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RETURN OF THE HUMPIES—Fishermen stand chest deep in the Skagit River, casting their lines in a hopeful attempt to catch salmon. —Photo by Gary Brown

Maple Ave. COA building sale listing discussed at planning meeting

By Bill Reynolds

There has been extended debate in town over pending new construction of a multi-unit residential building in a commercial zone.

The focal point for that dialogue is the “Talmon Project” at 306 Center Street.

In a coincidental twist, Town of La Conner Planning Commissioners and staff were asked last week about the status of a longtime commercial building in a residential zone.

The former COA restaurant at the corner of Maple Avenue and Washington Street – perhaps better known as the ‘new Joe’s Drive-In’ by locals of a certain age – is surrounded by a large parking lot. The vacant structure has undergone extensive remodeling in recent months and is now listed for sale for commercial/retail use for \$499,000, according to La Conner residents attending the Sept. 19 Town Planning Commission hybrid meeting at Maple Hall.

But the history of the property suggests a somewhat different scenario. One that would more accurately identify the property as residential since the non-conforming use under which the restaurant had operated is no longer valid due to its extended vacancy.

The building has lost its non-conforming use designation because it has been vacant more than six months and no one has applied for an extension, Town leaders said.

“It’s a commercial building,” noted Town Assistant Planner Ajah Eills, “but on a residential property.”

Eills and Town Planner Michael Davolio said they can’t control how realtors list the property, but are hopeful prospective buyers are made aware of it being zoned residential.

“In the end, though,” said Eills, “it’s the responsibility off the buyer to know the zoning.”

Davolio, Eills, and Town Administrator Scott Thomas said a buyer of the COA property would have to apply for a variance to use the building commercially again. That variance application would be reviewed by Town Hearing Examiner David Lowell, Eills said.

“That is the correct analysis,” Thomas told the Weekly News on Wednesday. “It was a legal nonconforming use as a restaurant. That use was abandoned after the restaurant use was terminated for a period of time.”

Resident Kathy Shiner brought to the commission’s attention that the 214 Maple Avenue property is being advertised with a commercial/retail listing.

“It’s not accurate,” Shiner told commissioners. “It should be residential.”

Former planning commissioner Linda Talman shared with present members of the Town advisory panel a snapshot of the property’s history.

“I did an information request for that property,” Talman said. “I knew it would be a mess when it came up.”

The Sanford family opened the original Joe’s Drive-In more than a half-century ago on the southeast corner of its Maple Avenue property, next to Talbot Street. The Sanfords later expanded their business, famed for its shrimp burgers and

State grants \$11.9 million to eight organizations for salmon recovery projects in Skagit County

By Ken Stern

When the Washington State Salmon Recovery Funding Board and the Puget Sound Partnership awarded \$81.5 million through 150 grants in 29 counties Sept. 18, they were sending \$11,948,293 to eight organizations and institutions in Skagit County for recovering at-risk salmon species.

In a news release, Gov. Jay Inslee said, “These are important projects that will help us restore our salmon populations. They also provide many other benefits.

When we clean up our rivers, we not only help salmon, we reduce flooding, help our communities adapt to climate change and preserve jobs that rely on healthy salmon and natural resources.”

The funds into Skagit County are 14.7% of the total distributed across 29 counties. The 18 projects here are 12% of those funded. Sixty-six grants totaling \$53.7 million will target projects in and around Puget Sound, Washington state’s biggest estuary, the news release states.

The \$3.8 million going to the Department of Fish and Wildlife is for restoring estuary habitat on Milltown Island in the South Fork Skagit River delta. The department will remove portions of the perimeter dike and cross-dike, excavate channels and tidal headwaters, manage weeds and plant native estuarine vegetation. The work will restore water, sediment and wood delivery to the 220-acre site allowing natural processes to maintain newly connected estuarine habitats.

The Lummi Nation has two grants totaling \$2.1. Their \$1.4 million grant will place 17 logjams and 37 habitat structures in the South Fork Nooksack River, north of



EAGLES NEED SALMON TOO
 A bald eagle feasts on salmon. —Photo by Nancy Crowell

Lyman. The Tribe will plant twenty-two acres of riverbank to restore spawning, rearing and holding habitat for Chinook salmon.

Their \$950,771 project is to restore habitat in the South Fork Nooksack River, west of State Route 9, at Cavanaugh Island. It will also place logjams, 14, and plant trees and bushes on the river’s banks.

The Skagit River System Cooperative received seven grants totaling \$2.8 million with projects ranging from \$150,000 to \$1.9 million. The largest grant designs the restoration of Tenas Creek, a tributary of the Suiattle River. Their other projects are restorations of the middle Skagit River floodplain; the banks of Davis Slough and Barnaby Slough; replanting the banks of Alder Creek and the Skagit River; and planting and maintaining lands in the Skagit River basin and its watershed.

The SRSC provides natural resource management services for the Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe and the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community.

The Skagit Land Trust expects to buy 75 acres of riverfront and floodplain in the Skagit River watershed to conserve high-quality habitat and enable restoration of impacted habitat.

The Skagit County government’s two grants are fish passage design for Mill Creek, \$458,263 and Martin Slough, \$391,000.

The Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group’s three grants total \$502,194. Its \$224,000 grant is for treating invasive plants and replanting the floodplain and banks of the middle and upper Skagit River. The \$150,000 award will help remove competing plants and controlling invasive weeds working with eight landowners on 121 acres of Skagit River floodplain and land along waterways. The \$128,194 funds a feasibility study for reconnecting a historic tidal wetland with Bowman Bay.

The Upper Skagit Indian Tribe has \$180,000 to improve

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Larry Kibbee residential unit dedicated at FD 13 open house

By Bill Reynolds

No amount of rain was going to dampen spirits at the Skagit County Fire District 13 Open House Saturday.

That is because the event’s guest of honor, retired fire district commissioner and former Shelter Bay resident Larry Kibbee, has long been admired for his sunny disposition.

Kibbee served six years on the fire district’s governing panel prior to moving to Bothell. He returned to the Snee Oosh Road station for the formal dedication of a new residential building that bears his name.

“I wouldn’t have missed it,” Kibbee told the Weekly News afterward. “It’s a super facility.”

Following a brief outdoor ribbon-cutting ceremony, abbreviated due to steadily increasing rainfall, those in attendance were invited to tour the spacious modular building.

Plans for the on-site housing, an on-the-job home away from home for district firefighters and emergency medical personnel, have been in the works for several years – dating to Kibbee’s tenure as commissioner – but were stalled during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The long-awaited open house was a festive occasion despite the gray, drizzly conditions.

Commission chair Bruce Shellhamer donned his chef’s hat and cooked hot dogs inside the fire station for the large gathering on hand to support Kibbee and the fire

department’s mission, which was in full display as crews rolled on several calls during the gathering.

Folks enjoyed lunch, including cake, collected emergency preparedness materials and mixed-and-mingled before meeting in front of the new Larry Kibbee Residential Unit for the dedication.

“This will be a residence for our firefighters and EMTs (emergency medical technicians) so we can serve the district with a 24-hour system,” said fire chief Wood Weiss.

Weiss described Kibbee as having been an outstanding boss who has remained a valued friend.

“He was a wonderful leader for this district and community,” Weiss said of Kibbee.

Commissioner J.J. Wilbur, who is also a Swinomish Indian Tribal Community senator and La Conner school board member, echoed those sentiments.

Wilbur and Alana Quintasket, the tribal senate’s vice-chair, expressed gratitude for

(continued on page 7)



CUTTING THE RIBBON – FINALLY! – Fire District 13 Commissioner J.J. Wilbur, Swinomish Tribal Senate Vice Chair Alana Quintasket and retired FD 13 commission chair Larry Kibbee could not be happier that the new residential quarters were move-in ready last Saturday at the Snee Oosh Road fire station. Not pictured, FD 13 Commission Chair Bruce Shellhamer and Assistant Fire Chief Jamie Jurdi.

– Photo by Ken Stern

From the editor—

The freedom to read everything

Every September the Weekly News focuses an editorial on Banned Books Week. The Week starts Sunday, Oct. 1 this year. Visit the La Conner Swinomish library next week. Heck, go to a library every single day through Oct. 7. We are fortunate to have good libraries throughout the county. It is unfortunate that our county commissioners have not shown the dedicated, long-term leadership citizens need to be led into the countywide, single library district that living in the 21st century requires. But that is another editorial.

