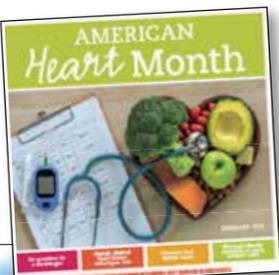




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Wednesday, February 3, 2021

# SEQUIM GAZETTE

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## Sequim mayor draws national spotlight

### Armocost deflects QAnon questions, criticism of city manager separation

BY MATTHEW NASH  
Sequim Gazette

Sequim mayor William Armocost's political beliefs have garnered the attention from multiple news outlets across the country, bringing the national media to Sequim to detail his thoughts on controversial QAnon conspiracy theories.

Questions about QAnon, city manager Charlie Bush's call to resign, and other topics were bound to be asked during KSQM 91.5 FM's latest Coffee with the Mayor with Armocost on Jan. 28. Armocost countered some questions to say he's never publicly supported QAnon, and that

he wears a skull pin to support law enforcement.

When asked on his views on the national election, he said whether in a small town's election or on the national stage, "once the election is final that is now my president and vice-president.

"(But) we're here to talk about Sequim, not the national scene," he said.

However, Armocost's political beliefs have drawn interest from numerous news outlets, including CNN — the international news organization headquartered in Atlanta, Ga. — and *The Seattle Times*.

Armocost appeared in a segment of "Anderson Cooper 360" on Jan. 29 on CNN. Kyung Lah, a CNN senior national correspondent, called into the Coffee with the Mayor program to ask questions before interviewing him outside the radio station.

Lah asked Armocost if he backs his words

See MAYOR, A-13



CNN's senior national correspondent Kyung Lah interviews Sequim mayor William Armocost after a KSQM Coffee with the Mayor session on Jan. 28 about QAnon as producer Kim Berryman and photojournalist Taka Yokoyama record the conversation that appeared on a segment of "Anderson Cooper 360" the next night. Armocost said he never publicly supported QAnon. Sequim Gazette photo by Matthew Nash



Contractor Chris Grubb stands on the site of his planned shop. In mid-January, a wind storm blew down the trusses one day after he and his family installed 51 of them. Family members look to support him by running a Gofundme account to cover his losses. Sequim Gazette photo by Matthew Nash

## High winds blow down man's dream project

### Family seek support for local contractor in online campaign

BY MATTHEW NASH  
Sequim Gazette

Chris Grubb, a 59-year-old Sequim/Dungeness area contractor, said he never anticipated a natural disaster coming to one

of his projects like this.

On Jan. 11, he and his family finished installing trusses for a 60-foot-by-100-foot shop near the Sequim Valley Airport along Old Olympic Highway. His son-in-law Cortland Waldron

said the shop was Grubb's final official project before hanging up his contracting hat for Grubb Construction.

Grubb planned to come back and put up siding later in the

See WINDS, A-10

## Legislators slam regional virus plans

### Decision leaves local counties at 'a standstill'

BY PAUL GOTTLIEB  
Olympic Peninsula News Group

The North Olympic Peninsula's Democratic 24th District lawmakers are at odds with Democratic Gov. Jay Inslee in his regional approach to the COVID-19 pandemic, saying it puts Jefferson and Clallam counties at an unfair disadvantage.

"Gov. Inslee's recent change to the Roadmap to Recovery has left Clallam and Jefferson counties at a standstill for no good reason," state Sen. Kevin Van De Wege and state Reps. Steve Tharinger and Mike Chapman said Jan. 29 in a joint statement.

"This new plan relies on inconsistent metrics and an overly broad, regional approach for decision-making that does not reward the citizens and businesses in Clallam and Jefferson who have faithfully complied with the governor's orders."

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## Superior Court judge backs city on subdivision decision

### Developer cannot proceed without second entrance/exit installed

BY MATTHEW NASH  
Sequim Gazette

A Clallam County Superior Court ruling keeps future phases of the Jennie's Meadow subdivision at a standstill for the foreseeable future.

On Jan. 27, Judge Brent Basden upheld Sequim city council's May 2019 decision to deny a variance request from developer Ruth Brothers Enterprise, LLC, of Kent, to use Jennie's Boulevard off North Priest Road to access the subdivision's proposed 71 homes for Phases B and C.

Councilors approved the two phases' preliminary major subdivision on the west



Judge Brent Basden upheld a decision Jan. 27 in Clallam County Superior Court that developer Ruth Brothers Enterprises, LLC, of Kent, must follow the City of Sequim's conditions that a second access point must be created before construction can begin on 71 new homes in Jennie's Meadow's second and third phases. Sequim Gazette photo by Matthew Nash

side of the Sequim city limits in 2019, but with conditions; among those conditions, the Ruth Brothers owners needed to prove their legal right to use Jennie's Boulevard, and to develop a second ingress/egress for the development.

