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Board Director Brad Smith leaves, too

Whitney Meissner resigns from La Conner schools

By Bill Reynolds

Dr. Whitney Meissner has resigned after three years at the La Conner Schools helm to accept an administrative post in another district, a move she announced prior to a video-conferenced local school board meeting Monday night.

Meissner said she will step down as superintendent June 30 and reveal her new assignment the following day.



DR. WHITNEY MEISSNER

She called the decision bitter-sweet, noting that her daughter, Molly, is a La Conner High graduate, and that they have made many lifelong friends here.

"The highlights from my time here are so many," she told the Weekly News on Tuesday. "There are some really great people I will always call friends. Our administrative and leadership teams did great work every day, but I'm especially proud of what they

helped us do during this COVID-19 (school) closure."

Her tenure as La Conner Schools chief was hardly bland.

Meissner drew official rebukes last June from membership of the two La Conner Schools employee unions, who called for her ouster in the wake of unexpected departures of elementary principal Bev Bowen and food services director Georgia Johnson, both of whom had enjoyed widespread campus support.

Employees alleged Meissner, with whom they had sometimes contentious contract negotiations in 2018, had created a hostile work environment, employed a divisive management style and that her interpersonal communication skills were lacking and occasionally overbearing.

Meissner answered with a mea culpa, vowing an improved dialogue going forward.

But union leadership felt the gesture was too little, too late.

Adding to the tumultuous mix was the La Conner School Board undergoing a flurry of change, the most recent example being the surprise resignation of longtime member Brad Smith, who had represented the Shelter Bay director district for 14 years. His resignation was effective June 19 he wrote in his letter to the Board last week.

The 2019 board elections, coming just months after the unions issued votes of no confidence in Meissner, saw challengers John

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Skagit County's Phase 2 Status

By Ken Stern

Requiring masks in downtown La Conner is a good public health idea for merchants and the public, Skagit County Health Officer Dr. Howard Leibrand told the Weekly News Tuesday. "That is a reasonable concept. Distancing is important. The more room you give people the better; outdoor air flow seems to be better for the prevention of transmission; not being enclosed is a help; as long as you are doing everything in the realm of Phase 2"

Leibrand continues to champion the public health precautions of wearing a mask, social distancing and not being with more than five people in a week outside your household. For Skagit County to move from Phase 2 to Phase 3 the 130,000 county residents must continuously abide by these measures. "You can't go to phase 3 unless you are willing to do the things that affect everyone," Leibrand said.

"We are not willing to do the things that keep people safe," he observed. "Some of this upsurge we are seeing are due to Mothers Day and Memorial Day and the pent-up needs to see each other. It is not the rules that are the problem it is this COVID virus that is the problem."

He noted the 50 positive test cases in the county since June 1. While the County can apply next week to move to Phase 3, Leibrand will not recommend that at Friday's meeting of the Skagit County Board of Health, calling the trends bothersome. The county commissioners agree with him, he said. They are three of the Board's five members.

The key metric counties must meet is the rate of newly diagnosed cases per 100,000 population during the prior two weeks.

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AN EAGLE HAS LANDED – Is this a precursor to our nation's birthday anniversary? As patriotic as our national bird are our country's farms. This guy was resting while keeping a watchful eye for rodents on a bale at Mesman's farm just east of La Conner.

– Photo by Sarah Walls



A DIFFERENT WAY TO BE IN THE STREETS – Concrete barricades, art, graffiti, masks: No it is not Beirut or Baghdad but the CHOP – the Capital Hill Occupied Protest – in Seattle. Sunday started the third week of youths insisting on a different future, one where Black Lives Matter and a safe community means defunding the police 50%. That is the City's East Precinct police station boarded up behind the tents.

– Photo by Ken Stern

July 3-4 blowout sale

Friends of Library closing book on its thrift store era

By Bill Reynolds

Absent fireworks, the final chapter of the Friends of the La Conner Library Thrift Store still promises a bang-up ending with a big Independence Day weekend closing sale.

The popular Morris Street shop, its inventory overflowing with a wide array of donated items, will be scene of a blow-out sale July 3-4 from 11-5 p.m. each day.