Banned Books Week editorials the last six years have heralded democracy, the First Amendment, the importance of liberty – choice – the critical need to speak against fear – for that is what censorship is, an effort to be safe and deny children the chance to imagine, explore and learn their way into the future. And while this newspaper has always acknowledged the right of individual parents to deny specific books and the possibility of a different future to their own children in the privacy of their own homes, it has always condemned those seeking to impose their personal beliefs on others in the public spaces of schools and libraries.

Each year this week's editorial has championed the cause of a new library in La Conner and thanked those working to make it possible. On Oct. 14 please join in celebrating the hope our efforts have turned into a reality at the library's dedication at 3 p.m.. Great job everyone. See you there.

The theme for this year's national Banned Books Week could not be more appropriate: "Let Freedom Read." That line echoes a historic, patriotic song written by the 19th century Baptist minister Samuel Francis Smith almost 50 years after the Bill of Rights was adopted.

The first stanza ends: "From ev'ry mountainside / Let freedom ring!" Smith titled it "America." It is also called "My Country, 'Tis of Thee."

The American Library Association's website has a section on "Banned & Challenged Books" and web pages for Banned Books Week. Here are their words:

"This is a dangerous time for readers and the public servants who provide access to reading materials. Readers, particularly students, are losing access to critical information and librarians and teachers are under attack for doing their jobs." – Deborah Caldwell-Stone, director of the ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom

"Banned Books Week celebrates the freedom to read and spotlights current and historical attempts to censor books in libraries and schools. For more than 40 years, the annual event has brought together the entire book community – librarians, teachers, booksellers, publishers, writers, journalists and readers of all types – in shared support of the freedom to seek and to express ideas, even those some consider unorthodox or unpopular. The books featured during Banned Books Week have all been targeted for removal or restriction in libraries and schools. By focusing on efforts across the country to remove or restrict access to books, Banned Books Week draws national attention to the harms of censorship.

"In a time of intense political polarization, library staff in every state are facing an unprecedented number of attempts to ban books. ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom ALA documented 1,269 demands to censor library books and resources in 2022, the highest number of attempted book bans since ALA began compiling data about censorship in libraries more than 20 years ago. The unparalleled number of reported book challenges in 2022 nearly doubles the 729 book challenges reported in 2021. Of the record 2,571 unique titles targeted for censorship, most were by or about LGBTQIA+ persons and Black, Indigenous and people of color.

"The theme for Banned Books Week 2023 is "Let Freedom Read." When we ban books, we're closing off readers to people, places and perspectives. But when we stand up for stories, we unleash the power that lies inside every book. We liberate the array of voices that need to be heard and the scenes that need to be seen. Let freedom read!"

We need to support the reality of the First Amendment in all public spaces for all people of all ages. Let freedom read!

— Ken Stern

Energy Star is efficiency seal of approval

By Greg Whiting

Last time, I suggested buying Energy Star electronics to cut your energy bills. What is Energy Star and why is their work relevant?

Energy Star is a voluntary program started by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1992 to promote energy efficiency and sustainability. Energy Star encourages manufacturers and building designers to submit their products for evaluation and (hopefully) certification that they are more energy efficient than competing products. Energy Star thus makes it easier for energy users to identify, products, buildings and industrial systems that are the most energy efficient.

You've probably seen the blue and white Energy Star stickers on electronics and appliances. You may even have seen Energy Star plaques in buildings. Energy Star ratings are available across a wide range of products, including appliances, electronics, lighting, heating and cooling systems, commercial and residential buildings and even industrial facilities.

To earn an Energy Star label, the system, whether it's a consumer appliance or a building, must meet criteria which are periodically updated by the EPA to reflect technological advancements and evolving energy efficiency standards. Energy Star is a comparative

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Are you offended? Feedback requested

When I became a columnist many years ago for this newspaper, I borrowed the title "If I Ran The Zoo" from a delightful book by Dr. Seuss. For me, it was just the perfect title for a column in which I could express my views on anything and everything.

Well, Seuss Enterprises, still run by his descendants, has just removed "If I Ran The Zoo" and five other books from publication due to controversy surrounding racist images within these books.

In a 1988 biography of Seuss, Ruth K. MacDonald notes the perceived presence of "occasional stereotypes of native peoples – potbellied, thick-lipped blacks from Africa, squinty-eyed Orientals" that may offend some readers today.

The Canadian Book and Periodical Council's Freedom to Read project listed the book as having been challenged in 2015 for insensitivity and ethnic stereotyping.

A citizen's view—

Tom Robbins Day a blast: Insulting him was wrong

By Holly Gwinn Graham

One of the joys in my year of health challenges was the fun and exciting opportunity to honor "our own" Tom Robbins on Sept. 2. It was a real blast! Tom enjoyed it, he and Alexa rocked it, the library's programs benefited and everyone entered into the sweet, happy, excellent spirit of the day. Some of us came from far away to celebrate the occasion and we celebrated with all our hearts.

That's why, when I read your recent Musing about the day, I was aghast at the last unfunny paragraph suggesting pushing a mummy of Tom through the streets of town in a wheelchair, making it a yearly event. Unholy crap.

What a stupid, unnecessary, really disconnected thing to write, especially after the happy success of a truly welcome "quirky" La Conner event, something that lifted hearts, reunited friends, made us laugh and healed us on many levels in these unsettled times. I, for one, had a ball. I made giant thumbs for the occasion and lifted them with pride in the procession. I even hitched a ride in a classic truck. Sissy Hankshaw lives! (I noticed there are a lot of us too.)

Aside from the fact that Tom remains an internationally recognized author with books and characters that live on, this parade for him was a gift to the whole town and nobody expects it to be yearly. What made it special is that it was a once-in-a-lifetime occasion – unforgettable, historical – and we were there!

Aging, as we know, is not for sissies and Tom is doing it well with his beautiful wife Alexa at his side. Being human means nobody gets out alive,

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Robbins Musing not appreciated

I did not appreciate your musings on Tom Robbins Day. Tom has been our friend for 49 years and is the funniest man we know. He's still in better shape than many of his friends 20 years younger than he is. To say he was propped up is ageist. He recently went through another bout of COVID-19 and fared well.

Tom has always been there for our community, greater area and issues that matter to our world. All we ever had to do is call him when we needed him to entertain us. I asked him many times to help and he did, to stop the nuclear plants here and other places. His activism is well known which he still

Don't extend South First Street

Dear town council, planning commission - and citizens:

It has been mentioned on the council and planning commission recently that it would be a great idea (said they) to have all the traffic thru town exit on First Street along the water next to the blue building that would be removed for this to occur. They also keep toying with a one way First Street.

This idea ignores some important realities: primarily, the Shoreline Master Plan. That land next to old blue (derelict blue building) and which is along the water does indeed partially belong to the town. But 200 feet of property along the water is regulated by the Shoreline Master Plan.

The shoreline plan promotes public access and water related or dependent uses. The state regulates it, not us. It does not mean a highway out of town. It means walking and biking and viewing and water experiences. We will never get more waterfront.



I went to the bookstore to see if I could still buy the book but I was told that they weren't able to sell it anymore. However, I was told that I could probably find it online but it would cost at least \$40 for the purchase.

Now I am faced with a very tough decision to make. I love the name of my column, and it has no racist implications, but is there guilt by association in this situation? It has won best column in the state's annual best newspaper contest several times.

I'd love to get feedback from my readers on this. You can connect with me via Facebook and let me know if you think I should keep the title or change it. If I will no longer be running the zoo, I'll have to figure out another obligation.

so, as the late Jimmy Buffet said in song, "If we couldn't laugh, we would all go insane." Having a sense of humor is essential, so your attempts at humor ought to be funny, not insulting, Mr. Editor. You owe us an apology for your sad, recently published attempt at it: Not funny – just wrong.

Thank you, dear Tom, dear Alexa, dear organizing crew and dear town of La Conner for a wonderful chance to honor great writing, memorable characters and our ongoing appreciation of the arts with this beautiful reason to get creative and show gratitude for each other, wherever our lives have taken us - a parade and a day of honor for Tom. This fine time brought us back together with happiness, hope, hugs and real healing power. Another Wow!

We share lessons in life and laughter at every turn. The best humor is based in love and thoughtful attention to the human condition. Tom has given us that for decades. May we continue to laugh together and shed some welcome tears, too, until the next Big Adventure, remembering how healing expressions of love and joy have always proved to be, as we celebrate our humanity with a hearty dose of plain old gladness. I have the pictures to prove it!

Go Tom! Go Alexa! Go La Conner! And thanks again for all the fun. I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

Holly Gwinn Graham, singer, artist, happy traveler, lived on Pull and Be Damned Road for 13 years until moving to Olympia in 1990 to earn a graduate degree in teaching at The Evergreen State College. www.hollygwinngraham.com

has a hand in.

