

**Pilot named Alaska's  
Best Weekly Newspaper**

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**First responders conduct  
active threat drill**

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**Mitkof Dance Troupe  
spring recital**

see page 13

# petersburg pilot

PETERSBURG, ALASKA



April 23, 2026  
Vol. 52, No. 17

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16 Pages  
\$2



Photo courtesy of Stephanie Aikins

Brandon Ware steers Petersburg Indian Association's 40-foot canoe to shore at Sandy Beach Park where a crowd waited to welcome and bless the newly made vessel which will depart next month for the ten day paddle to Celebration.

## New canoe *Keet Yaakw* to transport Petersburg tribal citizens to Celebration 2026 in Juneau

By **JAKE CLEMENS**  
Pilot writer

The *Keet Yaakw* is the first Alaska Native-designed canoe to be launched out of Petersburg, at least since Petersburg was incorporated as a town in 1910. Petersburg Indian Association Tribal Council Vice Presi-

dent ShaaL'aanee Brandon Ware described the feeling of bringing the new canoe towards shore at Sandy Beach, where it was unveiled to the public. "Coming into the bay, I knew we were seeing the same thing our people have seen since time immemorial... when it was a seasonal fish

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## American Cruise Lines lease approved by Petersburg Borough Assembly

By **OLIVIA ROSE**  
KFSK Radio

Petersburg's Borough Assembly on Monday unanimously approved a highly anticipated lease agreement with American Cruise Lines, a small cruise ship company that frequently stops in Petersburg. It's increasing its summer visits to town, and wants to build a cruise ship dock for its small passenger ships in Petersburg.

The Borough will lease part of its tidelands at the end of Dock Street next to the U.S. Coast Guard Dock to the company, which will build a mooring float and gangway there to support its cruise operations. The Assembly voted 6-0 in favor of the resolution, with Vice Mayor J Leigh Stanton Gregor excused from the meeting.

Harbormaster Glorianne Wollen said the project is a good use of Petersburg's waterfront.

"I'm in the business of tying boats up and, you know, anything that we can do to enhance the waterfront for watercraft, I think is a benefit," Wollen told KFSK in a Tuesday interview. "That's a segment of our marine industry that allows us to diversify a little bit."

There are still more details to square out before construction can start. But approving the lease is a step toward that, now that the company has officially secured a location for the project. The company will have to provide plans for its dock project to the Borough and work through that with the harbor department, according to the borough manager and the harbormaster.

"We just want to make sure that what they're going to build is compliant with our expectations and our facility," Wollen said. "We don't want to have something that is going to be detrimental to our facility."

There are a number of safeguards for the Borough and limitations for the company set in the lease language, like vessel size and the amount of passengers, and that the Borough isn't responsible for maintenance.

Wollen said the dock limits itself because it is going to be small. She also said Petersburg would see a drastic decrease in overall tour boat traffic without the company's presence.

"Thank goodness they're here and

Continued on page 3

## Library Friends honor historian Don Nelson and retiring staffer Chris Weiss

By **ORIN PIERSON**  
Pilot writer

The Friends of Petersburg Libraries marked their 25th anniversary Tuesday with a celebration at the Petersburg Public Library that doubled as a community tribute to two figures who have shaped the library and the town's cultural life for decades: revered Petersburg historian Don Nelson and retiring library staff member Chris Weiss, who served the library for nearly 40 years.

The event drew community members, library staff, borough

officials and representatives from the Clausen Museum to share memories and gratitude for both honorees.

### Don Nelson

Don Nelson was born in Petersburg about 95 years ago — two blocks from where he stood at Tuesday's celebration. His grandparents were among the community's earliest settlers, and he has lived here all his life.

"Born two blocks away, and I'm still here ... I didn't get very far," Nelson joked.

Nelson is the author of "Story of Petersburg" and co-authored "Petersburg Profiles" with Carol Enge. Clausen Museum Director Sarah Pederson told those gathered that "Story of Petersburg" is the best-selling book in the museum's gift shop — by far.

Pederson described the role Nelson has played in the muse-



LIZZIE THOMPSON / Petersburg Pilot

Sue Paulsen, master of ceremonies at the Friends of Petersburg Libraries' celebration on Tuesday (pictured left), assists Petersburg Library honoree and new retiree Chris Weiss with the cutting of the cake.

um's ongoing historical research.

"He has been coming every Wednesday for at least three years, and he works with Anne Lee, our curator," she said. "They look at photographs, they watch videos, and he identifies people from the very earliest years of his childhood. The memory on this man is astounding. He can look at fuzzy little pictures and identify that this is the sister of so-and-so."

She said Nelson has helped the museum resolve long-standing mysteries about its collection, and that his continued voluntary involvement speaks to his commitment to Petersburg's story.

"At this point in his life, when he could do anything that he wants, he chooses to come in regularly and help us document the stories of this community," Pederson said.

Continued on page 16



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# Yesterday's News

News from 25-50-75-100 years ago

**1926** - There are no issues in the archive until May 19, 1926. Thank you for your patience.

**April 20, 1951** - One of the most disastrous fires to hit Petersburg in many years occurred early Wednesday when the interior of Ted Reynolds' Harbor Bar and Liquor Store and of Winnie's Cafe were gutted by fire. Heavy smoke damage was suffered by Helen's Shop and there was slight smoke damage to the city office. The alarm was turned in at 5:25 a.m. by Mrs. J.L. MacKechnie who saw smoke drifting by her window in the Coliseum apartments, adjacent to and overlooking the Mann building in which the burned-out establishments are located. For a while it looked as if the entire row of buildings was doomed and residents of the Coliseum apartments moved out some of their belongings and made ready to evacuate at a moments notice. The Elks clubroom was completely emptied of everything but the stoves in two minutes flat. Almost as quickly, all furniture, records and the safe were taken from the city office while volunteers led by Cliff Fenn and Les Elkins emptied the Helen Shop. But firemen were able to contain the fire within the two business houses and damage in other parts of the building was limited to smoke damage. A much appreciated gesture of gratitude for their work was made by Ernie Haugen who provided coffee and a free breakfast at the Past-Time to all the firemen and volunteer workers who fought the fire so successfully. The fire broke out again early Thursday morning from a smoldering pile of paper but was promptly extinguished by Patrolman Anderson with the CO2 extinguisher from the police car, though firemen responded to a call turned in by Per Sather who first spotted the flare up. Ted Reynolds estimates damage to his establishment at \$25,000

partly covered by insurance. Winnie Gray's loss is estimated at close to \$7,000 with no insurance.

**April 21, 1976** - A Corps of Engineers decision not to dredge the Wrangell Narrows drew fire and a letter of protest at the Chamber of Commerce meeting here last week. The Chamber was made aware of the decision in a letter from state representative Ernie Haugen of Petersburg. The Chamber for years has advanced a plan for on-going work to improve the Narrows for

navigation. Haugen pointed out that the state alone sends some \$100,000 through the Wrangell Narrows "without even considering the fishing boats we have here in Petersburg." In other business, the Chamber is asking General Telephone Company to have addresses and box numbers listed with the phone numbers in the next publication of the local phone book. An earlier request was reportedly denied.

**April 19, 2001** - Four people escaped with their lives following a pair of oddly connected mishaps

on Mitkof Highway. The first, a roll-over accident, occurred around 8:44 p.m. near 5 1/2-mile when Rich Hughes lost control of his pickup while trying to pass another vehicle. Police Captain Bruce Westre said as Hughes pulled out into the on-coming lane to pass, the other driver simultaneously began to veer into the pull-off on the left side of the road. "Of course, Hughes had nowhere to pass, went into the pull-off and hit the soft dirt and the vehicle rolled." The truck careened into some high brush on the banks of the Wrangell Narrow, sliding to a precarious resting spot at the edge of the water. Westre was first to respond and aided Hughes, who escaped serious injury. EMTs soon arrived and transported Hughes to the hospital for evaluation. Meanwhile, Hughes' dog, a 7-year old named Samson, was also badly shaken up from the rollover accident, but uninjured. However, Samson became agitated when Don Hughes, the victim's brother, was in the process of transporting Samson home. As fate would have it, the second and more serious accident occurred around 9:30 p.m. as Hughes and Samson were travelling southbound. Near 8-mile, as Hughes was trying to negotiate the S-curves, he became distracted by the dog. "As he was being distracted, he drifted into the oncoming lane," Westre said, directly into the path of a pickup driven by Heather O'Neil.

Holli O'Neil, a senior at Petersburg High School, was riding with her mother toward town when the two vehicles collided head-on at approximately 40 miles per hour. Holli was thrown against the passenger's side window so hard that her forehead left a star pattern in the glass. Meanwhile, Heather also miraculously escaped life-threatening injuries after her upper body crashed into the steering wheel. Hughes was not as fortunate. He sustained a cracked vertebra and will be in a neck brace for six weeks. After spending the night in the hospital for observation, all were released in good condition Tuesday morning. While the hardship resulting from the loss of transportation cannot be discounted, there could hardly have been a happier ending, given the severity of the accidents and the fact that none of the four were wearing seatbelts.

