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Fresh scenery for a new tulip season



NEW PAINTING AT NEW TULIP FARM – Getting ready for 2023 tulip tourists, Oscar Serrano adds the finishing touches to a mural of the Cascades at Garden Roslyn. “This place is so beautiful and I like painting murals,” he says. Owner Ernesto Mendoza is at left.

– Photo by Anne Basye

Shelter Bay town hall voices Kontos recall pros and cons

By Bill Reynolds

Since COVID-19, the Zoom communications platform has been the next best thing to being there.

And for Shelter Bay residents, it was even better than that Sunday night.

Over 200 of the community’s homeowners logged onto a one-hour Zoom-only town hall addressing the April 12 recall election of Shelter Bay Board Director Judy Kontos.

The start was delayed about 15 minutes to accommodate increased participant capacity, which drew more than twice the number of people who regularly attend monthly in-person meetings at the Shelter Bay clubhouse.

It also made possible Weekly News off-screen coverage of the much-anticipated meeting. Staff were granted audio access to the virtual town hall by Shelter Bay residents who felt it merited exposure.

Board leadership denies the media entry to its town hall meetings.

“As I’ve said before, Shelter Bay is a private community and our town hall meetings are for community members only,” Shelter Bay board president Wendy Poulton said in a Sunday email to Weekly News Publisher Ken Stern. “The

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Saturday’s tulip parade is a favorite local tradition

By Bill Reynolds

It started as an impromptu event. Then it became not-so-impromptu.

These days the La Conner Kiwanis Skagit Valley Tulip Festival Parade on First Street is among the most visible and highly anticipated signs that spring – if not just around the corner – is certainly in the local zip code.

This year’s serpentine is 2 p.m. April 8. Participants are to gather 30 minutes prior to start time at the La Conner Marina’s south basin parking lot.

It started in 1987 with the late Luke Long, a La Conner Kiwanian and proud member of the Nile Temple Oriental Band, on a whim inviting his fellow Shriners to march here – minus the required permit – before he quickly ducked into the Pub for a meal and refreshments.

In keeping with tradition, there will be a distinctly La Conner flavor on Saturday’s menu.

Kiwanian Joy Neal, a former La

Conner library director, said residents Brad and Barbara Bradford have been selected as grand marshals for the 2023 tulip parade.

“She was active in Soroptimists and both were active in Friends of the Library,” Neal said of the Bradfords’ involvement in La Conner civic causes. “They worked in the library’s thrift shop, which raised money for the library. Brad donated a classic truck that was sold to raise money for the new library and more recently made planters out of leftover building wood and sold them last summer – again to raise money to help furnish the new building.”

La Conner Soroptimists will be among the wide range of participants taking part in festivities rebounding nicely from the COVID-19 pandemic that closed down the Skagit Valley in the spring of 2020.

“Soroptimists International of La Conner is marching in the tulip parade,” club spokesperson Nancy Hinton confirmed in a recent email

announcement. “It’s a great way to show our involvement in the community and have fun while we’re at it.

“We’ll be decked out in bunny ears for those who like to dress up,” she added, “and we’ll hand out candy on the parade route.”

Parade-goers can also expect to see the recently crowned La Conner Elementary School Daffodil Festival royal court. Those students – Queen Isabella Rubalcaba, King Jaydon Otis, Princess Heidi Wilbur and Prince Emmitt Alvord – were named during campus ceremonies last Friday and will ride in a parade float.

With that lineup and much more, the parade is guaranteed to bring smiles regardless of weather conditions.

Those wishing to join in the march are invited to complete a parade registration form and email it to info@tulipfestival.org or download it and show up Saturday at 1:30 p.m. at the marina south basin lot.

March cold, little rain

By Ken Stern

March was a cold month in a cold winter. Seven nights it frosted, with four overnight lows below 30 degrees the first two weeks and the 28.1 degree month’s low March 17. Snow was not measured locally.

By all calculations it was cold. The 35 degree average morning low was 2.9 degrees below the century average of 37.9. The average daily high of 51.4 was 0.8 degrees below the 52.2 century average.

Those combined to have the 42.9 degree daily average peg at 1.9 degrees below the 44.8 degrees for the century.

The high topped 50 degrees 18 times, starting the 6th. Only twice did it go above 62 degrees, with the 62.7 degrees high March 18 in the middle of 12 straight days above 50 degrees.

Rain was scarce, too, only 2.1 inches and never more than 0.4 inches in a 24 hour period. That came March 24 during four days of rain dropping 0.9 inches, 41.7% of the month’s total.

There was a quarter inch or more only four times, while six rain events were under one-tenth inch and no rain on 16 days.

This was the fifth driest March this century

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BNSF violated rail agreement with Swinomish Tribe

Fidalgo Island — The United States District Court for the Western District of Washington issued a decision concluding the liability phase of trespass litigation filed by the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community against BNSF Railway March 27, ruling that “BNSF willfully, consciously and knowingly exceeded” limitations in an easement to cross the Tribe’s land.

Swinomish Chairman Steve Edwards stated in a press release that “the Tribe takes its agreements very seriously and it expects them to be honored and we are thankful that BNSF is being held to the promises it made. We look forward to proceeding with the compensation phase of this case and finally concluding this dispute with BNSF.”

The court ruled: BNSF willfully, consciously and knowingly exceeded the limitations on its right of access from September 2012 to May 2021. It failed to acknowledge, much less evaluate, the unique circumstances impacting its ability to provide the service requested. BNSF did not show that it had good faith belief that its common carrier obligations overrode the easement limitations at any point after the unit trains started running.

BNSF intentionally trespassed and breached the easement by running more trains and cars than the easement allowed. The court held that BNSF had willfully, consciously and knowingly exceeded the easement’s limitations and that BNSF could not rely on its claimed belief that its common carrier duty to its shipping customers allowed it to do so. The case now enters a phase determining compensation for the trespass.

Historical and legal background

A 1991 easement agreement between the Tribe and BNSF allows rail traffic to cross the Swinomish Reservation in Skagit County but limits train size and frequency. In September 2012, BNSF began exceeding the easement’s limitations by shipping hundred-car “unit trains” of Bakken crude oil across the Reservation without the Tribe’s required consent. The Tribe filed suit against BNSF for violating the easement in April 2015.

The District Court had ruled in 2017 that BNSF’s common carrier duty under federal law was “not a defense to any of the claims asserted in this litigation” and did not allow it to ignore the requirements of the easement agreement. BNSF appealed and in March 2020, the United States

Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit affirmed the District Court and held that the Tribe’s lawsuit against BNSF was not precluded by the Interstate Commerce Commission Termination Act and could proceed. In 2022, the District Court entered a partial summary judgment in favor of the Tribe, but deferred to trial a ruling on whether the BNSF’s trespass was willful, conscious or knowing. The trial ran March 20-22, 2023.

Train tracks running across the northern edge of the Reservation were laid in the late 1800s without consent from the Swinomish Tribe or federal government. In 1991, the Tribe and BNSF signed an agreement settling a prior lawsuit filed by the Tribe and the United States in 1976 for nearly a century of trespass. This agreement granted BNSF an easement, but subject to important conditions: only one train of 25 railcars would cross the Reservation in each direction daily and BNSF would regularly update the Tribe on the type of cargo crossing Tribal land. In return, the Tribe agreed not to “arbitrarily withhold permission” if there should be a future BNSF request to increase the number of trains or cars.

In late 2012, the Tribe learned from media reports that crude oil

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THIS SHADE IS TULIP RED – Normally the color is called “no curbside parking” red, but when public works staff member Manny Perez paints La Conner curbs in March, the shade is matched to the season.

– Photo by Bill Reynolds



From the editor —

Free speech in Shelter Bay

Is democracy dangerous to the health of Shelter Bay community board members? Or, is the board's leadership allergic to free speech? Is it possible that the Weekly News is just plain wrong in its efforts to cover Shelter Bay governance?

The Weekly News has taken the standard journalistic approach to cover Shelter Bay: attending meetings; interviewing people; reading documents — including court filings; and tracking social media posts. Staff have spoken to people on and off the record, on background and for source material, including holding names in confidence.

Unlike the Town of La Conner, the La Conner School District or the Skagit County government, Shelter Bay is a private organization on private property. Public governments are regulated by the Revised Code of Washington, or RCW. And, of course, public governments adhere to the U.S. Constitution, the First Amendment's critical clause here being no law "abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press."

