



KENT REPORTER

Kent schools to reopen April 12 for 6th grade and younger

By STEVE HUNTER
shunter@soundpublishing.com

Kent School District pre-kindergarten through sixth-grade students will return to in-person learning on April 12 while students in seventh through 12th grade will return April 19.

District officials released a statement March 16 with the latest plan. Parents still have the option to keep students in remote learning.

“The health and safety of our students, staff and families are of utmost importance,” according to the district statement. “To welcome all students physically in schools, we need to meet all new health and safety measures; this means our in-person learning will look much different from previous years, if you choose to return to in-person learning in our buildings in April.”

As of March 16, schedules are still being negotiated between

district leaders and labor partners. The district said it will notify all Kent School District families and staff as soon as a schedule is finalized.

The state Department of Health, the Governor’s Office and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction have provided rules and guidance for student and staff health and safety. Guidelines may change as the school year progresses.

“We are providing this information to ensure KSD families and staff know what to expect if they choose in-person learning,” according to the district. “Soon we will be sending a survey for families to choose for each student, PreK-12, the learning model for their students for the remainder of this school year. We want to be sure all families understand the expectations of students while in the building before you make your

choice. The survey will include details about the schedule; this informs you of the safety measures for in-person learning.”

The district reminds all community members to be mindful of key preventive measures, including wearing masks, physical distancing, washing their hands thoroughly, and staying home when they are sick.

See **SCHOOLS**, Page 2

T-Birds players pumped to return to play at ShoWare Center



COURTESY PHOTO, BRIAN LIESSE, THUNDERBIRDS

Conner Roulette (34) returns for the shortened Seattle Thunderbirds season that begins Friday, March 19 against Spokane at the accesso ShoWare Center in Kent.

By STEVE HUNTER
shunter@soundpublishing.com

With the long wait to start the Western Hockey League (WHL) season finally over, Conner Roulette and Mekai Sanders are filled with excitement to get back playing.

The two will return along with the rest of the Seattle Thunderbirds to play the Spokane Chiefs in the season opener at 6:05 p.m. Friday, March 19, at the accesso

ShoWare Center in Kent.

“It’s going to be an unreal feeling,” said Sanders, a 17-year-old forward from Gig Harbor, during a phone interview after a recent practice. “We’ve been out of the game for a while so we are eager and pumped up to get going again. ...there’s a lot of energy and the boys are flying out there.”

No fans are allowed. Seattle plays again at 5:05 p.m. Saturday, March 20, against Portland, which will be shown on JOEtv

(KZJO), channel 22 and cable 110.

The WHL shut down the 2019-2020 season due to COVID-19 last March. This 2020-2021 season normally would have started in September. League officials reduced it to a 24-game season with no playoffs. All games will be played against U.S. Division opponents, Spokane, Portland, Tri-City and Everett.

“It’s going to be over a year since we played our last game,”

said Roulette, 17, of Winnipeg, Manitoba, during a phone interview. “That anticipation has just built up. I’m excited and everyone else is excited. We are going to go out there and play our best. We have all been waiting for it and it’s going to show on the ice with how excited we are and all of this time built up.”

It’s been tough for Sanders and Roulette to be away from the team for so long. Sanders spent some time in Wenatchee and

Spokane to train with a few other players, do some weightlifting, shoot some pucks and play an occasional exhibition game.

“We all had our hopes up that the start date would change,” Sanders said about previous alerts with dates of when the season might get going. “It would be sad, but our coaches would check in with us. It was, ‘this sucks’ when the date was pushed

See **T-BIRDS**, Page 2

City to get \$28.4 million in federal COVID-19 relief

By STEVE HUNTER
shunter@soundpublishing.com

The city of Kent will receive an estimated \$28.4 million in federal COVID-19 relief funding from the American Rescue Plan.

Under the legislation’s state and local funding provisions alone, Washington state will receive an estimated \$4.25 billion, cities and counties are estimated to receive a total of \$2.66 billion, and \$189 million will be allocated toward

critical infrastructure projects in the state.

U.S. Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA), the chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, released the estimated relief funding for localities in Washington state through the American Rescue Plan passed by Congress and signed last week by President Joe Biden.

“The city of Kent is grateful to receive direct funding from the federal government as part of the

latest COVID-19 federal relief package,” said Bailey Stober, city communications manager, in a March 12 email. “We want to thank our federal delegation including Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell as well as Reps. Kim Schrier and Adam Smith for their advocacy.”

Stober said it’s undetermined how the city will spend the money.

“We don’t have specifics at this time as to how the money will be allocated and which programs or services will directly benefit since

the package was signed by the president just days ago,” Stober said. “Mayor (Dana) Ralph will work with the City Council and the city’s Executive Leadership Team to create a process and plan to allocate Kent’s \$28.41 million in one-time funds.”