Many are calling the store's closure the end of an era in La Conner.

"It's been a wonderful run," Friends of the Library President Joan Scarboro said on Thursday. "As volunteers, working at the counter, my husband and I had a wonderful time."

The store opened in a former automotive garage, on property purchased by the library in 2012. Since then its steady business has covered mortgage payments and more for the future site of the La Conner-Swinomish Regional Library.

The Friends group has long championed library causes.

"The Friends have supported the library since 1988 with fundraising events and projects to benefit library needs and programs," said La Conner Library Foundation Director Susan

Macek. "Over the years most of the proceeds and contributions were set aside in a special account to help support their hopes and dreams – a new library building to serve the 5,000 residents of our library district."

Macek told the Weekly News that six years ago the Friends helped jump-start the fundraising campaign for a new library with a gift of \$42,000.

"A copy of that check," Macek said, "has hung above the door to the thrift shop ever since."

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the store to lock up this spring, mere months ahead of anticipated ground-breaking for the long sought new library.

There was much thought given in past weeks to re-opening the store when cleared to do so under the statewide COVID-19 Safe Start plan. But that idea was reluctantly nixed.

The heavy workload required to re-open briefly prior to building the new library was a key factor in the decision.

"With everyone at home cleaning out their houses and closets the last three or four months, we knew we would be overwhelmed with donations," Scarboro explained, "and we weren't sure there would be enough people to sort through

everything.

"It would have been a case," she added, "of having to re-energize for about six weeks or two months."

The local thrift store has been a source of energy from the outset, when it transitioned from what had been a book nook in the northwest corner of the library.

Moving into the old auto shop was no simple task. Members of the La Conner Kiwanis Club partnered with Friends of the Library, completely remodeling the building to house a venture that was expanded from book sales to a full-fledged second-hand retail outlet.

"They did the heavy lifting," Scarboro said of La Conner Kiwanians, who have received a portion of store sales proceeds for their community service projects.

The concept of opening a thrift store coincided with library officials assessing the need for a larger facility.

"We had started talking about it," recalled Diane Fritzler, who was President of the Friends of the Library at the time, "when the library talked about (constructing) a new building."

The result was more cha-

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Wood currency holds up Tenino

By Ken Stern

For the second time in 90 years the little town of Tenino, Washington, population 1,884, is making big national news, and for the same reason: the Thurston County community south of Olympia has again created a local currency, again in wood. The town government is providing qualifying residents up to \$300 a month in the wood scrip, to be used at local businesses. The merchants then redeem the \$25 bills at town hall.

A couple of reporters came down from Seattle to write about it. A 2,000 word story published on the news website The Hustle June 12 by Michael Waters was followed by Gene Johnson of The Associated Press. His June 17 story has been reprinted from coast to coast, from Oregon Public Broadcasting to the Washington Post, as part of "One Good Thing: Stories about the kind-

ness of strangers and individuals who sacrifice for others during the coronavirus outbreak."

Waters set a scene somewhat familiar to La Conner merchants this spring, but worse: For more than a month, the downtown area looked almost abandoned. Residents couldn't afford groceries. Long lines snaked outside the local food bank.

Mayor Wayne Fournier gets credit for acting to bring back the economy. "We were talking about grants for business, microloans, trying to team up with a bunch of different banks," he told Waters. "The big concern was, 'How do we directly help families and individuals?'"

His solution: a local currency for low-income residents in need. The Town became a mint and a bank, printing \$25 "bills" on maple veneer, the fund backed by \$10,000 from the Town. A 130 year-old printing press from the local museum

was again pressed into service.

The great backstory Waters found: During the Great Depression, the city printed sets of wooden dollars using that exact same 1890 newspaper printer. Then, within a year, the wooden currency had helped bring the economy back from the dead.

Water sums up today's program: Low income residents apply for up to \$300 monthly. The scrip has to be used locally for basic needs, including food, gas, and daycare. Most businesses take the wooden bucks. Twice a month they can go to city hall and redeem them for cash. Restrictions: no cigarettes, lottery tickets, marijuana or alcohol.