## BLESSING OF THE FLEET


**Sunday, April 26, 2:00pm**  
**Sons of Norway Hall**

**Join us as we ask blessings on our fishermen, boats and gear and remember those who have passed on.**


**Refreshments served.**

For new boat names, contact Glo Wollen:  
gwollen@petersburgak.gov

*Sponsored by Sons of Norway, PVOA,  
Petersburg Christian Ministerial Association*



## PETERSBURG HAPPENINGS

Brought to you by: 

**THURSDAY, April 23**

**Tai Chi for Arthritis & Fall Prevention:** 10:00 am, Mitkof Dance Studio  
**Tongass Forest Plan Revision Community Workshop:** 5:00pm, Assembly Chamber  
**School Board Meeting:** 6:00 pm, PHS Library

**FRIDAY, April 24**

**Al-Anon Support Group:** 12:00 pm, Episcopal Church  
**PIA Culture Club Program - All Students Welcome:** 2:30 pm, Elementary School Cafeteria  
**Darkness to Light Training - Child Abuse Recognition and Prevention:** 5:00 pm, WAVE Office  
**Mitkof Middle School Activity Night - Final:** 6:30 pm, PHS  
**Family Game Night:** 6:30 pm, Parks and Rec Gym  
**AA Candlelight Meeting:** 7:00 pm, Episcopal Church

**SATURDAY, April 25**

**Adult Volleyball League Invitational- Petersburg vs Prince of Whales** 10:00 am and 2:00 pm, High School Gym  
**Kid's Don't Float Event with USCG Auxiliary:** 12:00 pm, Community Gym and Pool

**SUNDAY, April 26**

**Devil's Thumb Shooters:** 2:00 pm, Gun Range  
**Blessing of the Fleet:** 2:00 pm, Sons of Norway Memorial Park  
**Knitting Group - All Welcome:** 2:00 pm, Mt. View Manor Social Hall  
**Salvation Army Sunday Worship:** 4:30 pm, Salvation Army Chapel

**MONDAY, April 27**

**Tai Chi:** 7:00 am, Mountain View Manor Social Hall  
**Seafood Business Planning Workshop:** 5:00pm, Parks and Rec  
**Burger Night:** 5:30 pm, Moose Lodge  
**AA Women's Meeting:** 7:00 pm, Presbyterian Church  
**Volleyball/Open Gym:** 7:30 pm, Parks and Rec Gym

**TUESDAY, April 28**

**Tai Chi for Arthritis & Fall Prevention:** 10:00 am, Mitkof Dance Studio  
**Seafood Business Planning Workshop:** 5:00pm, Parks and Rec  
**AA 12x12 Meeting:** 7:00 pm, Holy Cross Classroom

**WEDNESDAY, April 29**

**Tai Chi:** 7:00 am, Mountain View Manor Social Hall  
**Rotary Club Lunch and Fellowship:** 12:00 pm, Salvation Army Hall  
**Budget Work Session with Borough Staff - Open to the Public:** 12:00 pm Borough Assembly Chambers  
**PIA Community Meal:** 5:00pm, John Hanson Sr Hall  
**Free Dinner For All:** 6:00 pm, First Baptist Church

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NORTHBOUND DEPARTURES			SOUTHBOUND DEPARTURES		
SUN 5/3	KENNICOTT	06:15 P.M.	WED 5/6	KENNICOTT	05:00 A.M.
SUN 5/10	KENNICOTT	08:30 P.M.	WED 5/13	KENNICOTT	12:00 A.M.
SUN 5/17	KENNICOTT	04:00 P.M.	WED 5/20	KENNICOTT	12:30 A.M.
SUN 5/24	COLUMBIA	08:15 P.M.	WED 5/27	COLUMBIA	12:00 A.M.
MON 6/1	COLUMBIA	12:30 A.M.	WED 6/3	COLUMBIA	04:00 A.M.

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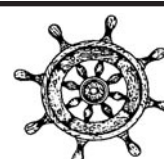
## EATHER

	High	Low	Precip	Snow
4/15	49	26	0.00	0.0
4/16	43	37	0.12	0.0
4/17	44	36	0.05	0.0
4/18	46	37	0.18	0.0
4/19	48	38	0.19	0.0
4/20	48	37	0.10	0.0
4/21	45	32	T	0.0

This Week's Precipitation: 0.64"  
This Week's Snow: 0.0"  
This weather service is provided by the FAA weather observation station at the James A. Johnson Airport.

## DAYLIGHT HOURS

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Daylight
Apr 23	5:26a	8:15p	14:49hrs
Apr 24	5:23a	8:17p	14:54hrs
Apr 25	5:21a	8:20p	14:58hrs
Apr 26	5:18a	8:22p	15:03hrs
Apr 27	5:16a	8:24p	15:07hrs
Apr 28	5:14a	8:26p	15:12hrs
Apr 29	5:11a	8:28p	15:16hrs




## PETERSBURG TIDE TABLE


APRIL 2026

	HIGH TIDES		LOW TIDES	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
	Time	Ft.	Time	Ft.
23 Thu	6:05	15.0	7:40	12.5
24 Fri	7:26	13.7	9:01	12.7
25 Sat	8:56	13.2	10:08	13.5
26 Sun	10:15	13.3	11:00	14.5
27 Mon	11:17	13.8	11:43	15.4
28 Tue	....	....	12:09	14.2
29 Wed	0:19	16.1	12:54	14.6

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**ACE**

Island Refrigeration, LLC / ACE 907-772-3310 908 S. Nordic Dr.

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

## Petersburg invited to weigh in Thursday on Tongass Forest Plan revision

By **ORIN PIERSON**  
Pilot writer

The U.S. Forest Service is bringing its Tongass National Forest Plan revision process to Petersburg this week, with an in-person community workshop scheduled for 5-7 p.m. Thursday, April 23, in the Borough Assembly Chambers.

The event is part of a series of workshops running across 19 Southeast Alaska communities through early May — a rare opportunity for the public to provide direct input before the agency completes a draft plan. Revision coordinator Erin Mathews described it as “a bonus” engagement round not typically built into the federal planning process.

“This is just a really unique opportunity that we have on the Tongass to engage at this level, even before the draft plan goes out,” Mathews said during a webinar earlier this month. “We can’t do it without your feedback.”

The Forest Service released preliminary draft plan content this month, kicking off a 45-day comment period running through May 6. The materials are not a finished plan but an early framework the agency is using to gather public guidance before developing formal alternatives and a full environmental impact statement.

The preliminary release includes draft desired conditions and goals for forest-wide resources, initial direction for recreation and tourism, subsistence, and timber management, a proposed geographic layout of management areas, and a preliminary list of species of conservation concern.

Mathews said the in-person format offers something the online comment process cannot. Attendees will have direct access to Forest Service staff, participate in an interactive exercise on the proposed geographic management areas, and vote on preliminary ideas for plan alternatives. She encouraged Petersburg people to attend even if they already submitted comments during an earlier scoping period.

“Comments are very useful,” Mathews said. “Now we’ve released this preliminary draft content, and the purpose of these workshops is to have a chance to discuss and influence those alternatives.”

The Forest Service expects to release a draft plan and draft environmental impact statement in November, which will open a formal 90-day public comment period. A final plan is expected in 2027-2028 and will guide management of the 16 million-acre Tongass for approximately 15 years.

Prior community engagement identified ecosystem protection, recreation opportunities and sustainable timber management as priorities among Southeast Alaskans. The revision is also required to align with Trump administration executive orders directing federal agencies to expand timber production and resource development in Alaska.

Those unable to attend in person can submit comments through the online web form at the plan revision webpage before the May 6 deadline. For questions, contact Mathews at [erin.mathews@usda.gov](mailto:erin.mathews@usda.gov). More information, including the preliminary draft materials, is available at [fs.usda.gov/r10/tongass/planning/forest-plan/tongass-national-forest-plan-revision](https://fs.usda.gov/r10/tongass/planning/forest-plan/tongass-national-forest-plan-revision).



ORIN PIERSON / Petersburg Pilot

### Spring is in the air

The musical call of sand hill cranes could be heard high above Petersburg all throughout the past week as the iconic birds migrate north to their nesting and breeding grounds in the wet tundras of Western Alaska.

## ACL lease

Continued from page 1

they’re willing to, you know, put some real money into Petersburg. I mean, this is a commitment,” Wollen said. “This company is really putting their money where their mouth is, and investing in our community and plan a long-term relationship.”

The lease agreement and project have been vetted by the harbor master’s office, the local harbor advisory board, and Petersburg’s planning commission. The agreement lasts 50 years, with 5-year renewal cycles. The starting rent is 10% of the tideland’s appraised value — \$9,550 annually. Wollen said that was calculated with the same process used for other leases in the area, like the U.S. Coast Guard and Petro Marine.

According to the approved tidelands lease, which begins May 1, the cruise ship dock should be completed within two years. But throughout the process, officials with the company and the Borough have consistently mentioned the goal of having the facility ready for next year.

“Hopefully we’ll have this in place and ready to go for the 2027 season,” Borough Manager Steve Giesbrecht said during the April 20 assembly meeting.

A public hearing on the lease was held during the first half of the meeting, but there was no testimony shared. However, at a town hall held in early 2025, residents generally supported having more tourism in town, so long as the Borough maintains control.

Discussions about the dock began in 2024. The

Borough and the company initially approached the cruise dock project with the idea of building it collaboratively, and the Borough’s last budget allocated a million dollars from the harbor reserves for the project. But over the course of discussions between the company and the Borough, Giesbrecht said it became clear that a lease agreement would work better for both parties; Wollen said partnering on the dock “was probably not the best financially feasible way” to approach the project. The company pivoted to instead lease the tidelands space and will build the dock privately.

American Cruise Lines is also trying to build docks for its vessels in other Southeast communities like Wrangell and Haines as part of a regional expansion. Its passenger ships stopped in Petersburg more frequently last year, but there were space constraints. Wollen said the dock could help with congestion in the maritime community, especially during the summer cruise season.

