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to borrow up to \$4 billion**
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crackdown on protests**
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school funding increase**
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LIZZIE THOMPSON / Petersburg Pilot

For the Rights of All

Last Friday morning, students at Rae Stedman Elementary listened closely to local author and actor Diane Benson explain the importance of Elizabeth Peratrovich Day.

Benson worked as a researcher and writer for the PBS documentary “For the Rights of All: Ending Jim Crow in Alaska.” She also acted in the film, portraying the part of Elizabeth Peratrovich.

During Friday’s presentation she shared a scene from the documentary that was filmed in the same legislative gallery where the Alaska Territorial Legislature’s House and Senate debated the anti-discrimination bill Peratrovich and her husband had helped to draft. Elizabeth Peratrovich’s impassioned

testimony during those debates has been widely credited as a decisive factor in the passage of the historic Anti-Discrimination Act of 1945.

Benson encouraged students to remember a time when they were excluded or felt they’d been treated unfairly and told them, “It takes bravery to stand up and speak. Be proud of that part of yourself that is willing to step forward when something is going on that’s not right. It’s scary, but somebody has to speak up and that’s why we celebrate Elizabeth Peratrovich Day, because, in a way, we’re celebrating that part in ourselves – that part that says: we’re strong and we stand up for what’s right, for what’s just and fair.”

Flat state funding complicates ongoing teacher negotiations

By OLIVIA ROSE
Pilot writer

The Associated Teachers of Petersburg (ATP) and Petersburg School District are negotiating the next labor agreement that will take effect in the fall of 2024 and span three school years through spring 2027.

Past negotiations between the teachers union and the district, which occur every three years, have largely focused on updating the contract language.

This year, however, ATP and PSD are focusing more on when, where and how to allocate what limited money the district has to work with.

ATP is aiming for an agreement with PSD that has fair and competitive salaries and comparable benefits for teachers.

However, costly adjustments are difficult for the district due to the limited budget it has to work within — a major challenge from years of flat funding from the state.

School board president Sarah Holmgrain said the district is “remaining optimistic” as negotiations continue, “because we all have the same goal of trying to come to a conclusion where everybody feels at least some sense of fairness about raises and programs.”

A teacher’s salary increases on a sliding scale and takes into account their level of education and years of experience.

The current labor agreement that was negotiated in 2021 issued a 1% raise each year for teachers. Unfortunately, the 3% total salary increases “were nowhere near inflation,” said ATP president Alice Cumps.

“The cost of living has gone up so dramatically ... inflation peaked so dramatically, and as that was happening, our salaries were locked-in at a very low increase

Continued on page 12

Blind Slough closed to king salmon sport fishing this summer

By ORIN PIERSON
Pilot editor

The fresh waters of Blind Slough will be closed to sport fishing for king salmon this summer, from June 1 through July 31, according to the sport fishing regulations for the Wrangell Narrows and Blind Slough terminal harvest released this week by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG).

However, in the salt waters of the Wrangell Narrows, king salmon fishing will be open. Both residents and nonresidents will have a bag and possession limit of two king salmon greater than 28 inches long and two less than 28 inches from the salt waters of the Wrangell Narrows.

Those regulations are estab-

lished by the Wrangell Narrows-Blind Slough Terminal Harvest Area Salmon Management Plan, which has been in place since 1997. Its rules are decided by the Board of Fish, and its purpose is to ensure adequate broodstock returns to the hatchery.

The management plan distributes the harvest of Crystal Lake Hatchery king salmon between sport and commercial fisheries based on the projected adult king salmon return to the terminal area.

Sport and personal use fisheries are granted priority over the commercial troll fishery in the area.

The benchmarks in the management plan state that when more than 4,000 fish are projected to return to the hatchery, the commercial troll fishery

shall be opened in the Wrangell Narrows and the sport fisheries will open in the salt water of the Narrows and in the fresh water of Blind Slough.

When the projection is between 2,000 and 4,000 fish, the commercial fishery will be closed; however, all the sport fishing shall open.

When the projection is between 1,000 and 2,000 fish, sport fishing is the Narrows is opened, but commercial fishing is closed and sport fishing in Blind Slough is closed.

When the projection is below 1,000 fish, the sport and commercial fisheries are closed in the terminal harvest area.

For 2024, the projected Crystal Lake Hatchery adult king salmon return to the terminal area is 1,400 fish.

Jeff Rice, the Petersburg/

Wrangell Area Management Biologist, told the Pilot that the management plan grants him the ability to issue emergency orders to modify these regulations, but he can’t issue those orders before June 1, and they are required to be based on “some new information that demonstrates a reason for a change. There must be a justification.”

“My plan going into the summer is to be in contact with the hatchery and be going out to Blind Slough myself ... everything we’re trying to do is to ensure that the hatchery gets the broodstock they need,” said Rice. “An emergency order would come out liberalizing the area and saying it’s back on, everybody can go fishing in Blind Slough, if [the hatchery gets] their broodstock or if they

feel there’s enough fish that they will be able to get their broodstock.”

“Three out of the last five years they didn’t get their broodstock,” Rice added.

If necessary, the option exists to issue an emergency order reducing the summer king bag limit in the Wrangell Narrows, as well, said Rice, “if we saw that as an effective tool to get to the end goal, which I believe is the hatchery’s end goal, our end goal and even the public’s

Continued on page 6



Yesterday's News News from 25-50-75-100 years ago

February 22, 1924 – Salmon may migrate distances of 1,000 miles or more, it was proved in an experiment conducted by the United States Bureau of Fisheries and recently reported to Dean John N. Cobb of the College of Fisheries. A number of salmon, each identified by a tag, were planted during the year of 1922 in waters near Alaska by Dr. C.H. Gilbert, professor of zoology at Stanford University. A Siberian fisherman reported that one of the salmon had been caught in the Pankara river on the coast of Siberia, more than 1,000 miles from the coast of Alaska. Some of the other salmon were identified on the Pacific coast as far as 800 miles south of the region where they were planted. “The experiment reveals that fish may migrate long distances and challenges the commonly accepted idea that they remain in home regions to spawn,” said Dean Cobb.

February 25, 1949 – It looks like spring has at last ‘sprung!’ The light drizzle is beginning to wear away the more than twenty feet of snow which has fallen on Petersburg this year. Everyone seems to be hoping the drizzle will change to a real determined Alaskan rain. Another sure sign

of spring, Herman Papke, long-time resident at the end of the road, was a Petersburg visitor Wednesday. Papke came to town with Harold Ray to buy supplies. He reported that in anticipation of a good year, he has ordered a large supply of seeds.

February 20, 1974 – Fifty-four persons, including four adults, swam 129.95 miles and raised \$4,258 for the Petersburg swim team during the “Swimathon” here February 14. Participants completed 9,149 laps in the municipal pool. The money, which was pledged according to distances covered in the water by various team swimmers, will go toward a team travel fund and for new equipment, including a new low diving board. Swim Coach Jim Martin said all but one of the 54 participants swam for the entire two hours allotted. Penny Ohmer won an award for swimming the 200-lap goal in the fastest time. Miss Ohmer covered the distance

in one hour and twenty minutes. Second place was Jimmy Roesel at one hour and twenty-three minutes. The youngest boy to complete the 200 laps was Alex Guthrie, 7, a second grader. The youngest girl was Tani Thorstenson, 8, a third grader. Mrs. Gary Oines took honors as the adult to swim the most laps, at 194. The swimmer with the most pledges was Tommy Thompson with \$528. Second was Jimmy Roesel with \$418.