“It is the city’s goal to ensure as much of this money as possible gets into the hands of those who need it the most and have been hardest hit by the economic impacts of COVID-19.”

State and local fiscal relief funds

can be used for local economic recovery purposes, including assistance to households, small businesses and nonprofits, assistance to hard-hit industries like tourism, travel and hospitality and infrastructure investment, according to a news release from Murray’s office.

City leaders last May countered an anticipated \$15.7 million revenue loss in 2020 due to COVID-19 by cutting 11 full-time employees,

See **RELIEF**, Page 2

teammarti.com
call 253-246-8938

THE REAL ESTATE TEAM YOU'VE ALWAYS DREAMED OF

Team Marti

WE'RE HERE TO HELP!

T-Birds

From Page 1

back again, but we knew we needed to jump on the season as soon as we get a chance.”

Roulette spent a lot of time in Winnipeg, but when training opportunities shut down in that city, he and another teammate went to Edmonton where they were able to still train until that city shut things

down as well in October. Prior to that, he was able to get some skate time.

Roulette said he looked forward to return to the ShoWare Center ice during his two-day drive with a teammate from Winnipeg to Kent.

“It feels good to get back,” Roulette said. “We got here and it’s great to practice again and get back after all of that time at home.”

After COVID-19 restrictions in the state eased, league officials decided to

start up the season even without fans in an effort to give the junior players a chance to perform before NHL scouts. Roulette and Sanders are each eligible for the July 23-24 draft.

Roulette is ranked 31st among the top 32 prospects by NHL.com writer Mike G. Morreale.

“Roulette is a well-conditioned playmaker who plays a detailed game and can create scoring chances with his passing and hockey sense,”

Morreale wrote.

Roulette, who scored 39 points (19 goals, 20 assists) in 54 games as a WHL rookie last season, said he won’t let the pressure of a shortened season and high-draft rankings get to him.

“There is high expectation, and I want the best for myself,” Roulette said. “It doesn’t matter when I go or where I go, what matters is how much I improve. I’m excited about it, but I’ve got to focus on

getting better and focus on this short season before anything to do with the draft.”

Sanders, who missed the first 34 games of last season with an injury, couldn’t help but wonder what it might be like if the expansion Seattle Kraken were to draft him.

“That would be unreal,” Sanders said. “It’s always been a dream of mine to stay in Seattle. When the Kraken started forming, it’s always been a thought

in the back of my head. It would be a crazy feeling.”

Meanwhile, back to this season, Sanders said he will miss playing without fans in the arena, but plans to keep that from impacting his play.

“I think obviously our fans have always been good to us and we love our fans, but it’s still going to be the same game,” Sanders said. “We have to focus on what’s going on on the ice and not what’s going on in the stands.”

Schools

From Page 1

Health screenings

■ Student and staff temperatures are required to be taken daily before going to school. Anyone with a 100.4 degrees or higher fever should not go to school or stay at a school site.

■ Health screenings will be in place daily for students and staff. Daily screening questions will ask if students and staff have any of the following symptoms within the last day that are not caused by another condition: Fever (100.4 degrees) or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty

breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, recent loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting or diarrhea.

Other questions include:

■ Does anyone in your household have any of the above symptoms that are not attributable to another condition?

■ Has your student been in close contact with anyone with confirmed COVID-19?

■ Have you had a positive COVID-19 test for active virus in the past 10 days, or are you awaiting results of a COVID-19 test?

■ Within the past 14 days, has a public health or medical professional told you to self-monitor, self-isolate, or self-quarantine because of

concerns about COVID-19 infection?

The student or staff member must be excluded from school if the answer to any of the above questions is “yes.”

Per state Department of Health guidelines, students, staff, vendors, parents, guardians, or guests will not be allowed in school if they show symptoms of COVID-19 or have been in close contact with someone who has confirmed or suspected COVID-19 in the last 14 days.

Staff and students with any illness must stay home.

Arriving, leaving school

■ Staff will be wearing face coverings unless they have a

medical reason not to wear one.

■ Students will be wearing face coverings unless they have a medical reason not to wear one.

■ Parents and visitors will have limited access to the school campus and must wear face coverings while on school grounds unless they have a medical reason not to wear one.

■ Parents and visitors entering the school for longer than 15 minutes must complete a health screening, including a temperature check.

■ Arrival and dismissal times may vary depending on grade level to support physical distancing.

■ Drop-off and pick-up locations may be different to support physical distancing,

and families should anticipate the process will take longer to accommodate health and safety requirements, especially as everyone adjusts to the new routine.