I didn't think your comment about the dummy mummy was very funny at all. It would be great to celebrate the love and creativity he inspires anytime! Note that the funds made at the event goes to the library children's program. It's okay to celebrate our elders and younger people too.

We and all our many guests had a great time that day including our children and their friends! The tribal kids with us had a great time passing out carnival beads. He inspires reading and I loved all his books which I read. I'll celebrate Tom any day and every day.

Debbie Aldrich
La Conner

And then there are the parts of that plan that just don't make sense. We have an enormous parking lot that this new road would bypass.

I hope that someday that transitional zone will be developed for housing for workforce families along with some work opportunities there for them – as dreamed of when that zone was created. And I hope that someday the street that was vacated long ago in the back of Maple Hall will become an entrance to that dreamed of mixed use area. At the moment, that vacated street is used for south-end walkers who use it to reach the town center. (These same walkers used to walk on the water side the derelict blue building until the town fenced it off.)

Making South First Street a way out of town would create an island of the transition zone and defeat the goal of waterfront access from the Port's La Conner Marina to Conner Park. Please don't mess with this jewel of a goal.

Historic towns all over the world have solved the broken mirrors problem in simpler ways.

Kind regards,
Linda Talman
La Conner

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Pay to park, one-way streets comp plan options

By Bill Reynolds

The wheels are turning – first gradually, then rapidly – as Town of La Conner officials continue work on updating the transportation element of its comprehensive plan.

“I’ve been working on this element for several months,” Director of Planning Michael Davolio told planning commissioners at their 90-minute Sept. 19 hybrid meeting at Maple Hall, “and one of the surprising things I’ve learned is that there is enough parking on South First Street to accommodate all the (residential and commercial) uses there.

“But,” he cautioned, “it doesn’t matter during tourist season and this is a tourism-based economy.”

Davolio’s comment, on what has been a top-tier issue in La Conner for decades, began a wide-ranging discussion designed to spur additional reflection – including of the outside the box variety – from commissioners.

“I’d like you to give these issues serious thought to discuss at a later meeting to establish goals,” said Davolio.

Topics and possible future scenarios raised last week included timed, angled and/or paid parking; one-way traffic on one or both of First and Second streets; opening South First Street to Caledonia Street; employing shuttle service from the parking lot below Town Hall; developing safe non-motorized traffic routes; increasing transit access; and improving stop sign visibility around town, especially Morris Street.

The one immediate and concrete result of the brainstorming was appointment of commissioners John Leaver and Bruce Bradburn to a subcommittee charged with contacting and gleaning information from representatives of companies that provide paid parking systems.

It was noted earlier that Bellingham, Leavenworth and Granville Island have already shifted to paid parking.

Bradburn said parking meters date to the 1940s, introduced in Oklahoma City at a cost of five cents per hour. Any embrace of parking restrictions, he added, will increase the burden on local enforcement.

“Unless you have enforcement,” he said, “it’s ridiculous. You’re going to have to hire someone to around and write tickets.”

A parking payment apparatus will also be needed.

“We would have to think about infrastructure to put in place to collect the (parking) fees,” Assistant Planner Ajah Eills said. “I’m sure that’s something that can be overcome.”

Commissioner Marna Hanneman, who will become mayor in December, said traffic congestion on First Street has been exasperated by the renewed popularity of larger vehicles.

“Vehicles are getting bigger,” she said. “I’m fearful someone will get hit or a mirror will get torn off.

“We have a vision of our town,” Hanneman stressed. “We want to keep it charming. But we need revenue and we need rules. I know the topic of parking on First Street is of huge importance to the town council,”

Leaver suggested using electric jitneys – open vehicles carrying passengers for relatively low fares – between the public south end parking lot and downtown, which Hanneman praised for its creativity.

“We need to be thinking outside the box,” she said. “We need to be creative and we have to realize we’re not going to please everyone 100% of the time.”

Whenever the prospect of one-way traffic on First Street is raised, concerns are voiced about potential impacts on residential neighborhoods, as an example.

“And then you’ll have to talk to the people on Second Street,” Hanneman quipped knowingly when a one-way First Street option was introduced.

Davolio addressed needs of bike lanes and additional sidewalks, thereby carving out more safe routes to school for local students. “There’s not a lot of transit access,” he said. “Do we want to do something about that?”

Commissioners are also looking at other key subjects.

Davolio said efforts continue to stay in contact with Swinomish Indian Tribal Community officials. Eills said the ongoing public participation program expects responses from La Conner Schools students to be incorporated into comp plan updates.

Oct. 17 is a public forum on short-term rentals at the La Conner Civic Garden Club Building. An Oct. 19 day trip to Langley is for a meeting with architect Ross Chapin, who specializes in affordable housing.

Prices high, quantity low in August for Skagit County sold homes

By Ken Stern

The 2023 pattern for homes sold in Skagit County holds steady: Fewer properties are available in most of the county’s nine markets than a year ago. Considerably fewer homes are selling, about 25% below 2022, month over month, and prices are about the same as 2022, kept high by the ongoing either side of \$800,000 for monthly median sold home prices in Anacortes. In August, \$880,000 was the median price for the 27 homes that closed there, by far the highest price of the year.

The median price of the 134 homes that closed in Skagit County in August was just dollars below \$600,000. The median price countywide has moved little and has been above \$545,000 since March.

Ten of the 13 homes sold in the La Conner market were in Shelter Bay. The sold home prices in Shelter Bay ranged from \$295,000 for a Shelter Bay Drive home to \$803,600 for Shoshone Drive property. A Landed Gentry property on Maple Avenue was

the only sale within La Conner, at \$685,000. The other two homes, near Skagit Bay, on Sneeh Oosh Road, \$1.45 million and Cobahud Road, \$685,000, were well above the market’s median sold home price of \$492,000.

In the La Conner market, 13 new homes were listed, three down from last month but about the same number through the spring and summer. The four homes in the town of La Conner start at \$699,900.

The largest quantity of homes, 38, sold in the Mount Vernon market at a median price of \$579,475. The 24 homes sold in the Sedro-Woolley area had a median price of \$622,450. The quantity of homes sold was over 15 below last August in each market.

The La Conner inventory estimate is again 60 days. Countywide, the inventory estimate is about 56 days to sell all homes if no new structures came on the market.

The median sales price is where half of the home sales are above it and half are below it.

COA . . . (from page 1)



FOR SALE - The property on Maple Avenue and Washington Street where the COA restaurant was is up for sale. But, it is zoned residential.

—Photo by Ken Stern

Grant offers fertile plan to plant trees on Morris Street

By Bill Reynolds

Town leaders hope to spruce up La Conner’s appearance with the planting of new trees along Morris Street.

The La Conner Chamber of Commerce and Town Parks Commission are teaming up on a grant application for placing street sensitive trees plus hanging baskets and updated banners to further beautify the town.

“The trees will be placed into existing holes with a containment to keep the roots from streets and sidewalks,” parks commission chair Ollie Iverson said in his official report of the panel’s Sept. 13 hybrid meeting at Maple Hall.

Iverson said the grant will be awarded in October.

“We will plant as many new trees along Morris Street as the funding will cover,” Iverson added. “We will do this again

in 2024, if needed, to finish the project. The funds for this will not go through the Town. It has not yet been determined how, and (the) public works (department) has full knowledge of this.”

In a related development, Town Planning Commissioner Marna Hanneman last week asked the status of plans to replace a tree removed from the Zipl’s property on Morris and Third streets.

“Public Works has an arborist working around town,” Town Planner Michael Davolio responded during the commission’s Sept. 21 meeting. “They’ve asked for a cost estimate for a replacement.”

The arborist had previously identified trees for removal at Pioneer Park that pose a public hazard. A winter windstorm at the park a couple years ago caused trees to fall onto the roof of the covered kitchen and picnic shelter, resulting in significant damage.

Iverson said that funding for tree removal and cleanup at Pioneer Park is being sought as part of a state Local Maintenance Program Recreation and Conservation Office grant application for repairs to the iconic fish slide at Conner Waterfront Park.

The decision on that grant request is also anticipated next month.

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The U.S. government makes COVID-19 tests available to uninsured individuals and underserved communities. Find no-cost COVID-19 testing sites at: <https://aspr.hhs.gov/TestToTreat/Pages/default.aspx>.

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practice of providing free ice cream to little leaguers who hit home runs at nearby Hedlin’s Ballfield, by moving onto the property—closer to Washington Street—the present restaurant building.