The Shelter Bay board leadership has said no to Weekly News requests to attend meetings and has asked staff to leave meetings. Board President Wendy Poulton responded Sunday: "As I've said before, Shelter Bay is a private community and our Town Hall meetings are for community members only. The presence of a reporter from the local press can change some people's willingness to participate and that is not fair or helpful to the members."

Some have said that is based on legal advice. Some observe that lawyers tell their clients what the client wants to hear.

Is there a push from residents, a groundswell from the grassroots, to keep the Weekly News from covering their governing body? Is this decision based on the best interests of the Shelter Bay community or is it in the board leadership's self interest?

There is a difference between a private organization and a closed one. Public organizations adhere to public standards. Private organizations can be selective on what they share. But is the Shelter Bay board representing the will of its residents?

More Shelter Bay residents may read the Weekly News than the community's communications. Residents can say which source they trust more. But they will not know what their elected leadership is discussing or deciding if their actions are not covered by an independent news source.

The Washington Post slogan is "democracy dies in darkness." Last week Shelter Bay board member Dan McCaughan concluded his "citizen's view" in the Weekly News with these lines: "I was elected to promote transparency, hold each other accountable and demonstrate respect for the rules. I want the community to know that I have their best interests in mind."

The next day McCaughan was cc-ed on this email from board Vice President Joe Hurley: "With Dan's recent paper article I don't see that we have a choice but to suspend him from the Board for 90 days." It quoted Shelter Bay rules: "The Board President or Vice President, with the concurrence of the board, may immediately suspend the board or community member if the violation is of such a serious nature as to potentially create a liability for the Community."

McCaughan and director Judy Kontos had ethics complaints brought against them for "Failure to Support the Decisions of the Board." The Shelter Bay board executive committee and its ethics committee find no space between analysis and criticism of a board decision and potential liability to the community. Its requirements of lockstep obedience and its punishing criticism with sanctions is the antithesis of democracy.

The Harvard Law Review defines a kangaroo court as "A self-appointed tribunal or mock court in which the principles of law and justice are disregarded." This leadership says it is following its rules and regulations. But how is it interpreting them?

The Shelter Bay Community board has nine members. Four have been appointed by fellow board members. Three are on the executive committee. Having not been elected, these directors can be fairly questioned if they represent the residents.

Is Shelter Bay a country club of 2,000 people or a community seeking democratic discussion, debate and decision making? Is it a private organization, but if it is closed to the press what is being kept from its residents?

— Ken Stern

LETTER

Thanks for library support

The opportunity to be involved in a new library project in the community we chose to move to in 2007 has been a once in a lifetime experience. I'm grateful to have been able to work with so many who were dedicated to a shared vision that united our community. After a 20-year dream of the Friends of the Library, and an all-out effort over the past 10 years, our "little library that could" made it happen.

Thank you to the La Conner Library board of trustees for your commitment to the new library. You held fast to the goal of a building design and materials that would represent our community as well as reflect and respect the natural environment that surrounds us.

Thank you to the La Conner Library Foundation board of directors for your tireless support in raising the funds over the years. I was blessed to be able to work with all of you, especially Jim Airy, who joined the library board in 2019 after serving as president of the Foundation.

Working with Jim on the Foundation led to the development of partnerships that were critical to achieving our funding goals: the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, State of Washington and Skagit County, Town of La Conner and Mayor Ramon Hayes. Throughout this journey, many from all walks of life including local residents, service organizations, businesses and foundations contributed an impressive amount of time, talent and treasure. We would not have a new library without any one of them.

One of the greatest representations of democracy has existed in our tiny town since the 1920s when a number of groups and organizations came together as volunteers to start a library. Now the library serves 5,000 residents within our library district. It's a place that values and serves people of every age, income level, location, ethnicity and physical ability. That place is our library. Our La Conner Swinomish Library, where everyone is welcome.

I look forward to reading and relaxing in the light of those big bay windows. Hope to see you there!!

Susan Macek,
Former director, La Conner Library Foundation

A citizen's view —

Sea level rise and migratory birds

By John Day

Washington state is a crucial stopover for millions of migrating birds. The diverse landscapes, from the coast to the mountains, provide essential habitats for birds during their long journeys. Among many vital habitats, the Skagit Valley stands out as an especially important wintering ground for tens of thousands of migrating birds. As a major destination for snow geese, swans and other species, the Valley provides crucial resources and shelter during the colder months, helping to ensure the survival of these magnificent creatures.

As the climate changes, the significance of Washington as a bird stopover continues to increase. We must prepare now for the effects of climate change, such as how rising sea levels will impact our state's estuaries which are so critical to both birds and our communities. House Bill 1181 was introduced in Olympia to address this issue, requiring counties planning under the state's Growth Management Act to account for rising sea levels caused by climate change.

Washington is a significant stopover on the Pacific Flyway, a migratory route stretching from Alaska to Patagonia. Millions of birds rely on it each year between their breeding and wintering grounds. Washington lies right in the middle. It is a vital stopover for birds that need to rest, refuel and prepare for the next leg of their journey.

The changing climate is putting pressure on these habitats and the birds that rely on them. Warmer temperatures, altered precipitation patterns and sea level rise are all having an impact on ecosystems and the birds that depend on them. It is important that we protect and conserve these habitats and the stopover sites. Local officials must be incorporating our best understanding of climate change into their medium-to-long-range planning.

Our state is home to conservation organizations like Audubon that are working to protect the state's bird populations and habitats. These organizations work with private landowners, government agencies and other stakeholders to preserve the state's natural areas and ensure that they remain viable stopover sites for birds in the future. But conservation organizations need local governments to be good partners, taking responsibility for the future of our state's wildlife and natural resources. By planning for sea level rise and its impacts, we can help ensure that Washington remains a safe and vital stopover for migrating birds for generations to come.

Passing HB 1181 will be a significant step toward protecting natural habitats and stopover sites, like those here in Skagit County, essential for the survival of migrating birds. As someone who appreciates the beauty of nature and recognizes the importance of preserving our ecosystems, I urge you to get involved. Whether you're a birdwatcher, a conservationist or a concerned citizen, you can make a difference by contacting your legislators and encouraging them to pass HB 1181. Let's work together to protect the habitats Washington's birds depend on.

John Day is president of the Skagit Audubon Society. HB 1181 has passed the House and is being considered in the Senate. Governor Jay Inslee is advocating for it.

BNSF... (from page 1)

"unit trains" of 100 railcars or more were beginning to cross the Reservation. By April 2015, BNSF was reportedly running six 100-car "unit trains" per week across the Reservation, more than four times as much traffic as permitted by the easement. The tracks are adjacent to the Tribe's economic center, including a hotel and casino. The intended development of this economic center was one of the primary reasons for the limitation of the number of trains and cars incorporated into the easement.

Source: SITC

CORRECTIONS

Glen's Johnson phone number is 360-661-6099. Call him for a Jam Night and music in La Conner. The editor's regret the misprints March 22.

The Shelter Bay-Swinomish master lease is 75 not 50 years, as mistakenly stated in the March 29 editorial. The new lease will be 75 years. Shelter Bay's population may be as high as 2,100, not 1,800 people. These errors are also regretted.

Safety device, human error derailed Anacortes train, federal officials say

By John Ryan, KUOW News

The Federal Railroad Administration has confirmed KUOW reporting that a safety device meant to keep trains from plunging into Puget Sound knocked a train off the tracks and onto the Swinomish Reservation early Thursday morning.

The short, seven-car BNSF Railway train was approaching a swinging bridge over the Swinomish Channel after leaving an oil refinery in Anacortes.

The bridge swings open to let boats through the Swinomish Channel, a shallow, 11-mile long arm of Puget Sound that connects Padilla Bay to Skagit Bay.

Devices called "derailers" (or just "derails") sit on either side of the bridge, embedded in the railroad tracks, to force trains off the tracks when the bridge is open.

The morning of March 16 the bridge was properly lined up for the train to cross it, but at least one derailer was still in

operation.

The train's wheels hit the steel-wedge device, and the two engine cars in front toppled to the right, plowing to a stop on their sides in the dirt next to an RV park and casino before reaching the bridge.

State officials estimate the engine cars spilled up to 3,100 gallons of diesel from their fuel tanks. They said, because the train fell to the right, none of the spilled diesel reached Puget Sound, on the left side of the track.

"There was a miscommunication between the train crew and the bridge tender," said Federal Railroad Administration spokesperson Warren Flatau.

He said it appeared that neither the BNSF bridge tender nor the two-person BNSF train crew followed procedures.