“Kind of a relief on our end, that I’m going to be able to attract the tender fleet again and not be so rigid with them ... which I think will be beneficial to the entire commercial fishing fleet,” said Wollen. “It’s a benefit to our operation here, and the operation of how we manage the harbor.”

There are 85 port calls scheduled for Petersburg this summer. American Cruise Lines makes up 31 of them.

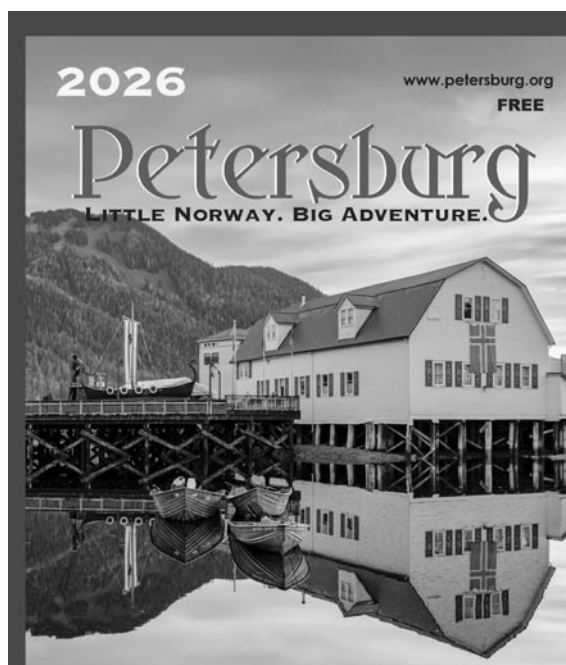
*This story was first published at [kfsk.org](https://kfsk.org) and is reprinted here with permission*

### A celebration of life will be held in honor of Linda Bell

Saturday, May 9th  
11:30a - 2:30p  
Blind Slough picnic area



Wear your favorite button down shirt and bring a picnic dish to share.  
Questions: Holly 650-7978



The 2026 Viking Visitor Guide has arrived and is available online



# Award winning local journalism: *Petersburg Pilot named Alaska's Best Weekly Newspaper*

Dear Readers, it's a pleasure to announce that your local newspaper, the Petersburg Pilot has been named Alaska's Best Weekly Newspaper for 2025.

The Pilot staff works hard to bring you a top notch local paper each week, and it is a much appreciated affirmation of the effort and all the community support that makes that effort possible.

Whether you pick up a copy each week at one of the dozen business vendors around town, or are a subscriber, or are one of the local advertisers who, through buying advertising, is investing in the survival of Petersburg's local newspaper — we appreciate the support and hope you know that this award is yours as much as ours.

"This paper has a good pulse on the community. It is also one of the best designed papers we've seen with a clean and easy to read format. Readers are getting their money's worth with a paper that truly strives to connect with their community," wrote Bill Kunerth, a retired journalist and publisher, and one of the many journalism experts from around the

country who judge the annual Alaska Press Club Contest.

We are proud to add that Petersburg's community radio station KFSK also won big in the contest, bring five statewide reporting awards back to town from last week's Press Club Conference in Anchorage.

Former Pilot reporter and current KFSK News Director Olivia Rose won second place for Public Safety Reporting- Audio for her story "Petersburg locals rescue man from cold, dark waters near Mitkof Island."

Hannah Weaver took third place in Best Culture Reporting-Audio for "Tannery closures hinder Alaska sea otter hunters."

Taylor Heckart and Hannah Weaver's story "Pedal/Paddle Battle in Petersburg raises record high of \$24,201" earned second place in Best Sports Reporting-Audio.

Olivia Rose won third in Best Arts Reporting-Audio for "First ever dance dad pageant in Peters-

burg 'surpassed expectations.'" That category's judge, Andrew Villegas of Colorado Public Radio, said of Olivia's story, "A good arts story is not just about the unexpected ... A good arts story gives us insight into the psyche of the people creating ... what moves them ... and these dads. I love this story because we get an idea of what DRIVES these fathers, and it turns what could be a relatively trite piece into an interestingly profound one."

And Taylor Heckart earned second place in Best Education Reporting-Audio for "A science-backed approach to reading has helped boost Petersburg elementary reading scores."

"We're so grateful we get to do the kind of work that matters to our community, and I just think it's really special that we can all learn from each other along the way," Rose said. "Local journalism, to me, is a community service — I mean, it's literally in our name, [KFSK] Community Radio. And I just think if our reporting helps even just one person, you know, that's really the point of what we're here for."



(left to right) Ola Richards, Lizzie Thompson, Orin Pierson, and Aiden Luhr hold the 2025 Best Weekly Newspaper award presented last Saturday by the Alaska Press Club.



KFSK News Director Olivia Rose (left) and Reporter Taylor Heckart (right) hold KFSK's Alaska Press Club awards at a banquet in Anchorage on April 18, 2026.

## TO THE EDITOR

### Thank You from Petersburg Lutheran Church

To the Editor:

Petersburg Lutheran Church would like to thank our wonderful community for their generous support of our annual Basement, Bake, Soup, and Book Sale.

Over 50 years ago, a group of women from our congregation came up with the idea for this event and it has grown beautifully over the years. Each year, many helping hands come together to organize, donate, and purchase the sale items. It's a joyful way to recycle and reuse gently loved treasures and clothing while connecting with neighbors and friends and reducing waste going to the local landfill.

All proceeds from the sale go directly to support community outreach, including Monday Night Meals, the Fresh Food Pantry at the Salvation Army, Thanksgiving and Christmas

dinner packages through the Salvation Army, and food distribution with Humanity in Progress (HIP).

We're deeply grateful for everyone's continued participation and generosity that make this long-standing tradition possible.

**Tusen tak, Gunalcheesh, Thank you, Nancy Berg, President, Petersburg Lutheran Church Council and Ioana Ward, event organizer**

### Picking up trash all over town

To the Editor:

For 18 years I have been picking up trash from all over town — it's everywhere! Not just on the road, it's up banks, in ditches, and bushes, out the road, trails, Libby's, Sandy Beach Road, downtown, by homes, parking lots! I know I'm not the only one who picks up, so thank you to those who do.

This ongoing issue not only detracts from our community's natural beauty, but also creates

an unwelcoming environment for residents and visitors alike.

While I appreciate the efforts of local youth who participate in annual spring cleanups, a single event each year is simply not enough to manage the constant accumulation of trash. To create a lasting change, I urge the city to consider hiring dedicated staff for at least the spring and summer months when the problem is most visible. If not hire, perhaps some sort of incentive to encourage residents to pick up trash.

Years ago a lady named Ruth Sandvik stopped me and said she always walked the loop, and carried a bag with her, just in case she found trash and would pick it up. Let's keep Petersburg clean and beautiful!

I also think bringing back free dump day and/or weekend would be wise. The city might lose a little money, but in the end it might help people clean up around their homes, etc.

Of course the easiest solution would be for people to stop littering.

**Thanks so much, Stacey Madsen**

P.S. Dog walkers please don't leave your poo bags on trails, now we have poo and trash.

2017 GENERAL EXCELLENCE FIRST PLACE NATIONAL NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION AND NAMED BEST WEEKLY NEWSPAPER IN 2013, 2015 & 2025 BY THE ALASKA PRESS CLUB

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# Petersburg's power grid: what the utility director wants you to know

By **ORIN PIERSON**  
Pilot writer

Petersburg's new utility director, Steve Harbour took the podium at the March 16 borough assembly meeting to address what he recognized as a public information problem.

"In the two years I've been at Power and Light, I've built up a lot of questions and heard a lot of misinformation," said Harbour, "Nobody's fault. I worked pretty close with Power and Light for years as an electrician, and I couldn't answer some of the stuff I'm going to talk about tonight."

The 45-minute presentation that followed — a slide-by-slide look at the borough's electrical system, its current capacity, historical usage patterns, and the investments planned for the next two years — is now available on PMPL's website and in printed form at the borough offices. Harbour returned to the assembly April 20 to emphasize that information.

"I've heard a couple people say we're on the ragged edge, and that's just not an accurate statement," Harbour said.

Petersburg's power grid operates on what Harbour called a "hydro first" principle. The borough's primary electricity supply comes from the Southeast Alaska Power Agency, or SEAPA, which delivers 100% hydroelectric power via Tyee Lake — a two-turbine facility at the head of Bradfield Canal dedicated to serving Petersburg and Wrangell. A second SEAPA facility, Swan Lake, is dedicated to Ketchikan, and the Swan-Tyee intertie connecting the two systems allows

excess energy from Tyee — which produces more than the two communities can use — to be sold to Ketchikan, helping spread costs across the system.

Petersburg's allocation from Tyee is 12 megawatts. The borough supplements that with 2 megawatts of its own hydroelectric generation from the Blind Slough plant on southern Mitkof Island, which has supplied Petersburg with power since 1921 and underwent a major turbine modernization completed in late 2023. The borough's fleet of diesel generators serve as backup, and under normal conditions, Harbour said, they don't run at all.

In 2025, the diesel generators ran a total of 227 hours — less than 3% of the year, Harbour said. The single largest driver of that runtime was a planned annual SEAPA system shutdown, which in 2025 accounted for 106 hours. The shutdown, which SEAPA conducts each June, allows crews to perform preventive maintenance on transformers and clear power lines too dangerous to service while the system is energized. The duration of the shutdown can vary from year to year depending on the scope of that maintenance. Local training and maintenance testing accounted for another 75 hours in 2025. Outage response was 23 hours, and peak shaving — using diesel to reduce demand spikes on the hydro system during cold snaps — accounted for another 23 hours.