The developer appealed this in June 2019, saying the decision lacked "substantial evidence" and that it violated the Ruth Brothers' constitutional rights.

See DECISION, A-13

## Sequim vaccination registrations for this week fill up in minutes

SEQUIM GAZETTE STAFF

time spots.

Online registration seems to be a popular option for those seeking vaccinations.

The online registration for first dose vaccines being offered by the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe on Feb. 2, Feb. 4 and Feb. 6 were filled in the first 30 minutes the portal was open — between 9-9:30 a.m. on Jan. 28, according to Betty Oppenheimer, communications specialist for the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe.

The system saw 2,172 people register to be vaccinated, she said.

Brent Simcosky, the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe's health services director, said locals sign up for one of five, one-hour

"The whole purpose of online registration is so people wouldn't be staying up and in their cars over night," he said.

In previous weeks, the tribe opened up vaccinations in Carrie Blake Community Park on a first-come, first-served priority, so residents began lining up over night.

"With our setup, we'll be able to hold 200 cars, so there won't be any cars spilling over (onto Blake Avenue)," Simcosky said.

He said tribal and Clallam County IT staff were working on logistics until Wednesday night (Jan. 27).

See VACCINATIONS, A-7

# Mayor

From page A-1

Lah asked Armacost if he backs his words from last August's Coffee With the Mayor program that "QAnon is a truth movement."

Armacost responded, "To make things perfectly clear, I've never endorsed or said I was a QAnon supporter."

He went on to say that he encouraged people "to do research and to seek truth" because we are in an "information overload" and "media frenzy."

Lah continued to say that Armacost directed people last August to seek out a video that is "conspiratorial" in nature.

"QAnon is not a truth movement. It's a conspiratorial movement that believes there's a secret society that is violent. Do you support this movement?" Lah asked.

Armacost replied, "I do not." He added that Coffee With the Mayor sessions are about sharing information with the public.

"I regret in the past I expressed my views; again, it's personal, but does not pertain to my view as a business owner, council member or as mayor."

Lastly, Lah asked on his thoughts he should be removed as mayor.

"We're all entitled to our own opinion," he said.

In his interview outside KSQM, Armacost told Lah that the media has misinterpreted his reference on QAnon and that it "led to this year of regurgitating negative energy that doesn't really meet anyone's needs other than it fills a sound bite."

He added, "There's a handful that may have that feeling, but I don't think the populace feels that way."

When asked if QAnon had a role in the Jan. 6 attack in Washington, D.C., Armacost said he cannot confirm or deny if one group is involved, but said, "with the integrity that I was raised with you never deface a public building, you never deface a public official. You give them the respect that they have earned by taking the willingness to put their life on hold to serve others I think."

"We need to get back to, 'How can we be kinder to our fellow man and lift them up?'"

Shenna Younger, a member of the Sequim Good Governance League, was one of the

locals CNN spoke with for the program, after being reached through Facebook.

Younger's group supports city manager Charlie Bush, who was recently asked to resign by Armacost and three other city councilors on Jan. 11.

"I told them QAnon is a distraction from the good things that are happening," Younger said.

"This is not indicative of who we are. When the pandemic first happened, and we faced a PPE shortage, a call went out and within 48 hours we recruited 100 sewers of Sequim citizens and because of those efforts we sewed over 8,500 masks and 150 surgical gowns for our medical workers."

"That's who we are. That's what got our health care workers until the PPEs arrived. We're kind and compassionate. This nonsense you're seeing is a very small and isolated group."

## QAnon

Armacost, a salon owner and Sequim councilmember, was selected by other council members in January 2020 to his mayor position, and while his support for QAnon didn't come up during his appointment or when he ran for his council seat, Sequim residents noted his Facebook posts using QAnon rhetoric — often writing "WWGIWGA," a reference to QAnon motto "Where we go one, we go all."

The Sequim mayor explained his thoughts on the controversial QAnon theory in an Aug. 27 radio interview, calling it a "movement that encourages you to think for yourself."

In response to a question from a listener, Armacost said, "If you remove Q from that equation, it's patriots from all over the world fighting for humanity, truth, freedom and saving children and others from human traffic — exposing the evil and corruption of the last century in hopes of leaving a better future for our children and grandchildren."

A couple of weeks after promoting QAnon in his radio appearance, Armacost apologized for promoting QAnon in the radio show in a joint City of Sequim press release with Bush.

Armacost said in the Sept. 9 press release: "To date, as mayor I have kept my personal life separate from my professional life and, as a result, I will not comment as mayor on my personal social media presence."

"While I believe that people



Sequim Mayor William Armacost waves during the Sequim Irrigation Festival's virtual parade in October 2020. He was elected mayor in January of last year. Sequim Gazette file photo by Michael Dashiell

should fight for truth and freedom, it was inappropriate to respond to this question as mayor during a program designed to talk about City of Sequim issues."