"The person on the ground didn't do everything he was supposed to do," Flatau said.

Derailer devices usually have a bright-colored flag jutting up from the tracks when they are

deployed.

"The train crew's supposed to be paying attention to that," he said.

BNSF Railway spokesperson Lena Kent declined to comment.

"It does appear that there was a miscommunication between the crew and the bridge tender regarding the lining of the bridge and lowering of the derails," Herb Krohn with the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers said in an email. The union represents BNSF engineers and conductors.

Krohn said the train's engineer had "many years of experience."

Human error and poor track conditions are the leading causes of rail accidents in the United States, according to Federal Railroad Administration data.

Given the spill's location on a tribal reservation, the Federal Railroad Administration sent an official to the site to monitor its cleanup but is not conducting a full investigation, Flatau said.

The wreck of the short

train, with no injuries, fire, or explosion, did not meet the agency's threshold to conduct a full investigation, he said. That's even though thousands of gallons of diesel, a hazardous material, spilled onto the ground and into the groundwater beneath the Swinomish Reservation.

Flatau said the agency does not consider diesel to be a hazardous material unless it's part of a train's cargo.

At least 44 million tons of hazardous material moves on rail through Washington state each year, according to the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics.

Samish Indian Nation chair Tom Wooten, who was briefed by officials at the crash scene, first told KUOW about the derailer device knocking the two locomotives over. A third, empty railcar partially derailed, while four tanker cars, also empty, stayed on the tracks.

"It's actually a designed function of that rail system to keep the train from plummeting

off the end into the water, right when the bridge is not aligned for the railroad to use," Wooten said.

"It looks like the bridge tender screwed up by not deactivating the derailer," Omaha-based rail-accident investigator Russell Quimby said in an email.

"A train derailing device seems to be a very 1890s solution," Ken McClow of Granite Falls, Washington, commented on KUOW's Facebook page.

"Maybe ask Google if the bridge is open or closed before dumping a train off the tracks and polluting the ground. Seriously. Sensors, cameras, internet. I've got cameras and sensors in my house to tell me if the water is leaking, if a door is open. It's not difficult."

"Derailers may sound 'old school' but they are obviously very effective and are designed to prevent much bigger catastrophes," Quimby said. "Generally at low speeds,

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OBITUARY



Anne Marguerite Rice
4/3/1939 - 3/17/2023

Anne was born in Seattle to George and Mary Connell. She attended school on Queen Anne Hill, but at age 15 her family was uprooted and they moved to West Seattle where Anne met Lauren Rice, age 16. They became inseparable friends graduating from West Seattle High School, the University of Washington, and both earning masters degrees from Oregon State University. Anne and Lauren were married at West Side Presbyterian Church on December 26, 1959. They had a wonderful marriage for 63 years.

In 1960 Anne began her 29 year career teaching home economics. A master teacher, she showed her creativity and versatility by teaching grades 1 to 12, except 7. Her favorite position was grade 4 at Marvista School in Normandy Park where she lived. She also was a super Mom adding four healthy and highly educated boys to her family along the way. During their retirement years Anne and Lauren lived in Shelter Bay near La Conner.

Anne Rice was adventurous. She and Lauren built a 34 foot sail boat, and enjoyed sailing adventures from Baja to the NW. They were aviators flying their single engine planes extensively for 60 years, including to the four corners of North America. Anne was a traveler visiting over fifty countries. Anne is remembered for her nutritious meals, her water color paintings, photographs, memorable stories, and beach-combing displays. She enjoyed and shared nature's beauty. Anne's charm, warmth and quiet spirit will be greatly missed by everyone who knew her.

Anne Rice leaves behind her husband Lauren, sons Andrew (Susan), Jeremy (Julie), Toby (Eve), and Stacy (Melissa), seven grandchildren, and three great grandchildren. Anne died from dementia disease at age 83. She is interred at Forest Lawn Cemetery in West Seattle. A celebration of Anne's life will be held in June for her close family.



Council may expand Emergency Management Commission

By Bill Reynolds

Should the Town of La Conner's new Emergency Management Commission have five or six members? Town Council tabled adding a sixth person last week. An alternate might be added, though.

Resident Linda Talman nudged officials toward that compromise position during a lengthy discussion.

Mayor Ramon Hayes proposed adding a sixth voting member after Jamie Throgmorton applied. Her background makes her an asset to the commission.

Town Administrator Scott Thomas was tasked with drafting a resolution modifying membership.

Former council member Bill Stokes, a commissioner, expressed concerns about having six voting members.

"I think the idea of expanding the commission to six won't work well," Stokes said. "All the Town's other commissions have five members and if you have a

tie vote, who's the tie-breaker?"

"I've been on commissions here a long time," he continued. "There've been times when we've had split votes. Who decides how to advance forward?"

"I don't know that it's a big problem," Thomas replied. "The commission would be advisory in nature and the council would make the ultimate decisions either way if there's a split opinion."

Hayes and Council member Mary Wohleb, noting the urgency of emergency management planning post-December flooding, favored putting as many well-qualified applicants as possible on the commission.

"I think the important thing is to get the best and smartest people at the table," said Wohleb. "It doesn't matter to me if it's five, six, or seven. It's the brain power that matters. It's very rare when there's a dissenting vote. I say, 'the more, the merrier.'"

Councilmember Ivan Carlson (continued on page 7)

Long school board meeting March 27

By Bill Reynolds

New La Conner School Board of Directors Loran James and Kim Pedroza hit the ground running last week in a two-hour marathon meeting.

James and Pedroza were appointed last month to fill sudden board vacancies. They did not have the luxury of taking time to get up to speed.

And despite the length, it was a relatively fast-paced session.

New ground was presented midway through in the form of a 30-minute presentation and proposal by Morgan Brown and Jen Willup of the Between Two Worlds indigenous science class to develop a native food medicine forest and barbecue pit behind the Bruce Performing Arts Building, north of the Little Braves Preschool.

The curriculum is funded through a Title VI Indian Education Grant.

The campus garden project, said Willup, would allow students to "get their hands in the dirt" and allow those from farm families to share their knowledge

with school peers.

More important, students would learn first-hand the nutritional and healing properties of native foods, Brown and Willup noted.

Better yet, they said start-up money has been allocated to Between Two Worlds – which employs a project-based learning format – for the educational garden with the Swinomish Department of Environmental Protection being the tribal community's representative in charge of maintenance. School district costs will cover water and electricity.

Another selling point, they said, is collaborating with other school garden clubs.

"We'd like to be able to bring our classes outside into that space," Brown said. "The goal of this project is to provide this great space for students to experience growing these plants."

The board vowed to revisit the proposal.

"You have a great idea here and we do have questions," said board chair Susie Deyo, who asked that the matter advance to

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A View From The State House



Dave Paul
State Representative



District 10

Our democracy at work

Our town hall meetings aren't that different from what happens in the House and Senate in Olympia.

People share their opinions – sometimes softly, sometimes loudly. Yet the kind of dialogue we have—and the attitude we bring to that conversation—determines everything else.

It was an honor to host two bipartisan town hall meetings in March and to listen to your ideas, stories and questions. Every town hall is unique, because every community has different issues and ideas. What is the same each time is a shared passion for their neighborhood, their schools and their local businesses.

I try to listen to everyone with respect, because standing up and speaking out takes courage, especially if an issue is controversial.

The trick is to share our strong opinions without making it heated – and being able to move onto the next topic so that others can be heard, too. And I appreciate how people have done that at our town halls.

Because even our best friends and family members won't agree with us on every issue. My wife will tell you that I'm wrong about some (perhaps many) things.

The same thing is true in Olympia. We are constantly talking about controversial issues and having tough debates. Some of the hardest debates are with people you usually agree with on issues.

Right now, we're in the most contentious part of session, with the fate of every bill being decided on the floors of the House and Senate.

Both chambers have also released proposed operating, construction and transportation budgets.

You might be surprised to learn how bipartisan these budgets really are, especially the construction and transportation budgets. Sometimes, they pass unanimously. That is because we make a huge effort to listen to each other with respect and to craft budgets that build schools and parks and roads in every corner of our state.

Because, it doesn't matter whether a district has Republican or Democratic lawmakers. We need great public schools, community colleges and universities throughout the state, along with a highway system and ferry network that connects all 39 counties.

Budget highlights

Here are a few projects I championed that I believe are especially important to our community.

- We can do more to help students earn college and vocational credits while still in high school. I'm proud that the House Operating Budget includes my request to fund the Northwest CTE Dual Credit project to increase credential attainment for high school students in professional technical programs.

