

# SHELTON-MASON COUNTY Journal

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## COMMUNITY PROFILE



Shelton resident Carolyn Maddux worked for the *Shelton-Mason County Journal* for more than 20 years, and was named the managing editor following the death of Henry Gay. She teaches creative writing at Olympic College Shelton, and is the acting director at Hypatia-In-The-Woods, where female writers work. *Journal photo by Gordon Weeks*

## Renaissance woman

### *Carolyn Maddux has a way with words*

By Gordon Weeks  
gordon@masoncounty.com

No standard-size business card can hold Carolyn Maddux's titles and passions.

The longtime Shelton resident is a poet, journalist, editor, teacher, gardener, former antique storeowner and baker of bread. A common denominator is a passion for words and nature.

As a reporter and editor for the *Shelton-Mason County Journal* for two decades, Maddux said she enjoyed "the kind of rush when something was happening and when I got my teeth into a project. And I loved writing."

Maddux grew up on the north shore of Hood Canal, between Belfair and Tahuya. Her father worked as a rigger at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard; her mother was a third-grade teacher who took time off from that job while Maddux was young.

Growing up there "was idyllic," she recalled. "I lived between

woods and water."

Maddux attended Belfair Grade School and was a member of the last class bused to Port Orchard to attend South Kitsap High School.

"It was quite a change from being in a class of 24 to 28 kids," she said.

At South Kitsap High, she worked on the yearbook staff, and was briefly a member of Future Homemakers of America. After graduating in 1961, Maddux enrolled at the University of Washington as a double major in zoology and English. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English, and then earned her teaching certificate.

Maddux taught English and journalism at Weatherwax High School in Aberdeen for two years, and then took a year off.

"I thought I'd write the 'Great American Novel,'" she said. "That didn't work out." She then went to Pacific Lutheran University for a year.

Maddux joined the staff at Annie Wright School in Tacoma, where she taught English. Her



Maddux is the author of several books. *Courtesy photo*

first class had 13 students.

"That was glorious," she said. "It was absolute bliss after public schools ... an ideal teaching situation."

The summer before starting her new job, her mother's next-door

see **MADDUX**, page A-18

## PUD 1 thief, 66, sentenced

*Woman stole more than \$10K from utility*

By Michael Heinbach  
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After Cynthia Jeanne Carow struggled to find words when asked if she wished to speak before Judge Amber Finlay handed down the 66-year-old Shelton woman's sentence for first-degree theft, Finlay asked Carow a simple question Monday morning in Mason County Superior Court.



Carow

"Why did this happen?" Finlay asked Carow, who last month pleaded guilty to using her position as network administrator at Mason County PUD 1 to misappropriate more than \$10,000 in company funds to her benefit between 2007 and 2016.

see **PUD**, page A-24

## Fire district looks into alleged racist remarks, more

By Dana Kampa  
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A pen rapidly clicked away from the Mason County Fire District 6 commissioners' table as they heard allegations of racism and staff misconduct from community members.

The community was faced with the uncomfortable realities of addressing the complaints in a small district during a meeting Tuesday at the Union fire hall.

The meeting's agenda was created by fire district chief Clint Volk — who also acts as the district's secretary — and contained complaints from two former volunteer firefighters against Volk. One of those complaints says Volk used

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## INSIDE TODAY

City implements new way to rate roads

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North Mason students set leadership standards

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Highclimbers boys hoops coach steps down

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**Holy Week Worship**

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# Investigation: Board twice goes into executive session

*continued from page A-1*

racist language during a training session.

Volk removed one proverbial hat and donned another throughout the meeting, as commissioners tackled difficult decisions as to what parts of the allegations should or should not be made public. About 30 residents were on hand during the meeting, many of whom voiced concerns during the official business proceedings.

Fire commissioners went into closed-door executive sessions twice — they could have opted to go a third time — to evaluate the complaints.

The first executive session addressed a complaint by Aaron Pufal against Volk. Pufal was a member of the Mason County Fire Academy, until he was recently suspended.

In his complaint dated March 28, Pufal alleged that Volk used racist phrases as a way for trainees to remember the meaning behind certain symbols for fighting fires.

“Recently, Chief Volk was conducting a lecture on the appropriate extinguishing agent for use on different classifications of fires,” the complaint reads. “During this lecture, Chief Volk explained that we could easily remember the color black is used in the hexagon symbol for ‘K’ because the ‘KKK, kills blacks.’ ... injecting the Ku Klux Klan into the lexicon of firefighters is abhorrent.”

The complaint alleges this wasn’t the only incident. Pufal wrote that Volk similarly equated the “D” class extinguishing agent’s star with the wartime use of the yellow star of David to identify Jews in Nazi Germany.

Pufal expressed frustration with finding ways to follow up on the complaint, seeking a response from commissioners in Mason County Fire Districts 18 and 6, the Mason County Fire Marshals Office in Shelton, the Washington State Patrol, the Mason County Fire Academy and the Board of Mason County Commissioners.

During the meeting, Fire District 6 commissioners Rich Heinrich, Tim Whitman and Mike Sheetz elected to enter executive session with Volk in the room.

They cited a section of Washington’s open records law to justify the private meetings, “to receive and evaluate complaints or charges brought against a public officer or employee. However, upon the request of such officer or employee, a public hearing or a meeting open to the public shall be conducted upon such complaint or charge.”

That qualification caused some dispute about when issues need to be made public or private.

“As the accused, I do not want it in open session,” Volk said regarding Pufal’s complaint. “It could impede an investigation that is currently ongoing.”

