



## Seahawks sports

- AHS swimmers place 2nd at state
- Basketball teams finish 4th at districts

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## LIVE TRAINING



RICHARD WALKER / ANACORTES AMERICAN

Anacortes Fire Lt. Chris Byer sprays water to keep a training fire at bay Saturday near Anacortes Airport. Firefighters trained in a house donated by the Port of Anacortes for the purpose, and then allowed the house and two outbuildings to burn to the ground.

## Firefighters get rare experience at exercise

BY RICHARD WALKER  
rwalker@goanacortes.com

The adjective most used by onlookers to describe the live-fire training exercise Saturday near Anacortes Airport was “cool,” as in “This is cool.”

But the event — the temperature from it, anyway — was anything but cool.

As flames roared and smoke billowed out of the barn loft, Anacortes Deputy Fire Chief Jack Kennedy estimated the temperature inside was 2,500 to 3,000 degrees — hot enough to melt aluminum, brass, bronze and steel. He said a structure fire doubles in size every 30-40 seconds, and it didn’t take long for the former farmhouse and outbuildings at 4015 Airport Road to be reduced to nothing but ash and memories.

A crowd of onlookers watched as local firefighters and training officers from Seattle



RICHARD WALKER / ANACORTES AMERICAN

Fire travels from the second floor to the first floor of the former Rockwell house on Airport Road during a firefighting exercise.

Fire Department burned down the house, barn and a solarium on property owned by the Port of Anacortes.

Such training is rare. This

was the first such training fire, in which a house is donated for fire training purposes, since 2011, Fire Chief Dave Oliveri said.

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“I can’t put a price tag on what this means to us. I’ve had some of my 20-plus firefighters tell me this is the best training they’ve had in their entire career,” he said as firefighters fought smaller training fires inside the house before getting the structure ready to burn to the ground.

The Anacortes department’s live-fire practice facility off Highway 20 and Reservation Road is essentially metal storage containers, Oliveri said.

“We can get a little fire going in them, but nothing else about that is the same as a residential or business structure,” he said of Saturday’s exercise. “By doing something like this in a house, it’s a controlled environment, but it’s a real environment, with real rooms, hallways, doorways, stairwells. ... It shows us what a building, what a house will do when it’s on fire.”

## Mayor talks about 2020

### Housing, fiber, budget top the list

BY MONIQUE MERRILL  
mmerrill@skagitpublishing.com

Housing options, the fiber network and a community-focused budget are among the city’s top priorities in 2020, Mayor Laurie Gere reported to a nearly packed house at the State of the City address Wednesday, Feb. 19.

Regarding housing, Gere touched on zoning changes made in 2019, particularly the R-4 residential zone and its height bonus statute, currently under moratorium.

The statute allows new apartment buildings to gain an additional floor, up to five floors, if 25% of units are under 600 square feet, the thought being they will be more affordable options.

“Right now we are having a conversation with the community regarding the R-4 height bonus moratorium,” Gere said.

She mentioned the lack of buildable land

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## Port’s plans for events center meet opposition

BY MONIQUE MERRILL  
mmerrill@skagitpublishing.com

The Port of Anacortes’ long-standing proposal to build a new events center at Cap Sante Marina is trying to move forward, but some residents and marina tenants are expressing their opposition.

In an almost three-hour City Council discussion Monday, Port Executive Director Dan Worra presented an update on the port’s plan to construct a new events center at the North and West Basin of Cap Sante Marina. The plan is for a south-facing center equipped with a catering kitchen, expanded event space with office rooms and public outdoor plazas. Variations of the

See *Port*, page A6

## Officials: Getting new AHS right was most important

BY BRIANA ALZOLA  
balzola@goanacortes.com

Standing behind glass windows, students watch cameras move, speaking into microphones and directing their on-air talent as the Anacortes digital media class presents its weekly live news segment “The Rock.”

The studio, much like its professional counterparts, has multiple cameras, lights and a backdrop that changes color with a few computer key strokes.

Down the hall, the choir and band classes

fill their new spaces, with enough room for students to sit comfortably with the added benefit of something teacher Carole Leander said she hasn’t seen during class in a long time — daylight.

Across the way sits the renovated Brodniak Hall, ready for the upcoming performance of the drama club’s musical “Band Geeks,” its first in two years.

The final phase of the Anacortes High Construction project, a wing that houses music, drama and career and technical



BRIANA ALZOLA / ANACORTES AMERICAN

Jonah Umayam and Lauren McClintock practice for their anchor spots on last week’s episode of “The Rock,” the Anacortes High School live news show. The show is broadcast from a new studio at AHS at 2:35 p.m. Wednesdays.

classes, is now open to students, almost a year later than planned.

“The kids are in there, and they are using these new spaces,” Superintendent Mark Wenzel said.

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