February 18, 1999 – Stedman Elementary and Petersburg High School participated in the Kindness and Justice Challenge – a program designed to promote acts of kindness and justice while learning values such as respect, responsibility, tolerance and compassion. The contest, which the district is participating in for the second straight year, is held each year in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. “whose life sought kindness and acts of

justice.” Petersburg school counselor Marjorie Paust, who got the schools involved in the program, explained that the contest runs for two weeks after Martin Luther King Day. During that time students are asked to complete random acts of kindness and to keep track of those accomplishments. The program started in the district with the assistance of the student groups Natural Helpers and the National Honor Society, but Paust soon expanded the contest to include other members of the student body. Racking up acts of kindness, high school students visited the elementary school to explain and teach the elementary students what acts of kindness mean. With that information in tow, elementary school students outdid the older students in the district, completing a total of 146 acts of kindness and earning first place in the state. High school students notched another 102

acts, placing it third in the state. The 248 acts of kindness ranged from helping to shovel someone out of the snow to spending quality time with a younger sibling – or even just being available when someone needed a good friend. Paust said that with so much snow over the past few weeks, the majority of the reported acts included moving snow. But she pointed out that one student taught their younger sibling to play guitar, while others helped friends with homework. One act that particularly touched Paust was an act sent in by one of the elementary school students who “let my little brother sleep on the top bunk.” High school junior Jennifer Loesch, who went to the elementary school everyday of the two week challenge, said, “It was a great thing. It’s something that should be done every day in our lives, not just the two weeks that the program goes on.”

Northern Nights Theater

This Weekend:
Mean Girls
2h • Rated **PG-13**
Musical/Comedy

Showings:
Friday & Saturday @ 7 pm
Sunday @ 4 pm

Next weekend:
No Movie
HS Play

Concessions available.
Credit cards accepted.

650-7626

WEATHER

	High	Low	Precip	Snow
02/14	33	25	0.00	0.0
02/15	40	22	0.00	0.0
02/16	40	23	0.00	0.0
02/17	42	27	T	0.0
02/18	43	34	T	0.0
02/19	45	30	0.00	0.0
02/20	44	30	0.00	0.0

This Week's Precipitation: 0.00"
This Week's Snow: 0.00"
This weather service is provided by the FAA weather observation station at the James A. Johnson Airport.

DAYLIGHT HOURS

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Daylight
Feb 22	7:04a	5:05p	10:01hrs
Feb 23	7:02a	5:07p	10:05hrs
Feb 24	6:59a	5:10p	10:11hrs
Feb 25	6:57a	5:12p	10:15hrs
Feb 26	6:54a	5:14p	10:20hrs
Feb 27	6:52a	5:16p	10:24hrs
Feb 28	6:49a	5:19p	10:30hrs

“Constituent Connection” with your District 2 legislator

Representative Rebecca Himschoot invites you to stop by her table this Saturday, Feb. 24, at the Glacier Express Café between 10 and 11 a.m. for a conversation. Please accept this opportunity to ask questions, make suggestions, and share concerns with your representative.

For more information email rep.himschoot@akleg.gov or call her office at 907-465-3732.

PETERSBURG HAPPENINGS

Brought to you by:  

THURSDAY, February 22
Stories In Motion, ages 0-3 with caregiver: 11:00am, Public Library
PMC Board Meeting: 5:30pm, Municipal Building
Free Dinner Get Together: 5:30pm, Lutheran Church- Holy Cross Hall
PHS Boys Varsity Basketball vs Haines: 5:30pm, PHS Gym
PHS Girls Varsity Basakethball vs Haines: 7:00pm, PHS Gym
Ragnarok Rollers Practice: 7:30pm, Parks & Rec Gym

FRIDAY, February 23
Al-Anon Support Group: 12:00pm, Episcopal Church
Bingo: 6:00pm, Sons of Norway
AA Candlelight Meeting: 7:00pm, Episcopal Church
PHS Boys Varsity Basketball vs Mt. Edgecumbe: 7:00, PHS Gym

SATURDAY, February 24
Celebration of Life for Paul Bowen: 1:00pm, Moose Lodge
PSG Chamber of Commerce Banquet: 6:00pm, Elks Ballroom
PHS Boys Varisty Basketball vs Mt. Edgecumbe: 7:00, PHS Gym

SUNDAY, February 25
Knitting Group- all welcome: 2:00pm, MVM Social Hall
Ragnarok Rollers Practice: 5:00pm, Parks & Rec Community Center

MONDAY, February 26
Tai Chi: 7:00am, Mountain View Manor Social Hall
Burger Night: 5:30pm, Moose Lodge
AA Women’s Meeting: 7:00 pm, Presbyterian Church

TUESDAY, February 27
AA 12x12 Meeting: 7:00pm, Holy Cross Classroom

WEDNESDAY, February 28
Tai Chi: 7:00am, Mountain View Manor Social Hall
Rotary Club Lunch and Fellowship: 12:00pm, Salvation Army Hall
Free Super For All: 6:00pm, First Baptist Church
American Legion Meeting: 6:30pm, Upstairs Elks Lodge

To add an event to the Happenings calendar call us at 772-9393 or email Pilotpub@gmail.com

Friends and family of Emilie Sperl are invited to attend a Celebration of Life

at Sons of Norway Hall
5pm on March 2nd

All are welcome to bring a dish and join us for a potluck supper.

FERRY SCHEDULE

Terminal Office • 772-3855 or call 800-642-0066

NORTHBOUND DEPARTURES				SOUTHBOUND DEPARTURES			
SAT 2/24	KENNICOTT	12:30	A.M.	MON 2/26	KENNICOTT	03:15	A.M.
FRI 3/1	KENNICOTT	08:30	P.M.	SUN 3/3	KENNICOTT	09:00	P.M.
MON 3/4	KENNICOTT	09:00	P.M.	THUR 3/7	KENNICOTT	11:45	A.M.
FRI 3/8	KENNICOTT	11:30	P.M.	MON 3/11	KENNICOTT	12:00	A.M.
FRI 3/15	KENNICOTT	07:00	P.M.	MON 3/18	KENNICOTT	01:15	A.M.

PRESENTED AS A PUBLIC SERVICE BY:



PETERSBURG TIDE TABLE
FEBRUARY 2024

	HIGH TIDES				LOW TIDES			
	A.M.		P.M.		A.M.		P.M.	
	Time	Ft.	Time	Ft.	Time	Ft.	Time	Ft.
22 Thu	0:24	14.1	12:03	16.1	6:09	4.1	6:39	-0.6
23 Fri	0:54	14.8	12:39	16.5	6:44	3.1	7:10	-0.9
24 Sat	1:22	15.4	1:12	16.6	7:17	2.3	7:38	-1.0
25 Sun	1:48	15.9	1:44	16.5	7:47	1.7	8:05	-0.7
26 Mon	2:13	16.2	2:15	16.1	8:18	1.3	8:31	-0.2
27 Tue	2:38	16.3	2:47	15.5	8:48	1.2	8:57	0.6
28 Wed	3:03	16.2	3:19	14.6	9:20	1.2	9:23	1.7

PRESENTED AS A PUBLIC SERVICE BY:



Ordinance would allow sale of borough property below assessed value for public benefit

By OLIVIA ROSE
Pilot writer

An ordinance amending Petersburg municipal code to allow borough land to be disposed of for less than assessed or appraised value when deemed for a “public benefit purpose” passed in its first reading Feb. 5 at a Petersburg Borough Assembly meeting.

Amending the code will allow the assembly to dispose of borough land at a lower price for projects deemed more valuable to the community than revenues from a sale at full-value.

The municipal code currently has a mechanism for disposal of borough real property for less than the assessed value to a state or federal agency, federally recognized tribe or nonprofit entity — or for purposes of economic development as determined by the assembly to be in the best interest of the borough.

However, there is currently no mechanism for the borough to sell at less than assessed value for affordable housing or a large development project.