Since then, up until COA relocated to Morris Street, a series of eateries have operated there.

Going forward, if a variance for the property isn’t granted, its location in a residential zone could provide some relief for La Conner’s housing crunch, suggested resident Leslie Smith.

“There would be an opportunity or housing on that property,”

she said. “There could be more homes, one of our goals.”

In the meantime, attempts to contact the listing realtor have been unsuccessful.

“The realtor is not returning calls,” Talman said. “It’s an AI (artificial intelligence) thing.”

Sliders Café

closed till

Oct. 5

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High School boys' soccer team gets its first win

By Bill Reynolds

The La Conner High School boys' soccer team was on point against Crosspoint Saturday.

The Braves (1-3) earned their first victory of 2023 with a convincing 5-0 home shutout of non-conference foe Crosspoint Academy, a traditional soccer power from Bremerton and a SeaTac 2B entry.

Lane Tenborg paced the winners by scoring twice and assisting on La Conner's other three goals.

Braves' head coach Galen McKnight described Tenborg's play as "brilliant."

McKnight also praised Corran Eisen, who broke a scoreless tie with the lone first half goal of the match; Sammy Williams, who scored off a corner kick after the break; and Kale Navarette Higgins, who also found the net off a corner kick from Tenborg.

Goalkeeper Tyler Cicotte and La Conner's defenders likewise

received kudos for having combined to blank the Warriors.

"They were very steady, only allowing four shots," McKnight said.

McKnight likes the progress his club is making after sustaining successive losses to Lopez, Friday Harbor and Mount Vernon to open the season.

All three Braves' setbacks were tough defensive clashes.

Lopez edged La Conner 1-0 in the Braves' debut Sept. 12. Friday Harbor escaped with a 2-1 verdict in the Sept. 15 home opener. MVC nipped visiting La Conner 2-0 Sept. 18.

The Braves' strong second half play last Saturday assured that La Conner would land in the win column and not be on the short end of a fourth straight closely fought contest.

Next up for the Braves is a non-league pairing Friday at home opposite Grace Academy.

La Conner hosts MVC in a much-anticipated rematch Oct. 6.



CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS – Al Sampson (51), C.J. Edwards (24) and Ivory Damien (5) led the Braves onto the field Friday night against co-NW2B leaders Coupeville — Photo by Bill Reynolds

Braves take it on the chin at Coupeville

By Bill Reynolds

La Conner quarterback Ivory Damien accounted for more than 200 yards in total offense, including a 79-yard first period scoring strike to wideout Logan Burks, but the visiting Braves still fell 48-6 to NW2B grid foe Coupeville at Mickey Clark Field Friday night.

Coupeville prevailed on the strength of superior roster depth and a punishing ground attack led by Mike Robinett, who ran for three touchdowns and was effective all night on inside blasts.

The Braves also hurt themselves by yielding six turnovers, a blocked punt and a failed fourth down conversion attempt deep in their territory.

Yet matters weren't all grim

(continued on page 7)

Volleyball team wins league opener

By Bill Reynolds

The new-look La Conner High School volleyball team, sporting a revamped lineup following heavy graduation losses from last year's state 2B championship roster, has not lost sight of the immediate task at hand.

Which is to collect as many NW-2B/1B match triumphs as possible.

So far, the Lady Braves (2-4 overall) have checked that box.

The team, which dropped early non-league contests with 1A Meridian and Lynden Christian, 1B Neah Bay and 4A Glacier Peak, has won the match that counts most – a straight-sets sweep of conference rival Concrete Sept. 14.

Coach Pam Keller's charges also own a non-conference victory over Toppenish.

The Lady Braves put their 1-0 NW2B/1B ledger on the line against Coupeville at Landy James Gym last night.

La Conner entered that date paced by senior hitter Morgan Hui-zenga, who has averaged just over four kills per set, senior setter Abby Udlock, whose 55 assists have ignited the team's attack and sophomore defensive specialist Addison Keller, who has recorded 86 digs and leads the team in service aces.

La Conner was looking to avenge an abbreviated three-set defeat to Coupeville at the South Whidbey Invitational Tournament, where

they lost 2-1 (23-25, 25-15, 12-18) in a meeting not counted in league standings. Coupeville was led at the tourney by Grey Peabody and Mia Farris, who registered 24 and 22 kills, respectively and Madison McMillian, who logged 46 digs.

The Lady Braves resume action tonight (Wednesday) when they visit 2A Sedro-Woolley for a 7 p.m. match.

La Conner returns to NW2B/1B play at home tomorrow at 6:30 p.m. opposite Friday Harbor and Oct. 3 against Orcas Island.

Farris, who registered 24 and 22 kills, respectively and Madison McMillian, who logged 46 digs.

Girls' soccer falls 3-0 at Auburn Adventist

By Bill Reynolds

The La Conner High School girls' soccer team could not find the net at Auburn Adventist Thursday afternoon. On that score, the Lady Braves are in good company.

Auburn Adventist has won four matches this fall by shutout. That is why they sit atop SeaTac 2B League standings.

The Lady Falcons added NW-2B/1B member La Conner to the list, recording a 3-0 non-league triumph, despite several outstanding

individual performances cited by first-year coach Maddie Huscher.

Huscher praised striker Izzy Villard, right wing Kailey Carlson, right back Aisley Zimmerman and Anahi Pena for their play against Auburn Adventist, which is unbeaten in its SeaTac 2B matches and 4-1 overall.

"Izzy and Kailey had a great 1-2 passing play to move the ball up the other team's half of the field," Huscher told the Weekly News afterward. "Anahi was aggressive and quick to the ball. Aisley won

the ball back from the opposing team and did a fantastic job of guiding them to the outside of the field when they had the ball, instead of allowing them to dribble or pass to the middle."

La Conner (1-3-1) was scheduled to entertain NW2B/1B foe Mount Vernon Christian Tuesday afternoon before returning to its non-league slate with home games tomorrow (Thursday) with Sultan and Saturday against Forks.

School board reviews service graduation requirement

By Bill Reynolds

The drive to reinstate student public service hours as a La Conner High School graduation requirement intersected Monday with a concrete example of the level of community support enjoyed by the school district.

School Board members at their 75-minute Sept. 25 hybrid meeting expressed appreciation for a donation of 11 ukuleles by the La Conner Arts Commission to the elementary music program.

Board President Susie Deyo cited the commitment demonstrated by the group as a prime reason of the great value for everyone when students engage in the community to mutually strengthen bonds.

School board student representative Josi Straathof has polled 12 seniors, initially for their views.

"Some of them understand that

community service is something that college scholarships require," Straathof said.

She said they acknowledge the benefits of public service, though many note they already have outside commitments and would like assurances that required community engagement would be relevant to their future goals.

"We need to start somewhere," stressed Deyo, a 1978 graduate and University of Washington alum. "We need to get back to encouraging 10 hours of community service. We need to meet with the kids and explain that we think it's a good thing for La Conner learners to recognize the importance of community service."

Dialogue also continues on the five-year, \$2.5 million grant enabling expansion of La Conner's after-school program, which Deyo and finance chief David Cram said

will be renamed the "Braves Hub." The funding allows the former Braves Club to add transportation, nutrition and family engagement activities.

Superintendent Will Nelson said they are in the process of hiring a Braves Hub program administrator and site coordinator. Once they start, a specific plan for the expanded program will be developed, Nelson said.

Cram, Deyo and board member John Agen briefly addressed an article in the Washington State Standard, reprinted in the Weekly News, that identifies La Conner, Marysville and Mount Baker as school districts starting the year without balanced budgets, triggering state oversight of each district's finances.

Cram said a two-year "binding conditions" agreement had been entered into with the state in August. The state scrutiny is based on the district's reliance upon a budget extension in the wake of an anticipated – and since realized – negative fund balance at the outset of the 2023-2024 school year.

Cram said the district's recent self-imposed spending cuts will deliver a positive fund balance by year's end, though not equal to 10% of the annual budget, a

(continued on page 7)

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Natalie Niblack lives life as an artist, citizen scientist and worried human

By Meg Holgate

A few miles away from a heavily trafficked exit off I-5, a 122-year-old bunkhouse once used by dike workers sits clinging to the edge of the north fork of the Skagit River. It seems to defy our present-day world. This is the home and workspace of painter and ceramic artist Natalie Niblack.

It was a hot late August afternoon when I went to visit. Niblack's faithful dog, Lillybelle, ushered me through a screened door to her studio. A fan sent a cool breeze throughout the cabin, blending fragrances from her garden with the sweet aroma of fresh oil paint.