Harbour's presentation sought to confront the idea that Petersburg's electrical system is operating near its limits.

Summer peak loads run



Utility Director Steve Harbour

around 5 to 6 megawatts, Harbour said at the April 20 meeting — well below the 14 megawatts currently available from hydro sources alone.

The highest demand levels come during the coldest days of winter, reflecting the community's ongoing conversion from oil to electric heat.

The borough's all-time peak demand was 13.8 megawatts, reached in late 2022 and has been approached but not exceeded since, with last winter seeing loads of 13.5 megawatts on multiple occasions during December's cold snap.

Those sharp demand peaks tend to be brief — an hour or two in the early morning when people wake up, and another hour or two in the evening when they return home and begin cooking and heating.

Through peak shaving, or adding power to the local grid from diesel generation, the borough avoids running at the upper limit of its hydro supply to preserve a buffer against system disruptions.

Harbour credited Petersburg residents with helping hold diesel use down during peak shaving events. He said community response to conservation requests has kept the number of peak shaving days to six over the past two years.

Two major projects are expected to substantially expand the borough's generation capacity before the end of 2027.

The first is the addition of a

third turbine at Tyee Lake, a SEAPA project that would add 6 megawatts to Petersburg's share of that facility, bringing the hydro allocation from 12 to 18 megawatts. Harbour noted the third turbine would provide enough hydro capacity to handle winter demand peaks without Petersburg or Wrangell needing to burn diesel at all.

"By the end of 2027, we should be able to say goodbye to peak shaving for at least 10 years," Harbour said, adding that projected growth from both communities would not push the system to its limits again well beyond the 10-year demand forecast under normal weather patterns.

The second project is the procurement of a second generator at Scow Bay, which adds 3.5 megawatts to the local diesel backup fleet. The Scow Bay addition addresses the concern that on the coldest days of the year, when loads approach the historical 13.8-megawatt peak, a loss of SEAPA supply would currently leave the borough short of the diesel generation needed to avoid rolling outages. The new generator closes that gap.

Harbour noted that a further generator addition will eventually be needed after Scow Bay 2. "Those generators there are as old as I am, and there's one that's as old as my parents," Harbour said of the existing borough diesel fleet. "They're well maintained, and they run great. But things only last so long."

One concern raised at the April 20 meeting involved drought conditions and their effect on hydro supply — a relevant history given an unusual dry spell in 2018 and 2019 that forced extended diesel generation for weeks on end across the north end of the SEAPA system.

Outgoing Utility Director Karl Hagerman explained how that draught "taught us a very valuable lesson," and SEAPA redesigned its lake management practices after that event, implementing what he called a

curtailment line — a minimum lake level threshold at which SEAPA stops selling supplemental power from Tyee Lake to Ketchikan, until the lake recovers. The approach preserves an adequate water reserve dedicated to Petersburg and Wrangell.

Usually there is abundant rainfall. Harbour noted the annual average spill at Tyee is typically 25,000 to 30,000 megawatt hours, representing potential hydroelectric capacity that exceeds current community demand. 2025 saw Tyee Lake spill around 48,000 megawatt hours of unused generation.

Looking at longer-term trends, electricity consumption in Petersburg has grown 52% since 1995, from about 36.7 million kilowatt-hours sold annually to just over 56 million last year. The year-over-year average growth rate has been 1.54%. Harbour projects the next ten years will bring between 23% and 31% more usage, driven primarily not by new homes or businesses but by a continuing shift from fuel oil to electric heat — heat pumps and electric boilers that residents have been adopting in large numbers for years.

He added that the growth rate will likely level off after the next decade, as a large share of the community has already made the switch.

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## Local first responders conduct active threat drill at Stedman Elementary

By **ORIN PIERSON**  
Pilot writer

Petersburg police, fire and EMS personnel conducted a multi-agency active threat

training exercise at Stedman Elementary School after school hours on Wednesday, April 15.

The Petersburg Police Department issued a public service announcement ahead of the



Photo courtesy of Wild Tide Films - Kegan Green

Nick Espeseth and Dave Berg provide emergency care inside the ambulance on a mannequin retrieved from the scene of the practice incident.



Photo courtesy of Wild Tide Films - Heather Canik

The Petersburg Police Department, and PVFD Fire and EMS staff and volunteer responders gear up and approach Stedman Elementary School during last week's active threat drill.

exercise alerting residents that emergency vehicles and personnel would be visible in and around the school and asking

the public to avoid the immediate area. The drill was organized by Petersburg Police Sgt. Drew Ayriss and EMS Coordinator Ryan Gilkey.

Ayriss said the idea grew out of a conversation with Gilkey shortly after Gilkey came on board, set against a backdrop of rising concern

over active threat incidents nationally.

"Given the threat we had last year at the school ... we should probably be running more of these roles more often," Ayriss said. He added that while the police department runs its own response

Continued on page 7

## Police report

**April 15** - An officer conducted foot patrols downtown.

An officer assisted Emergency Medical Services (EMS) on Chief John Lott St.

An officer spoke with a complainant on S 2nd St.

An officer spoke with a complainant on S Nordic Dr.

A wandering dog was dropped off at the Police Department (PD) and claimed by its owner.

An officer responded to a report of a dog running into traffic near Scow Bay Loop Rd. but it had departed the area and was unable to be located.

An officer spoke with a citizen on Cornelius Rd. about a civil issue.

**April 16** - An officer spoke with all parties concerned with an unleashed dog on private property on Chief John Lott St.

An officer responded to a reported disturbance on Chief John Lott St. and determined it was non-criminal.

An officer responded to a dog complaint on Frederick Point Rd. and determined it was non-criminal.

**April 17** - Dispatch notified the hospital of an incoming patient.

A caller requested lockout assistance.

An officer spoke with a complainant on Excel St.

Papers were served on Kisenos St.

A driver on Tango St. was issued a warning for an inoperable headlight.

**April 18** - An officer responded to a report of a disabled vehicle on Mitkof Hwy.

A driver on Nordic Dr. was issued a warning for speed.

An officer spoke with an individual on N 1st st. concerning active trespass notices.

Jimmy Barbuch, 49, was charged with violating conditions of release.

An officer responded to a report of an activated alarm on S. Nordic Dr., determined it was faulty, notified the responsible person and they reset the alarm system.

A deer was reported to have been struck and killed by a vehicle on Mitkof Hwy.

**April 19** - An officer assisted a citizen on Howkan St.

An officer responded to a report of an aggressive dog on Lumber St.

**April 20** - An officer responded to a report of

a dog at large on Kisenos St. While talking with the complainant, the owners arrived and collected the runaway.

An officer responded to a disturbance on N Nordic Dr., conducted a welfare check and determined the situation was non-criminal.

There was a post-event report of a non-criminal disturbance on 4th St.

An individual on Sandy Beach Rd. spoke with dispatch concerning potential community programs/assets for individuals in need of assistance.

An officer responded to a disturbance on N Nordic Dr., conducted a welfare check and determined the situation was non-criminal.

An officer assisted EMS with a fall on Rambler St.

A dog on S Nordic Dr. ran into traffic and was struck by a vehicle.

The owner of a vehicle blocking access to a business on N 1st St. was contacted and moved the vehicle.

An officer responded to a report of property/food dropped on Sandy Beach Rd., gathered the items and brought them to the PD.

**April 21** - An officer responded to a report of an unsecured door, and possible unauthorized access, on N 2nd St., conducted a search of the premises and found all clear.

Telephone services were interrupted/non-functional. AP&T was notified and responded.

A water alarm activated at the Birch St. Pump Station. Water Wastewater (W/WW) was notified and responded.

Power and Light (PP&L) was notified and responded to a power outage.

Papers were served on Kisenos St.

An officer conducted a welfare check in North Harbor.

An officer assisted EMS with a fall on Dock St.

An officer responded to a report of suspicious activity on Ira II St. and determined it was non-criminal.

Alesa Williams, 34, was arrested in North Harbor for alleged criminal trespass and violating conditions of release.

An officer responded to a report of suspicious behavior on N Nordic Dr., made contact with a youth who had climbed onto the roof of a business and advised them of the ramifications.

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# Active shooter drill

Continued from page 6  
drills monthly, opportunities to train alongside fire and EMS are rare.

The drill ran three scenarios. Police entered the building — where mannequin dummies, shell casings and other props had been staged to simulate a shooting scene — after hearing

fake gunshots. EMS personnel followed roughly 15 seconds behind in full kit to begin triaging in the warm zone while officers secured the threat. Two police volunteers, including a department dispatcher, helped set the scene and played roles in the exercise.

Petersburg School District

Superintendent Robyn Taylor observed from outside.

“Each of the varying groups, between the police, the fire department, the volunteer EMS, after each scenario they came back together as a whole group and really debriefed about each of their varying viewpoints — what went well,

and areas that maybe they need to consider in the future,” Taylor said.

“I really appreciate how involved all of our members of the community are and truly want what’s best, not just for the school, but for the community at large,” Taylor said.

“The active threat drill was important because it gave EMS, fire, and law enforcement the opportunity to practice our rapid trauma response as a collective group,” said Gilkey. “No emergency is ideal, but the more exposure training we can provide to members, the better

... our teams can better understand the ultimate goals that have been proven to provide the best patient outcomes.”