This ordinance expands the categories of reasons where the borough could sell for less than assessed value, and lays out a process to do so.

A project must meet two requirements in order to qualify for a less than full value disposal.

It must be determined to result in a public benefit, and it must be one of three kinds of projects: economic development projects for new or expanded industrial, manufacturing or commercial facilities; construction of affordable housing; and

residential housing developments creating at least 20 residential lots that, according to the ordinance, “would address the shortage of reasonably priced housing within the borough.”

The 20 lot minimum sets a threshold for development projects to meet in order to be considered significant enough to meet the standards to be sold for less than full value.

“If we look at the magnitude of the costs rising in this community, you know, saving [money] on a land sale ... it’s not going to save us from that,” said assembly member Thomas Fine-Walsh, who spearheaded the ordinance. “What we need is, we need more community members, we need more property taxes, we need more sales taxes, we need to bring people into this community in order to make it sustainable. And that’s what this tries to do.”

Results from a major housing needs assessment demonstrated a significant need for housing in Petersburg, especially affordable housing.

Assembly member Fine-Walsh said the results provided input from the public “suggesting that we look at ways we can remove barriers to development of reasonably priced housing for our community. And that’s what has led to this.”

Considering the housing crisis in Petersburg, assembly member Scott Newman said that, in the Petersburg Borough, “we have a demonstrated need, we have the land, but we don’t have the mechanism to make this happen ... This is a good first step.”

He also noted the current value of

property is unaffordable.

“[This amendment] gives the manager or the assembly the ability to lower the price to the point where it can be economically affordable for the groups of people that we’re trying to address. So I think this is a good thing,” said assembly member Newman.

Assembly member Fine-Walsh emphasized the ordinance ensures the opportunity for public input on disposals conducted under this code.

“Essentially, what we’ve tried to do is create a system to dispose of land below assessed value, while always maintaining public accountability, because it’s public land. And I think it’s incredibly important, when you’re dealing with a public asset like this, you always have public accountability,” assembly member Fine-Walsh explained.

There are checks and balances in place throughout the disposal process in order to achieve this transparency.

“This incorporates a lot of public feedback from the community. I know there are a lot of people concerned about disposal of public land for less than assessed value ... is this gonna open the door to private developers running away with our land ... We’ve made tremendous effort to prevent that situation. And every step of the way there’s public input. There’s input from planning and zoning, there’s input from the borough assembly, there’s input from the public through public hearings...” said assembly member Fine-Walsh.

The disposal can be initiated by either the borough or a developer with an ap-

plication, which is first reviewed by the planning and zoning commission, and any other relevant boards, before it can be considered by the borough assembly.

Then, the borough manager writes up a full report — with findings of fact detailing the project benefits — recommending to the assembly how to proceed with the disposal.

A disposal may proceed by competitive bidding or through direct negotiations. If the latter is favored, neighbors of the considered property are given prior notice in order to provide the opportunity to participate in a public hearing.

After a public hearing is held and the assembly considers the proposal and its attached recommendations, they determine if and how to proceed with the disposal.

If the assembly determines a disposal for less than assessed or appraised value is appropriate and meets the standards of a public benefit, the conditions of the sale are enshrined in a purchase agreement.

“This is a really important issue for our community. We really need to do everything we can to support the efforts of developing residential lots here ... I hope people will consider this ... We’ll have three readings here ... We’ll have ample opportunity to hear public input, which I hope will be plentiful and spirited. I look forward to hearing from the public,” said assembly member Fine-Walsh.

The next Petersburg Borough Assembly meeting will take place in the assembly chambers at noon on March 4.

Permanent Fund leaders propose to borrow up to \$4 billion for investments

By JAMES BROOKS
Alaska Beacon

The leaders of the \$76 billion Alaska Permanent Fund voted unanimously on Friday to adopt a strategic plan that calls for borrowing up to \$4 billion in order to increase the amount of money available for investments.

Friday’s vote has limited effect: The borrowing could take place only if the Alaska Legislature and Gov. Mike Dunleavy

change state law to allow it.

“It’ll start out as a legislative effort, then it would take a bill,” said Pauly Swanson, communications director of the Alaska Permanent Fund Corp., which manages the fund.

The Alaska Permanent Fund is the No. 1 source of general-purpose state revenue for state services and the annual Permanent Fund dividend. Each year, the fund transfers more than \$3 billion to the state treasury, and members of the board of

trustees hope to increase that amount by growing the value of the fund.

“This is going to require policymakers, the Legislature, the governor to get their minds wrapped around a concept,” said Deven Mitchell, the corporation’s executive director.

Public comments on the borrowing plan generally opposed the idea, but the six members of the corporation’s board of trustees said in prior meetings that they felt the approach gave fund managers a valuable new tool to increase the value of the Permanent Fund.

That tool, known as leveraging the fund’s accounts, is used widely by other pension funds and endowments, some of which borrow more than 25% of their funds’ value.

If investors’ earnings are greater than the rate of interest on the loan, the approach can boost returns beyond what’s normally possible. If they fall short, the strategy can compound losses.

Members of the board of trustees said they recognized public discomfort with the concept and amended the plan to involve a maximum of \$4 billion instead of 10% of the fund’s value.

“I think 10% is concerning to many people,” Mitchell said.

“I think four is the number,” responded trustee Craig Richards.

That proposal was what the board ultimately adopted.

The board also bowed to public opinion in other aspects

of their strategic plan by eliminating a suggestion that it raise its investment target above 5% plus inflation. A higher target would have required a more aggressive — and risky — investment strategy.

Trustees also scaled back plans to seek exemptions from the state’s open meetings act. Now, they’re only seeking exemptions that would shield the identity of candidates for a new executive director or chief investment officer.

Mitchell suggested that if the fund’s leverage plan is adopted by the Legislature and succeeds, then trustees will ask for permission for more money.

In Friday’s meeting, he described how that request might go: “If the fund succeeds like we’re hoping for, then we’ll be back and you’ll be able to see the fruits of this authority.”

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



Paul W. Bowen
February 29, 1932 — August 1, 2023

Celebration of Life & Adventure

Saturday, February 24, 2024
1:00pm-4:00pm
Petersburg Moose Lodge

We hope you will join us to share stories about Paul. If you are unable to attend and you have memories to share, please send to nevettebowen@gmail.com

PETERSBURG Chamber Banquet

24 FEBRUARY, 2024

6:00 PM

The Elks Lodge
Caterer: The Little Shed
Cost: \$45
Salmon or Flank Steak
Tickets: Lee's Clothing

GUEST SPEAKER
TODD MACMANUS

pcoc@alaskan.com

907.772.3646

To the Editor

Blind Slough King Salmon

To the Editor:

ADFG will not be opening Blind Slough freshwater king salmon sport fishery in summer 2024. They are expecting low returns based on the previous poor returns to the Crystal Lake Hatchery. What is most interesting is they will still allow the sport saltwater fishery to continue with no restrictions.

First, closure of the freshwater king salmon fishery will not solve the problem. The vast majority of kings are harvested in the saltwater. Removing the handful of local freshwater anglers will simply provide more fish for the saltwater trollers to catch as the king salmon daily move from freshwater to saltwater with the tide.

Second, the core reason that fewer fish make it to the Crystal Lake Hatchery is the growth of the commercial sportfishing lodge industry in the Wrangell Narrows. We’ve all seen it. The fleet of lodge boats has grown exponentially in the last two decades and seen no restrictions. Yet ADFG and Crystal Lake

cannot figure out why they can’t get enough king salmon to the hatchery. Seems like simple math to me – if an armada of nonresidents harvest four kings per person per day in the Narrows you can’t expect many kings to make it to the hatchery!