"Any responses to questions reflecting the personal opinion of the mayor do not reflect policy positions of the Sequim City Council or the organization," Bush said in the Sept. 9 statement.

QAnon began in 2017 and is traced back to an anonymous online persona claiming to be a government insider seeking to expose the "deep state" allegedly working against then-President Donald Trump. Media reports describe QAnon claims that public figures and institutions are secretly involved with child trafficking and civil unrest, and that President Trump has a secret plan to bring this group to justice.

At least 11 candidates seeking seats in the U.S. House of Representatives in the November election had expressed belief in or support for QAnon. Two of them — Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) and Lauren Boebert (R-CO) — won House seats.

The movement gained further attention when on Jan. 6, individuals donning QAnon clothing violently broke into the U.S. Capitol.

## The pin

Community members questioned online and during the radio segment why Armacost wears a "Punisher" pin that is recently associated with QAnon.

Armacost said it's not a "Punisher" skull to him, but a "Thin Blue Line Skull" he purchased on pinmart.com to "support 100 percent our law enforce-

ment personnel."

He said the nation is in a "turbulent time" with attempts to defund police, and that he wants to show his support for his family and friends in law enforcement.

"I believe in the rule of law, not the rule of mob," Armacost said.

On why he wears the pin during city council meeting, Armacost said he's straightforward and does not "sugar coat or hide how I feel."

"(Supporting) your local law enforcement is an honor and not one that should be criticized," he said.

The Punisher skull originates with the Marvel Comics character Frank Castle, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran, who in the comics seeks vengeance against criminals after a Mafia family kills Castle's family.

His first appearance dates back to 1974 in "Amazing Spider-Man No. 129," and his popularity has garnered movies, a television show and merchandise.

In recent years, the Punisher's skull has been embraced by military, law enforcement and citizens for various reasons. Punisher, the character, is owned by Disney, and multiple news outlets report it's unknown if the corporation has sought copyright damages on the skull logo's usage.

## City manager

Armacost was also asked repeatedly at the Jan. 28 Coffee

with the Mayor program why city councilors voted 4-2 to ask Bush to resign.

He replies multiple times that it was "philosophical differences between the city council and city manager" and chose not to elaborate on those differences and that those discussions are "bound to remain confidential."

Karen Hogan, a member of the Sequim Good Governance League, called into the radio show asking for further clarity on the differences.

Armacost said he went through city attorney Kristina Nelson-Gross to facilitate the executive session discussion.

"You owe it to the citizens of Sequim; you asked an extremely competent, capable and very compassionate man to leave office and we don't understand why," Hogan said.

"Philosophical differences have to do with how a city government is governed and managed and you owe it to us to tell us those differences."

She added that replacing Bush will be expensive for the city.

Another listener questioned why the council dismissed a petition to retain Bush. The petition featured about 1,200 signatures and about 680 said they live in Sequim.

Armacost replied he is bound by law to listen to the council, and he only has one vote.

He referenced Save Our Sequim's petition from 2019 seeking the proposed medication-

assisted treatment (MAT) clinic not be built in city limits with more than 2,500 signatures.

"(These were) hand-signed, not an Internet signature where people knocked on doors to express their views," Armacost said.

"We encourage more public engagement. It's how we can do our very best for them."

Members of the Good Governance League later took issue with this, saying the SOS petition was done over months prior to the pandemic, while theirs was done in 10 days.

League leaders said they have not initiated a petition calling for Armacost's resignation.

## 'Negative light'

Another listener asked if the attention on QAnon will hurt Sequim's reputation.

Armacost said he doesn't think so because "the magic of Sequim" with its environment, location and that "people are the real treasure."

As of press time, Bush has not signed his resignation severance, but he has until mid-February to do so. On Jan. 31, city councilors met in executive session for an hour to discuss expectations for interim city manager Charisse Deschenes. After the executive session, Armacost said he'll meet with her to negotiate a contract and bring it to the next city council meeting — Monday, Feb. 8 — for city council's approval.

On Jan. 31, city councilor Brandon Janisse, who opposed Bush's resignation, asked city clerk Sara McMillon to add to a city council agenda "how we are going to address the negative light the city is now in."

He wrote, "We need to discuss steps on how we are going to improve public relations, our image in the community at large, how we are going to build trust again, but within the city and public, and how we are going to protect city staff from a negative agenda."

McMillon replied that when the preliminary agenda for Feb. 8 is prepared, she'll add the topic.

For more information on Sequim City Council, visit [www.sequimwa.gov](http://www.sequimwa.gov) or call 360-683-4139.



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**Geriatric Care Management and Guardianship**

Wednesday, February 10, 2021  
2:00-3:00pm on KSQM FM  
Radio Station 91.5 FM



Speaker:  
**Mindi Blanchard**  
Bridge Builders, Ltd.

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