- The House Transportation budget includes my request for \$2.1 million to complete the Mount Vernon Library Commons, including the installation of electric vehicle infrastructure. This project will benefit our entire region and I'm excited to help secure this critical funding.

- Finally, I have heard from many of you about ensuring that the grant dollars awarded to the Museum of Northwest Art in 2021 are reappropriated for 2023. I'm pleased to report that House Capital budget reappropriates the funds, so that this important work can be completed.

As we negotiate with the Senate in the coming weeks, I will continue to advocate that these community programs and projects are included in the final budgets.

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SITKA



HOLDING COURT – La Conner Elementary School named its Daffodil Festival Royal Court Friday. Princess Heidi Wilbur, Prince Emmitt Alvord, King Jaydon Otis and Queen Isabella Rubalcaba will ride in a float during the La Conner Kiwanis Skagit Valley Tulip Festival Parade Saturday.
– Photo courtesy of Karla Reynolds

Baseball dropped back-to-back league games Friday

By Bill Reynolds

Growing pains aren't easy, but the La Conner High School baseball team's coaching staff takes solace knowing the youthful Braves are getting stronger.

Last week's NW2B/1B action at Darrington and at home against league leading Mount Vernon Christian are examples. Both games ended in the loss column, but the Braves played on equal terms save for one bad inning in each outing.

Darrington rode a 13-run second frame to an 18-7 triumph on Thursday. MVC also parlayed a big second inning – the Hurricanes plated 11 times in the stanza – into a 21-9 victory.

With the twin losses, La Conner fell to 1-5 and 0-4 in league contests.

"It was a tough week, but our depth is improving," Braves coach Jeremiah LeSourd told the Weekly News Sunday.

He cited strong games at the plate at Darrington from C.J. Edwards, Brogan Masonholder and Kaleb Otis.

Edwards ripped a two-run double. Masonholder delivered two base hits and drove in three runs. Otis batted in two runs on a double and a single.

And, Hadden Zimmerman lined his first base hit.

Against Mount Vernon Christian, La Conner settled down after its rocky second inning. Lefthander Logan Burks pitched well in relief and Ivory Damien made his mound debut, which LeSourd said lengthens the Braves pitching rotation going into the second half of the season.

Offensively, Damien and Otis contributed RBI singles.

La Conner was coming off a 13-0 non-league setback at Granite Falls last Tuesday. In that game, starting catcher Kenai Zimmerman took his first turn on the hill.

The Braves played at Friday Harbor yesterday and then play the Wolverines at home 4 p.m. Friday. They visit Orcas Saturday. All are league games.

The high school softball team has the same schedule.

Murdock, McCormick strike gold in league meet

By Bill Reynolds

Back in the day, PF Flyers claimed its sports shoes could make athletes run faster and jump higher.

La Conner's Tommy Murdock does that regardless of what footwear he laces up.

The Braves junior, a reigning state hurdles champion, took top honors in three events at an NW1B/2B track and field meet hosted by Mount Vernon Christian Wednesday afternoon.

Murdock, as expected, swept both hurdles events at Mount Vernon. He won the 110s with a 0:15.81 clocking and captured the 300s in a 0:41.51 finish.

In addition, he placed first in the 100-meter dash, hitting the tape at 0:11.49.

Murdock's triple crown led the Braves to third place on the boys' team scoreboard with 95.5 points. Coupeville, with 209

points, ran away with the team title.

Coupeville likewise was the front-runner on the girls' side of the meet, collecting 198 points.

The Lady Braves, paced by freshman Maeve McCormick's victory in the long jump, finished fifth out of 10 schools with 34 points.

The La Conner quartet of Shaniquah Casey, Acelynd Greening, Addison Keller and Emily Smith teamed to place fourth in the girls' sprint relay. The 4x100 meter entry clocked a 1:03.03 finish time.

Addison Wigal claimed the bronze medal in the girls' javelin with a toss of 72'4.5". Smith took fifth in the long jump at 23'0.5" Morgan Huizenga and Lydia Grossglass joined Wigal in the Top Ten of the javelin, placing sixth and eighth, respectively.

On the boys' side of the meet, Murdock was joined in the point

parade by teammates Jacob Pommels, Isaac Kitchen, Isaiah Price, Flint Huizenga, Thomas Kitchen, Alexzander Martin and Kali Adams.

Pommels placed second in the 200 meters (0:23.89) and fifth in the 100 (0:11.65), then combined with Price, Adams and Thomas Kitchen for a silver medal in the 4x100 relay (0:46.41) and ran a leg of the Braves' second place 4x400 relay entry (3:54.58), joining Price, Huizenga and Isaac Kitchen.

Price also contributed a bronze medal finish in the javelin (122'5").

Martin collected silver in the discus with his second-place throw measured at 121'9".

La Conner resumes action following spring break April 12 at the Skagit Showdown in Sedro-Woolley.

La Conner's Marble, Harper earn All-State hoops honors

By Bill Reynolds

The afterglow of a stellar high school basketball season continues to shine for two La Conner High School seniors.

Ellie Marble and Josie Harper have received Girls' 2B all-state recognition from two national digital sports outlets.

Marble was tabbed by SBLive, a technology partner of state associations, coaches and administrators, for first unit all-state honors. Harper was a second team selection.

Both Marble and Harper were first unit All-State choices of Prep Girls Sports, a major source of in-depth hoops news and coverage, team rankings, recruiting information and analysis.

"It's pretty special for the both of them to be recognized at such a high level," La Conner head girls' basketball coach Joe Harper told the Weekly News on Sunday. "I couldn't be prouder of them both."

The senior duo, along with classmates Makayla Herrera and

Kennedy Miller, helped lead La Conner to a second straight fourth place finish at the state Hardwood Classic last month.

Marble, a 6'-0" forward, has also been named as the Skagit Valley Herald Girls' Basketball Player of the Year.

Marble and Harper were joined on the SBLive and Prep Girls Sports All-State teams by Lauryn Madsen of Warren, which handed La Conner its lone loss at Spokane.

Madsen praised Marble, a Central Washington University volleyball signee and whom she guarded in their tourney matchup. Marble finished that game with 24 points. Madsen led Warden with 22.

"I was going to be the best matchup for her and so I knew she was going to score points no matter what and there wasn't any stopping her from fully scoring," Madsen said in a media interview afterward, "but it was just how many we could hold her to."

On the season, Marble was La Conner's top point maker, scor-

ing at a 21.8 per game clip.

Harper averaged 19.3 points per contest and Herrera chipped in another 12 points per outing for the Lady Braves, who posted a 22-6 record on the 2022-23 campaign.

Marble led Skagit County in scoring. Harper was the 2022 county scoring champion.

At Spokane, La Conner defeated Northwest Christian-Colbert, Rainier and Adna.

Prior to their back-to-back fourth place finishes, the Lady Braves placed second at the Hardwood Classic in 2020 just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and were runners-up in a 2021 summer state tourney that replaced the canceled Spokane tournament.

AAUW 2023 \$10,000 college scholarships

The Stanwood-Camano Branch of the American Association of University Women is accepting 2023 scholarship applications through April 29 for university students in their junior or senior year or in Master's Degree programs.

Scholarships of \$10,000 will be awarded to three applicants who are current residents of La Conner, Stanwood, Camano Island, Arlington or Lakewood areas or are high school graduates from these school districts. Applications are at aauwsc.org/scholarship.

Source: AAUW, Stanwood-Camano

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My Name is Olga and I live in Ukraine

By Judy Booth

This article is taken from edited emails received from Olga in Ukraine to Jan Paul of Shelter Bay. Jan has known Olga for twenty years. For security reasons we are not using Olga's or her family's last name.

Olga became friends with Steve and Jan Paul of Shelter Bay after winning a scholarship to study in the U.S. for one year. She did not live with the Pauls but visited often and stayed in contact with them through the years. They connected.

Olga writes: "Before war there were two kinds of people – those who thought it possible and those who thought it absurd." Olga was among the former and promptly put together a survival kit including water, food, candles and medicine.

She lived in Ivano- Frankivsk, near L'viv in western Ukraine by the Slovakian border with her

mother and two grandmothers. When not working her night job, she and her mother cared for her grandmother, who suffered from dementia. Her father and brother lived in Kiev, 340 miles away in central Ukraine.

Then, Feb. 23, 2022: A state of emergency was announced by the Ukrainian government. War felt imminent. She wanted to get her dad and brother out of Kiev.