What would be equitable for all user groups is to have everyone share in solving the hatchery’s problem. Allowing

retention of four fish in saltwater and ZERO in freshwater is ridiculous. Allowing two fish in saltwater and two fish in freshwater would accomplish the same goal but still allow everyone access to the resource.

If locals don’t speak up now, ADFG will not be restricting the commercial lodge businesses and there will be no freshwater fishery for the locals who enjoy

taking a walk to “the slough” and catching a king salmon. Many of the local people that will be displaced by this closure are children, elderly, financially disadvantaged. Whatever your situation, you shouldn’t be excluded from the resource while the commercial lodges continue to fish unrestricted.

ADFG will tell you their hands are tied, but they always

have the ability to change management through emergency order. If you feel like I do – that this management plan is unacceptable – please call ADFG and let them know. The contacts are Patrick Fowler (907) 772-5231 and Jeff Rice (907) 772-3801. I hope to see you with your fishing pole at “the slough” this summer.

Andy Kittams

Dear Long Term Care Staff,

We cannot thank you enough for the amazing care that you gave to our dad and grandpa, George Curtiss, while he was living in Long Term Care. Words could never express the gratitude that we have for each and every one of you who helped take care of him. You made his life so full of joy up until the very end. He loved and appreciated every one of you and that was always so clear to us when we went to visit him. We are so thankful for the love that you showed him, even on his worst days. Thank you again, from the bottom of our hearts for the job that you do and how well you do it. In his words, “You are all keepers” and we couldn’t agree more!

Love,
The Family of George Curtiss

Thank you

America Legion, Edward Locken Post 14



Thank you to the America Legion for hosting such a fun filled evening for the town, and using the event to show how HIP to be Kind it is by supporting community members experiencing housing & food insecurity.

Sincerely, the HIP Board of Directors

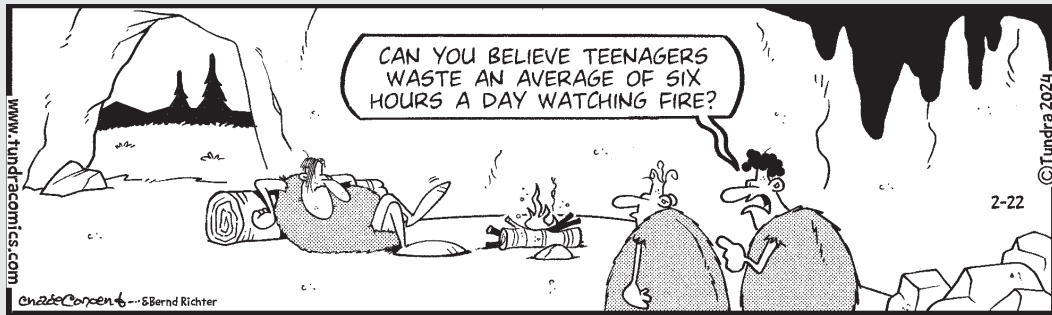
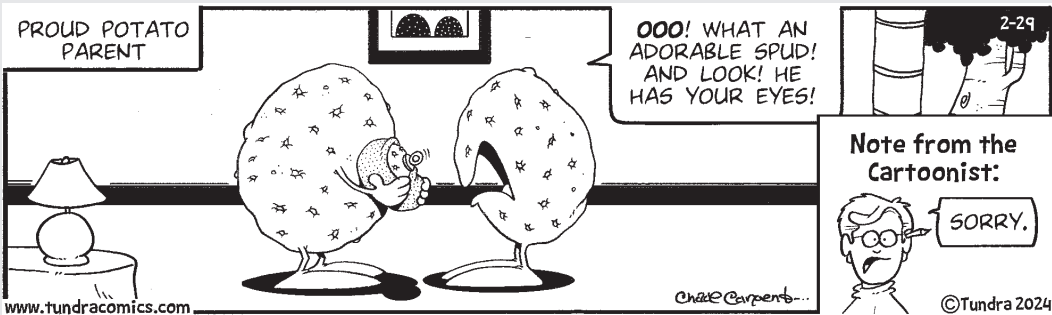
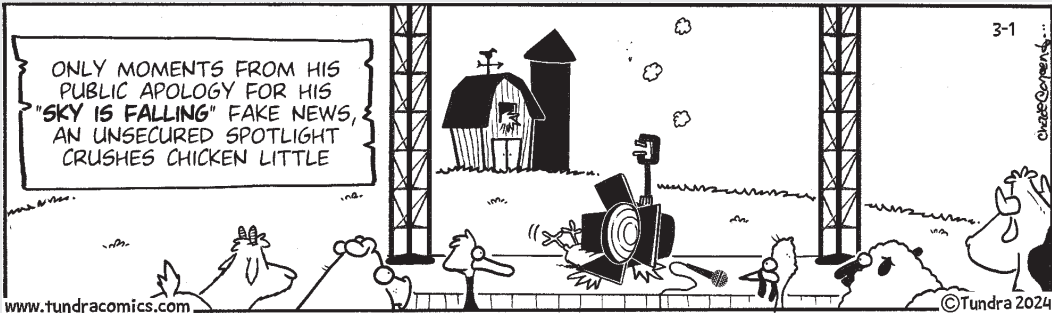
Ritter’s River

by Marc Lutz



Tundra

by Chad Carpenter



2017 GENERAL EXCELLENCE FIRST PLACE NATIONAL NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION AND NAMED BEST WEEKLY NEWSPAPER IN 2013 & 2015 BY THE ALASKA PRESS CLUB



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GUEST EDITORIAL

Risky business not the state’s business

By LARRY PERSILY
Wrangell Sentinel Publisher

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

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

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

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

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

The trustees propose borrowing up to \$4 billion.

Minus six zeros, it’s the same as an individual borrowing \$4,000 and putting the money into the market, thinking they can earn 8% on their investment, pay 4% on the borrowed money, and pocket the 4% profit without putting any of their own money at

too much risk.

That is, unless the borrowed money fails to earn a higher return than the interest payments, in which case the investor loses the difference.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Police report

February 14 – An officer conducted a welfare check on South 3rd Street.

An officer responded to a parking complaint on Dolphin Street and a vehicle was moved at the direction of an officer.

Jose Acuna was cited for driving with a suspended license.

Robert Brooks was cited for failure to carry proof of motor vehicle liability insurance.

An officer provided a civil standby on Haugen Drive.

February 15 – An individual requested extra patrols on Lumber Street.

Jared Nicholas Burns was charged with probation violation and violating conditions of release.

A driver on Sandy Beach Road was issued a warning for speed.

An officer responded to a report of suspicious activity on Rambler Street and determined it was unfounded.

A driver on Baranof Street was issued a warning for tail light requirements.

February 16 – Papers were served in South Harbor.

A runaway dog was brought to the Petersburg Police Department (PPD) and the owner came to claim it.

Officers contacted the owner of a dog running at large on Sandy Beach Road.

PPD received a report of an unattended dog on South 3rd Street.

An officer removed debris from the roadway at 2.5-mile on Mitkof Highway.

February 17 – PPD received a report of suspicious activity on South Nordic Drive.

PPD received a report of a found dog.

An officer spoke with an individual regarding a civil matter.

An officer conducted foot patrols at Sandy Beach Park.

February 18 – An officer assisted a citizen in North Harbor.

Dana Miyaki was remanded for violating conditions of release.

February 19 – Evelyn Anderson was charged with permitting an unauthorized person to drive.

An officer assisted the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) with a fall on North 12th Street.

An officer responded to a report of dangerous driving on Mitkof Highway and determined there was no illegal activity.

An officer spoke with a complainant concerning a civil issue.

An officer responded to a disturbance on South Nordic Drive and determined it was non-criminal.

Matthew Davis, 27, was arrested for allegedly violating conditions of release.

An officer responded to a reported dog bite on Kisenov Street.