Her studio is in urgent climate-change emergency mode and Niblack is grieving. Her walls and shelves are lined with paintings, drawings and ceramics, clearly illustrating the all too apparent consequences of our human negligence. Several painted canvases depict horrifying scenes of exploding trains, pipelines and ruined watersheds. They are born from the egregious harm the fossil fuel industry is having on the biosphere. A realization that only a mile away train tracks carrying toxic materials to and from the local refinery puts her home squarely in the blast zone.

Across the room another series of paintings references an unsettling neglect for our coastal margins. These works reflect a world of plastic debris, floating and submerged, carelessly settling into the natural habitats of our marine life.

While not painting and sculpting, Niblack is a citizen scientist. She and fellow artist and frequent collaborator Ann Chadwick Reid are stewards at the Padilla Bay Reserve, gathering information for local surveys on marine debris, heron foraging



Artist Natalie Niblack with dog Lillybelle
— Photo courtesy of Natalie Niblack

and beached birds. Volunteering for local environmental research groups has directed Niblack's artistic focus to the plight of our bird populations. "If we were to incur an additional three degrees of global warming, 80 species of birds from the Skagit Valley would not return," says Niblack. With migratory routes severely impacted by regional fires, pollution and global warming, an estimated one-third of bird populations are not returning from their migrations.

She has recently concluded a body of work to be exhibited at the Museum of Northwest Art as a part of an upcoming climate change show. Her installation "66 Birds/3 Degrees" examines the plight of 66 Western Washington birds that are at risk if global warming is not mitigated. Amongst others, the Vaux's Swift, Rufous Hummingbird, Goshawk, Spotted Owl and Northern Pygmy-Owl stare back at you from her walls. She carefully sources her information from the National Audubon Society,

"I want to have direct eye contact between you and the bird. When you have that kind

of contact with another creature, you have to take some responsibility or relationship with that creature. I think about the impact our collective actions are having on all these creatures and maybe on the lives of all other creatures." Niblack begins to tear up at this thought and Lillybelle, sensing her sadness, jumps up on all fours to give her a doggy hug.

We move on to another part of her studio. Here she makes her ceramic work. Lifting the dust cover, she reveals carefully modeled heads of Donald Trump, Kim Jung Un, Rudolph Gulliani and Mitch McConnell, amongst others. These heads are realistic, oversized versions of outrageous ugliness. Clearly she doesn't feel optimistic about our political system either. Niblack makes no apologies for the uncomfortable nature of her work. Much like her paintings, these ceramic heads are confrontational and intensely relevant. Indeed, this is the point.

It is early evening now. As I leave Niblack's studio and home, I hear the sound of plates and cutlery being laid out by her partner Mick as he prepares dinner in the kitchen. She gives me some yellow wax beans from the garden. I take a final glance at this bucolic stretch of Skagit Valley farmland – less than 13 miles from the local solid waste transfer station.

Natalie's installation can be seen at the Museum of Northwest Art's upcoming exhibition: "Surge: Mapping Transition, Displacement and Agency in Times of Climate Change," Oct. 14-Jan. 21, 2024.

Holgate is an artist. Her last show, with glass sculptor Steve Klein, "A Precarious Edge," exhibited at the Museum of Northwest Art early in 2022.



THEY CUT HAIR JUST LIKE THEY USED TO – Here, Ed Marlow is cutting fellow historian Roger Fox's hair in his home shop in 1990.
— Photo courtesy of Fox Family Collection

Cutting hair and keeping history: Barbers as local story keepers

By Adam Sowards

Sometimes, at the center of a community's history is a barber's chair, swiveling this way and that and gathering up stories.

Barbers are "always a repository of the past, because so much day-to-day life is part of the barbershop experience," said Mari Densmore, archivist at the Skagit County Historical Museum.

Fortunately, two Skagit County barbers collected thousands of photographs that capture decades of Skagit history. The new exhibit at the Skagit County Historical Museum is "Barber Historians: 'Just a Little Off the Top'" opens with an Oct. 5 reception.

The exhibit has a dual focus. The first is the history of barbering. The second is the history barbers have preserved for Skagit County. Ed Marlow and Roger Fox, barber historians, are highlighted.

Barbers have existed for thousands of years. Their tasks used to include amputations, bloodletting and tooth-pulling, in addition to a simple trim. That grimmer history, luckily, is not part of the museum's exhibit. Instead, community is emphasized.

In Skagit County's early years, loggers and farmers came to town for a bath and a haircut. Barbershops were gathering places for news and sharing stories, especially for men.

In decades past, according to Jo Wolfe, director of the Museum, women enjoyed several common social outlets, such as Ladies' Aid Societies or the Parent Teacher Association. "But for men, it became the barbershop," said Wolfe.

Many decades ago, Bert Kellogg, a barber and photographer, shared

thousands of negatives with Marlow and Fox, helping to get them started in preserving and displaying photos of the area's history. They put photos on the walls and shared albums of pictures. Soon, people offered their own. It kept growing.

The public examined the images and identified family members or events they knew. In this way, the community built the collection cooperatively. "They had a vested interest in it," said Densmore.

One result of gathering photographs this way is they represent more scenes from daily life than a professional photographer would produce. "We would be far poorer in terms of the history that has come" to the museum, said Densmore.

These barber historians preserved parts of the past that otherwise would have been lost. The photographs displayed represent a tiny fraction of the entire collection being loaned to the museum for the exhibit. It covers cover the 1880s through the 1960s, primarily.

Besides the photos, all sorts of tools of the trade and a barbershop chair are on view.

The Fox family started barbering in Skagit County in 1908 and continued for 96 years. The bulk of the exhibit focuses on generations past. But the museum staff is including some displays from barbers practicing today. After all, they continue to be part of many rites of passage for every generation.

The entire team at the museum is busy putting together the exhibit so that it is ready for the opening reception. 5-7 p.m. Oct. 5. The event is free, and refreshments will be provided. Marlow is expected to attend.

County tire collection Oct. 5-6

Skagit County will host a free tire-round up for county residents Thursday-Friday Oct. 5-6 at the Skagit County Fairgrounds. Residents must register online. There is a limit of twelve road tires per household, including car, truck, motorcycle and semi-trucks.

Tractor tires will not be accepted. Drop-off is at the north entrance of the fairgrounds, 1410 Virginia Street, Mount Vernon 98273.

In the 2022 collection, over 40 tons of used road tires were dropped off in one day. County staff hope to collect at least that quantity again.

Proper tire disposal has many benefits. Tires are a significant source of solid waste and they can be expensive to dispose of and clean up properly, since they are laden with toxic chemicals that can leach into ground and surface water as they sit out in the landscape, harming fish, wildlife and the environment.

Information at the Skagit County Solid Waste Division: 360-416-1570.

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When: Monday October 16 - 6:15 PM to 8:30 PM
Where: Skagit PUD, 1415 Freeway Dr, Mt Vernon

Burlington Mayor, Contested City Council and Burlington School District Director Races
When: Wednesday October 11 - 6:15 PM to 8:30 PM
Where: Burlington City Hall, 833 S Spruce St.
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Anacortes Contested City Council, Contested Port District Commissioner and School District Director Races
When: Tuesday October 10 - 5:00 PM to 8:00PM
Where: Anacortes City Hall, 904 6th St.
In partnership with Anacortes Chamber of Commerce

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EDGAR
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Edgar was a long time resident of La Conner since the young age of 3 months. He was the Director of Customer Service at Mary Davis Vintage Lighting until his retirement in 2020. He was then able to devote full time attention to the joys of his life which included food, kids, treat balls, long walks and more food. We will miss you buddy. Rest in peace BIG Fella!

Measure to dissolve Dayton's library will not be on fall ballot

By Courtney Flatt
NWN News, NWPB

A measure to dissolve a small library in southeastern Washington will not be on the November ballot. The decision comes after a hearing Sept. 20 in Columbia County's Superior Court.

After more than a year fraught with book challenges and the specter of the loss of Columbia County's only library, Superior Court Commissioner Julie Karl ruled in favor of not allowing a measure to dissolve the library to make it onto the ballot.

"This court is cognizant of the impact of this decision on all concerned and its reach beyond the borders of this city, county or even this state," Karl said to a packed courthouse.

In her recollection, the courthouse had never been so packed, said Elise Severe, chair of the local political action committee Neighbors United for Progress and defendant in the lawsuit.

"To have so many people there, holding their breath, just waiting for their answer at the end. It's a day I'll never forget," Severe said in an interview.

The morning after the hearing, Severe said her daughter came out from her bedroom.

