

**Top rebounder**

MLCA grad Anna Yarbro leads NWAC in total rebounds



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\$1

**Salazar's departure followed conflict**By EMRY DINMAN  
Staff Writer

**MOSES LAKE** — Before resigning from his position as Moses Lake's human resources director, Carlos Salazar raised concerns about whether top officials had given raises to themselves and favored departments.

According to letters between Salazar, his attorney and city officials, Salazar had concerns that then-Interim City Manager Kevin Fuhr withheld documents from city council members in order to secure pay raises for himself and favored departments. Salazar was placed on leave shortly thereafter due in part to his conduct while raising those concerns.

For his part, Fuhr said that the salary adjustments were long-needed, across the board and based on sound reasoning. For years, wages for city classified staff hadn't kept up with

See SALAZAR, A3

**Taste of spring this weekend**Pineapple Express brought rain  
By CHERYL SCHWEIZER  
Staff Writer

**MOSES LAKE** — It looks like it could get pretty warm out there this weekend. Really warm for the last day of January.

The National Weather Service is forecasting high temperatures in the mid-50s for Friday and Saturday. "There's a chance we could have some 60s as well," said Steve Bodnar, meteorologist with the NWS in Spokane.

So, maybe — is there a chance — could it be an early spring?

Nope. "Then a cold front comes in," he said.

"It's not going to last very long. We'll be back to normal temperatures by Monday."

Monday's high is supposed to be 45 degrees, and temperatures are supposed to be at or below seasonal norms for the

See WEATHER, A2

Steve Pfeifer of Soap Lake takes joy in turning cigar boxes into guitars.  
Charles H. Featherstone/Columbia Basin Herald



Local man finds artistic expression in making guitars

**SOAP LAKE** — "Nothing's better than the sound of an acoustic guitar with your fingers sliding across the strings."

So says Steve Pfeifer as he slowly plays a little muddy

Delta blues on the

simple, three-

stranded guitar

in his hands.

His right hand picks while his left hand glides over the neck, a metal slide gliding across the fretboard.

But the one Pfeifer

is playing is not an

acoustic instrument, and it's plugged into a small amplifier sitting nearby. The little guitar growls

and howls as he plays, sounding a little like a swamp bottom on a muggy summer afternoon in Mississippi sometime before the middle of the last century.

Only Pfeifer just built both the guitar and the amplifier. He makes the guitars from wooden cigar boxes and uses old yardsticks as the fretboards and decorates the headstock with a cutting from an old license plate.

And he builds the amplifiers from just about anything he has at hand — old radios, clocks, wooden boxes, anything.

Along with painting, it's what he does now that he's retired from

See GUITARS, A4



Because of the wide variety of materials he uses, every one of Steve Pfeifer's instruments is unique.

Charles H. Featherstone/Columbia Basin Herald

**Moses Lake School Board OKs contract extension**By CHARLES H. FEATHERSTONE  
Staff Writer

**MOSES LAKE** — The Moses Lake School Board voted Thursday to extend Superintendent Josh Meek's contract for one year, through the end of the 2022 school year.

"I'd like to state the board's appreciation for Josh and all

the work he has done and will continue to do," said board President Elliott Goodrich during a regular meeting Thursday night.

Under the terms of the contract, which was set to expire on July 1, 2021, Meek is paid \$198,993 per year plus performance pay of as much as \$25,000 for the 2019-2020 school year.

As of press time, the

extended contract was not available for review.

In the previous contract, the superintendent's performance pay is based on a formula derived from goals set by both the board and the superintendent at the start of the school year. Any bonus must be approved by the school board the following July.

However, newly elected board member Bryce

McPartland did not vote for extension, saying he could not vote "for the contract as written."

In an email to the Columbia Basin Herald after the meeting, McPartland said that his "no" vote was not "against Dr. Meek or his performance."

"I voted against the contract," McPartland explained. "The contract ought to be transparent, so that people

could understand exactly what was being incentivized."

"We incentivize our priorities. I felt the contract should explicitly reflect what has been prioritized by district leadership, either within the body of the contract or in an addendum," he wrote.

Board members also out-

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# Nation

## Impeachment gives Romney a chance to assert Senate clout

By LAURIE KELLMAN  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It's Mitt Romney's big moment, again.

The 2012 Republican presidential nominee has for a year been a freshman senator from Utah. He's sitting in judgment of the president he has called unfit for office. And he's defending President Donald Trump by calling for one witness in particular, former national security adviser John Bolton, as the Senate weighs the impeachment allegations against the nation's 45th president.

The trial is a chance for Romney to wield influence in the Senate as an independent GOP voice — or become one of the Republicans standing by the president when it's time to be counted. For now, the Utah senator has been clear about wanting more than the manuscript of Bolton's book, which alleges that Trump directly linked the release of military aid to Ukraine's willingness to investigate Democrats.

"I'd rather hear from Mr. Bolton," Romney, 72, told reporters Tuesday.

He may yet get the chance. On Tuesday night, Senate Majority Leader Mitch

McConnell told Republicans in a closed session that they lacked the 51 votes to block the 100-member Senate from calling any witnesses. A motion to call them would pass if Romney and at least three other Republicans voted with all Democrats.

