

The NEWPORT MINER

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Another hearing set on comp plan

BY DON GRONNING

OF THE MINER

NEWPORT — Following a complaint that oral comments on a proposed amendments to the county's comprehensive plan were limited at the Planning Commission's Jan. 8 hearing, Pend Oreille County commissioners have set another hearing date.

Public comments will be heard Wednesday, May 22, at Newport High School, from 6-9 p.m.

Commissioners will also accept written comments. Comments may be sent to Greg Snow, Director of Community Development, 418 South Scott Ave./P.O. Box 5066, Newport WA, or emailed to gsnow@pendoreille.org, prior to the public hearing.

The planning commission has made their recommendations on the four comprehensive plan

SEE COMP PLAN, 2A



MINER PHOTO/DON GRONNING

Big turnout for plant sale

Gardeners descended on Stratton Elementary School for the 21st annual WSU/Pend Oreille County Master Gardener Plant Sale Saturday, April 27. Proceeds from the sale are used to fund a long list of Master Gardener educational projects. Here Molly Phillips and Katherine Napier of Newport check out some raspberries. It was their first time at the plant sale.

Legislature adjourns on time with new budget, new spending

BY EMMA EPPERLY

WNPA OLYMPIA NEWS BUREAU

OLYMPIA — The Washington State Legislature adjourned minutes before its midnight deadline on April 28, ending its 105-

day session on time for the first time since 2009.

Before the \$52.4 billion biennium operating budget saw final passage, lawmakers worked out a deal that includes a school levy lid lift.

"This truly has been an epic legislative session of unprecedented scope and dimension of achievements for the people in the state of Washington."

SEE LEGISLATURE, 14A

Catching up on maintenance

BY CANEEL JOHNSON

OF THE MINER

NEWPORT — Pend Oreille County is making a plan to catch up on their maintenance, of roads, of fairgrounds and of buildings. The county has had to defer maintenance on a number of things after tax revenues fell in the Great Recession in 2008.

Actually, the county's problems with roads started before that. Since 2004 the county has had to shift taxing ability from the roads fund to

the general fund 12 years to balance the county budget. This year the county was able to avoid a road levy shift, but the damage has been done.

Now the county is facing maintenance issues because of the deferral of care, especially to the roads and Pend Oreille County Fairgrounds. County commissioner Karen Skoog testifying to the House of Environment and Energy committee in Olympia on another matter Wednesday, April 25, talked about the state

SEE MAINTENANCE, 2A

New priest finds home in Priest River

BY SOPHIA ALDOUS
OF THE MINER

nald Nwauzor of Priest River.

That is the attitude Nwauzor, 69, tries to bring to his spiritual practice as the new priest at St. Blanche's Catholic Church in Priest River. Having relocated to the Pend Oreille River Valley in January from St. Mark's

in Boise, Nwauzor is settling into his new community.

"I'm not much of a fisher, but it looks like I will have to become one," he says of recreating on the Pend Oreille River.

Nwauzor was born in

SEE PRIEST, 2A



MINER PHOTO/DON GRONNING

Laundromat sold

Last week people who went to wash laundry at the Newport Laundry found the doors closed and a sign advising people to use Priest River Cleaners. The building was sold to NEW Health Programs Association, which intends to build a dental clinic for Medicaid patients on the property. The equipment from the laundromat is for sale.

the 2019 season starting Saturday, May 4 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the parking lot of the Pend Oreille Playhouse at 236 S. Union Ave. Customers are encouraged to park in the parking lot directly across the street from the playhouse.

The Pend Oreille Union 4-H Club will be holding a plant sale at the farmers market May 4 and May 11. All proceeds go toward the club.

Theft of street signs increasing

NEWPORT — The Pend Oreille County Sheriff Office is asking for help from the community to find out who is stealing road signs. Since the end of March, the Pend Oreille County Road Department has experienced 11

road sign thefts from various locations in the south part of the county. Most of them were street names but there were also stop signs stolen.

"This is unusual, occasionally one sign is stolen," Sheriff Glenn Blakeslee said. "And, yes it is a crime."

The perpetrator can be charged with theft in the third degree or possession of stolen property in the third degree. Both charges are a gross misdemeanors and people can be sentenced to up to 364 days in jail or fined up to \$5,000.

The signs cost between \$100-200 each. The theft of a stop sign endangers the public.

The Sheriff Office is asking the public watch for any suspicious activity near intersections and to call 911 to report that activity.

BRIEFLY

Tri County Health meeting May 8

CUSICK — The regular meeting of the Board of Health of Northeast Tri County Health District will be at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, May 8. The meeting will be held at the Camas Center located at 1821 N. LeClerc Rd. in Cusick. The meeting is open to the public. Public input is welcome.

People needing special accommodations should contact Kelly LeCaire at Northeast Tri County Health District at 509-684-2262 by Monday, May 6.