The AP's Gene Johnson interviewed locals for his story. Tyler Whitworth, past president of the local chamber of commerce, told him, "The city could have

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Aqiumuk's Kitchen

By Patricia Aqiumuk Paul, Esq.
Food Editor - pat@laconnernews.com

Perfect pie to take on a picnic. It is great served with sandwiches for lunch. In this recipe I used two large Beefsteak tomatoes from Hedlin Family Farms. Plus, I added half a pint of cherry tomatoes.

Savory Tomato Pie

Ingredients

- Pie crust, 1 for the bottom
- Mozzarella cheese, 1 cup, shredded
- Cheddar cheese, ½ cup shredded
- Tomatoes, 2 large
- Salt, 1 teaspoon
- Garlic granules/powder, ½ teaspoon
- Oregano, ½ teaspoon
- Basil, fresh, 1/3 cup, optional
- Black pepper, to taste
- Mayonnaise, ¼ cup
- Cherry tomatoes, 1 cup, halved

Preparation

Preheat oven to 400 F. Peel tomatoes. Option is not to peel. Slice. Lay over paper towels and sprinkle with salt. Place the pie crust in your pie dish. Use a dinner fork to poke holes in the pie crust. Sprinkle 1/3 cup of the mozzarella cheese around the bottom. Bake in your hot oven for ten minutes. Allow to cool completely. Lower the temperature of the oven to 350 F.

Combine 1/3 cup shredded mozzarella and ¼ cup shredded cheddar cheese together and set aside.

Make your first layer of tomato slices on top of the cooled crust. Sprinkle with garlic, oregano and black pepper. Add a layer of the cheese mixture. If using basil, spread several leaves. You can substitute fresh sage for the basil. Repeat for the second layer. Place the halved cherry tomatoes on top. You can substitute grape tomatoes or just another layer of sliced tomato.

Mix the final bits of both cheeses in a bowl with the mayonnaise. Dot over the cherry tomatoes. Bake uncovered for 30 to 35 minutes. Cool before serving. May be served warm, at room temperature, or cold.



ALL THIS FOR ME? AND I AM ONLY THREE. – Lucetta Williams had her father, Robert Williams, next to her, and her mom, Autumn Taylor, holding her hand last week as they excitedly watched vehicles from the Swinomish police department, Fire District 13, friends and family drove by in a new kind of way to celebrate during the CV-19 pandemic: a birthday parade. – Photo by Robin Carneen

Lucetta Williams' birthday parade

By Robin Carneen

During the COVID-19 pandemic there have been restrictions preventing large gatherings, making it a real challenge for milestones like birthdays.

But mother Autumn Taylor wanted to make sure her daughter,

Lucetta Williams, would still have a way to celebrate hers.

Last Wednesday while standing in their front yard decorated with balloons and large lawn signs that said "Happy Birthday," Taylor, Robert Williams, the dad; Lucetta, her siblings, family and about a dozen of her friends were treated to a special "Birthday Parade" led by the Swinomish Police Department and Skagit County Fire District 13 vehicles. The joy on Lucetta's face was indescribable. At the start of the parade, she turned to me and softly said "they are nice!"

The emergency vehicles flashed

their lights and blared their sirens as the lead police vehicle blasted the classic "Happy Birthday" song over a loudspeaker. The officer in that vehicle drove by smiling and singing "Happy birthday to you!" at the top of his lungs.

They were followed by a procession of honking vehicles full of waving friends and relatives, stopping only long enough to drop off a gift and birthday greeting for the three year old girl.

This was one of many parades that have happened on the Swinomish Reservation and all across the United States since the start of the pandemic.

Tenino . . .

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given out debit cards or cash, but we don't know where that money is going to go. This is one of the ways we could keep the money here in the community."

The mayor's summary: "We're a small community that relies on a lot of tourism during the summer. Now, everything's been shut down. Our businesses, our restaurants, antique stores, they're not going to have the traffic. There's no assistance available for them. We are on our own."