"I paid a cab a huge amount of money to drive to Kiev and bring back my dad and brother and two dogs to Ivano- Frankivsk."

Like many others, her brother refused to think they would be invaded and did not want to leave his job. Olga put all her "patience and knowledge" into convincing her brother to flee Kiev.

Even though a state of emergency had been announced, authorities continued to say nothing serious would happen. At 7 p.m. Olga began her night

shift at work while continuing to call and convince her brother to return to Ivano- Frankivsk in the cab.

"So you think I just threw away \$500 for no reason just to hire a cab to get to Kiev to move you guys? You know I might be in panic, but I am way too far away from being dumb. Is there no doubt war is a possibility?"

He finally agreed. It would take the cab's rescue mission, a minivan, eight hours to reach Kiev. Two hours later the van was loaded with boxes, two humans, one still very angry about leaving Kiev and two dogs. So far, no bombs. No air raid sirens.

Back in Ivano- Frankivsk at work during "deep night," Olga heard planes flying overhead. On social media she read that Kiev was being bombed; her dad and brother having only left only an hour before.

Part II next week.

Mommy + me dance time



LET IT BE A DANCE – What is better than dancing with mommy at a yoga class in La Conner? Maybe only being in a parade or at an Easter egg hunt can beat that. This takes place at Crescent Moon Yoga

– Photo by Kylee Fortygin

By Kylee Fortygin

Early Friday mornings you can find parents and their children dancing up a storm at Crescent Moon Yoga Studio on Morris Street in La Conner. That is where the fabulous "Ms Mo" teaches kids dance and learning skills through fun activities.

"We've been coming since September" said Jessica Van Wagner who brought her toddler, Mae Mae, along. "My daughter learned her colors, better coordination, and how to take direction in an exciting way. This is a fun group setting to engage with others."

Ms Mo has been teaching dance for almost 20 years, both recreationally and for competition. She moved to La Conner in 2020 and has been building her business since COVID-19

restrictions were lifted. She offers different classes catered to different age groups; the Mommy + Me class is tailored to walking age up to three years old.

Dads and boys are also encouraged to attend. "He loves music and he needs to burn the energy" says Nicole Chase about her son Lochlan. The class starts with warm ups and cardio, continues with music and dance routines, then ends with prop time using whimsical ribbons and a colorful parachute with playhouse balls. It's a fun way for parents to get active with their kids while meeting other parents around town.

Ms Mo teaches in multiple locations posted on her Facebook page (facebook.com/MsMosedance).

Information on the La Conner classes at MsMosedanceLaConner Facebook page.

Larger birds at your backyard feeders

By Bob Hamblin

Here are ways to identify larger birds visiting your backyard and property. Every year or so some evening grosbeaks visit a feeder for sunflower seed. They are robin sized but more heavily built. They usually show up in small flocks vocalizing with whistle like calls. Male and females have different color patterns. Both have heavy seed cracking bills, and they show up in late winter into early spring. Their main food in this area is the samara or seed pod of big leafed maples. They nest in the middle elevations of the cascade mountains in conifer forests.

Black-headed grosbeaks are plump birds showing up in May as a nesting species. Males have a black hood and, like females, a

heavy thick bill and white wing patches. They also eat sunflower seeds. The male has a beautiful song, very similar to robins but faster and more complicated.

Spotted towhees are common residents. They are primarily ground dwellers and also enjoy sunflower seeds. They like low growing foliage where they nest. They are a little shy and do not allow close approaches. They may nest as early as March, ending in August.

Slightly smaller than the towhee, the red crossbill will show up when Douglas Fir cones are ripe. This is any time of the year. They also come to feeders for sunflower seeds. They show different colors with adult males

having reddish heads and underparts. Some slightly yellowish juveniles have streaked underparts.

Typical road work has started at the Wylie Game Range. Over 10 years ago the dikes on the perimeter of the range were built. As usual, they did not meet the high-water mark code. Now they are going to shut the area down to raise the dike another two feet, which won't be enough to control a new high tide surge. They are closing the area to hikers until October or November. You can no longer hike there until it is finished. I found in this area a lot to discuss about birds and habitat, but not this year. You may find me at the refuge three miles west of Wylie Road that will be open.

Easter egg hunts


Several Easter egg hunts will be held Saturday, April 8.

The La Conner Firefighter's Association egg hunt starts at 10 a.m. at Pioneer Park.

The Inspire Church has their egg hunt at 11 a.m. There will be over 20,000 eggs to find, a bounce house, food and more. The church is located at 17444 Snee Oosh Rd.

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COMING SOON: Live music and open mic – watch this space

Recall campaign targets 5 Shelter Bay directors

By Ken Stern

Embattled Shelter Bay Community Director Judy Kontos is on the offensive, petitioning since mid-March to have residents recall the five members of the board's executive committee. The board sanctioned Kontos in February after an ethics committee investigation Kontos believed was patently unfair.

The petitions against board President Wendy Poulton, Vice President Joseph Hurley, Treasurer Louise Kari, Secretary Monte Hicks and Secretary pro tem Elaine Dixon read the same: "In accordance with Shelter Bay Community, Inc. Article V, Section 2, we the undersigned members of Shelter Bay Community, Inc. and Shelter Bay Company call for an immediate mailing of 10 day notice to each member to facilitate a RECALL VOTE of the following Officer (name)."

Kontos explained via email: "This recall campaign is about Shelter Bay and what we 'can'

do together, not what we 'can't' do.

"The purpose of the petition is to force a special meeting of Shelter Bay residents be scheduled by the Board as mandated in our SB bylaws. The stated purpose of the special meeting is to be a community vote on recalling each Officer individually. It is not a slate, each officer will have a ballot voted on."

Signatures from 25% of the households, one per lot, or 218 leaseholders, are needed. Kontos says she has a cadre of supporters going door-to-door, hosting gatherings and getting signatures at the gatehouse entrance.

Kontos declined to report the number of signatures collected, but wrote "let's say I'm an overachiever. More is better."

Shelter Bay has slightly over 900 homes. It is organized as a homeowners association. Shelter Bay Community, Inc. is governed by an elected nine member board of directors. Its annual meeting is in May.

Shelter Bay court hearing April 14

By Ken Stern

Five Shelter Bay Community board of directors will get their day in Skagit County Superior Court April 14, but until then are restrained from taking any action on the organization's master lease with the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community or destroying any financial records.

In a hearing Friday, March 31, Judge Laura Riquelme found "good cause to grant some restraints" against the board's executive committee: Wendy Poulton, Elaine Dixon Monte Hicks, Joseph Hurley and Louise Kari. Leasehold resident Jan Henrie is the plaintiff. Her March 15 civil complaint accuses them of violating their statutory fiduciary duty and malfeasance.

Riquelme found "there appears to be immediate and irreparable damage that could result by the time we get to the merits" of the case. She rejected defense attorney Kyle Rekofke's arguments that there was no basis for imposing conditions and that the board should not be enjoined from making financial decisions.

Paul Taylor, Henrie's lawyer, called the March 15 request for a temporary restraining order "critical" to prevent the defendants from passing decisions that would violate the master lease and "violate Washington law." He claimed the situation for Shelter Bay's residents is an "emergency" and that "for the last six months (the defendants) have been giving out misinformation and disinformation."

The hearing was on Henrie's motion for a preliminary injunction and the defendants' motion for a continuance. Some 25 people attended, almost all via Zoom.

Rekofke noted his "clients have and will promise to govern within the law."

Riquelme heard a similar case against these board members in December. Shelter Bay resident Roberta Fontenot had sought an injunction for breach of fiduciary duty. She permitted Fontenot to withdraw the complaint without prejudice, which means refile was possible.

The April 14 hearing will be at 9:30 a.m.

Town of La Conner citizen survey

The Town of La Conner is interested in your opinion. It has created a survey for town residents regarding Town of La Conner services and community resources. To complete this survey, go to the Town's website and click on the link at the top of the home page. The deadline for online survey submittals is May 14.

Or, pick up a paper copy at Town Hall, 204 Douglas Street. The deadline for paper copy survey submittals is May 10.

Website: townoflaconner.org
Source: *Town of La Conner*

Rain Report: March

Rain March 26-April 1: 0.04
Rainfall in March: 2.11"
Number of rain days: 15
Least rain, one day: 0.01", 2 days
Most rain, one day: 0.38", Mar. 24
Least rain: 1.35", 2019
Most rain: 5.0", 2017
Average rainfall, 2000-2022: 3.04"
Rainfall last month, Feb.: 2.43"
All totals in inches. Data from WSU Mount Vernon.