Petersburg Borough Assembly member Jeff Meucci also observed the drill. At Monday’s assembly meeting, he recognized Chief Kerr, Sgt. Ayriess and members of the police, fire, and EMS for their participation.

“It was very interesting to me to watch all the people who volunteer in this community and the professionals involved, how dedicated they are to spending part of their work day up there training for emergencies that could happen,” he said.

Kerr, speaking after the meeting, framed the exercise in straightforward terms. “You always hear, ‘I never thought it’d happen here,’” he said. “So you prepare for the worst, you hope for the best.”

Ayriess said the national climate over the past several months sharpened the sense of urgency.

“It’s unfortunate we have to do this kind of training,” he said, “but the way all the school threats were happening and just public threats were happening down south over the last four or five months, that definitely raised some awareness up here.”



Photo courtesy of Wild Tide Films - Heather Canik

Petersburg Volunteer Fire Department volunteer Rachel Shaw and Nick Espeseth strap into their body armor for last week’s active shooter drill. The first responders are equipped with this kind of protective equipment, but it is a very rare for them to use or even practice in ballistic gear.

“I really appreciate how involved all of our members of the community are and truly want what’s best, not just for the school, but for the community at large”

— PETERSBURG SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT ROBYN TAYLOR

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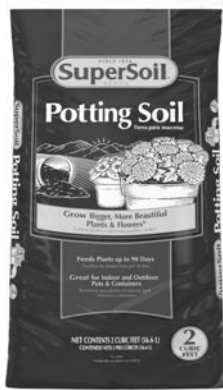


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# Canoe

Continued from page 1

camp for thousands of years.” The ceremony had been timed to coincide with high tide at Sandy Beach, not the most helpful current for the canoe crew. “We did some circles when we came out of the harbor... and we were going backwards for a minute at the mouth of the Narrows... I was like ‘Pull, pull, pull!’” Brandon said, laughing, referring to pulling the canoe paddles.

Caitlyn Ware remembered how someone mentioned getting a tow, since a safety skiff escorted them, “but Victoria was like, ‘We are *not* getting a tow.’”

Victoria Moore said she didn’t remember the canoe’s maiden voyage being that intense. “We’re all pulling and I look back at my son Alex, and he’s yawning,” she said, laughing.

Canoes are nothing new to the waters around Petersburg, of course, having been used to reach the seasonal fish camp for thousands of years before European settlers, as Brandon Ware



Photo courtesy of Stephanie Aikins

The *Keet Yaakw* was painted by Juneau artist Xájoosa John Garcia III, in formline designs including killer whales. For the blessing, green cedar boughs crest the prow of the 40-foot canoe.

acknowledged. But there has been a relatively recent resurgence, as neighboring clans have stopped through on their canoe journey to the biennial Celebration in Juneau. Petersburg residents have joined this journey as well, being welcomed aboard other clans’ canoes as they come through town. Having a traditional canoe based in Petersburg will

give locals more chances to practice, and allow for more people to make the journey. “I have two kids, and I’m so excited for them to get to see the canoe growing up and get to help pull,” said Caitlyn, who plans to make the ten-day journey to Celebration.

Brandon Ware donned the killer whale helmet in honor of the new canoe’s name, *Keet Yaakw* (killer whale canoe), and he scattered some pieces of pilot bread into the water.

Will Ware, hit s’aati, or house master, for the Freshwater Mark Sockeye house of the T’akdeintaan clan, explained, “It’s our custom that whenever we see a killer whale, we put some of our food into the water, as a sign of respect for the guardian and keeper of the ocean world... We chose the killer whale because we didn’t want this canoe to just belong to one clan in Petersburg. Since we don’t have a killer whale clan, it’s somewhat generic, but at the same time it represents Petersburg.”

The *Keet Yaakw* was painted by Juneau artist Xájoosa John Garcia III, in traditional designs including killer whales. He was paid to paint the bow and stern, but decorated the sides pro bono. Garcia’s bold Tlingit artwork in black and red stood out on the white fiberglass hull, crested with green cedar boughs on the prow, and blessed with blue swirling cedar smoke.

Petersburg locals performed

some of songs and dances chosen by the neighboring killer whale clan, whose territory somewhat overlaps with Séet Ká Kwáan, as well as songs and dances selected by Will Ware. And he invited the crowd to join in as they learned the words. He said they’d only planned a short ceremony, as the forecast had been for rain. But only scattered drops fell, as the crowd of 40 people enjoyed the sound of Native drums and tried to “decolonize their tongues” by singing along.

During the traditional canoe song (performed with hand-carved paddles), an Alaska Airlines Jet flew overhead, drowning out the singers and drums. But as the noise of the jet faded, the voices and drums could be heard again. As the last song ended, it was replaced by the calls of a flock of sandhill cranes over the Sound, and the tide lapping against the hull of the canoe.

Canoe pullers of Petersburg will enjoy listening to plenty more waves and wildlife in the future, aboard the *Keet Yaakw*.

Pullers will be leaving Petersburg on about May 24<sup>th</sup> for the ten-day journey to Celebration 2026 in Juneau. They plan to stop in Kake, then camp the rest of the way, with Brian Newman supporting them with his fishing boat the *Ocean Summer*.

Tribal citizens 18 and older are welcome to apply as pullers, as long as they are physically

able to pull a canoe paddle and camp outdoors along the way, and willing to attend safety classes before the trip.

If you meet the criteria, send your letter of interest to [tribaladmin@piatribal.org](mailto:tribaladmin@piatribal.org), or drop it off in person at the PIA offices.



JAKE CLEMENS / Petersburg Pilot

Sasha Ivan Soboleff, representing the Alaska Native Brotherhood, leads a blessing of Petersburg Indian Association’s new 40-foot canoe as it arrives for the first time at Sandy Beach Park in Petersburg.

## Rules of the Road US Coast Guard QUESTION & ANSWER



### QUESTION:

Which statement is TRUE, according to the Rules?

- a. A vessel engaged in fishing shall keep out of the way of a sailing vessel.
- b. A vessel not under command shall keep out of the way of a vessel engaged in fishing.
- c. A vessel engaged in fishing while underway shall, so far as possible, keep out of the way of a vessel restricted in her ability to maneuver.
- d. A vessel not under command shall keep out of the way of a vessel restricted in her ability to maneuver.

Source: U.S. Coast Guard

ANSWER C. A vessel engaged in fishing while underway shall, so far as possible, keep out of the way of a vessel restricted in her ability to maneuver.

## Petersburg Borough Assembly will sell two parcels to local developer for rental properties

By TAYLOR HECKART  
KFSK Radio

The Petersburg Borough Assembly voted unanimously last week to sell two borough-owned parcels to local developer Dave Ohmer for \$61,800. Ohmer plans to build a duplex on each property, which are on Haugen Drive near the hospital WERC building.

Ohmer has not signed the deeds yet, but he told KFSK he was happy the contract specifically outlined that the property would be used to build housing rentals.

“I hope this is a bit of a template for them to do this with a lot more people around town, and try to get lots into private hands,” Ohmer said. “We need more housing.”

Housing is tight in Petersburg, and in Southeast Alaska in general. A 2023 survey found Petersburg will need to add more than 300 housing units over the next decade.

“There are people in every walk of life needing housing,” Ohmer said. “Retired people down to

young people that can’t afford to buy a house right now and want to stay in Petersburg and work.”

Ohmer acknowledged that there were some concerns about building homes on the properties. Last year, some community members testified about safety and aesthetics concerns.

“We’ll try to do anything we can to fit in nicely into the neighborhood and not create any problems for anybody,” he said.

Ohmer said the properties will require some utility improvements, and he plans to install water and sewer next spring.

Ohmer originally applied to buy the properties last July. The Assembly initially rejected his application in a narrow 2-3 vote but reversed its decision in October. Borough Manager Steve Giesbrecht negotiated the terms of the sale.

At the April 13 meeting, Assembly member Jeff Meucci moved to pass the resolution to sell the properties, seconded by James Valentine. The resolution passed in a 6-0 vote.

This story was first published at [kfsk.org](http://kfsk.org) and is reprinted here with permission

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# Go Vikings!



Front left to right: Maria Toth, Cadence Flint, Maelle Boitor, Arielle Tucker, Simone Nilsen, Lexie Tow, Zia Hulebak, Emi Anderson, Sophia Cotta, Anna Lucas, Nicole Ware, Assistant coach Keely Ware. Back left to right: Head coach Casey Gates, Waylon Jones, Kaleb Kerr, David Owens, Alex Holmgrain, Nolan Lutomski, Ben Kandoll, Noah Pawuk, Brayden Tucker, Jakob Preisler, Wesley Durst, Nate Olson, Andi Mihai, Danny Stocks, Parker Swanson, Gaje Ventress, Payton Dreisbach and Lucas Cotta. (Photo by Aiden Luhr)

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## Former champion Petersburg wrestler coaches new middle school girls team

*Jens Hammer, who now lives in Banks, Oregon, co-founded the girls team and in their very first season led them to a state title*

By AIDEN LUHR  
Pilot writer

As of 2024 and according to Fox 10 Phoenix, the fastest growing high school sport in this country is girls wrestling. The number of participants surpassed 74,000 in 2024-25, according to data from the National Federation of State High School Associations. This was a 15% increase with roughly 1,000 schools adding programs, a huge jump compared to only 11,498 girls a decade ago, according to NFHS.