"We said our good mornings, and she said, 'Mom, did you keep the library open?' And I said, 'Yup, we sure did,'" Severe said.

The fight might not be over yet. In a public post to Facebook, Jessica Ruffcorn, who has helped head up the library district's dissolution, said the community has been activated and friendships have been forged.

"We didn't work this hard for change to let it end here like this. We will continue to fight to protect the children of this community. We will continue to fight for our taxing district to remain accountable to this community," Ruffcorn wrote.

Earlier this month, the judge had temporarily banned the measure from the ballot for two

weeks.

If the measure to dissolve the rural library district had been placed on the ballot and succeeded, librarians said it would have been the first time in the nation that a public library had been dissolved following book challenges.

Those challenges started more than a year ago, with some people claiming books in the children's and young adult sections of the library were "graphic" or "obscene." When those books weren't banned, they petitioned to dissolve the Columbia County Rural Library District.

Since then, the library has moved the young adult nonfiction section into the adult fiction section. Librarians also now allow parents to add permissions to their children's library cards. They moved the "parenting section" to a larger bookcase that

includes the "first conversations" section, which includes books on puberty, consent, bodies and sex education. They also placed dividers around the young adult section.

If the district had been dissolved, all of the material would have gone back to the state, and the historic library building would have been returned to the City of Dayton. The library had been run by the city for decades, but library supporters said it was falling into disrepair in the 1990s. So, in 2005, supporters helped put the founding of the rural library district to a vote. At the time, 59% of rural county voters approved the district.

The City of Dayton voted to annex into the district in 2009.

Now, Proposition 2 would have only allowed people who live in unincorporated parts of the county to decide the library's

fate. Importantly, Karl said after reading all the court documents "multiple times," it didn't make sense for people who live in the county to vote on something that affects so much of the city.

"We did away with taxation without representation a long time ago," she said.

As of last month, the county auditor's office reported 1,076 active voters in the unincorporated parts of the county, with 1,707 active voters in Dayton, where the library stands. The town of Starbuck, with 98 voters, would not get to vote on the matter because it has not been annexed into the rural library district.

Karl said the library provides critical services to the county that would disproportionately affect the poorest members of the community.

During his testimony, Ric

Jacobs, the attorney for the defendants Neighbors United for Progress, Elise Severe and Gerald Kaiser, said allowing Proposition 2 on the ballot would have been a "stain on the county's reputation."

"In taking the [Neighbors United for Progress's] pleadings at face value, and ruling against the ballot measure, I believe that [Karl] took the only voice of unincorporated voters away and displaced them for other voters and non-voters," Ruffcorn wrote.

In his testimony, Columbia County prosecuting attorney Dale Slack said it would have been improper for the county or the auditor's office to make a decision about the constitutionality of Proposition 2.

The defendants had argued that the state rule was inconsistent – allowing the City of Dayton to annex the library but not allowing those residents to vote on a potential dissolution.

"I can wonder and I can guess all day until I'm blue in the face whether this is a good statute or not," Slack said at the hearing. "But at the end of the day, nobody cares what I think, and nobody should because it's not my constitutional duty to tell anybody whether a statute is constitutional or not. That is solely the duty of this court."

Court documents also claim signatures for the petition to get the measure on the ballot were collected fraudulently. The documents say multiple witnesses said they were told false statements to sign the petition – and insulted if they did not sign.

At the hearing, Karl said people "willfully and deliberately engaged in fraud." Karl said the first time the signatures came in, more than two-thirds were invalid.

"There should be an investigation into the potential criminal acts engaged in to collect these signatures needed for the petition," Karl said.

General Election ballots were set to go out to military and overseas voters Sept. 23.

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Find something offensive in your library

By Jean Markert, Library Director

Normally I like to use my column to talk about all the exciting things happening in the library, but this month I want to write from my heart. The first week of October is Banned Books Week, and lately there has been a lot of talk about books and what should or should not be in libraries. As a relatively new library director and former educator, this subject has always interested me. A bookmark I recently saw had a quote by Jo Godwin that said, "A truly great library contains something in it to offend everyone." Throughout history, libraries have been a place for discussion and learning and a place where people are free to explore new or controversial ideas.

We are fortunate that our community supports these ideals as well; however, not all libraries are so fortunate. A library in the tiny town of Dayton, Washington has twice been threatened with closure because a small group of people disagreed with a pride display the library put up last June. If the library district had been dissolved, the wonderful opportunity offered by libraries to discover and explore new ideas would be gone as well. Fortunately, in this case, the effort to dissolve the library failed by extremely slim margins both times signatures were collected.

This truly breaks my heart. A group may not agree with the principles of the books on display, but by asking for those books to be removed and ultimately, in this case, gathering signatures to close the library, they are robbing themselves of the chance to better understand the issues contained in the books. What if, instead of banning books or threatening to close libraries because they contain materials that are offensive, we use these materials as teaching moments. If we don't agree with an idea, engage with the offensive material, study the issue, engage in conversations with people from the other side to better understand their point of view or use books as teaching moments to help us learn from our past and to create a better future.

This is what makes libraries such great resources. They give us the opportunity to engage and learn even if we don't agree with all the materials contained within them. I am very thankful to live in a community where the library is valued and instead of looking for ways to censor our materials, people are open to learning and value the idea that all people should be reflected in our library.

The goal of the La Conner Swinomish Library is to be a place where all people are welcome and can find something that is either a reflection of who they are or a place to discover a new or challenging idea, and it is my hope that if you find something in our library that does offend you, use it as an opportunity engage with that material to expand and grow.

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Fire District

■ ■ ■ (from page 1)

the bonds linking Swinomish and the fire district, then performed a blessing song ahead of the ribbon cutting.

“The relationship between Swinomish and Fire District 13 is an important one,” Wilbur stressed.

“We’re so appreciative of Fire District 13 and all they do for the

community,” Quintasket added. “We couldn’t be more grateful for the awesome team they have.”

Father Mel Strazicich offered a prayer amid the rain, then quipped that he wouldn’t be sprinkling water as part of the dedication.

Kibbee was moved by the proceedings. Afterward he praised the fire district as “an amazing organization” and lauded the de-

duction of its personnel, expressing appreciation for having been able to work with Weiss, retired chief Roy Horn, Shellhamer, Wilbur, former commissioner Arne Fohn and the panel’s late chair Chuck Hedlund, among others.

Kibbee conceded he had little background in or knowledge of the fire service when, having previously served on the Shelter Bay board of direc-

tors, he stepped up to join the three-member fire commission. He immediately began doing his research and proved a quick study.

Not only did Kibbee help steward the fire district through a period of growth but became a mainstay at Washington Fire Commissioners Association conventions.

His admiration is endless for those who run toward rather than

away from danger.

“They’re dedicated to the health and safety of the community,” Kibbee said of the district’s firefighters and emergency medical staff. “They’re great people.”

Judging by what transpired Saturday, the feeling is mutual.

School Board

■ ■ ■ (from page 4)

long-established board policy.

“We made some adjustments to the budget,” said Cram. “We’re going in the right direction. I like where we are.”

“This is not a regular occurrence for our district,” Agen said. “We’ve made cuts as severely

as we can and are endeavoring to be in as positive a position as possible.

He added that the budget shortfall is just one-third that of Mount Baker’s and one-thirtieth that of Marysville.

“Ours is pretty minimal compared to the others mentioned in the article,” Agen said.

Cram shared a positive number, in the early K-12 student

enrollment of 497 full-time students. That determines how much funding support the district receives from Olympia. He had estimated a drop from 510 to 490 students.

On the academic side, district teaching and learning director Beth Clothier praised staff members serving on the district’s Mastery-Based Learning Teachers Pilot Program.

“We’re super excited that we’re making progress with mastery-based learning,” said Clothier, who also alluded to improved student test results attributed to new math curricula adopted by the district last year.

“The great thing about mastery-based learning,” Nelson said, “is it takes the focus away from grading and puts it on mastering content.”

Additional strides appear likely in math.

“It was a big lift for our teachers last year,” Clothier said, pointing out that having greater familiarity with the math program means teachers will have a better idea now of how to implement its main and supplementary features.

Football

■ ■ ■ (from page 4)

for La Conner (0-3) as Damien and Tommy Murdock recorded multiple tackles for losses during what was a typically physical league battle between two long-time rivals.

“I think the thing that I’m most proud of,” Braves head coach Charlie Edwards told this team afterward, “is that their coach told me he was impressed by how hard our guys hit. He said you hit like trucks.”