Shelter Bay

■ ■ ■ (from page 1)

presence of a reporter from the local press can change some people's willingness to participate and that is not fair or helpful to the members."

"Your decision," Stern responded, "is disappointing, of course."

A community-wide email to residents Saturday explained that threats of disrupting the meeting necessitated the change.

"We were contacted last week by a board member letting us know the meeting may be subject to disruption and wanted us to be aware of a possible response being needed during the meeting," Swinomish Tribal Police Chief Earl Cowan confirmed Monday.

Board member Joe Hurley apologized for the change in for-

mat when he opened the Zoom meeting, but said it was "made out of an abundance of caution."

The agenda allowed Kontos, accused of four code of conduct violations – each of which she vehemently denies – to deliver a 10-minute statement.

"I was hoping," said Kontos, elected to the board last May on a reform platform, "to see everyone face-to-face."

She offered a point-by-point defense of her actions, specifically denying having released any confidential information or being a party to litigation last year against five board members.

Kontos, who brought four decades of experience in finance to the board, said she was elected to the governing panel on the pledge of providing fiscal expertise and greater transparency.

"I've been raising questions with the board since my seating,"

she said.

"This is a valuable seat," Kontos added. "Please make sure I continue to hold it, so we don't have another appointed director." Four of the nine members are board appointed.

In closing remarks, Kontos noted that she has worked cooperatively with colleagues in the business world her entire career and during her time on the board has refrained from posting views on social media, frequently seen as a contentious venue.

"Let's be fully informed before we vote," she implored.

Board members were given the opportunity to speak, as were community members, who alternated between those in favor of recalling Kontos and those supporting her retention.

Board members Gary Ladd and Monte Hicks presented opposing views.

Ladd, past moderator of in-person town halls, endorsed Kontos.

"I continue to believe that Judy Kontos is a valuable member of this community and a valued member of this board," he said.

Hicks, the board's secretary, insisted that Kontos must be removed from the board. He referred to her at one point as a "litigation bully" who hides her identity behind others, most notably attorneys who have brought complaints against Shelter Bay leadership.

Those who volunteered to speak were often referred to by only their first names.

One speaker said he had voted for Kontos last year but would now support the recall. Another who will vote to recall Kontos alluded to Shelter Bay's "need to get back to normalcy," and said that the community's staff and

officials have been helpful and forthcoming in responding to his requests for information.

Yet another resident supporting the recall said Kontos had promoted divisiveness and taken "a hostile stance against the board."

Kontos supporters rallied to her side by praising her willingness to ask tough questions while simultaneously trying to tone down turmoil in the community dating to 2020's unauthorized cutting of trees at Rainbow Park by former board member Steve Swigert, resulting in \$92,000 in penalties and fines imposed by the Swinomish Planning Department.

One speaker admitted to not knowing if she was for or against the recall. Someone else provided what likely was the one consensus statement that emerged.

"It's all absolutely exhausting," she said.

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Train

■ ■ ■ (from page 2)

derailers just derail without putting rail vehicles on their sides.”

Since 2020, major rail lines in the United States have had a more modern system known as “positive train control” to keep trains from speeding or running into obstacles including other trains.

That system is required on railroads’ main lines but not minor branch lines.

State and federal politicians have been pushing for other safety improvements on the nation’s rails, especially since

a train carrying hazardous materials spilled vinyl chloride and other carcinogens near the town of East Palestine, Ohio, in February.

“Unfortunately, a lot of this stuff doesn’t get improved until accidents happen,” Wooten said.

By March 18, crews at the Swinomish Reservation spill site had removed 2,100 cubic yards of contaminated soil – about 175 dump-truck loads – and 4,300 gallons of contaminated groundwater, according to agencies responding to the spill.

Responders planned to install a series of “sparging” wells that pump air underground to speed the evaporation of volatile petroleum products left in the

groundwater. Vacuum trucks would then suck the petroleum vapors out of the ground.

Officials say no spill impacts to human health, fish or wildlife have been observed.

According to agencies responding to the spill, BNSF Railway will pay the full cost of the cleanup.

On March 22, Washington Democratic Sen. Maria Cantwell chaired a U.S. Senate hearing on improving rail safety nationwide.

“We have to have minimum safety standards. We have to have modernization of safety technology,” Cantwell said.

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Council

■ ■ ■ (from page 3)

sided with Stokes.

Councilmember Annie Taylor predicted perfect commission attendance will be unlikely.

The compromise brings Throgmorton on with voting privileges when a commissioner is not present at meetings.

“Her voice,” Hayes said, “would be too great not to have at the table.”

Hayes also weighed in briefly with an overview of current events in the nearby Shelter Bay residential community, whose 75-year master lease with the

Swinomish Tribal Community expires in two decades.

“It’s extremely complicated and it affects all of us,” said Hayes. “The lessees in Shelter Bay pay seven per cent of the raw land value and have a master lease that expires in 2044, 21 short years away. Lenders won’t advance 30-year mortgages. They’ve been negotiating as long as I’ve been mayor.”

“The real issue,” said Hayes, “is they have to come to terms with that lease. It’s something we need to be following. It’s important to the La Conner community.”

Also, resident Sandy Stokes reported at least two recent home

burglaries in her neighborhood.

“I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again,” Hayes responded, “but I think a citizens’ patrol is a good idea for this community.”

Waterfront property owner Chip Hall thanked officials for facilitating a meeting between him, a neighbor, and Department of Natural Resources staff over a disputed shoreline lease.

Hayes said the issue has been discussed at Town Hall and that council will have to act on it.

Lastly, Talman cautioned the Council that the emergence of vacation rentals can have a significant adverse effect on the town’s tight housing market.

School

■ ■ ■ (from page 3)

a board study session for review.

Though not stated directly, the native plant garden would appear to be the type of innovative project school officials are exploring as “pull factors” to boost district attendance during a period of statewide and national student enrollment declines.

Deyo identified the Braves Club as one already in place. The after-school program has a membership of 81 students and a daily average attendance of just under 60, according to data provided by Andy Wheeler, special services director. He said a new grant application for future funding is being prepared.

“I think having the Braves Club is a pull (for us),” Deyo said. “Parents know someone will be here helping their students with homework until they get off work.”

The revived Little Braves Preschool is likewise a potential enrollment pull factor, Superintendent Will Nelson said during a public forum at the Waterfront Café the week before.

“We’re looking at marketing ourselves and we reopened the Little Braves Preschool this year,” Nelson said. “Our feeling is that if we have a preschool, it’s most likely those students will matriculate into our kindergarten.”

Discussion turned to recognition of the historically significant milestones of Whittaker Field, which opened during the 1972-73 academic year. A May 3 ceremony will observe the golden anniversary of Whittaker Field’s dedication as part of a

track meet.

The undefeated 1968 Braves football team, whose head coach, the late Jim Frey, was instrumental in the successful drive to install a lighted athletics field on the local campus, will also be recognized.

That team played afternoon home games since there were no stadium lights, which made attendance difficult for working parents and fans.

“We’re in the process of finalizing details,” La Conner Middle and High School Principal Christine Tripp said.

The field is named for the legendary one-armed La Conner coach and administrator Jack Whittaker. His family members are expected to attend.

“Our band will be performing,” Tripp added, “and we’re trying to make it a community gathering event.”

Board member John Agen, was a junior and the starting quarterback when the lights at Whittaker Field were first turned on and over the course of two seasons never experienced a loss there.

Retired La Conner Schools teacher and administrator Maureen Harlan, a friend and colleague of Frey’s, sought and received board approval to honor the ’68 team at the re-dedication

ceremony.

“Mr. Frey,” Harlan told the board, “was the one who pushed hard to get the lighted field.”

In other school board business:

• Wilbur was the unanimous choice to succeed Lynette Cram as board vice-president. Cram resigned last month when her husband, David Cram, returned to the district as its chief financial officer.

• Nelson said he and district Teaching and Learning Assistant Director Beth Clothier have been in discussions with new Skagit Valley College President Chris Villa about a dual credit math collaboration that would allow La Conner students to be counted as full-time students here while also earning college credit through SVC. “It’s a win-win,” Nelson said.

• Agen, the district’s liaison with the state legislature, lamented that the percentage of funding support from Olympia to public schools continues to dip despite a mandate that the state fully fund education. “It’s disappointing,” said Agen. “And exasperated by inflation,” Nelson responded.