One of the biggest reasons for this recent growth is states sanctioning girls wrestling, allowing them to compete in their own state tournaments instead of only against boys, according to Associated Press. The growth in high school has had a trickledown effect for middle school as well.

For first year programs built from the ground up, sometimes you don't really know what to expect. Petersburg native and former Viking wrestler who won two region titles under Rob Schwartz, Jens Hammer, and head coach Addie Madison formed a girls middle school wrestling team in Banks, Oregon, in October 2025.

"For years we've had a bit of a co-ed team and the girls have been trying to fit in where they can, but this year we decided to make a clean break and start a girls team," Hammer said.

Expectations can be tricky demands to assess for a brand-new program but coach

Hammer and Madison were mainly focused on developing a good foundation.

"Expectation is that everybody works hard and they learn to love the sport – winning at all costs isn't necessarily the goal, we want these girls to come back and love the sport and, in that regard, we definitely achieved it," Hammer told the Pilot.

The team had a lot of sixth graders this past season, experiencing meets for the first time.

"The first couple of tournaments of the year really showed us that we should expect [to] have an amazing season because the girls went out and just competed their hearts out," Hammer said.

The success kept coming for the first-year program as they took 12 kids to regionals and then eight to the state tournament. The team finished with two first place finishes, a second place and a third place at state. Out of 103 girls teams at the Oregon Middle School Girls State Wrestling Championships on March 14, in Albany, Oregon, Banks finished first overall with 114 points.

The girls team will be losing a few athletes to high school for next season but the foundation has been built for sustained success.

"The athletes that are expected to come up from elementary this year, we're really excited for and considering Madison and I were able to coach the team to first place in our first year, we're still getting our feet under us. Next year, we're going to



Photo courtesy of Janelle Callender

Front row from left to right: Lorelei Weeks, Alexis Buxton. Middle row, from left to right: Abbi Veis, Madi Callender, Reagan Maxwell. Back row, from left to right: Aubree Buxton, Kamilah Robles, Jens Hammer, Addie Madison, Ezhmee Foresman and Riley Kemper. Banks Middle School Girls Wrestling won the state championship in their inaugural season.

be more prepared [and] organized," Hammer said.

Winning a state title as a program in their inaugural season is a very hard thing to do but Madison and Hammer were able to foster a healthy environment for a girls wrestling team that had a dominant season and have all pieces for success in 2026-27 and beyond, all in a city of 1800 to 1900 people.

As a small town as well, Petersburg hopes to see good growth and numbers of girls in the future with their middle school wrestling program.

"Something that needs to happen is for them to have a female coach or role model

in that situation," head coach Mike Corl said. "There's lots of things that go on that I'm not capable of ... I do my best."

Mitkof had four middle school wrestlers this season in Addie Flores, Freya Fenner, Jovee Coil and Autumn Skye-Dundas.

"The good thing about coaching girls is most of the time, I don't have to worry about them being mischievous and causing problems. [Flores, Fenner, Coil and Skye-Dundas] are goal oriented, sharp and their awareness of surroundings is better than boys of that age," Corl said. "They want to get better every day and have a level of commitment that will help them succeed in the future."

## Petersburg students build skills and community at 2026 Senior Native Youth Olympics

By AIDEN LUHR  
Pilot writer

This past weekend, Petersburg's Cedar Helms, Conor Oppenheim and Maddie Dreisbach competed in the 2026 Senior Native Youth Olympic Games, in Anchorage.

This meet saw Oppenheim set a new personal best for himself in the Two-Foot High Kick, kicking as high as 80 inches.

"In your jump, there's kind of a space in front of your chest when you're standing up right and when you're trying to get your legs up, your chest

crunches forward and it occupies that space and you don't want that because your legs can't get higher," Oppenheim said regarding technique change to achieve goal. "As soon as I jump, I try to bring my knees up into that space so my chest doesn't occupy it, so I can get my legs higher."

The stage and scope of the NYO games in Anchorage wasn't particularly daunting for Oppenheim as he has competed at the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics, with the most recent event being last July in Fairbanks.

"I feel like state is more

accurate to the high school level. It has a lot more competitive competition because of the close age group. WEIO is a lot more open, it's not as competitive. Both are good experiences and you can learn from both," Oppenheim said.

In other events, Oppenheim kicked 74 inches in Alaskan High Kick, 58 inches in the One Hand Reach and 88 inches in the One Foot High Kick.

The NYO games aren't just about competition but it's also a time to build connections with other people from similar or different backgrounds as yourself.

"I was a lot more social – I put myself out there and talked to as many teams as I can and talked to as many people and that made [NYO] much better than last year," Dreisbach said. "If you go and talk to other teams and how they got into [NYO], then it's better."

Dreisbach performed similarly to how she did in 2025 as for the Wrist Carry, an event that originally helped to develop the skills for hunters working together with each other and carrying heavy loads.

"I did my average, to like the first turn, that's usually when I slip off. It was a little bumpy. That's just something I need to work on next year," Dreisbach said.

Dreisbach said due to some judging inconsistencies, such as not giving enough time for her to adjust her form, she only made it to half court during the

Seal Hop.

Dreisbach hopped 54.8 inches. She also kicked 70 inches in the One Foot High Kick and 64 inches in the Two Foot High Kick.

Moving forward, Dreisbach will continue to work on her craft for 2027.

"I want to work on Alaskan [High Kick]. I'm motivated to get better at it now. Same with Kneel Jump, I really want to work on [jumping] out instead of up," Dreisbach said. "Those are the two [events] I want to focus on."

While Oppenheim and Dreisbach are veterans, this was Helms first time competing in Anchorage.

"I was hoping I'd win a few matches in [Inuit and Dene Stick Pull] and I won one in Inuit and then I didn't because it's more

technique than strength based," Helms said.

Inuit and Dene Stick Pull are bracket-based events with double elimination.

"I [wish] I would've gotten a better grip for Inuit and Dene. That was more strength so I need to do some training on that," Helms said.

Nearly 400 athletes competed in 11 games this past weekend, representing over 100 communities.

"It was bigger than I expected because when I think of NYO, I feel like it's a smaller sport," Helms said. "Some people gave me input on how I can do better on my technique and everybody was very kind."

Like Oppenheim and Dreisbach, Helms will now turn his attention to the offseason in preparation for 2027.



Photo courtesy of Dea Heppa

Petersburg's Connor Oppenheim explodes vertically in the air, performing a Two Foot High Kick during the 2026 Senior Native Youth Olympic Games, on Friday, April 17, 2026, in Anchorage. Oppenheim set a new personal best, kicking 80 inches.

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## Petersburg community continues fight against cancer with 27th Annual Beat the Odds

By AIDEN LUHR  
Pilot writer

This past Saturday, Petersburg celebrated their 27th Beat the Odds race, a fundraiser that supports local cancer related programs such as cancer treatment level, equipment training and more for patients and families.

So many families came out in support and either ran or walked their way, starting at Sandy Beach.

"It continues to impact people all over town. Either a member of their family or themselves, or a good friend. People want to help," committee member Marlene Cushing said.

The money the organization receives goes towards the fight against cancer.

"Through different agencies in Southeast Alaska, we help with the travel costs – and training for the local staff so people can stay here and get chemo therapy," Cushing said.

Beat the Odds has become so much more than just a running and walking event.

"It's kind of an emotionally touching occasion and the camaraderie of being in a group where you're all thinking about and feeling that, is a big benefit of it," Cushing said.

Cushing said, with a matching grant,

Beat the Odds was able to raise over \$35,000 to go towards the battle against cancer.

In 2025, Beat the Odds allocated funds locally and regionally:

\$10,800 to Petersburg Medical Center (\$7,500 chemotherapy treatment chair, \$3,000 chemotherapy training for two nurses, and \$300 5 Wishes Booklets), \$4,000 to home health for chore services, \$1,800 to True North Counseling and Consultation LLC to facilitate cancer support group and individual sessions if requested, \$6,000 for the 27th Beat the Odds event, including cost of shirts, printing and miscellaneous, \$1,000 for radio public service announcements on KFSK regarding cancer resources in the community, \$1,500 for miscellaneous expenses and supplies (box rent, mailing, office, printing, website), \$700 for Cancer Survivor's Day, including food, and miscellaneous, \$1,000 to Angel Flight West, \$13,000 to Ketchikan First City Council on Cancer, \$4,000 to Wrangell Cancer Care, and \$6,000 to Juneau Cancer Connection.

Cushing has been doing this event ever since its first race 27 years ago and she, like a lot of other people, are fighting for someone else.

"I have to mention Annabelle Baker, who's the person that went to [the Beat



AIDEN LUHR / Petersburg Pilot

Michelle and Rick Brock are all smiles as they walk during 27th Annual Beat the Odds event on Saturday, April 18, 2026, in Petersburg. This year, the event earned over \$35,000.

the Odds event] in Juneau and thought we need to do this in Petersburg. She put her energy and heart into it. She ended up getting breast cancer and she died in 2012, so Annabelle memory is a big factor," Cushing said.

With Beat the Odds over, there will be more events coming this summer.

"There's going to be a cancer survivor celebration at the Lutheran Church Holy Cross House, June 5th. It's a luncheon," Cushing said.

The event will be free entry.

"It's a nice celebration of people who are living with or have had cancer," Cushing said.

Another year, another successful and great turnout for Beat the Odds, 27 years standing.

"We urge people to do what they can to prevent cancer with diet and exercise.

There's screenings available at the Petersburg Medical Center for people who have smoked for a long time. Hope for more cures and prevention tools in the future," said Cushing.