February 20 – Christopher Kegans was cited for illegal passing in a no passing zone.

Elizabeth Selsar was cited for failure to yield and failure to carry proof of insurance.

An officer provided a civil standby on Lake Street.

PPD received a report of theft on Sandy Beach Road.

An officer spoke with a complainant.

Property found on South 3rd Street was returned to its owner.

A driver on Mitkof Highway was issued a warning for an inoperable headlight.

The Five Finger Lighthouse Society has opportunities for you to get involved!



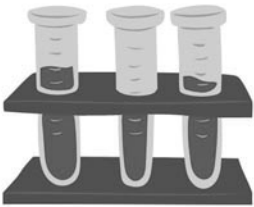
Have you ever dreamed of volunteering as a Lighthouse keeper?

During the summer months volunteers reside in the keepers quarters at Five Finger Lighthouse to host visitors and contribute to the improvement and maintenance of the lighthouse, typically remaining on site for weeks or months at a time.

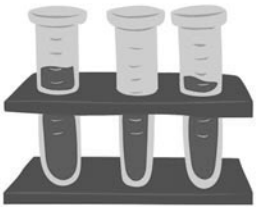
Contact the FFLS board of directors to find out if serving as a lighthouse keeper might be a good fit for you visit fivefingerlighthouse.com.

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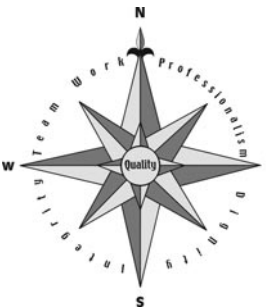
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Vikings work overtime on the road in Metlakatla

By **LIAM DEMKO**
Pilot writer

Petersburg’s Varsity Vikings basketball squad took on Metlakatla for two games last week, resulting in two losses against their tough competitors.

After a difficult day of traveling the Vikings fought hard in both games on Thursday and Friday with each match ending in a close finish against their competitors in Metlakatla, who have been ranked number one in their conference this season.

The Vikings intended to travel down to Metlakatla Wednesday afternoon, but issues with air travel forced them to take a series of boat trips on Thursday which brought them into the gym just barely in time for their first match.

Despite the difficulties, the Vikings kept up throughout the game as the score seesawed back and forth.

“It was one of those games—I call them possession games—it just went back and forth. They would get a lead and we would get a lead,” said head coach Rick Brock.

The Petersburg squad started out down by a small margin at the end of the first quarter with Metlakatla up 11-8.

By halftime they were able to shrink that margin even smaller, down by one point with the score at 18-17.

And at the end of the third quarter, they continued to keep Metlakatla’s lead to two points.

With it still being anyone’s game, the final quarter came down to a last second play.

The Vikings were down one point with the ball and only 12 seconds to go when a scramble for the ball after a missed shot caused chaos on the court.

Brock called a quick timeout before Petersburg put in one final effort.

“We ran a play and we had a really tough shot at the basket. It just wouldn’t go in for us, it rolled around the rim and fell. We lost by one, it was a pretty tough ending,” reported Brock.

When everything was settled, the Vikings lost 46-45 on Thursday.

“We battled, we did a lot of good things, but every time we had a chance to take our lead and stretch it we weren’t able to take advantage of the opportunity,” said Brock.

“One of our strengths is balanced scoring and we only had three guys on Thursday. We play better when we have more guys in the mix.”

Not to be set back by their loss, the

Vikings had a long night of sleep after their busy day and prepared to give it their all in their final match on Friday.

According to Brock, Friday’s game mirrored Thursday’s in quite a few ways.

The Vikings started things off strong with a one-point lead at the end of the first quarter, before Metlakatla tied it up at halftime.

Metlakatla took the lead in the third quarter, forcing the Vikings to make up some ground in the final hustle.

“In the fourth quarter we had a nice run—we had a four-point lead with about three minutes to go,” said Brock.

But the back-and-forth nature of the series reared its head once again.

“We had some empty possessions and they started making some shots. We went from four up to down four,” said Brock.

In the final moments, the Vikings fought back and held Metlakatla for a couple of key possessions and Hunter Conn was able to make two free throws, which set the game into overtime.

The Vikings scored early but both teams struggled throughout the overtime period, and one deep three-point shot from Metlakatla was enough to win them the game, with Petersburg losing

41-44.

“It was a lower scoring game. I thought our defense was pretty good actually in both games, but on Friday we didn’t shoot the ball very well,” said Brock.

However, Brock also reported that their scoring on Friday was much more balanced across the board.

“We’re playing better. Having Elijah [Whitacre] back [after his injury] helps us. He’s a key part of our team. Defensively I thought we guarded them well. [There were] good positives,” he said.

“It’s hard because I thought we battled, we played hard, fought, all those things that you want your team to do on the road. But expectations wise we were looking to try to get at least one [win] down there... We’ve had four games go down to the last possession and we need to learn how to win those games also.”

Looking ahead, the Vikings are set for a series of exciting games.

Petersburg will host conference games against Haines on Wednesday and Thursday night, and the weekend will feature non-conference games against Mt. Edgecumbe on Friday and Saturday, with Saturday’s game being a special cancer awareness game.

Lady Vikings have a rough trip to Metlakatla

By **LIAM DEMKO**
Pilot writer

After a difficult trip down to Metlakatla the Lady Vikings fought their hardest during their two matches on Thursday and Friday.

Up against Metlakatla -- one of the best teams in the conference—the Lady Vikings struggled to take much ground leading to two losses.

Things started off on the wrong foot for the Petersburg athletes.

“It was a challenge. We went from ready to go down there, to almost mentally deciding that we aren’t going, to meeting at

the school at 5 am the next morning to take a nine-and-a-half-hour boat ride down,” said head coach Matt Pawuk.

But despite the difficulties, the Lady Vikings kept their heads up.

“The kids responded just fine to it and I was happy with their effort on Thursday night,” reported Pawuk.

The Lady Vikings tried on Thursday, but a clear height difference between the two teams kept them from executing their gameplan.

“We struggled to score a whole lot just because our offense is designed to get the ball inside, and when you’re deal-

ing with such a height disadvantage it makes it tough to do the things that you want to do,” said Pawuk.

Even though they lost 41-14, there were still some positive takeaways.

“We fought hard with them. That’s a team that has put up over 80 points a couple times this year and we held them to 40 Thursday night.”

After some much needed rest and relaxation, the Lady Vikings headed into their Friday match.

The game unfortunately was a similar story, with the Petersburg girls down around 20-9 at halftime, and the game ending

46-13.

But once again, Pawuk was proud of how his team performed up against their tough opponents.

“I was honestly just proud of our girls for holding that team to only 20 points in the first half... It was nice to see our kids—even after struggling Thursday night—to come out Friday night and still play really hard,” he said.

And despite the rough weekend, the girls are ready and raring to go as they head into this

week’s games, with matches up against Haines on Wednesday and Thursday.

“We’re ready to come home for sure, and we’re excited to get back on our home court. There’s nothing quite like playing in front of your own fans,” said Pawuk.

“We played Haines about a month ago. They beat us both times but both games were really competitive... It’ll be a good test for us to see what kind of progress we’ve made in the last month.”



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OLIVIA ROSE / Petersburg Pilot

Independent Grocery Alliance Retailers of the Year

IGA President John Ross presents Hammer & Wikan General Manager and CEO Jim Floyd with the USA Retailers of the Year award in Hammer & Wikan grocery store on Feb. 8, as board members and staff look on proudly. Pictured, left to right, are Jennifer Toyomura, Terri Faulter, Bruce Westre, Laron Martin, Sharon Wikan, Gainhart Samuelson, Katrina Miller, Audrey Samuelson, Jim Floyd and John Ross.