Newport Farmers Market open for the season

NEWPORT — The Newport Farmers Market is back for

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LETTERS POLICY

We welcome letters to the editor. Letters should be typed and submitted to The Miner and Gem State Miner office no later than 5 p.m. Friday for publication the following Wednesday. No letter will be published unless it is signed by at least one individual, even if the letter represents the view of a group. The letter must include a telephone number and address for confirmation of authenticity.

Letters should be no longer than 300 words. The Miner reserves the right to edit to conform to our publication style, policy and libel laws. Political letters will not be published the last issue prior to an election. Letters will be printed as space allows.

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PRIEST: Brother convinced him to try seminary school

FROM PAGE 1A

Aba, Abia, a city and state in Nigeria. His parents, Mary and Joseph, raised Nwauzor and his nine siblings in a small, but peaceful household.

"I honestly can't remember us fighting at all," he says. "For so many of us, we got along well."

From his youth, he was fascinated by the ritual and religion of the Catholic Church, though neither of his parents were Christians. "From my young days I was evangelized by the Irish priests," Nwauzor says. "Saint Patrick is the patron saint of Nigeria, so they influenced me as a youth." He remembers a priest named Father Crowley, who was a role model for Nwauzor growing up.

"He was a very humble man and he loved us so much," Nwauzor says. "You felt his compassion for all beings."

When Nwauzor was around 14-years-old, his older brother convinced him to try seminary school in the Abia diocese. He says that until then, he didn't understand what it means to enter a priest,

but after only a few classes he was hooked.

"I become serious my vocation; I think I was touched," Nwauzor says.

His father and mother had different reactions to Nwauzor's decisions. While Joseph was supportive of his son's decision, Mary balked, afraid that her son would devote himself entirely to theology and she would never see him. "I think she had this image of me being a cloistered monk who never interacted with the outside world, so I wouldn't see my family," Nwauzor says, smiling. "Once she realized that wasn't the case, she began to enjoy my enthusiasm for it. Especially after I became a deacon in the church."

Both Mary and Joseph eventually converted to Catholicism, but tragedy wasn't far off. Four years to the day after Nwauzor was ordained as a priest, Mary died in a motorbike accident on her way to church on Easter Sunday.

"That was a heartache for all of us," Nwauzor says. "You can know that someone is in heaven with God and still miss them



"Jesus suffered and died for all of us," says Father Reginald Nwauzor, standing near the altar of St. Blanche's Catholic Church in Priest River. "Jews or gentiles, he did not discriminate with his love."

deeply."

In 1997 Nwauzor was sent by his bishop to study theology at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh for five years. He then applied to his dioceses to go to Las Vegas, where he lived for three years before applying to go to Idaho Falls in 2005. From there he has worked as a priest in Burley, Idaho, Blackfoot, Idaho and Pocatello, Idaho before going to Boise. Upon moving to Priest River,

Nwauzor replaced Father Peter Fernando of Sri Lanka, who returned to his home country.

"My responsibility is to serve my congregation, to bring them to Christ and preach love and forgiveness and bring people to god to pray with them," Nwauzor says. "I love my priesthood and the people I have met so far have been very gracious and welcoming to me. I do my best to follow in the footsteps of

Christ and the apostles, they didn't discriminate against anybody and they were inclusive. As the saying goes, 'The rain falls on everyone.' We will not agree on everything, but we can decide to disagree with one another and not hate." When he is not tending to his duties, Father Nwauzor enjoys soccer, tennis, traveling, going for walks and exploring the Pend Oreille River Valley.

MAINTENANCE: Estimate of cost for projects not yet known

FROM PAGE 1A

of the roads in the county.

"Of the roads that are paved we can only afford to maintain half of them," said Skoog. "That means we are literally talking about going to gravel."

Public works director Craig Jackson is trying to find ways to make the money the county has go as far as it can. One of the ways is by renting a rock crusher for \$60,400 instead of contracting the job.

The county spent \$50,000 in 2014, 2016 and 2017 for a company to crush rock from the gravel pit behind the District 1 maintenance building. The cost per cubic yard varied, but it was about \$6-10 a cubic yard, said Don Ramsey, county engineer. This year the county estimates that it will cost \$2-3 a cubic yard. The county will still spend the same amount of money to fix the roads but by renting the machine instead of contracting the work out the county will get more materials for the money.

The roads are not the only area that the county has fallen into disrepair. A risk assessment done by the public works department last week revealed much-needed repairs to the county fairgrounds in Cusick that need to be done before the fair this year and some that need to be done in the following years.

According to the assessment, about six of the poles that hold up the bleachers for the rodeo grounds are rotted and need to

be replaced before August.

"The repairs to the columns on the rodeo stands will be done before the fair," said Garth Hanson, fair board chairman.

The railings on the sides need to be raised to come up to code. The kitchen needs to have an electrical system put in place, overhead hazards need to be dealt with, and a column that is failing in the support system needs to be fixed.