## PHS's music program shines at Region V Music Fest in Ketchikan

By AIDEN LUHR  
Pilot writer

In early April, Region V Music Fest took place in Ketchikan, bringing southeast Alaska music together in one spot for a few days. Petersburg, which brought 40 students to the music fest, had been working tirelessly on various forms of music for this event, full of different languages.

"Our jazz band has been working on a few different tunes that are big band swing, a funk and a Latin piece," music teacher Chelsea Corrao said. "Choir, we did a lot of foreign language, we had a Spanish piece and Norwegian, technically Swedish, followed by an Appalachian folk song type of thing."

For choir, all of these multi-language pieces are key because the English writing is harder to translate with multiple diphthongs (a single syllable containing two vowel sounds).

"We've been working really

hard on our vowels and in order to do that, we have to do foreign languages because we have to use the international phonetic alphabet," Corrao said.

Judges were very impressed with Petersburg's performance as the Concert and Jazz bands got all three superiors and the choir got two.

Even with their success, the program wasn't sure how this year would shake out, especially after losing 17 seniors from last year.

"A lot of the comments from the upperclassmen was that they didn't even think they would get [to music fest] this year," Corrao said. We started the year and [the upperclassmen] were like 'We'll see what happens.' But they did it, they got there and I think they learned a lot about themselves and I think we have a strong freshman and sophomore group that were willing to care and put in the time to put the vision of the upperclassmen into

play."

One of those seniors this year is Serena Helms.

"This music fest was probably my favorite music fest and I've made more sophomore and freshman friends. I'm gonna be really sad to leave them," Helms said.

This year, Helms switched from playing the tenor to the Barry saxophone.

"It's been interesting to see how my position changed in the band musically and also leadership wise," Helms said.

Three performers from Petersburg received command performances, a prestigious showcase for top-tier musicians in Quinn Rafferty (musical theatre), Canek Sosa (vibraphone solo) and a trio consisting of Jozlyn Turland, Annabelle Christensen and Sophia Cotta.

"Ms. Corrao surprised me before we left. She really thought I would get a command and I was like 'I don't know, I don't

think so.' It didn't matter to me whether I got a command or not, I was just hoping I would give people an enjoyable performance and I think I did that," Rafferty said.

The band performed several pieces, which included one of Rafferty's favorites, "From the Underground," during their choir performance.

"There's so many moving pieces and it was interesting to sing and it was the hardest so it was the most fun to work on and I think it sounded the coolest when we all sang together," Rafferty said.

This was Rafferty's first year in choir.

Once the current seniors graduate, there are other people such as Maria Toth ready to become leaders for the lowerclassmen.

"This year, being an upperclassman, I'm already getting more opportunities and

ways to help underclassmen with music," Toth said.

Toth plays the flute for concert band and tenor for jazz. Mastering two instruments is not an easy thing but Toth has been able to do it.

"Learning tenor saxophone, I can now switch to that more easily and it's been my third year practicing and doing that," Toth said. "Especially since they're different kinds of bands, I can kind of switch my focus and vibe for the band that I'm playing for."

PHS's Spring Concert will be May 18th, at 7pm in the auditorium.

"To show the community how hard we've worked and how even though we were a beginning band, we've come really far and exceeded everybody's expectations and so I'm excited to show that off – and how Ms. Corrao can change our band and music program for the better," said Helms.



Photo courtesy of Chelsea Corrao

Petersburg music teacher and conductor Chelsea Corrao and the Jazz band pose for a group selfie during 2026 Region V Music Fest, on Saturday, April 11, 2026, in Ketchikan. For the fourth year in a row, the Jazz band received all three superiors.



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# Mitkof Dance Troupe spring recital brings the Circus to town



Photo courtesy of Tanya Somerville / www.SeaprintsPhotography.com

The spring recital featured 27 dance numbers, with choreography split among the six MDT dance teachers: Caroline Crain, Kelsey Lambe, Olivia Reid, Lauren Thain, Kaili Watkins, and Alice Wegener. High school seniors Gabriele Whitacre, Brooklyn Whitethorn, and Freya Tucker took part in the choreography of their own senior showcase solos in the recital.

By **JAKE CLEMENS**  
Pilot writer

The Mitkof Dance Troupe (MDT) brought the circus to town, with elephants, clowns, acrobats, feats of strength, magicians, fire dancers, lion tamers, and even circus animal cookies. 125 dancers from pre-K to graduating seniors performed to a packed auditorium Monday night and a line down the block on Tuesday. Signs of a successful program, despite the challenges that MDT faces to purchase the studio building.

As for opening night, "It went really smooth," said Olivia Reid, MDT executive director and instructor. "We like to do something lively in the spring... the instructors all pick their own music and we don't get to watch each other until the week before. It's so fun to see what everyone does."

Another smooth aspect of this recital was the lighting. "With the new lighting board, we can control it all from an iPad backstage... if something happens, we can shut it all off, and don't have to yell back to the booth." The lights were preprogrammed for each dance, and controlled by Logan Stolpe and Alyssa Eden to enhance the experience, whether it was the black and white for mimes, or red and orange for the fire dancers. Or purple for a number set to Prince's "Purple Rain." That was graduating senior Freya Tucker's self-choreographed performance. Fellow graduating seniors Gabriele Whitacre and Brooklyn Whitethorn also performed pieces they choreographed themselves, demonstrating not only mastery of memorized movement, but planning as well.

And the progression of that mastery was on display on Monday and Tuesday, all the way down to the pre-K animal circus cookies.

Kelsey Lambe, MDT instructor and accountant, said of the graduating seniors, "These sen-



Photo courtesy of Tanya Somerville / www.SeaprintsPhotography.com

iors were in some of the first classes I taught when I moved here ten years ago, so they're the first that I've seen all the way through. Now they're strong beautiful young women."

That's only the latest generation of MDT's legacy in Petersburg, though. It began with Mindy Anderson and Steppin' Out in 1996, using space in the Romiad building that's long since been demolished and replaced by the public library. In the late 90's Steppin' Out began using space at St. Andrews Episcopal Church at 301 N 3<sup>rd</sup> St, and partnered with them to build an expansion for dedicated dance studio space. Anderson handed over the Steppin' Out to a board of directors in 2013, and that's

when it was reborn as Mitkof Dance Troupe, with Olivia Reid as executive director.

"It's going really well," said Reid, "but it's still a nonprofit, so the income numbers aren't there for a loan [for the building]. There are nonprofit-specific loans, but those are difficult to qualify for also." An added difficulty is that the board of directors rotates, since volunteers don't typically commit to more than a few years on a board, let alone putting their name on a loan.

But, president of the MDT board Barb Steltz says the feeling is positive. The Episcopal church gave MDT first right of refusal to buy the building, so there's no imminent deadline. "We're not

going to disappear next week," Steltz said. "It's the space for us, it's centrally located close to the school. People have already brought us ideas for grants and fundraisers... It chokes you up how much people are willing to help."

"How much do you need, Barb?" yelled Glorianne Wollen from the audience, to scattered laughter.

Steltz said that the loan that fell through was for over \$300k, but they have a sizeable down payment. "We feel positive that we're going to be here for a long time," Steltz said.

If you're looking for a way to keep the Mitkof Dance Troupe circus in town, there is a crowd-funding drive through

Zeffy.com, or you can show your support by buying MDT merchandise on Bonfire.com. MDT is also looking for two board members. If interested, submit your letter of interest by May 1<sup>st</sup> to mitkofdancetroupe@gmail.com.



at Petersburg School District

**BREAKFAST IS AVAILABLE**  
K-5 AT 7:45AM / 6-12 AT 8:50AM

**Monday, Apr 27**

Breakfast  
Chef's Choice  
Lunch

Korean Meatballs with  
Brown Rice

**Tuesday, Apr 28**

Breakfast  
Chef's Choice  
Lunch

Bean and Cheese Burrito

**Wednesday, Apr 29**

Breakfast  
Chef's Choice  
Lunch

WG Roast Beef Sandwich

**Thursday, Apr 30**

Breakfast  
Chef's Choice  
Lunch

WG Pizza Day

**Friday, May 1**

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Chef's Choice  
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Library News



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**Year of Reading Challenge!** / For teens & adults / All new prompts with prizes awarded monthly! / Register at [psglib.beanstack.org](http://psglib.beanstack.org)

**Wiggle & Giggle!** / Wednesdays, April 29 / 11 a.m. – noon / Children ages 0 – 5 and their caregivers, join us for a rollicking good time!

**The Friday Commons:** Come for the snacks, stay for the chill / Friday, April 24 / 1:45 – 3:15 p.m. / For teens, grade 6+ / Friday Commons is your go-to spot to chill, create, and hang with friends – no cost, no pressure! Drop in for crafts you can actually take home, board games or video games, and snacks to keep you going (because we know Fridays hit different). Whether you want to make something cool, try something new, or just relax and vibe, this is your space. Bonus: you get a say in what happens next with programs, activities, even books. Show up, bring a friend, and make it yours.

**Yoga with Karen Malcom** / Saturday, April 25 / 11 a.m. – noon / \$\$, pay at the front desk / bring your own mat / For beginners and seasoned Yogis.

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**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that the Board of Directors of the Southeast Alaska Power Agency (SEAPA) will hold a Special Board Meeting electronically on **April 28, 2026 from 2:00-3PM AKDT**. The purpose of the meeting is to consider a contract, a lease, and a change order. During the meeting an executive session may be held for discussions related to an employee contract. Possible action may be taken following the executive session. For additional information please call (907) 228-2281.