Haines loses appeal of Census which showed 500 resident drop

By LEX TREINEN
Chilkat Valley News

The U.S. Census Bureau rejected Haines' appeal over the 2020 population count, which showed Haines' population dropping by around 500 residents. "I'm deeply disappointed. I really thought that our response was compelling," said borough clerk Alekka Fullerton, who worked on the appeal. "I was mad – it's a big deal to our community."

The bureau counted 2080 residents in Haines in 2020. The borough appealed that number in June.

Fullerton said a few weeks ago, she realized the borough still hadn't received a response about its appeal. She reached out to her contact at the Census Bureau, who told her the appeal denial had been

sent to former mayor Douglas Olerud in November. Fullerton said she was frustrated that the letter wasn't sent to her email, which was the one included in its appeal.

The letter from the Census Bureau was included in the Feb. 13 assembly packet. "Our research found errors within the legal boundaries of your governmental unit, and we have made the corrections; however, the corrections did not change the counts for your total housing and population, so there is no change to your official 2020 Census counts," Deborah M. Stempowski, an associate director for the Census count, wrote to Olerud.

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

"We were very convinced our position was compelling. Apparently the Census Question committee agreed that we validly pointed out mistakes in the Census but that the mistakes found did not change the population determination," Fullerton wrote in the assembly packet.

Decennial census counts are used by the federal government to allocate federal funds. There's no exact formula, but estimates suggest Haines' population loss could represent more than \$10 million in lost funds over 10 years.

The state of Alaska does an annual population count that has showed Haines' population has remained relatively stable over the past few years. Fullerton said her work with GIS contractor Gary Greenberg of Alaska Map Company found an additional 600 residents over the Census count.

The Census Bureau said the revised housing counts will be available on its website in the coming months.

Fullerton said her best guess as to why the Census Bureau didn't correct its findings was because of the way the count is taken every 10 years as a snapshot. The count happened in the spring of 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic was beginning.

"We're a remote community without a lot of healthcare infrastructure, so I think our population was unusually low on that particular day," she said.

She said anecdotally, the community doesn't feel like it has lost a fifth of its population.

"If we had lost 500 people from town, why would we have a housing crisis?" she said. "We would feel it and there'd be a lot of empty houses."

Wrangell officials concerned about ongoing population decline

By LARRY PERSILY
Wrangell Sentinel writer

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

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

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

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

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

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

Statewide, the labor force

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

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

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

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

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

A lack of housing is a constant issue, she acknowledged. The borough later this year will sell 20 residential lots at the new Alder Top Village (Keishangita.'aan) subdivision

near Shoemaker Harbor, with an additional 20 lots possible in a second phase if there is sufficient demand.

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

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

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

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

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

uals to help.

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

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

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

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

He said the community

needs to take "bold moves" in the next five years to stop and, hopefully, reverse the population decline.

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

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

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

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Obituary

George Willard Curtiss, 88

George Willard Curtiss was born March 28, 1935, in Dallas, Oregon to Burt and Beulah Curtiss. He was the oldest of five children. George grew up in Dallas and spent his early years there hunting and fishing with his dad.

George was a standout basketball and football player during his high school years. After graduating he entered the Marines and served during the Korean War. Upon returning to the states he married Nancy Mishler in October of 1955 and they began their family in Corvallis, Oregon, where they had four children. In 1967 the family moved to Petersburg, Alaska, where they had two more children and George began his career with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game. Instrumental in revitalizing the salmon industry, he spent most of his summers walking streams all over Southeast Alaska. Anan and Petersburg Creek were among his favorites. After retiring in 1990, he and Nancy moved to Oregon.

George's passion was loving



George Willard Curtiss

Jesus and his greatest gift was sharing Him with everyone he met. He also had a lifelong love of fireworks and wanted everyone else to enjoy them too. He started Curtiss Fireworks in Petersburg and soon became known as "the Fireworks guy." George looked forward to every season and to visiting with everyone who came out to see him. They got their fireworks and a story or two to go along with them.

He spent his retirement years traveling between Oregon and Alaska visiting his many friends

and family. When his family began to see signs of dementia, he settled back in Petersburg. In 2022 he moved to Petersburg Medical Center's Long Term Care where all the nurses and staff treated him like a king. Despite his condition, he was happy and content in their care right up to the end. He was loved by all and he loved them all back. After a short battle with cancer, George went home to be with Jesus on February 7, 2024, in Petersburg.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Burt and Beulah; his sisters, Merry and Maydene; and his brothers, Jerry and Chuck.

George is survived Nancy Curtiss; sons, Troy (Vicki) and Craig (Nancy); daughters, Teresa (Rick) Versteeg, Tina Norheim, Cindy (Michael) Allen, and Angela (Marc)Lee; grandchildren Kerri Curtiss, Amanda Ridgeway, McKenzie Serafini, Kris Norheim, Rikki Markham, Taylor Crump, Fawn Gunther, Courtney Martin, Rex Versteeg, Martin Ford, Anthony Curtiss, Lana Caruso, Tanner Lee, Ethan Ford, Mauri Springer, and Kaden Lee; and twenty-one great-grandchildren.

His ashes will be spread in his favorite places.



Stork report



Alice and Cody Wegener are pleased to announce the birth of their daughter Charlotte Brooke Wegener. She was born at 6:16 p.m. on January 30, 2024, at Bartlett Regional Hospital in Juneau, Alaska, and was 6 pounds 12 ounces, 19.25 inches.

Senior Meals



- MONDAY, February 26**
Cashew Chicken, Rice, Green Salad, Milk, Muffin
- TUESDAY, February 27**
Beef Stew, Dinner Roll, Cucumber Salad, Milk, Apple Strudel
- WEDNESDAY, February 28**
Seafood Chowder, French Bread, Green Salad, Apple, Pudding
- THURSDAY, February 29**
Sloppy Joes, Tater Tots, Fruit Cup, Milk, Brownie
- FRIDAY, March 1**
Beef Taco Pasta, Mixed Vegetables, Green Salad, Pineapple Chunks, Cake

The community dining room is open to eligible diners (60+ and their spouses, or disabled individuals living in an assisted living facility). Dinner is served between 4 and 4:30 p.m. All meals are suggested donation only. Please call Mountain View Food Service at 772-4331 before noon for reservations.

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

The Pilot extends its best wishes to the persons listed on the Community Calendar.

Those with birthdays this week are: **February 23:** Craig Thorsteinson, Jenna Wilson-Ashby, Mary Midkiff, Samantha Medalen. **February 24:** Donna Ewing. **February 25:** Amy Bradley, Tracy Erickson. **February 26:** Dave Berg, Delfin Evenson, Fred Beltran, Hellen Jackson, Justin Haley, Kevin Thompson. **February 27:** Bruce Beck, Theresa Vick. **February 28:** Berlyn Ward, Bridget Wittstock, Eloise Whitethorn, Tammy Rabago.

Those with anniversaries this week are: **February 28:** John and Shari Wikan.