• The high school basketball teams and coaches and the school’s cheerleaders and band were praised for successful winter seasons.

POLICE BLOTTER

SKAGIT COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sunday, March 26

11:28 a.m.: Burglary – The caller said their house was entered and ransacked while they were in the process of moving out. Deputies collected evidence, investigation continuing. Caledonia St., La Conner.

12:25 p.m.: Grate theft – Report of the theft of a grate off the Padilla Trail. Deputies located the grate in the area and were able to put it back. The damage was reported to the owners, the Department of Ecology, Bay View Edison Rd., Greater La Conner.

Monday, March 27

9:11 a.m.: Photographers keep out – Caller reported trespassers on their property. The suspects had walked past no trespassing signs to take pictures of the geese. Best Rd.,

Greater La Conner.

Wednesday, March 29

12:48 a.m.: Car vs pole – Deputies responded to a car accident involving one car vs a pole. The driver was arrested for suspicion of DUI. Best/Young Rds., Greater La Conner.

1:52 p.m.: Mail thief – Report of a cold theft of mail. The caller said her locking mailbox door was left open and her mail was gone. Best Rd., Greater La Conner.

Friday, March 31

4:40 p.m.: Fender bender – Deputies responded to a two vehicle, rear end car accident. The driver of the causing vehicle was arrested for suspicion of DUI. Best/Valentine Rds., Greater La Conner.

Rain. . . (from page 1)

and one of 11 years under three inches of rain.

Seven of the driest Marches have been since 2013, with 2019's 1.3 inches the least rain and 2021's 1.6 inches the third driest year.

Yet four of the wettest years since 2000 have been since 2014, with the five inches in 2017 the most rain.

The month's average rainfall for the century is now 3 inches.

This year was nine-tenths an inch, 30.6% below that.

For 2023, rainfall has totaled 6.23 inches. That is 3.7 inches and 37% under the 24 year century average as the region heads into six months of less rain. April's century average is 2.7 inches.

March did not set a single weather record.

Measurements and data are at Washington State University's Mount Vernon weather station on Memorial Highway.

See rain report box page 6.

Anacortes Nautical
Treasure Hunt
April 14-23, 2023

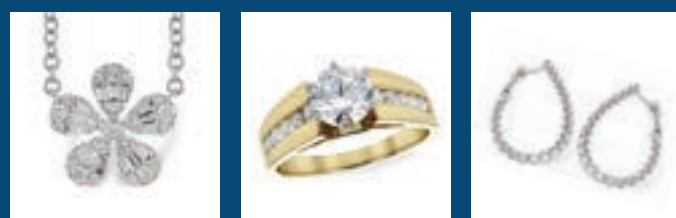
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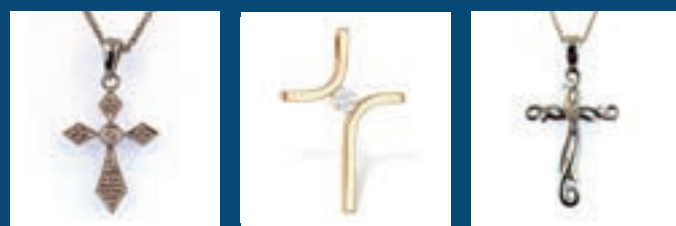
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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Complete Events Calendar on laconnerweeklynews.com

NOT TO BE MISSED

Impromptu Tulip Parade.
April 8, 2 p.m. Check in at La Conner Marina South basin parking lot at 12:30 p.m. To enter, fill out form on genuineskagitvalley.com

Spring Garage Sale.
April 7-8, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Skagit County Fairgrounds. Admission is \$5 per adult and free for kids 12 and under. Easter egg hunt on Sat at 11:30 a.m.

Tulip Town.
15002 Bradshaw Rd, Mount Vernon. 360-424-8152. tuliptown.com.

Locals Night. April 12, 5-7 p.m. Free admission. Be prepared to show ID.

Heritage Flight Museum.
15053 Crosswind Dr, Burlington. 360-424-5151. heritageflight.org.

April Fly Day. April 15, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Admission: \$12 Adults, \$10 Seniors, \$5 Military and Kids 5-17, Free for members and kids under 5.

ART & THEATRE

Lincoln Theatre.
712 S 1st St, Mount Vernon. 360-336-8955. lincoltheatre.org.

Live Theatre: Something Rotten.
Fri-Sat 7:30 p.m. and Sun 3 p.m. April 14-23.

Gallery W.
101 N 1st St, La Conner. 360-265-2374. galleryw.art

Exhibit: "Emerge" Invitational Show. Through April 30.

Museum of Northwest Art.
monamuseum.org, 360-466-4446.

Teen Art Club. Fridays twice a month, 3-5 p.m. Free for grades 6-12. Pizza, snacks and art supplies are provided. Find schedule online.

Recycled books into art journals workshop. April 15, 1-3:30 p.m. Ages 14+ class fee is \$30. Taught by Rachel Simpson.

LIBRARIES

La Conner Swinomish Library.
520 Morris St, La Conner. 360-466-3352. ldlib.wa.us. Open 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday.

Storytime. Every Friday at 11 a.m.

Anacortes Public Library.
360-299-8067, CityofAnacortes.org. 1220 10th St, Anacortes.

Tech Help. Every weekday at library front desk. 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Drop-in for hands-on help.

Maritime Speaker Series: Above and Below the Salish Sea. April 8, 2 p.m.

What Laughter Tells Us: Asian Americans, Laughter & Belonging. April 12, 6 p.m. A free talk Michelle Liu of Humanities Washington.

Mount Vernon Public Library.
360-336-6209, mountvernonwa.gov. 315 Snoqualmie St, Mount Vernon.

Virtual Reality. Every Saturday 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Must be 18 or older.

Baby Storytime. Every Friday 10:30-11 a.m.

MUSEUM EXHIBITS

Museum of Northwest Art. Open daily 10 a.m.-5 p.m. monamuseum.org, 360-466-4446.

Exhibit: Permanent Immigrant, Italo Scanga in the Dale and Leslie Chihuly Collection. Through May 14.

Exhibit: Geppetto's Children, Italo Scanga at Pilchuck Glass School. Through May 14.

Pacific Northwest Quilt & Fiber Arts Museum. Wed-Sun, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. qfamuseum.org, 360-466-4288. 703 S Second St, La Conner.

Exhibit: Bedtime Stitches. Through April 30.

Skagit County Historical Museum. 360-466-3365 or skagitcounty.net/museum. Hours: Thurs-Sun 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

Exhibit: Quilt Until You Wilt. Through June 2023. Design your own paper quilts.

MUSIC

Ukelele Fun & Song Circle.
Meet every Wednesday. 1-2 p.m., Burlington Senior Center. For more info, email yogaheartspace0@gmail.com.

Shelter Bay Chorus.
Meet every Thursday. 4:30-6:30 p.m., Shelter Bay Clubhouse. No auditions required, just a joy for singing. Questions, call Joan 360-941-7507.

MEETINGS

Town of La Conner
204 Douglas St, La Conner. 360-466-3125. Zoom info @Townoflaconner.org/calendar.

Town Council. April 11, 6 p.m. at Maple Hall.

Parks Commission. April 12, 9:30 a.m. at Maple Hall.

Arts Commission. April 13, 10:30 a.m. at Maple Hall.

Planning Commission. April 18, 6 p.m. at Maple Hall.

La Conner School District
305 N 6th St, La Conner. 360-466-4113. lcsd.wednet.edu.

School board special meeting. April 10, 1-3 p.m. via Zoom.

Candid Conversations & Community Coffee. April 11, 6 p.m. at Swinomish Education Tents.

Skagit Conservation District 2021
E. College Way #203, Mt. Vernon. 360-428-4313. Zoom info @skagitcd.org.

Board meetings. Every fourth Wednesday 7:30-9 a.m.

Rotary Club of La Conner.
laconnerrotary.org. Meetings Monday, 6-7 p.m. at Shawn O'Donnell's Farmhouse restaurant - optional dinner at 5:30 p.m.

Skagit Cemetery District One.
Regular meetings. Every second Thursday, 5 p.m. at Lori Buher's home, 17604 Valentine Rd., Mount Vernon.

Little Mountain Gamblers.
Gamblers Anonymous. Every Tuesday, 6:30 p.m. at Senior Center in Mount Vernon. 1401 Cleveland Ave. Any questions, call Washington State Gamblers Anonymous hotline at 855-222-5542.