Published: April 23, 2026

PUBLIC NOTICE

LET IT BE KNOWN TO ALL PEOPLE OF UNITED STATES OF AMERICA – This is public notice and affirmation that a baby boy has been born on the land in a mortal body to his biological father Daniel Tucker and biological mother Jessica Ann Simone of the Tucker Simone family and was given the name Aengus. The family lovingly welcomed their baby to Earth on the land of the geographical location commonly known as Petersburg, Petersburg Borough, Alaska Republic, United States of America. He was born on the 9th day of August in the calendar year 2025 AD.

This is public notice and affirmation that a baby boy has been born on the land in a mortal body to his biological father Daniel Tucker and biological mother Jessica Ann Simone of the Tucker Simone family and was given the name Finbarr. The family lovingly welcomed their baby to Earth on the land of the geographical location commonly known as Petersburg, Petersburg Borough, Alaska Republic, United States of America. He was born on the 9th day of March in the calendar year 2023 AD.

This is public notice and affirmation that a baby girl has been born on the land in a mortal body to her biological father Daniel Tucker and biological mother Jessica Ann Simone of the Tucker Simone family and was given the name Robinia. The family lovingly welcomed their baby to Earth on the land of the geographical location commonly known as Bellingham, Whatcom County, Washington Republic, United States of America. She was born on the 17th day of June in the calendar year 2017 AD.

Published: April 16, 23, 30, May 7 and 14, 2026



Photo courtesy of Je Tagaban

Mainstreet traffic

A small herd of Sitka black-tailed deer strolls down main street in downtown Petersburg. Forage-stressed deer, low on body fat, grazing on ornamental shrubs in town has been an unfortunately common sight in recent months, as the prolonged winter snow on Mitkof Island restricted access to the local deer population's preferred winter sustenance of evergreen forbs and blueberry bushes.

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

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

Those celebrating birthdays this week are: **April 24:** Brayden Hisaw, Kaitlin Willis. **April 25:** Mike Slaven, Trevor McCay. **April 26:** John Olsen, Paul Jennings. **April 28:** Eric Morrison, Jeffery Holten, Linda Reller, Terry Durkin. **April 29:** Jessica Peeler, Cole Rhoden, Jessica King, Kathy Clark, Leiah Kittams.

Those celebrating anniversaries this week are: **April 24:** Gerry and Darlene Whitethorn. **April 26:** Charlie and Dianne Christensen. **April 29:** Bill Tremblay and Cindi Lagoudakis.

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

Senior Meals

Monday, April 27

Pulled Pork Sandwich, Coleslaw, Fries, Orange, Chocolate Mousse

Tuesday, April 28

Taco Salad with Fixings, Fruit Cup, Brownie, Milk

Wednesday, April 29

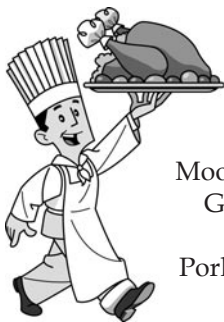
Chicken Salad Sandwich, Vegetables Sticks, Chips, Cheese Stick, Rice Krispy Treat

Thursday, April 30

Moose Meatloaf, Mashed Potatoes with Gravy, Dinner Roll, Apple, Muffin

Friday, May 1

Pork Egg Rolls, Rice, Peas and Carrots, Muffin, Milk



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 at 5 p.m. All meals are suggested donation only. Please call Mountain View Food Service at 772-4331 before noon for reservations.



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.....2x4-23b58  
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[petersburgwave.org/careers](http://petersburgwave.org/careers)

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**First Bank is looking** for a Customer Service Representative/Teller for the Petersburg Branch. If you like to work with customers, enjoy problem solving, are dependable, and you are interested in the position, stop by the branch and let's talk about it. Previous experi-

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**The Salty Pantry** is looking for enthusiastic full-time and part-time people to join our team. Contact Mindy at 907-518-0571 or stop in the Salty Pantry at 14 Harbor Way.  
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 ..... tfn5-15b84

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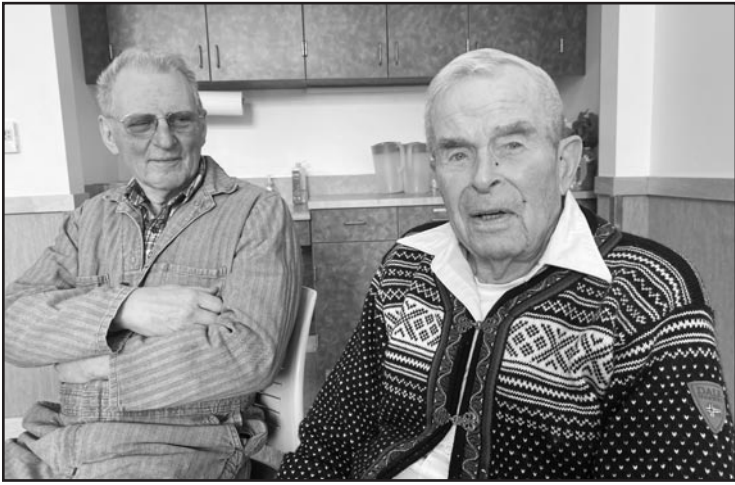
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ORIN PIERSON / Petersburg Pilot

Petersburg historian Don Nelson (pictured right) received an afternoon of well deserved accolades during Tuesday library celebration.

## Library Friends

Continued from page 1

Petersburg Librarian Tara Alcock also thanked Nelson, calling his book a foundational resource.

“Your book has been a fundamental piece of our ability to offer local history resources to people,” Alcock said. “It really is the book on Petersburg.”

As a token of appreciation, master of ceremonies Sue Paulsen presented Nelson with a copy of a recently published memoir by Don Giles, a Petersburg figure who worked in the cold storage industry before rising to CEO of Icicle Seafoods and who has written about his 50 years in Alaska’s fisheries industry.

Nelson, in the manner of a man more accustomed to honoring others than being honored himself, was gracious but brief.

“I need all the encouragement I can get,” he said.

### Chris Weiss

Borough Clerk Becky Regula came to Tuesday’s celebration with some vintage paperwork in hand. According to official borough employment records, Chris Weiss’s hire date at the Petersburg Public Library was Oct. 2, 1986.

Regula also produced a six-month performance evaluation that then-library director Joyce Jenkins had written in April 1987: “Chris is a reliable, efficient employee, and has learned quickly. She is a real asset to the library.”

Nearly four decades later, those words drew appreciative laughter from the crowd.

Weiss came to Petersburg after earning a degree at the University of Oregon, where she had worked in electron microscopy and was among the first researchers to observe bacteria from hydrothermal ocean vents. Finding limited opportunities in that field in Petersburg Alaska, she turned to library work — arriving at a moment when her background in computers was an unusual and valuable asset.

“The library was just beginning to think of automation,” said library board member Mary Ellen Anderson, who served as the borough’s elementary school librarian for 19 years. “[Chris] was a perfect fit.”

Over nearly 40 years, Weiss served as a library clerk, technology support staff and passport acceptance agent — a role that, Anderson noted, helped many Petersburg residents get their first look at the world beyond the island. Weiss helped usher in Petersburg’s first internet connection, a dial-up modem that could accommodate two users at a time, and guided multiple library automation projects, including the transition from a card catalog to a computerized system.

Alcock, who arrived in Petersburg 23 and a half years ago with no library experience, said her overlap with outgoing director Joyce Jenkins amounted to a single day — leaving her essentially on her own with Weiss from the start.

“Joyce and I only had one day of overlap,” Alcock said.

“It was just Chris and I, me fumbling through it, Chris having a great deal of patience, showing me the ropes.”

She described the experience of working alongside Weiss across more than two decades as extraordinary, and struggled to hold back tears.

“She is the cornerstone of what we do,” Alcock said. “I’m just thrilled to take this opportunity to thank you for your incredible service and really mentoring me. All the automation system migrations — major undertakings, every one of them — I really could not have done without Chris.”

Alcock said Weiss’s departure leaves a gap she can barely imagine filling.

“This is a bittersweet day for me. I really can hardly imagine coming into work and Chris not being part of it,” she said. “You are going to be deeply missed by me and the rest of the staff.”

Weiss will pass her technology responsibilities to Beth Loesch.

Beyond her library work, Weiss made a broad mark on Petersburg’s cultural life. Speakers at Tuesday’s event described her as a founding organizer of the Rainforest Festival, now in its 18th year. She has hosted a jazz program on KFSK on Thursday nights for many years, taught dance, performed piano at community events, wrote poetry, showed visual artwork in public exhibitions and played recorder with a local ensemble called Toots and Squeaks. She will even be returning to the stage in this year’s Mitkof Mummies community theater production.

“She deserves so much to retire and attend fully to her many hobbies,” Anderson told the standing room-only meeting room. “We can’t wait to see what paper and fiber arts may come our way and to hear about her travels and to see how her garden grows. I have to say, Chris, you’ve been such a help to me as a librarian and the technology office over the years. So much. Thank you for all your work.”

Asked to reflect on the occasion for the Pilot, Weiss said retirement is “bittersweet.”

“It’s hard to leave such a fun job with so many great people that I work with,” she said. “And

of course, it’s a beautiful library and just the daily interactions with the community. And yeah — it will be nice to have time for myself.”

Weiss said her retirement

plans include nurturing new varieties of tomatoes, and the peas, beans, cucumbers and squash that she will grow in her greenhouses and raised beds.

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