sit in a tub
- 43 Bank machine
- 46 E.g. Robinson, Doubtfire
- 48 Plump
- 50 Vigor
- 52 Thanksgiving dish
- 54 Spherical hairdo
- 55 --- Vista, Disney brand
- 56 Military groups
- 58 Outguess
- 61 Heroic
- 62 Diminish slowly
- 63 Vast multitude
- 64 Gasp
- 65 Bead
- 66 Newswoman --- Curry
- 68 The present time
- 70 Cable/satellite network
- 72 Dine

## OBITUARY

### Former resident Lillian Lackey dies at 76

Lillian Patricia Lackey, 76, of Soldotna, died peacefully in her sleep on Sept. 10, 2024. Lillian, or Lilli Pat as she was known to some, was born March 24, 1948, to Kenneth Lincoln "Link" and Elizabeth "Tiny" Lewis in Wrangell. She graduated from Wrangell High School in 1966, and attended secondary school in Cleveland, Ohio, before returning to Alaska to live in Anchorage. In 1968, Lillian married Thomas C. Lackey, and together they moved to Tom's hometown in Georgia, where they lived until returning to Alaska in 1976. Together they raised their children in Soldotna and enjoyed the Alaska lifestyle of hunting, fishing, gardening, berry picking and snowmachining at their cabin in the Caribou

Hills. Lillian worked at the state district attorney's office in Kenai and the state court system until retiring in May 2005. She was preceded in death by her parents, and siblings Teresa Landers and William "Henry" Lewis. She is survived by her husband, Tom; children Terie (Mike), Tiffany (Steve) and Tom Jr; grandchildren Christiana Loomis, Kayli Lackey, Logan Loomis, Ashleigh Loomis, Ellen Lackey, Timothy Lackey, Tanner O'Hara and Brodie O'Hara; great-grandchild Leonidas Kaai; siblings Ken (Sigrid) Lewis, Roberta "Bobbi Ann" (Paul) Lethenstrom; and many nieces and nephews. A celebration of life was held at the Sterling Senior Center on



Lillian Lackey

Sept. 14. Donations can be made to the American Cancer Society and/or the Sterling Senior Center.

## Police report

### Monday, Sept. 9

Failure to stop for a school bus. Dog at large.

### Tuesday, Sept. 10

Vacation check. Traffic stop.

### Wednesday, Sept. 11

Letter served for removal from a licensed premise. Letter served for removal from a licensed premise. Animal complaint about a cat.

### Thursday, Sept. 12

Agency assist: Ambulance.

### Friday, Sept. 13

Civil matter. Agency assist: Hoonah Police Department.

### Saturday, Sept. 14

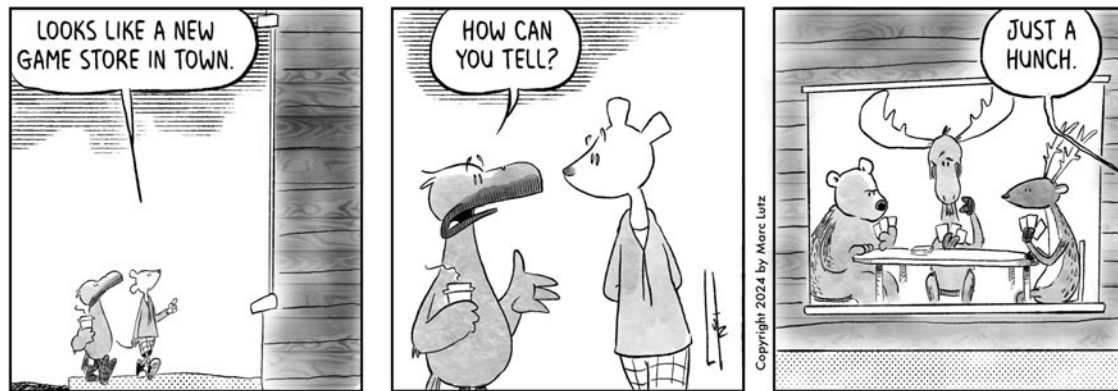
Agency assist: Ambulance. Citation for failure to provide proof of insurance. Agency assist: Hoonah Police Department. Traffic stop. Agency assist: Ambulance. Report of possible driving while under the influence. Noise complaint.

### Sunday, Sept. 15

Trespass. Civil matter.