SERVICE & VOLUNTEER

La Conner Sunrise Food Bank. Food distribution every Monday from 2:30-5 p.m. 602 S. 3rd St., La Conner. 360-488-3878. laconnerfoodbank.com.

Swinomish Helping Hands Food Bank. Food distribution every Thursday from 2-5 p.m. Non-essentials every first Thursday. 17444 Snee Oosh Rd, La Conner. 360-856-2211. helpinghands-foodbank.org.

Skagit Valley Humane Society. 18841 Kelleher Rd, Burlington. 360-757-0445. skagithumane.org. Find volunteer/donation opportunities online.



By Patricia Aqimuk Paul, Esq., Food Editor.

Baked Tofu Slices

I snacked on two of these slices. I now have snacks for a few days. Way better to grab a slice or two of these instead of chips. These turn out soft on the inside with a slight crunch on the outside. We keep nutritional yeast in our cupboards to sprinkle on popcorn. In this recipe, it provides a nutty flavor to the coating. They bake up quickly so stay near the kitchen and use a timer. I set two timers: The one built into our kitchen stove and the timer in my cell phone.

Ingredients

- Firm Tofu, 1 pound
- Whole wheat flour, 6 tbsp
- Nutritional yeast, 2 tbsp
- Onion powder or blend, 2 tsp
- Garlic granules or powder, 1 tsp
- Powdered sage, ¼ tsp
- Black Peppercorn, 1/8 tsp
- Soy sauce, 2 tbsp
- Olive oil, 1 tbsp



Preparation

Drain the tofu. Slice ¼ inch thick. Should be about 12 slices. Use two medium bowls. Into the first bowl add soy sauce. In the second bowl, add the dry ingredients. I use a small whisk to mix them together. Prepare a large flat baking sheet. Spread the oil over the baking sheet. Dip each slice of tofu in the soy sauce. Then dredge them in the dry ingredient dish. Flip a few times, to get them evenly coated. Place evenly apart on the baking sheet. Bake in a 400 F oven for 10 minutes. Then turn over and bake an additional five minutes. Serve warm or cold. Store in the refrigerator.

AqimuksKitchen@outlook.com

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Super Crossword

HAVING FLITTING THOUGHTS

- ACROSS**
- 1 One of Chrysler's K-cars
 - 11 Imaginary
 - 21 Lack of refinement
 - 22 Open to discussion
 - 23 * Golf format not based on the number of holes won
 - 24 * Part of an internal-combustion engine
 - 25 Take an ax to
 - 26 Ornate wardrobe
 - 28 Nice 'n Easy product
 - 29 Shin locale
 - 30 Stumblebum
 - 33 Austrian cake
 - 34 Up on the latest
 - 37 "Binary" singer DiFranco
 - 39 S. Amer. country
 - 40 Much like
 - 41 Calculus pioneer Leonhard
 - 42 Hot temper
 - 43 Scanned ID in a market
 - 44 Cartoon pic
 - 45 Twist, as in a hose
 - 47 Dark deli loaf
 - 48 City haze
 - 49 The Browns, on sports tickers
 - 50 Volunteer's response
 - 52 Star pitchers
 - 54 Getz of jazz
 - 55 List-curling abbr.
 - 56 Brief letter
 - 57 Roofing material
 - 59 Like an old apple's consistency
 - 60 Bit of a script
 - 61 Fear greatly
 - 63 Longtime operating system
 - 64 Spanish pot
 - 65 Blackthorn fruits
 - 66 Supplement
 - 67 Word that can precede the starts of the answers to the five starred clues
 - 69 Trousers
 - 70 Car navig. aid
 - 72 Owner of WordPerfect
 - 73 Cato's "I love"
 - 75 Brainteaser
 - 79 Sacred spots
 - 81 Soviet spacecraft series
 - 86 "Lord Jim" novelist Joseph
 - 87 * Buyer's final figure
 - 88 Membrane covering a lung
 - 89 Creole cooking pods
 - 90 Temporarily stylish thing
 - 91 Take to court
 - 93 Leash, e.g.
 - 94 Tony winner Schreiber
 - 95 Roofing material
 - 96 "It's so-so"
 - 99 Winter illness
 - 101 Director Preminger
 - 102 Roof part
 - 103 Mine car load
 - 104 Yoko of art
 - 105 Shark part
 - 106 Sped
 - 107 Genesis twin
 - 109 Small stream
 - 111 "Smooth Operator" singer
 - 113 * Vessel for crustacean fishing
 - 117 * Removes tenderly, as a lover's tears
 - 122 City in central Illinois
 - 123 Hawaii's nickname
 - 124 Super-corny
 - 125 Occupancy levies
- DOWN**
- 1 Talk smack to
 - 2 Like official public statements
 - 3 Freed from federal restrictions
 - 4 Give off light
 - 5 "Look, mice!"
 - 6 Ripen
 - 7 Lil Jon's genre
 - 8 Around H'wood, e.g.
 - 9 French card game
 - 10 Actress Jane
 - 11 One asked to attend a party
 - 12 Less remote
 - 13 Eye creepily
 - 14 Thanksgiving mo.
 - 15 Summer, to Jeanne
 - 16 Form a lap
 - 17 Tough
 - 18 Many a virtual bidding event
 - 19 Ork, Krypton or Melmac
 - 20 Lion's home
 - 27 Paris airport
 - 29 "Righteously" singer Williams
 - 30 Desk wood
 - 31 Pseudonym
 - 32 Groups for devotees
 - 34 Vast Asian mountain system
 - 35 Satirical device
 - 36 Tent securer
 - 38 Straight up, in a bar
 - 46 Reeves of "The Matrix"
 - 48 Fair booth
 - 51 Straight up, in a bar
 - 53 Sutured
 - 54 Like altruists
 - 55 Singer Fitzgerald
 - 58 Obtain by threatening
 - 59 Singer Rita
 - 62 Church teachings
 - 65 Film holders
 - 68 Rock's Clapton
 - 71 Launching platform
 - 74 Star athlete, for short
 - 75 Place to learn, in Lyon
 - 76 Smartphone company
 - 77 The opposite way
 - 78 Cemetery plot
 - 79 Animal trap
 - 80 Pack full
 - 82 Information group for analysis
 - 83 Big name in car cleaning products
 - 84 Speechify
 - 85 "Thwack!"
 - 90 Remote
 - 92 Moniker for a Yale student
 - 95 Coverer of a bald spot
 - 96 Unlike gods
 - 97 Brian of Roxy Music
 - 98 Pipe with a flexible tube
 - 100 Open, as a Ziploc bag
 - 108 Band blasters
 - 109 Renege (on)
 - 110 Drug bust unit
 - 112 Mgr.'s helper
 - 113 "Wait a —!"
 - 114 "In your face!"
 - 115 Actor Saget
 - 116 Singer Rita
 - 118 Topping sort
 - 119 That girl
 - 120 Supped
 - 121 "Definitely!"

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Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ◆◆◆

◆ Moderate ◆◆ Challenging
◆◆◆ HOO BOY!

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Puzzle Answers Page 8

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Piles are actively managed, turned and moved and monitored at the two-plus acre site behind the fire station on Chilberg Road.

The multi-step process involves PVC pipe aeration and adding microorganisms from the wastewater treatment plant that incubate the pile. The process produces intense heat, cooking the piles to more than 150 degrees for 14 days, then, another 72-hour period that is even hotter, plus 30 days of curing.

The finished compost is tested by the Department of Health before offered to residents or sold to commercial gardens, nurseries and landscapers.

The Class A quality compost is excellent for use in flowerbeds and landscaping. Residents can load up at the kiosk next to the fire station. They do so at the world's most popular price: FREE.

Larger loads are filled for a fee. Screened compost costs more.

La Conner, Shelter Bay and Swinomish Reservation residents and users of the wastewater treatment plant can drop-off yard waste at the site. Punch cards to pay for each load are purchased at Town Hall beforehand.

Kelly Wynn is superintendent of the wastewater treatment plant and composting facility. The Town has contracted with his company, Water and Wastewater Services, for over 40 years.

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Summer - U-Pick/We-Pick Berries, Garden Produce, Pickling Cucumbers, Sweet Corn, Cherries, Apricots, Nectarines, Peaches, Melons, Tomatoes, Flower Bouquets

Fall - Pumpkin Harvest & Family fun! Local Cider, Apples, Sweet Corn, Winter Squash, Fall Decorations

Winter - Trees (we flock), Wreaths, Garland, Holly, Ornaments & Nuts



15565 SR 536, Mount Vernon (360) 424-6982