



Basketball teams to play in district games

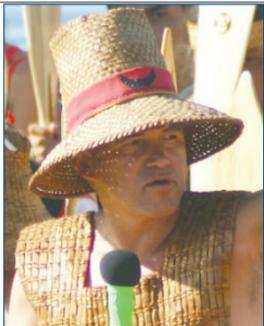
YourFidalgo **B1**

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BUILDING ON HISTORY



MONIQUE MERRILL / ANACORTES AMERICAN

Jim Aggergaard shows volunteer Glen Piper the process for constructing new picnic tables for the Rosario Beach shelter at Deception Pass State Park. The goal is to have 18 done by April 1.

Group creates tables from fallen trees

BY MONIQUE MERRILL
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If a tree falls in Deception Pass State Park and no one is around to hear it, will it be made into a picnic table?

The answer, according to Deception Pass State Park Manager Jason Armstrong, is maybe.

Proof is inside of the Cranberry Lake shelter at the park, where long beams of Douglas Fir, sanded, epoxyed and affixed with bench seating, fill the space. Only the sharpest-eyed parkgoer might recognize this wood from the old growth tree that used to stand tall next to campsites in the Forest Loop of the park, but Armstrong and his crew know.

Armstrong has been overseeing a new project to replace and update some of the picnic tables within the park, and sometimes this means using wood directly from the park.

"It really comes down to what wood produces itself for the park," Armstrong said.



MONIQUE MERRILL / ANACORTES AMERICAN

An artisan-made picnic table sits safely inside the dry shelter at Rosario beach. A thin strip of dark cherry wood separates the top three pieces. Volunteers are making outdoor tables modeled after this design.

When a tree falls in the park, Armstrong and staff determine if it can be repurposed in the park. Sometimes that means harvesting it for firewood; sometimes it means making a 16-foot long table.

"Everything that comes

down that's reachable we try to repurpose," Armstrong said. Anything out of reach is left to decompose in the park and provide nutrients back into the forest floor.

As the park prepares for the busy spring and

summer season, the tables in and out of the park shelters are slowly being replaced with updated versions. They are still in the style of the Civilian Conservation Corps members

See **Tables**, page A7

City, pool ponder \$36.8 million wish list

BY MONIQUE MERRILL
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A steering group is envisioning a combined community and aquatic center that could include two pools, a fitness area, a full-size gym, a commercial kitchen, child care area, flex space, classrooms for the Boys and Girls Club and offices for pool staff and the Anacortes Parks and Recreation Department.

A first draft "wish list" was presented last week with features that could be included in a combined center run by both the City of Anacortes and the Fidalgo Pool and Recreation District.

The pool district has been actively working toward a replacement facility, and the city has made clear its goal to pursue a community center. The two governing bodies are considering the possibility of combining their goals into one.

City staff, including Mayor Laurie Gere and City Council members, met with Fidalgo Pool commissioners Thursday, Feb. 6, to discuss moving forward on pursuing a shared center at the current Fidalgo Pool and Fitness Center site.

Pool district Commissioner Jeremy McNett went over a list he drafted of rooms and spaces both parties identified as wanting the facility to have, which included estimated square footage for each area.

The draft calls for a 73,500-square-foot facility on two levels. About a quarter of that space would be dedicated to the aquatic center, with two pools, but the Fidalgo Pool and Fitness Center would also be responsible for some of the nonaquatic spaces.

Assuming the price per square foot is around \$500, as it was for the recently built Mount Vernon YMCA, the price for this early draft would be roughly \$36.8 million, according to McNett. That number could grow due to the higher price of building aquatic

See **Pool**, page A6

City taking steps to shore up IT security

BY RICHARD WALKER
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Government IT systems and data are attractive targets for cyber criminals, so the City of Anacortes is taking steps to make sure its systems are secure from cyberattack.

At the city's request, internet technology experts from the State Auditor's Office audited the city's IT systems, completing the audit in October.

Results were shared with the city but are not being released to the public, according to auditors, because "the public distribution of tests performed and test results could increase the risk to the City."

Michael Hjermsstad, assistant audit manager of the State Auditor's Office, reviewed the audit Monday with the City Council. Much of what he shared is in the audit report:

See **IT**, page A7

Suspects in Jan. 21 gas station robbery arrested

BY RICHARD WALKER
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Two men are charged with first-degree robbery and auto theft in connection with the Jan. 21 robbery of the Shell Gas Station and Food Mart at 13th Street and Commercial Avenue.

Charged are Robert Roland Cool Jr., 51, and Kenneth Michael Lohman, 30, according to charging documents. Both have a Federal Way address, according to charging documents and database searches, though one of the men has a home in Olga, on Orcas Island, where evidence was report-

edly found after investigators obtained a search warrant.

Lohman was still in custody Tuesday in the Skagit County jail; bail is set at \$100,000. Cool posted bail.

Anacortes police arrested the two without incident late Jan. 29 in a vehicle at South March Point Road and Casino Drive.

Anacortes Police Capt. Dave Floyd said the information about the arrests, made public eight days after the robbery, was not disclosed earlier because the house on Olga had not been searched yet, and investigators didn't want to jeopardize evidence. Floyd said it wasn't deter-

mined as of Tuesday who did what in the auto theft and robbery. Police did not release information about how the men were connected, though Cool's charging document states he is also known as Robert Roland Lohman.