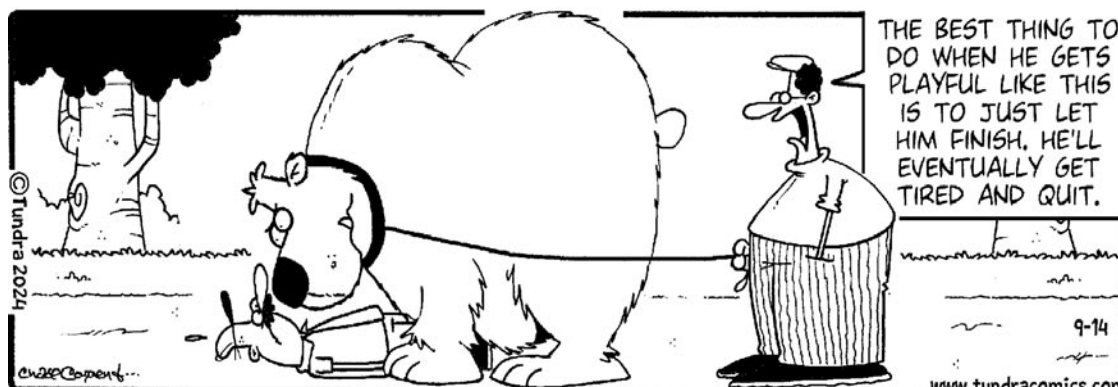
## Ritter's River

by Marc Lutz



## Tundra

by Chad Carpenter



**CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL  
LEGAL NOTICE**

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

- a. **ORDINANCE No. 1064** of the Assembly of the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, Repealing and Replacing certain sections of Chapter 5.10, Purchase and Sales, in the Wrangell Municipal Code.  
Kim Lane, MMC, Borough Clerk  
City and Borough of Wrangell

**Publish Sept. 18, 2024**

**CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL, ALASKA  
Public Notice**

ABSENTEE VOTING for the Regular Borough Election, to be held October 1, 2024, begins on Monday, Sept. 16, 2024, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, at City Hall.

Qualified Voters may vote an Absentee Ballot until Monday, Sept. 30, 2024, at 4 p.m. for the Regular Borough Election.

For those voters who cannot VOTE ABSENTEE IN PERSON, you may submit an application to have your ballot mailed, emailed or faxed to you. Please stop by the Borough Clerk's Office to apply.

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

**Publish Sept. 11, 18 and 25, 2024**

**CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL, ALASKA  
Public Notice**

For the upcoming City and Borough of Wrangell Regular Election of Oct. 1, 2024, the following ordinance applies: 2.16.030 Write-in Candidates and Write-in Votes. Individuals who fail to file a declaration of candidacy but wish to run for office as a write-in candidate, must file with the borough clerk a letter of intent no later than 5 p.m. on the Friday preceding the election (Sept. 27, 2024) in which the candidate plans to participate.

Write-in votes cast for individuals who do not file a letter of intent will not be counted.

In order to vote for a write-in candidate, the voter must, in the space provided, write in the candidate's name as the candidate's name appears on the letter of intent filed with the borough clerk. In addition, the voter must mark the oval opposite the candidate's name. Stickers shall not be used.

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

**Publish Sept. 11, 18 and 25, 2024**

**CITY and BOROUGH OF WRANGELL, ALASKA  
Notice of Regular Election**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that on the 1st day of October 2024, in the City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska, a Regular Local Election will be held for the purpose of voting on the following Borough Official positions and Propositions.

- Borough Mayor: One – (2-Year Term)
- Borough Assembly: Two – (3-Year Terms)
- School Board: Two – (3-Year Terms)
- Port Commission: Two – (3-Year Terms)

**PROPOSITION 1**

**Ratification of Ordinance 1063**

Amendment to Section 2-3 of the Home Rule Charter to remove the prohibition on compensation for assembly members as set forth in Ordinance 1063.

**PROPOSITION 2**

**Ratification of Ordinance 1065**

General obligation bonds for major renovation of Public Safety Building as set forth in Ordinance 1065.

The polls for said election will be open at 8 a.m. on the said day and will close at 8 p.m. on the same day.

Each voter must have the qualifications prescribed by state law. A qualified voter shall vote only once per election and shall exercise that right at the polling place established in the designated Wrangell Precinct (James and Elsie Nolan Museum/Civic Center) and in which he/she resides within the borough boundaries of the City and Borough of Wrangell.

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

**Publish Sept. 4, 11, 18 and 25, 2024**



PHOTO BY SAM PAUSMAN / WRANGELL SENTINEL

**All smiles for Garfield**

Third graders Ellie Silva and Marina Fitzjarrald eagerly await the animated film, "The Garfield Movie." The Nolan Center hosted the screening on Sept. 13 as a part of the Wrangell Kids Club activities. The new, free after-school program offers activities for children ages 7-13, and is a collaboration between Parks and Recreation (Monday open gym and games), the Irene Ingle Public Library (Wednesdays STEM and crafts activities) and the Nolan Center (Friday movies).