If you'd like to be included on our list, please call 907-772-9393.



at Petersburg School District

- Monday, Feb 26**
Cherry Blossom Chicken
- Tuesday, Feb 27**
Baked Potato Bar
- Wednesday, Feb 28**
Street Tacos
- Thursday, Feb 29**
WG Viking Ramen Bowl
- Friday, Mar 1**
WG Sub Sandwich



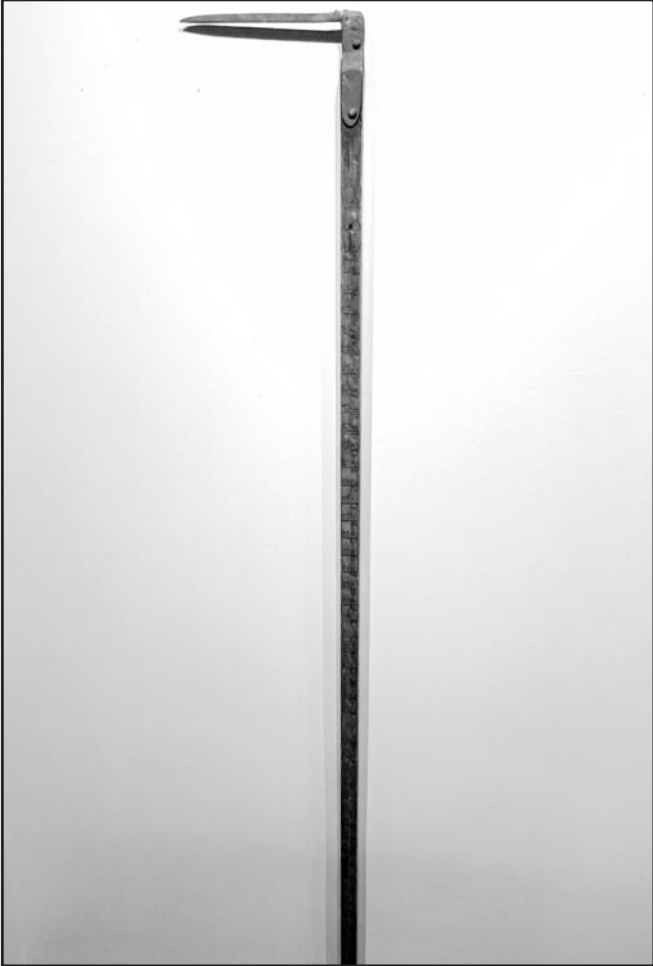
BREAKFAST MENU -
Served With Milk & Choice of:
Fresh Fruit, Applesauce or
Dried Cranberries

Homemade Granola with Yogurt,
Smoothie and Granola, Fruit
Parfait and Granola, French
Toast, Oatmeal, Homemade
Muffin, and Cereals

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Served with Milk
*WG = Whole Grain



Artifact Archive



This log scale stick, or logging scale, is over one hundred years old and was used in the field by foresters and logging companies as a measuring tool to estimate a tree's volume or board feet, and thus its potential value. Made of hardwood, it is sixty-two inches in length and has specific measures laid out on each of its four sides. Still in use today, log scale sticks simplify scaling because they combine both a measuring stick and a table of log volumes.

The stick is used to measure the diameter of standing trees in inches. Their height is measured in 16-foot logs and their volume by board feet or cords. It also has an angle gauge that can be used to determine basal area - a measurement that can determine the crowding or density of trees.

Information and photos for this column are provided by the Clausen Memorial Museum.

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.....tfn2-8b124
Petersburg's Public Works Department has an opening for a full-time Administrative Assis-

tant I. This position pays \$21.95 per hour and has full benefits. A full job description and employment application can be obtained from the Borough's website at www.petersburgak.gov. Applications will be accepted at the front desk of the Borough offices, 12 S. Nordic Drive, or mailed to P.O. Box 329, Petersburg, AK, 99833, or emailed to bregula@petersburgak.gov.
.....tfn2-8b70
Petersburg Borough has an opening for the position of Lineman. This is a regular full-time position in which the Lineman will also be trained as a generation operator. Wage for a Journeyman Lineman is \$59.75/hr with operator premium (Tier 4) \$62.17/hr with operator premium (Tier 1-3). Signing bonus of \$5,000 after completion of six-month probationary period. Up to \$15,000 reimbursable relocation expenses with a minimum two (2) year employment agreement. A complete job description and employment application can be obtained from the Borough's website at www.petersburgak.gov. Applications will be accepted at the front desk of

the Borough office at 12 S. Nordic Street in Petersburg; by mail to Human Resources, P.O. Box 329, Petersburg, AK 99833; or via email to bregula@petersburgak.gov. Open until position is filled.

.....tfn2-1b128
The Petersburg Borough is seeking qualified candidates to fill the position of Assistant Utility Director. The position will work under the direction of the Utility Director, to assist in the operation and management of the Borough's Power and Light, Water and Wastewater departments and eventually assume the role of the Utility Director fol-



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- Clinic Reception/Admissions (FT)
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For complete job descriptions or any questions, contact Human Resources Director
Cindy Newman at cnewman@pmc-health.org or call **907-772-5719**



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20 lift stations and collection system. The utilities collectively employ 14.5 FTE's in support of essential services to the community. A bachelor's degree in public administration, construction management or related field is desired. Other combinations of education and experience that demonstrate competency in the desired knowledge, skills and abilities may be accepted. Please visit the Petersburg Borough's website to view the full job description and to complete an employment application. Salary \$125,000 DOE. Open until filled. Go to www.petersburgak.gov for a complete job description and employment application.

.....tfn2-15b240

Petersburg Indian Association is accepting applications for a FT Tribal Administrator. Position will be responsible for general oversight of operations and staff at PIA. Job description and



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application available at the PIA office or at piatribal.org. Open until filled. Salary \$75K - \$90K DOE. Native preference applies.

.....tfn1-25b47

Petersburg Borough has an opening for a permanent full-time Motor Pool Equipment Mechanic. Starting wage for this position is \$32.42/hour. \$2500 hiring bonus after six-month probation period and \$2500 bonus after one year. Three years of vehicle repair and maintenance employment experience is required. Possession of a

Class A or B Commercial Driver's License with air brake and tanker endorsements is preferred; however, applicants with the ability to obtain the required CDL within the first six months of employment will be considered. A full job description and employment application can be obtained below. Applications will be accepted at the front desk of the Borough office, 12 S. Nordic Drive, or mailed to P.O. Box 329, Petersburg, AK 99833, attn: Human Resources, until the position is filled.

.....tfn11-30b129

MISCELLANEOUS

Petersburg Indian Association Council opening. Let your voice be heard! Are you a PIA tribal citizen looking to volunteer and be a part of the governing body? If interested in joining the PIA Tribal Council submit a Letter of Interest

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.....4x3-7b77

Classified deadline is 5 p.m. each Tuesday for ads appearing in Thursday's paper. Call 772-9393 or drop by at 207 N. Nordic Drive.

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Teacher negotiations

Continued from page 1

because when we negotiated in 2021, we didn't know that that was going to happen in the future," said Cumps.

She noted the higher cost of living in Petersburg paired with non competitive wages for PSD teachers and a "watered down" state retirement system that disincentivizes teachers from staying "really puts us at a disadvantage when we're trying to attract and trying to retain quality teachers."

Cumps said now, adjustments need to be made "to catch up" to the cost of inflation and improve Petersburg's recruitment and retention of quality teachers with fair and competitive wages.

As negotiations between the teachers union and the district continue to go back and forth on what adjustments can be made within the limited budget, the largest obstacle to this agreement is funding — or lack thereof.

ATP and PSD stress that the continuing trend of flat state education funding over the last several years has made it challenging to work within the school district's limited budget.

"Not only is it not helping the situation, but it's making it worse," said Cumps. "And it's making it worse for all school districts."

The base student allocation (BSA) — funding that a district receives per student from the state — has remained flat since 2017.

State of Alaska FY25 budget comparisons between several departments show budget in-

creases for Department of Corrections with a 42.6% increase since 2017, Public Safety with a 69.4% increase since 2017, Fish and Game at 21.7%, Natural Resources at 33%, Governor's Office at 23.3%, Legislature at 25.7%, Department of Education and Early childhood Development (DEED) Operations which manage the districts and their funding see a 19.5% increase in budget since FY17 — meanwhile K-12 Aid to Districts is at a negative 3.4%.

PSD is not expecting to receive increased or additional state funding, although it is crucially needed.