Indeed, La Conner kept on

truckin’ despite repeated time-consuming drives by the hosts.

Coupeville set the tone by marching 65 yards on nine plays on its first series, capped by a 10-yard Robinett TD jaunt.

La Conner gambled on its ensuing possession. The Braves went for it on fourth-and-three from their 24 but C.J. Edwards – who had gained seven yards on the previous play – came up short. The ball turned over to the Wolves, who went up 14-0 seven snaps later via a two-yard plunge by signal caller Logan Downes.

La Conner answered with the

first – and most impactful – of a handful of big plays made possible by the scrambling ability and arm of Damien. After stopping Coupeville on a fourth-and-one at the Braves 21, the senior field general threw a perfect long spiral to Burks, who was open deep in the Wolves’ secondary. Burks reeled in the toss and dashed untouched into the end zone, trimming the lead to 14-6 with less than a minute remaining in the first quarter.

Damien and Burks followed up in the fourth quarter on a 60-yard pass play to the Coupeville 15, but the Braves’ stalled there.

“We did a lot of good things,” said Edwards, “and one of them was being able to move the ball.”

Unfortunately for La Conner, that yardage too often didn’t translate into points.

Coupeville, by contrast, was able to close out drives.

A Wolves’ methodical 10-play, 70-yard touchdown march spanned the first and second quarters and gave the home team a 21-6 edge.

The Wolves extended their lead to 28-6 two minutes later courtesy of a 57-yard Jack Porter pass interception return.

The victors tacked on three insurance scores after the break.

La Conner tried gamely to shift the tide as Damien delivered a 17-yard second half completion to Austin McClure.

But after a four-yard Kenai Zimmerman pickup and short receptions by Burks and Edwards a promising Braves series died at the Coupeville 16.

La Conner will look to break into the win column Friday with a non-league matchup at Bellingham.

Salmon

■ ■ ■ (from page 1)

with Bowman Bay.

The Upper Skagit Indian Tribe has \$180,000 to improve habitat in Clark Creek and the nearby Cascade River by determining the preferred alternative for a suite of projects.

Seattle City Light has \$62,120 to partner with Skagit Land Trust to buy eighteen acres of Skagit

River waterfront and floodplain habitat near South Lyman Ferry Road and Cape Horn Road to conserve high-quality habitat in the Skagit River system.

Whatcom County organizations were awarded \$13,686,204 for five projects, with almost \$10 million to the Nooksack Indian Tribe for restoring the South Fork Nooksack River at Fish Camp reach.



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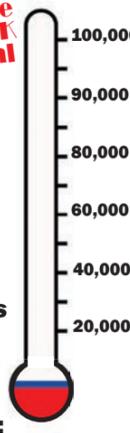
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Visit us at the Skagit Valley Bigfootfest, Skagit County Fairgrounds, Sept. 29 -30. See our Sasquatch Corner, for all your Sasquatch needs.



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Complete Events Calendar on laconnerweeklynews.com

Aqimuk's Kitchen

By Patricia Aqimuk Paul, Esq., Food Editor.

Corn on the Cob

Prepared in the Instant Pot. This is a recipe shared by my cousin, Debra Lloyd. One evening I was preparing corn in a big pot of water, and she suggested I try this. Two fit perfectly and two I snapped in half in a six quart pot.



Ingredients

- Corn on the cob, 4
- Water, 1 and 1/2 cups

Preparation

Shuck the corn. Place in the Instant Pot. Add the water. Close the lid and the turn the pin to close also. Use the pressure button. Set the timer to one minute. When done, do a quick release, being careful where the steam is aimed. We serve ours with corn handlers, butter and salt.

AqimuksKitchen@outlook.com

NOT TO BE MISSED

Skagit Symphony begins its 2023-24 season with "Second Chances" on Oct. 21. The concert features Sandra Shen on piano playing "Stars" by Mary Howe, Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto and concludes with Mussorgsky's legendary "Pictures at an Exhibition." Info: www.skagitsymphony.com/second-chances

Free Master Gardener Know & Grow: Mosses & Lichens Tue. Oct. 17 1:00-2:30 p.m. NWREC Sakuma Auditorium, 16650 Washington 536, Mount Vernon, WA 98273, USA

LIBRARIES

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

- Storytime for Children. 11 a.m. every Friday.
- Book Club. Meets at 2 p.m. every fourth Wednesday. Info: Richard Wisniewski at wisniew10@gmail.com
- Tech Help. 4-6 p.m. every Monday. One-on-one technical support in 30-minute blocks.
- Dungeons & Dragons Club. 3-5 p.m. every Tuesday. No previous gaming experience necessary.

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

- Virtual Reality. Every Saturday, 1-3 p.m. Must be 12 or older.

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

Burlington Public Library. 820 E. Washington Ave., Burlington. 360-755-0760, burlingtonwa.gov/library.

- Knitting Club. All ages, Wednesdays at 6 p.m.

MUSEUMS

Pacific Northwest Quilt & Fiber Arts Museum. 703 S. Second St., La Conner. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday. qfamuseum.org, 360-466-4288. See two new exhibits:

- Bojagi Journey 2023; curated by Patti King, through Oct. 8.
- David Owen Hastings: Paper + Stitch, through Oct. 29.

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

- Exhibit: "I Do, the History of Weddings," through Sept. 24.

Museum of Northwest Art. 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Tuesday through Saturday, noon-5 p.m. Sunday and Monday. monamuseum.org, 360-466-4446.

- Teen Art Club. A free program for youth in grades 6-12, where you can bring your friends and your creativity to make art together and inspire your art. Pizza, snacks, and art supplies will be provided.

2-5 p.m. every Thursday. Non-essentials every first Thursday. 17444 Snee Oosh Road, La Conner. 360-856-2211. helpinghandsfoodbank.org.

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

MUSIC

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

Shelter Bay Chorus. Meets 4:30-6:30 p.m. every Thursday, Shelter Bay Clubhouse. No auditions required. Questions, call Joan at 360-941-7507.

La Conner Live Concert Series. Live music 1-4 p.m. Sunday in Gilkey Square.

SERVICE & VOLUNTEER

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

Swinomish Helping Hands Food Bank. Food distribution from

MEETINGS

La Conner Swinomish Regional Library. Library board of trustees meets at 5 p.m. the second Tuesday of the month in the library, 520 Morris St., La Conner.

Skagit Cemetery Dist. 1. Regular meetings at 5 p.m. every second Thursday, at Lori Buher's home, 17604 Valentine Road, Mount Vernon.

Skagit Conservation District. 2021 E. College Way No. 203, Mount Vernon. 360-428-4313. Zoom info at skagitcd.org. Board meetings 7:30-9 a.m. every fourth Wednesday. Next meeting is Sept. 27.

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

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Weekly SUDOKU

Answer

3	8	6	1	5	4	7	9	2
2	7	4	9	3	8	1	6	5
9	1	5	6	2	7	4	3	8
6	5	9	4	1	2	3	8	7
8	2	3	7	9	6	5	4	1
1	4	7	5	8	3	6	2	9
7	3	1	2	4	9	8	5	6
4	6	2	8	7	5	9	1	3
5	9	8	3	6	1	2	7	4

Sudoku, Crossword answers on page 8

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Super Crossword

OH NO!

ACROSS

1 Vermicelli, e.g.
6 Commercial spots
9 16th-century pope
14 Olympic length unit
19 Had a dull, steady pain
20 Chart topper, often
22 Cockeyed
23 Hidden stockpiles of certain infield bags?
25 Low-pH liquids
26 Certain Southern sib
27 Tax doc. whiz
28 Lead-in to Pen
30 Ranch unit
31 Grassy tract
34 Instructions for securing a bottle with a screw cap?
39 Gods, in Italy
40 Some thin batteries
43 Owner of Zipcar
44 Promotional links
45 Dad providing the finances?
49 Cottage cheese piece

50 Reject, as a lover
51 Turner of "Betrayed"
52 Sashimi fish
53 Jesting type
56 Bane of not knowing which college major to choose?
62 Vigoda of old TV and film
65 Hirer of many 27-Acrosses, for short
66 Skyrocket
67 Toll highway
68 Chemistry class cost
70 Like the letter O in this puzzle's entire solution
73 Applies drippings to
75 Brain flash
76 Hajj city
77 "Palooka" actor Erwin
78 She's shearable
79 Design of a three-masted ship?
86 "The Addams Family" cousin
87 Swivel on an axis
88 Ribald
89 Org. against pet abuse