General safety precautions

■ Schools will follow disinfection guidelines developed by Seattle King County Public Health and state Department of Health for school campuses, including classrooms, work spaces, outdoor spaces and playgrounds.

■ Physical barriers may be installed or other areas where physical distancing is not possible in a school building.

■ All students and staff will

be encouraged and provided time to wash/clean their hands regularly.

■ Hand washing stations with soap and/or hand sanitizer will be made available in classrooms.

■ Schools will limit the sharing of supplies between students and disinfect between uses if sharing is unavoidable.

■ Desks will be facing forward and spaced further apart to ensure a minimum of 6 feet distance between students.

■ There will be no large gatherings such as assemblies and dances.

■ Schools are working with daily schedules to stagger lunches, recesses, and other transition times to minimize student group interaction.

Relief

From Page 1

using \$5 million of general fund reserves, reducing the capital budget transfer fund from the general fund by \$3.2 million, eliminating the summer parks recreation program, and using \$1 million from the city’s Health and Wellness Fund.

Because of those cutbacks, which also anticipated revenue losses in 2021, further cuts to the 2021-2022 city budget were not necessary when the council adopted

the budget late last year.

Kent received \$5.8 million in federal relief last year from the CARES Act, according to Derek Matheson, city chief administrative officer.

The city spent \$2.3 million on payroll safety expenses (much of it went to public safety; \$545,000 to ShoWare Center reopening supplies); \$2.1 million on small business grants to about 300 businesses; \$756,322 on laptops and other computers so employees could work remotely; \$271,534 on medical and protective supplies (PPE); \$174,583 on signage, communication, social

distancing supplies; \$92,290 on job safety retraining and wage reimbursement for aerospace industry; and the remainder on several other items less than \$21,000 each.

Overall, the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan provides \$360 billion to states, territories, Tribes and local governments to be used for responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency, to offset revenue losses, to bolster economic recovery and to provide premium pay for essential workers, according to Murray’s news release.

States, counties and cities with higher unemployment

rates will receive more funds as part of the federal formula.

“Beating this virus means making sure our states, counties, cities, towns and Tribes have the resources to continue an effective and strong response — and with the signing of the American Rescue Plan, help is finally on the way,” Murray said. “Washington state families are relying on the people our state and local governments employ — whether it’s our health care workers, our teachers, EMS, transportation workers — to keep our families safe and healthy and our communities running as

the work continues to end this pandemic.”

Nationwide, state and local governments have had to eliminate 1.4 million jobs since the pandemic began, and job losses increased by 50,000 in December, according to the Murray news release. The need is particularly pronounced at the local level: a National League of Cities survey showed a 21% revenue decline on average among cities with losses and the National Association of Counties projected a 20% revenue decline. These figures may grow worse over time as property tax revenue

decreases have lagged recessions by two years or more.

COVID-19 relief funds

(in millions of dollars)
 King County: \$436
 Auburn: \$15.7
 Bellevue: \$20.7
 Burien: \$11.2
 Covington: \$4.6
 Des Moines: \$7.0
 Federal Way: \$18.3
 Kent: \$28.4
 Maple Valley: \$5.9
 Renton: \$22.1
 SeaTac: \$6.3
 Tukwila: \$4.4
 Note: List is example of cities




WELLNESS PLAN for YOUR PET at EVERY STAGE of LIFE.



VCA CareClub® is the pet healthcare solution for pet owners who want a comprehensive and affordable way to keep their cats and dogs as healthy and happy as possible through every stage of their lives.

Join the Club today to experience the value of having your cat or dog on the path to ideal wellness, and to enjoy access to our healthcare team all year-round.

MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES:

- Convenient monthly payments.
- Unlimited visits to your VCA® hospital each year.
- Doctor-recommended vaccines.
- Prevention and early detection tests of serious diseases.
- Routine dental care for your pet.
- Peace of mind knowing you are doing the best for your pet.
- After hours medical support (DVM)

CALL TO ENROLL TODAY!

Committed to a
STRESS-FREE VISIT
for you and your pet.



VCA COVINGTON ANIMAL HOSPITAL
 27045 174th Pl. SE • Covington, WA 98042
 253-631-8616 • www.vcahospitals.com/covington
 Monday thru Saturday 8am-6pm; Sunday Closed

Comment on South King County’s new light rail maintenance facility



Learn more and weigh in on Draft EIS findings by April 19

Learn more and RSVP
omfsouth.participate.online

Attend an online public meeting

March 24, 2021
 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

March 30, 2021
 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Questions?

Contact the Community Engagement team:
OMFS: (206) 398-5453
omfsouth@soundtransit.org



SOUNDTRANSIT / Powering progress