In the future the handicapped accessible ramps need to be readjusted to adhere with Americans with Disabilities Act standards. Right now they are too steep.

The water, sewer and power system needs to be mapped out. The water lines feed the house next door. They house has its own meter, but a separate line for the house needs to be installed. The sewer system needs to be updated. The vendor spaces underneath the bleachers need to be assessed to find out the danger involved if there is a fire or if the structure collapses.

An estimate of how much these jobs are going to cost is not yet known.

The Pend Oreille County Fair Association board receives funds from the county general fund to put on the fair every year. The fair board has been setting aside funds to replace the main exhibition hall. There is \$44,606 available to help with the necessary repairs to the rodeo grandstands before the fair this year. The fair board received a \$7,000 grant from the Department of Agri-

culture to repair the bathrooms.

The fair board matched it with another \$7,000. The Kalispel Tribe donated \$12,500 to replace the cook stove, roofing, grill and counters to the kitchen.

The fair association is working with the county to remedy some of the policy discrepancies to be able to move from a 501(E)4 to 501(c)3 non profit status to be able to apply for grants to make even more repairs to the fair grounds.

The county is developing a plan for maintenance of county buildings. The county has not had a formal maintenance plan in the past. There were attempts to start one, but it was never put into an organized plan, Ramsey said. The county has been going on an "as needed" basis.

The county is creating a 10-year program to schedule time and budget money for the maintenance of all county buildings.

"If you don't have a plan and schedule you don't have anything," Jackson said. "Then we are just putting fires out."

There are 35 buildings throughout the county. James Batie, county facilities maintenance technician started keeping track of necessary repairs for buildings in Newport in 2013. He put together a maintenance log that outlines what has been done recently and what needs to be done in the future.

"It is hard to compile a list of things to do when all we can do is put out fires," Batie said.

According to the log this year

the Courthouse, Hall of Justice, Community Development annex, IT emergency building, Counseling Services building and 911 center all need water heaters that will cost \$800 each. The IT building needs a new heat pump that is expected to cost \$7,500. The Garden building where WSU Extension is housed needs a 16-20 ton heating and cooling unit that is estimated to cost \$80,000. The 911 center needs a 2-5 ton heating and cooling unit that is estimated to cost \$20,000. The maintenance shop needs to repair the floor heating (\$8,500), a new riding lawn mower (\$5,500) and a washer dryer (\$1,200).

"It is not so hard to put together a plan," Jackson said. "Finding dedicated funding is harder."

A maintenance program is required by the legislature, and doing maintenance on an as needed basis is not the best way to get things done.

"Crisis management is not the way to do it," Ramsey said.

The county is repairing the elevator in the courthouse this year, because it makes a horrible sound when going up and down. It is so old that the components to fix it are not made any more and can barely be found. A couple of years ago the HVAC unit in the courthouse had to be fixed because it made terrible sounds as it died as well.

Batie and Jackson are still compiling a list of the necessary repairs to the buildings in the rest of the county.

COMP PLAN: Commission recommended no blanket re-zone

FROM PAGE 1A

adverse impact on the environment. Snow made that determination after a review of the environmental checklist and other information on file with the county, according to a legal advertisement in this week's issue of The Miner.

The proposed amendment is controversial because land where a silicon smelter is proposed to be built near Newport is currently zoned Public Lands. Smelter opponents claim the smelter would harm the environment. A zone change is needed before the project can proceed.

The planning commission also recommended denying Responsible Growth * Northeast Washington's wide ranging amendment. The group sought a number of things, including

strengthening language in the comp plan to protect the environment, including placing industrial projects within the county's Urban Growth Area.

The planning commission advised approving a land zone change for seven acres that will be used for a commercial storage facility on Westside Road near Dalkena. The planning commission also gave their approval for a zone change from Public Land to R-5 on behalf of Lori Stime of Hayward, Calif.

The county commissioners will make a decision on all four amendments at the same time.

mission chairman Norris Boyd. Boyd said that the smelter wasn't under consideration, just the comp plan amendments.

Attorney Rick Eichstaedt and law clerk Emily Hazen, representing Responsible Growth * Northeast Washington, wrote in an Feb. 1 email that Boyd's actions "... inappropriately and unlawfully interfered with citizens' state and federal public participation rights."

They said it was also a violation of the Growth Management Act and the State Environmental Policy Act, as well as the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

"When the government intentionally opens a place for speech-related activities, such as the Cusick Community Cen-

ter, then the government may not exclude speech without justifying the exclusion with a compelling government interest," they wrote.

They noted that Boyd had allowed some people to testify about land uses that could occur if the amendment were approved and allowed two people to talk about the smelter.

"This leads to the inescapable conclusion that the Chair was silencing certain members because of their viewpoint on the topic of smelters," they wrote. "This is not a content neutral restriction on speech."

Snow said the commissioners planned to hold another hearing all along before deciding on the comp plan amendments.