93 "Will you let me?"
94 Reiner or Sagan wearing a Santa suit?
98 Hawaiian porches
101 Diminish
102 Malevolent
103 Eat dinner
104 British apartment doubling as a malt shop?
107 Ticks by
110 Sister of Meg, Jo and Amy
111 Diminish
112 Comedic actress Issa
115 Fit for the job
116 Lauder of makeup
118 Famous German tale teller who lived in a farm building?
125 Rhythmic swings
126 Rhythmic way to march
127 Strike hard, biblical-style
128 Very inclined
129 Dutch cheeses
130 Stitch clothes
131 Consequently

DOWN

1 Butter square
2 Frau's "Alas!"
3 Small, agile Japanese dog breed
4 Irwin of "Crikey! It's the Irwins"
5 "Puff" snake
6 "I have it!"
7 Part of DVD
8 Stride
9 Actress Zadora
10 Business mag
11 "I hate it!"
12 Precipitates cold pellets
13 Italian motor scooter brand
14 Hamm of soccer
15 Boxed up
16 Slow-paced martial art
17 Footballer's sweep
18 "Start over" buttons
21 "Begone!"
24 Queen guitarist May
29 Not off-key
31 Alternatives to JPEGs
32 Sign on for another tour of duty
33 Hawk cousins
35 Toddler's cry

36 "— got a feeling ..."
37 Geraint's title
38 Theoretical physicist Paul
41 Way yonder
42 Did karaoke
46 Joanne of "Red River"
47 Bellybutton type
48 Driveway goo
49 Adorable
52 Eldest son of Mitt Romney
53 Be the author of
54 Cockeyed
55 Duck cousins
57 Rapping "Dr."
58 Very, in music scores
59 Hwy. crime
60 Banquet liquid holder
61 Rival of DHL and FedEx
62 Perp's story
63 Having no knack for
64 Roger of "At the Movies"
69 E-help page
70 No more than
71 Former U.S. RR regulator
72 Educ. facility
73 A/C meas.
74 Subtle glows
76 Kihei's island
77 Perplex
80 Pan Am rival

81 Paris palace
82 Bi- plus one
83 Make lighter
84 Video surveillance syst.
85 PC key abbr.
90 Submits, as a test paper
91 Mötley —
92 High peaks
93 Jungle knife
94 Half- (java option)
95 "Good" cholesterol, for short
96 Lulu Hogg player Peggy
97 Imam's God
98 Vilifies in print
99 Scores 100 on the test
100 Stinging plant
101 Certain radio frequency range
105 Yippie Hoffman
106 Not false
108 Discomfit
109 Large feather
113 Raggedy — (some dolls)
114 Livy's "Lo!"
117 Seer's "gift"
119 Sanyo rival
120 '60s war site
121 ENTs, e.g.
122 Hack down
123 & so forth
124 Once called

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POLICE BLOTTER

SKAGIT COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Monday, Sept. 18

2:47 p.m. Really fast driver – Traffic stop for speeding vehicle with citations issued for speed and driving while LICENSE suspended 1st degree. Beaver Marsh / McLean Rds., Greater La Conner.

Wednesday, Sept. 20

10:45 a.m. Bad choices – A motorhome tried to drive down First street and found the lane was too narrow. The driver tried to turn around in a parking lot and hit another parked car. Info was exchanged between the owners. S. 1st St., La Conner.

Thursday, Sept. 21

6:08 p.m. Not abandoned – The restaurant owner called to report an abandoned vehicle but soon called back to say the owner had returned and moved the vehicle. La Conner Whitney Rd., Greater La Conner.

8:09 p.m. Dark or not – Report of multiple motorcycles on the road with no headlights. A deputy checked the area but did not locate anything. Best Rd., Greater La Conner.

Friday, Sept. 22

10:48 a.m. Stopping a leak – A deputy was notified by a plumbing company of a fraud situation involving a customer. The company had been called to a repair of leaking pipes by a male subject who said the problem was at his

mom's house. When the company arrived they found an elderly female in assisted living. They contacted the male who said it was his mom and tried to get the plumbing company to provide her personal information. A deputy contacted the male who immediately hung up. Unknown where the caller was from. State St., La Conner.

Saturday, Sept. 23

8:07 a.m. Break-in 1 – Vehicle prowl. Washington Ave. / S 1st St., La Conner.

10:28 a.m. Break-in 2 – Vehicle prowl. N. 2nd St., La Conner.

2:27 p.m. Break-in 3 – Vehicle prowl. N. 2nd St., La Conner.

Three vehicle prowls were reported that occurred either late Friday night or early Saturday morning. Items taken out of the cars were loose items that were easy to carry. This includes packages, a briefcase and loose change. All vehicles were unlocked which allowed easy entry. Locking doors is a key to preventing easy theft. If doors are not locked, the vehicle should be left empty or with nothing of real value or concern to the owner.

8:02 p.m. Two for one – Vehicle stopped for speeding and also issued a citation for suspended driver's license. Best / Chilberg Rds., Greater La Conner.

Soroptimists accepting applications for Live Your Dream Award

By Bill Reynolds

Soroptimists are optimists – and with good reason, especially in La Conner.

Members of the local chapter daily express appreciation for the widespread community support received for their multiple service projects. Their global volunteer organization provides women and girls access to education and training needed for economic empowerment.

"It's totally amazing what we get in donations," Diane Goetz, co-president with Margaret Hillard of La Conner Soroptimists, said of the merchandise stocked at the chapter's Vintage La Conner thrift store.

Goetz and Hillard, in a sit-down interview with the Weekly News in mid-September, said store sales generate revenue that the Soroptimists plow back into the community, funding programs such as the impactful Live Your Dream award that uplifts female heads of households.

Applications for the Live Your Dream program are being accepted through mid-November. It is designed to help women overcome serious life-changing challenges, from poverty and divorce to death of a spouse and domestic violence.

Award recipients, Goetz and Hillard stressed, may use the Live Your Dream cash award to offset any costs related to their efforts to attain higher education, including books, childcare and transportation.

"The great thing about this," Goetz said, "is that it's an award, not a scholarship. It helps with living expenses. It can be money used to replace worn tires or a dead battery on a car needed to get to school, where computers and technology can be accessed. The award can help recipients get an edu-

cation and launch new careers."

Hillard echoed Goetz, citing community support as the foundation of Soroptimist service projects, including annual scholarships for graduating La Conner High School seniors and the prestigious Ruby Award, which honors women who make extraordinary efforts on behalf of others.

"Without this community," said Hillard, "we'd be out of business. We have an amazing community, amazing customers and amazing volunteers."

Hillard and Goetz said the La Conner Soroptimist roster has at various times boasted more than 60 members since the chapter's inception more than 25 years ago.

"Nine of our charter members are still active today," said Hillard, a 1985 La Conner High graduate who was encouraged by retired La Conner Schools administrator Maureen Harlan to join the chapter.

Harlan remains a vocal champion of what she terms "Soroptimism," a can-do spirit that makes possible outreach missions like Live Your Dream.

"We believe in this," said Harlan. "We believe in what we're doing. We see the results."

In the case of Live Your Dream, it's a concerted campaign to transform lives and create opportunities for recipients to further strengthen their communities.

Women with dire financial needs enrolled in post-secondary courses – whether at community colleges, vocational-technical schools, or in-person or on-line classrooms – are encouraged to make application for the Live Your Dream award. And to do so without hesitation.

"We want them in early," said Goetz, who has been a Soropti-

mist for more than 20 years.

Applications can be made online at Soroptimist.org/awards. Additional assistance can be obtained by contacting silaconner@gmail.com.,

"The goal of this," Goetz said, "is for recipients to come out with an associate degree and a bachelor's would be great."

Typically, La Conner area applicants are students at Skagit Valley College or Whatcom College.

But where a student is enrolled shouldn't be a limiting factor, Goetz said. She is hopeful applications will start pouring in ahead of the November deadline.

"I know women in the La Conner area who haven't applied yet," she said.

Goetz and Hillard said the local community's tireless rallying to the Soroptimist cause inspires their commitment to continued service.

"It's a totally symbiotic relationship," Hillard insisted. "It's a lot of work, but there are a lot of rewards and we have a lot of fun."

Or, as Goetz puts it: "I just can't not be a Soroptimist."

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PIRATE TALK AND PRIVATE PLAY – Rhonda Hundertmark and her grandson Maverick were not waiting for next year's International Talk Like a Pirate Day, Sept. 19. There was treasure to be found, planks to be walked and timbers to shiver last Wednesday, so the two did.

– Photo courtesy of Rhonda Hundertmark

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- 3. Saturday Nov. 4th ... Prime Rib Night**
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