Mason County Fire District 18 is conducting a formal, external and independent investigation by personnel hired by the Washington State Fire Chiefs Association.

Attorney John Bonin questioned if it was a conflict of interest to have Volk present in the commissioners’ private meeting concerning potential disciplinary action toward himself, regardless of whether he was acting as board secretary, district chief or an employee accused of misconduct. The commissioners included a third party and proceeded with the executive session.

Volk reminded attendees early in the meeting that commissioners are

not allowed to speak with one another about fire district business prior to a public meeting, and thus must make decisions on a case-by-case basis of when to hold an executive session or withhold documents.

“This is the first time they’re seeing all of this collectively,” Volk said of the complaints. “If it was emailed to them individually, they could read it. But they cannot interact amongst each other until they come to this meeting today. This is the start of them seeing together what Mr. Bonin had concerns about. The complaint against myself from Mr. Pufal, those records are currently under investigation, and we’re not releasing those, with the exemption of there’s a current investigation going on.”

After returning from executive session, Heinrich said the board had reviewed Pufal’s complaint.

“We, at this time, are satisfied District 18 is doing an investigation into the accusations,” Heinrich said. “We will defer to the results of that investigation.”

Pufal noted for the record that he believed the investigation with Fire District 18 and his complaint against Volk to be separate issues.

Volk said he would participate in an investigative interview the following day and later face any consequences.

“What comes from that, I will be held accountable to, period,” Volk said. “That’s who I am as a person and a member of the fire district. I am accountable to my actions.”

## Weighing transparency and privacy

A second complaint stemmed from former volunteer firefighter Jeff Brittig’s termination from the district.

A certified letter sent April 8 from Bonin Law office — made public at the meeting — alleges Brittig “has been discriminated against, retaliated against and terminated without good faith compliance with (Fire District 6’s) procedures.”

The letter claims Brittig was denied the right to present information on money mismanagement, specifically related to the district’s nonprofit organization alleged by Brittig to have used funds to buy “large amounts of liquor for parties” that then reportedly ended up in a private residence.

Brittig also claimed his request for a small item of special equipment for his disability was ignored, according to the letter.

Further, the letter states “Mr. Brittig, on information and belief, is not alone in suffering retaliation, discrimination and intimidation for making efforts to engage in protected activities.”

Minutes from the March 19 fire district board meeting indicated Volk briefed commissioners about his decision to terminate Brittig for “gross insubordination.”

“If Mr. Brittig had not appealed (yet), and the decision to terminate him is final, I have absolutely no understanding as to why Mr. Brittig is on the agenda today,” Bonin said at the meeting’s outset.

Volk said earlier that day he received verbal confirmation from Brittig’s legal representation, Bonin, that the firefighter requested an appeal, and was awaiting written confirmation.

As Volk and the board discussed if it would be appropriate to enter executive session to discuss Brittig’s

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see **INVESTIGATION**, page A-15



A stack of publicly requested records teeters on the edge of the desk where Mason County Fire District 6 office manager Heather Fredrickson, left, and Chief Clint Volk listen to allegations of misconduct during a Tuesday meeting at the Union fire district headquarters. Journal photos by Dana Kampa

# Investigation: District will look into the allegations

*continued from page A-14*

complaint, attendees questioned why one matter would be public when the other wasn't.

"It makes it a little odd as the secretary, but as the employee side of the complaint, I am requesting that this matter be made public per RCW 42.30.110(1)(f)," Volk said.

Bonin objected to Volk's decision to make the matter public, considering it concerned private employment issues, while Volk urged the board to favor open meeting laws, given there was no pending litigation or investigation involved with Brittig's complaint.

Commissioners chose not to enter executive session based on the Brittig complaint, electing instead to table the topic until they consulted legal counsel.

Following the meeting, Bonin sent a letter to the district commissioners urging Volk's termination.

Bonin particularly took issue with how certain information was released, saying "the unilateral decision to openly publish private information related to Mr. Brittig and issues like disabilities while he sought to obtain due process has put severe trauma on my client. He has been rendered medically unable to participate in any appeal process and is seeking counseling to help him overcome the abuse of process, retaliation, discrimination and public humiliation that he has suffered."

District commissioners considered a third executive session during the meeting, also involving Brittig.

"We have one (executive session) coming up, Mr. Brittig making a complaint against Heather Fredrickson," Volk said. "He did not send that to the board. And that is being treated in another fashion also. There is no deception here, purely the process of running it through the board."

The final executive session referred to a complaint by Brittig toward Heather Fredrickson, district office manager.

After returning from the private meeting with commissioners, Fredrickson said she no longer would interact directly with Brittig to fulfill public records requests out of concern for her safety, leaving secretary/public records officer Volk as the point of contact to handle the complaint involving chief Volk.

On the legislative end of the meeting, commissioners voted in favor of an updated resolution No. 252 that confirms the fire district is not required to maintain a public records index because it would be too logistically difficult to maintain.

They also reviewed changes to the district's disciplinary policy, limiting the timeframe for a person to appeal his or her termination to within 60 days of being let go, and records management. The policy establishes a new proposed cost structure for public records requests, based on increased demand through the years. The commissioners will vote on the resolutions at the earliest at the May meeting. The board meets at 10 a.m. the third Tuesday of the month at 50 E. Seattle St., Union.



Mason County Fire District 6 Chief Clint Volk intends to cooperate with investigations of alleged misconduct.



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**Journal**