The wooden dollars will expire after the Town declares its COVID-19 state of emergency over. Waters quotes Fournier: "We'll run out this program and then we'll look into having our own city currency."

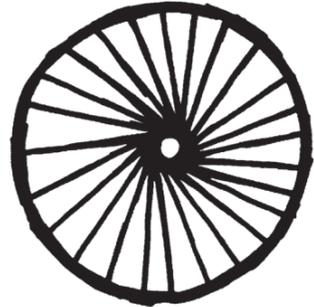
Waters' article goes into some detail on the history of local currencies during the Great Depression, when "hundreds of municipalities, business associations and worker co-ops started issuing scrips." He reviews the status of municipalities around the country and world with local currencies today. His story: <https://thehustle.co/covid19-local-currency-tenino-washington/>.

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Skagit County Sheriff's Office

POLICE BLOTTER

Monday, June 15

12:53 p.m.: Made nice – Report of a fight. Deputies arrived and did not locate any problems. S. 4th St., La Conner.

5:30 p.m.: All cracked up – Caller noticed a vehicle with the window broken out. Deputies contacted the owners who confirmed they had been the victim of a vehicle prowl. Bay View Edison Rd., Bay View.

9:11 p.m.: Was sound made? – Tree in the roadway. Homeowners removed it. McLean and Avon Allen Rds., Greater La Conner.

Tuesday, June 16

8:57 a.m.: Alarms happen – False alarm, employee error. A museum, S. 1st St., La Conner.

10:22 a.m.: Slip sliding away – Rocks in the roadway. Public works was notified. Pioneer Pkwy, Rainbow Brdg.

1:57 p.m.: Barks and bites – Caller reported a dog fight that happened while camping at the state park. Referred to the park rangers. Bay View Edison Rd., Bay View.

9:56 p.m.: Car got away – Caller reported they were almost hit by a tan 4-door vehicle 20 minutes earlier. No other description of the vehicle. Morris and 6th Sts. La Conner.

Wednesday, June 17

5:51 p.m.: Cans in hands – Deputies investigated a report of possible graffiti. The caller observed two males leaving the area with paint cans in their hands. Deputies later contacted one of the juveniles who said it was another person who did the graffiti and he and his friend were just throwing the cans away. N. 2nd St., La Conner.

6:55 p.m.: Farmers argue – Civil matter over the use of hay bales and horse pasture. Bradshaw Rd., Greater La Conner.

Thursday, June 18

7:33 a.m.: Town tagged – Report of the above mentioned graffiti by La Conner Public Works. Pioneer Park, S. 4th St., La Conner.

10:20 a.m.: Dogs run free – Same animal problem mentioned above. Bay View Edison Rd., Bay View.

12:02 p.m.: Litter patrol – Recovered an empty sharps container and disposed of it. Dike Rd., Conway.

12:59 p.m.: Purple haze – Report of a purple 70s Ford that was driving all over the road. Deputies checked the area, but were unable to locate it. Chilberg and La Conner Whitney Rds., La Conner.

10:18 p.m.: Cows happen – Loose cows in the roadway. Cows were removed by the owner. Recor and Josh Wilson Rds., Bay View.

Friday, June 19

12:02 p.m.: Family matters – Caller wanted deputies to check on her father. The caller stated he had younger people living with him who may be taking advantage of him financially. Deputies knocked on the apartment door, no one answered. Maple Ave., La Conner.

12:54 p.m.: Check this out – Caller wanted to pass information to the Sheriff's Office. Similk Beach., Greater La Conner.

12:56 p.m.: Always be careful – Caller reported that a tenant who lives in an adjacent dwelling nearly struck her and her electric wheelchair while backing out of her driveway. Investigation continuing. Bradshaw Rd, Greater La Conner.

1:15 p.m.: And doors locked, too – Intoxicated male contacted at the public bathrooms. The male was not injured and just needed a ride home. Morris St., La Conner.

6:07 p.m.: Broken window policing – Caller reported their small rear window had been broken on their vehicle. Nothing was taken from the vehicle. Spruce St., Conway.

Thought for the Day: "Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great." — Mark Twain

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