Here's what the charging documents state:

Each is charged with stealing a 1993 Honda Civic "on or about Jan. 21" and a 1992 Mazda pickup the morning of Jan. 21 in Anacortes.

About 9:30 a.m. Jan. 21, officers responded to a report of an armed robbery at the Shell Gas Station and

Food Mart. The manager reported that a tall, thin male wearing a black mask and dark clothing displayed what appeared to be a handgun and demanded money from the cash register. (Charging documents describe Cool as 5 feet 9 inches and 175 pounds, and Lohman as 6 feet 2 inches and 160 pounds.) The robber left with an undetermined amount of cash, fleeing alone in the pickup.

"A partial license plate number was provided and based on that information and the vehicle description,

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Tables

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who first crafted the park's tables and shelters in 1930s, but with a few modernized modifications.

"(The CCC) would hand-notch this stuff. Instead of using lag bolts, they used mortise and tenon joinery," Armstrong said. Either way, the result is a seamless, gapless tabletop.

The Cranberry Lake shelter houses the largest tables. Earlier this year, park maintenance staff used wood from a Douglas Fir estimated to be about 250 years old to make the tables. A crew of eight moved the pieces from the shop to a shelter to assemble the 1,300-pound table.

That was just the start. Armstrong set a goal of building 18 new tables by April 1 to replace the outdoor tables at the Rosario Beach shelter. These are a fraction of the size of the ones in the Cranberry Lake shelter, so he has a crew of staff and volunteers up for the job. Each Wednesday, five volunteers arrive at the park maintenance shop to assemble new picnic tables for Rosario Beach, a popular summertime wedding venue.

"We're trying to make sure people have a good experience," Armstrong said.

Fallen park trees are not the source for the outdoor tables, which endure wet Washington weather all year. The wood for those is purchased lumber, but the style is the same.

When Armstrong began this process, a local artisan reached out to offer help in creating new tables. Using design elements from the



MONIQUE MERRILL / ANACORTES AMERICAN

Above: These 16-foot long tables weigh around 1,300 pounds. Each piece had to be brought to the shelter and assembled inside of it because they were too bulky to move in one piece. These tables reflect the original design of tables in the park from the Civilian Conservation Corps era. Below: From 1-3 p.m. every Wednesday until April, a group of volunteers will join park staff to assemble new tables for a popular wedding destination within the park.



"three-C era," the artisan created 10 tables that fill the inside of the Rosario Beach shelter. Since the tables are inside, they don't require the usual moisture gap between the three top board pieces, so the artist ran a small strip of dark cherry wood to mimic the usual gap.

Now, volunteers and staff are taking the design and applying it to outdoor tables, which means including a real gap between planks instead of cherry wood.

The volunteers are a mixture of park supporters. Some are involved in the Deception Pass Park

Foundation, and some just want to give back to the park. All are becoming handy with a hand drill.

"I love the parks," volunteer Glen Piper said.

Ranger Jim Aggergaard is in charge of coordinating the 18-table project. He set up two rooms for the operation. In one, volunteers use pre-cut lumber to assemble the legs of a table, then bring that to other room where the table itself is assembled and screwed together. From there, the strongest of the bunch are tasked with moving the 400 to 540 pound tables to their destination.

The tables currently at Rosario Beach will be moved to North Beach, where Armstrong estimates they'll get another five years of use until the elements reclaim them.

IT

Continued from page A1

Auditors assessed the city's IT security policies, procedures and practices "against selected leading practices in this area to identify any improvements that could make them stronger."

Auditors gave city management the test results, then conducted selected follow-up testing "to determine if they had successfully mitigated weaknesses we identified."

According to the report: "We found that, while the City's IT policies and practices partially align with industry leading practices, there are areas where improvements can be made. The City of Anacortes has already addressed significant issues we identified, and is continuing to make improvements."

The report recommended the city "continue remediating identified gaps."

According to the State Auditor's Office, municipal concerns about the potential for cyberattacks are well founded.

Since 2016, six government organizations in Washington state have reported data breaches to the state attorney general. Multiple state and local governments have reported cyber-related incidents, including frauds, to the state auditor.

Since 2017, the United Kingdom's National Health Service, the cities of Atlanta and Baltimore, Garfield County in Utah, and 22 municipalities in Texas have been attacked with ransomware "that crippled or disrupted their operations," accord-

Online

Read the city's IT audit security report at <https://portal.sao.wa.gov/ReportSearch/Home/ViewReportFile?arn=1025588&isFinding=false&sp=false>.

ing to the State Auditor's Office.

Attacked governments are often placed in the difficult position of either failing to deliver core services or paying an expensive ransom to the attackers, the auditor said.

Hjermstad said municipalities have a support network on their side, but should be careful how they react to a hack.

"We've heard stories of people who have tried to track (hackers) down by hacking back," Hjermstad said. "That is not the job of individuals or local government. It's the job of the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI."

Those agencies, as well as the state Attorney General's Office, have investigative arms that can help, he said.

He recommended cities have a response plan so employees know what to do after a hack. For example, don't turn a hacked computer off; in doing so, evidence could be lost that authorities could use "to track back to the bad actor and hopefully make an arrest."

Hjermstad's advice: "Leave your computer running but isolate it from the network."

City Council members Matt Miller and Ryan Walters recommended the city have regular performance audits; Walters recommended the city explore external cybersecurity monitoring.

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