**CLASSIFIED**

**HELP WANTED**

Wrangell Public Schools is accepting applications for the following positions for the 2024-2025 school year:

- Middle School Boys Basketball Assistant Coach
- Middle School Girls Basketball Assistant Coach
- High School Wrestling Assistant Coach

For more information and a job description, please contact the District Office at 907-874-2347. Positions are open until filled. It is Wrangell Public School District's policy to not discriminate based on age, race, color, national origin, sex or disability.

**HELP WANTED**

Johnson's Building Supply is accepting applications for

the following position: Customer Service. Duties include counter sales, freight handling, customer deliveries, stocking and inventory. Full-time position; will require working Saturdays. Valid Alaska driver's license, must be able to lift 50 lbs., forklift experience a plus, starting pay is DOE. Stop by Johnson's for an application.

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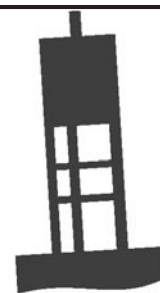
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# Court allows felon in New York prison to remain on Alaska ballot

By JAMES BROOKS  
Alaska Beacon

The Alaska Supreme Court on Sept. 12 affirmed the U.S. House candidacy of Eric Hafner, a Democrat imprisoned in New York state on a 20-year felony sentence.

The court, in a split 4-1 decision, upheld Anchorage Superior Court Judge Ian Wheelers' decision to dismiss a

lawsuit by the Alaska Democratic Party that had challenged Hafner's eligibility.

The decision means Hafner will appear on the November U.S. House ballot alongside incumbent Democrat Rep. Mary Peltola, Republican challenger Nick Begich, and Alaskan Independence Party challenger John Wayne Howe.

It also means that election

preparations, including ballot printing and distribution, will continue on a previously published schedule.

Under Alaska's elections system, the top four finishers from the primary election advance to the general election. Hafner finished sixth, but two higher-finishing Republicans withdrew from the race, allowing Hafner to advance.

The Democratic Party sued, arguing that state law prohibited the elections division from replacing two withdrawn candidates. The party also argued that Hafner was ineligible because the U.S. Constitution requires a candidate to be an inhabitant of the state when elected to the House. Hafner is not scheduled for release until 2036.

Wheelers rejected the party's arguments, and the Democratic Party appealed the case to the Supreme Court, which took up the issue on an emergency basis.

The Alaska Republican Party intervened on the side of elections officials, seeking to preserve their decision to promote Hafner.

In a sworn affidavit, elec-

tions director Carol Beecher said that with draft ballots already printed and equipment undergoing testing, any ballot redesign would delay the mailing of blank ballots to international voters.

That mailing, required by federal law, must take place by Sept. 21. Because that's a Saturday, the division must mail about 3,500 ballots by Sept. 20, officials said.

Additionally, about 700,000 ballots will be printed for the general election, a process that must begin early because it takes two and a half weeks.

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

# Governor vetoes bill to resolve dispute over taxes on car-sharing rental apps

By JAMES BROOKS  
Alaska Beacon

Alaska's governor has vetoed a bill intended to clarify the rental car tax collection process for Alaskans who put up their vehicles for rent on Turo and similar car-sharing applications.

The Alaska Department of Revenue has said that Turo is subject to the state's 10% sales tax on rental cars, the same as Avis, Hertz and other companies that own and rent cars. But Turo has argued that users, not the company itself, are liable for collecting the tax.

The state unsuccessfully sued Turo six years ago in an attempt to find out how much tax revenue the state is owed. Since then, the state has occasionally garnished Turo proceeds from the bank accounts of Alaskans who rent their cars but, generally, the rentals go untaxed.

Senate Bill 127, from Anchorage Sen. Matt Claman would have resolved the dispute by making clear in state law that Turo is in charge of collections from rentals on its platform. As a compromise, the bill would have set the rate at 8% for Turo-like rentals, lower than what is charged on other rentals.

That bill passed the House and Senate by wide, bipartisan margins, but the legislative consensus did not sway the governor.

"Unnecessary taxation of a new and growing industry is bad public policy," the governor wrote in his veto message, issued Sept. 3. "Accordingly, I have vetoed the bill."

The act means the long-running dispute between the state and Turo is unresolved. The Department of Revenue, expecting passage of the bill, had suspended tax collections from Turo users in 2023. The agency did not immediately respond to a question asking about the current status of the tax.

Claman said he was disappointed by the governor's decision. Claman said the bill had included a liability shield for back taxes owed by Turo users. With the veto, Alaskans are still liable for those unpaid taxes, and the state could go after them.

"The problem doesn't go away, and so I'll certainly be looking to reintroduce the legislation," Claman said. "We worked with the Department of Revenue as well as Turo and local rental companies to reach an agreement that worked for everybody."

The veto was Dunleavy's eighth for a policy bill in 2024 and 13th since being elected in 2018.

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

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