"Unless the state does something drastic, I think we could probably get through year one, but I'm not sure what will happen in year two and three," said Holmgrain.

The Petersburg Borough contributed \$1.8 million to PSD from years 2001 to 2022, \$2 million in fiscal year 2023, and last year the borough answered PSD's ask and gave \$3 million for FY24.

This year, the district is requesting that the borough fund to the cap, the maximum amount the state allows them to contribute, which is \$3.4 million.

A work session between the school board and the borough assembly will take place on Feb. 29 where the district will explain why the increase of \$400 thousand is needed.

"It was a good run ... we should've been asking sooner than that, but we had grants to cover things so that's why we didn't," said Holmgrain, adding that non-renewable grants supporting over \$300

thousand in wages expire this year.

"We are all stuck in this position ... because we have received flat funding from the state for several years. And we've seen inflation ... We really do need the borough to fully fund us to the maximum allowable monies that the state will allow local boroughs to fund school districts ... in order for us to have any kind of chance at maintaining ... the programs in the schools that we have here," said Cumps.

However, even with full funding from the borough, the district said it will have to make some significant budget cuts over the next three years if funding from the state does not change drastically, noting COVID funds, grants and strategic reductions have kept PSD from "going over the fiscal cliff the past few years," according to the school board discussion about FY25 budget considerations on Feb. 20.

At the school board meeting Tuesday night, PSD Finance Director Shannon Baird shared the sobering news that, even if the district receives \$3.4 million from the borough and state funding equivalent to FY24, the district "cannot afford the increase to costs" because "the dollar doesn't go as far."

PSD does not anticipate receiving the additional funding it needs from the state. Thus, "we're looking at reductions."

"Obviously we do not want to get rid of [staff], so we are going to reduce in supplies, materials and everywhere else that we can first, but you can only do so much of that and it's

a smaller part of expenditures," said Baird.

ATP and PSD are both concerned about how the lack of funding increases will impact the schools in Petersburg in the coming years — especially in the face of budget cuts.

Holmgrain said that the lack of funding puts programs and positions at risk of being cut.

"The worst case scenario is you start cutting programs, in order to balance the budget, on things that aren't required in order to graduate," such as elective classes like the arts, or extracurriculars. "We can all argue they're very valuable ... And those are the first thing to fall when you've got to make a budget cut. And that's heartbreaking because that is what makes a well-rounded student and makes a well-rounded citizen, is being exposed to more than just the basics," said Holmgrain.

She added that the district does not want to change programs or lay off staff because, "ultimately, it affects kids" and the remaining teachers "end up taking on more to compensate for the loss of a staff member."

If inadequate public education funding from the state does not change and budget cuts ensue, schools may lose programs and teachers, class sizes may increase, non-required class aides may go away and the jobs of teachers may become even more challenging as a result.

"Our worst case scenario is you start seeing things like that cut, and whether this community's okay with it or not, is a different story. I don't think we really are. But that's why it's

important that the borough fund to the cap, and why, locally, we need to be harping on our legislators and particularly the governor, but it just sounds like ... he [Gov. Dunleavy] doesn't want to hear from anybody unless they agree with him ... But the legislature can override him if they are willing to do it! So it's not impossible — it's just harder," said Holmgrain.

"Our common goal ... ultimately ... is that we're providing the best education possible to our children in Petersburg," said Cumps. "It gets hard to achieve that goal when one of the main ways to get there is having proper funding for all of those programs and people to exist. So I really do think that if the community of Petersburg wants to continue to offer the same outstanding education that we're known for and that we're proud of having, then we really have to have the funding to support the high quality teachers and the programs that allow us to provide those opportunities to our kids."

The negotiation process with ATP and PSD to update the collective bargaining agreement continues without contention. There is no set deadline.

"It's hard," said Holmgrain. "Every three years we do this. It's always been successful. Nobody gets exactly what they want, but everybody has walked away from the table satisfied and comfortable with where we landed. So I'm optimistic we'll have the same experience again."

Alaska House rejects per-student school funding increase

By **ANDREW KITCHENMAN**
Alaska Beacon

The Alaska House of Representatives voted on Wednesday against increasing the amount written into law saying how much the state should spend per student in public schools.

Wednesday's action isn't final, and the House could change course as soon as 11 a.m. Thursday, when debates are scheduled to resume. House Minority Leader Calvin Schrage, I-Anchorage, said it would be accurate to consider things in a holding pattern.

"Obviously, we haven't come to a deal yet. But the bill will be in second (reading) tomorrow. So we'll still have the opportunity to amend the bill. And hopefully we'll be able to find a bipartisan way forward to provide support to students in schools at a time that they really need it," he said.

Supporters of the increase offered dire warnings about what will happen if funding doesn't rise.

"Schools in Fairbanks will close. Schools across Alaska will close," without more funding, warned Rep. Maxine Dibert, D-Fairbanks, before the House voted against her proposal to in-

crease the school funding formula.

Wednesday's debate revolved around Senate Bill 140, which is intended to increase internet speeds in public schools, in part by unlocking federal funding.

The funding increase amendments failed 19-21, with the three non-Republican members of the majority caucus — Reps. Bryce Edgmon, I-Dillingham; Neal Foster, D-Nome; and CJ McCormick, D-Bethel — voting with the 16 minority caucus members for the amendments. Rep. David Eastman, R-Wasilla and not a member of a caucus, voted with the 20 Republicans in the majority against them.

The debate focused on the amount of the base student allocation used to set how much the state should fund schools in the budget. The current amount is \$5,960, though it received a one-time \$340 increase this year, and the actual dollar amounts that schools receive are higher, since the BSA is adjusted higher based on factors like school sizes, the number of students with special needs and local costs.

Dibert proposed making a \$680 increase permanent.

SB 140 was originally a bill focused on the internet in schools.

But after the Senate passed it without controversy last year, multiple House committees sought to make it a vehicle for passing other education policies. Those proposals included the funding increase and changes sought by supporters of charter schools and the correspondence school programs that serve many homeschooled students.

Ultimately, the House rejected those committee proposals, bringing the bill back to the version the Senate passed. Then it rejected a series of proposals by members of the mostly Democratic minority caucus, which aimed to reinsert an increase to the school funding formula into the bill.

Majority-caucus Republicans were unsuccessful in adopting their preferred version of the bill, which included the charter and correspondence school changes as well as a \$300 BSA increase. Edgmon, Foster and McCormick, as well as Eastman, voted against adopting that version on Monday.

Rep. Justin Ruffridge, R-Soldotna, had said last year that a \$680 increase was needed by schools in his district. On Wednesday, he voted against that increase.

"I would say nothing is dead.

We're just working through the process," he said afterward.

Eastman spoke against amendments to increase the school funding formula, noting the state's low ranking among the states in student test scores.

"My question is, if we were to increase this amount, would we expect an increase in our performance? Or would we expect the same performance that we've had most recently?" he said.

Rep. Andy Josephson, D-Anchorage, rejected linking funding increases to test score outcomes.

"Fundamentally, I'm bothered by the idea that these are widgets, and that if we just can

make the widget cheaper and the factory faster, somehow we'll spit out a better product," he said.

But the arguments offered by supporters of the amendments to increase the school funding formula did not sway opponents.

On the House floor, Republican Reps. Laddie Shaw and Will Stapp attached yellow Post-It Notes over the "yes" buttons on their desks. The "no" buttons were left exposed for easy access.

James Brooks contributed to this article. The Alaska Beacon is an independent, donor-funded news organization. Alaskabeacon.com.

FBC Petersburg

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• **11a** - Worship in person & Facebook • **6p** - Youth Group

Wednesday: 6p - Outreach Fellowship Meal
• **7p** - LIFE Group in Fellowship Hall

Thursday: 6p - Celebrate Recovery



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