It's far from clear whether Bolton or other witnesses end up testifying before the Senate, or whether Romney, in the end, votes with other Republicans to acquit Trump. Right now, Romney is focused on witnesses, not party, said Jason Perry, director of the Hinckley Institute of Politics at the University of Utah.

"I don't believe that he believes he has broken ranks with the party," Perry said. "I believe he thinks he is helping the party, because he believes he is fulfilling the constitutional role of being an unbiased juror."

The vote math is one of the factors that makes impeachment a rich opportunity for Romney to elevate his status as a rare independent voice in the Trump-dominated Republican Party. Another is the fact that Romney is as safe as a Republican can be under the payback-loving president. He isn't up for reelection for nearly five years.

Utah is polarized over

Trump, but not between Republicans and Democrats. Even as "Never Trumpers" have faded nationally, a strong current of discomfort with the president remains in polite, immigrant-welcoming Utah.

Also, Romney has survived Trump's attacks, some profane, before. Trump used crude terms to describe Romney's appeal for an endorsement in 2012. In the heat of the 2016 GOP presidential primary, Romney delivered a speech in which he said Trump "lacks the temperament to be president," is a "fraud" and, on an assortment of issues, "very, very not smart."

## GUITARS

from A1

35 years as a lineman for Grant County Public Utility District.

"I saw one, probably on the internet, and I decided I wanted one," he said. "Instead of buying it, I decided to build it."

He makes anywhere from 30 to 40 of these little guitars every year, "depending on how distracted I am," and sells them for somewhere between \$60 and \$100 each.

The cigar box Pfeifer uses acts as a resonator — something to amplify the sound. He can build acoustic instruments, but mostly he makes electric ones, with simple guitar pickups right below the strings.

"They don't have a formal name," he said of these three-stringed guitars. "If you go way back to the South, they were originally called a Diddley Bow. The slaves created them with just about anything they could find."

"A piece of wood and a nail, a piece of barbed wire, anything that could make music," he said.

Although he worked for the PUD, the 62-year-



The necks of Steve Pfeifer's "Diddley Bows" are made from yardsticks, and the headstocks are cut from old license plates.

old Pfeifer said he has always had an artistic disposition. He studied art at Eastern Washington University in the mid-1970s for two years after graduating from Ephrata High School. Then "life, family, and everything else"

got in the way, and he had to set his interests and hobbies aside for a while.

"It was a good job, a good place to work, but it's hard work, and dangerous. I went to the hospital a few times, but I survived with all my

fingers and toes intact," he said.

Pfeifer explained that while he only fell off power poles a couple of times when he was young, the greatest danger was flash burns from high voltage electricity. "It's something I

chose to do. Why, I don't know," he said.

Pfeifer said his artistic interests reasserted themselves after he retired three years ago and when his daughter Sarah was diagnosed with cancer.

"She inspired me to

keep going, she really pushed me to do it," he said. "We lost her in 2018, so I'm doing all I can to keep her memory alive."

Pfeifer said it takes him about seven hours to make a guitar or an amplifier. He starts measuring and cutting wood, and it takes a "lot of figuring" to make sure everything comes out right.

"You just have to use good wood to start with, good solid wood," he said.

Pfeifer prefers maple, but he usually uses pine since it's cheaper and he wants to keep his Diddley Bows as affordable as possible. Just this month, he completed construction on a workshop out behind his home on a ridge east of Soap Lake, where he builds and paints and where "everything is for sale."

Including all the little guitars hanging on the wall.

"I liked 'em, so I started making them," he said as he strummed a bluesy dirge. "As long as people keep buying them, I'll keep making them."

Charles H. Featherstone can be reached at [cfeatherstone@columbiabasinherald.com](mailto:cfeatherstone@columbiabasinherald.com).

## SCHOOL

from A1

lined the things they would like to bring to the legislature during the current session, which started two weeks ago.

Board members agreed that more local control

over spending and discipline were important, as well as a reduction of the number of things the state mandates schools do but doesn't pay for. In particular, Goodrich said he would like to see the legislature impose a statewide salary schedule for teachers and administrators, say-

ing that while the state did give more money to the schools with the McCleary Fix several years ago, it abolished the statewide salary schedule for teachers, and some districts significantly raised teacher pay without providing enough for teacher benefits.

"If they require that we do it, they should pay for it," Goodrich said.

However, Goodrich also said the matter is not merely one of more money, and he does not want to see the local property levy caps imposed under the McCleary Fix removed.

As part of the legislative fix to ensure

more funding for schools statewide, the legislature raised the statewide property tax levy for schools and imposed a second levy as well. In return, the state initially capped local levies at \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value, though the cap has been raised to \$2.50 and there is talk of abolishing it completely.

"I'm opposed to the elimination of levy caps," Goodrich said. "We got a bunch more money, raised everyone's salaries, and we need to be accountable for the choices we make. It doesn't always mean taking more from citizens."

Charles H. Featherstone can be reached at [cfeatherstone@columbiabasinherald.com](mailto:cfeatherstone@columbiabasinherald.com).

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Charles H. Featherstone/Columbia Basin Herald  
Moses Lake School Board members Susan Freeman, Shannon Hintz and Elliott Goodrich talking before the start of Thursday's meeting.

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