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County appoints acting prosecutor in special procedure

BY MARCY STAMPER

Okanogan County has a new acting prosecuting attorney, after a complex series of appointments, resignations and hirings at a special meeting on Friday (Feb. 4).

Sue Baur, who retired in November as deputy prosecuting attorney for Wahkiakum County, stepped into the acting role on Monday (Feb. 7) to fill the spot left by the resignation of Okanogan County's elected prosecutor Melanie Bailey. Bailey's last day was Jan. 27.



Sue Baur

As acting prosecutor, Baur will oversee the office until the county commissioners appoint an interim prosecutor. In accordance with the state constitution, since Bailey was a Republican, the Okanogan County Republican Party will submit up to three nominees to the county commissioners to fill out her term.

Since the party hadn't yet provided any names to the commissioners, the county had to come up with a solution to keep the office functioning.

It was a fairly unprecedented situation. Okanogan County Chief Civil Deputy Prosecuting Attorney David Gecas researched state laws and consulted with other attorneys, Okanogan County Superior Court Judge Chris Culp, and the state Attorney General's office to determine how to handle the vacancy, which necessitated multiple steps under different sections of state law.

On Monday Jan. 31, Culp appointed Gecas and the county's other four deputy prosecuting attorneys as deputy prosecutors, giving them the authority to serve during the hiatus.

Although the appointment of Gecas and the other four deputies lasted just five days, it was necessary to ensure the functioning of the office. There were many cases scheduled in District Court last week, Gecas said.

When there's a vacancy in a partisan elected office, state law allows the county legislative authority to appoint a deputy or assistant employee as an acting official to perform all necessary duties to continue normal office operations. But that individual does have to be a county employee. That meant Baur couldn't be appointed directly.

So, on Friday (Feb. 4), Culp administered the oath of office to Loreva Preuss, one of the

See ACTING, A2

Cannabis grower sues county over requirements

Argues violation of 5th Amendment

BY MARCY STAMPER

An Omak cannabis grower has sued Okanogan County over the county's new requirement that growers meet with planning

staff to show their license and a detailed site plan. The grower argues that the county already has that information and that being asked to furnish it violates their Constitutional rights.

Ladyhelm Farm sued the county, the three county commissioners, and the planning director over a moratorium

on new or expanded cannabis grows that includes the meeting requirement. The suit was filed in Okanogan County Superior Court on Jan. 21.

Ordering the growers to provide this information violates their Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination, the suit alleges. "The County

has taken cannabis producer permits and approvals hostage for the ransom of self-incriminating information in violation of the 5th Amendment to the United States Constitution and Article I, §9 of the Washington State Constitution," it says.

The suit also argues that the requirement also violates

the equal-protection clause in the 14th Amendment by singling out cannabis producers, whereas other businesses haven't been asked to provide proof that they're in compliance with regulations for things like zoning and shorelines. Even cannabis

See CANNABIS, A2

Students learn the art of ski fabrication at LBHS design class

BY MARCY STAMPER

Imagine carving graceful turns in deep powder as you glide down the slopes – on skis you designed and made yourself.

For four Liberty Bell High School Design and Construction II students, that vision will become a reality when they finish fabricating custom skis – complete with an original logo design – later this year.

The project had its roots in class last year, when the students entertained a dream of creating their own skis. Construction/Design and Outdoor Recreation teacher Wyatt Southworth, who, despite being a skier, has never made skis before, was enthused about the opportunity for them all to learn together. "It's a deep dive into the manufacturing and design process," he said.

After some initial research, the class took a field trip in October to Lithic Skis in Peshastin, which designs and creates custom, handcrafted skis. The owners were generous in sharing their time and expertise with the students, Southworth said.

The folks at Lithic taught them about the various stages of the design/build process – not only for the skis, but also for the tools to make them. "We saw



Photo by Marcy Stamper

Liberty Bell High School senior Kieren Quigley, center, positions a ski core in the template the class built.

cool tools that they'd designed themselves," senior Eli Neitlich said.

At Lithic, they walked through the process of building skis from start to finish, and

picked up tips and insights to inform their own building process. Back in class, the students

designed their own ski press and profile sled. They've also built a

See DESIGN, A2

Kiwanis ready to awaken 'Family Activity Park' dream

Plans to launch first phase this spring

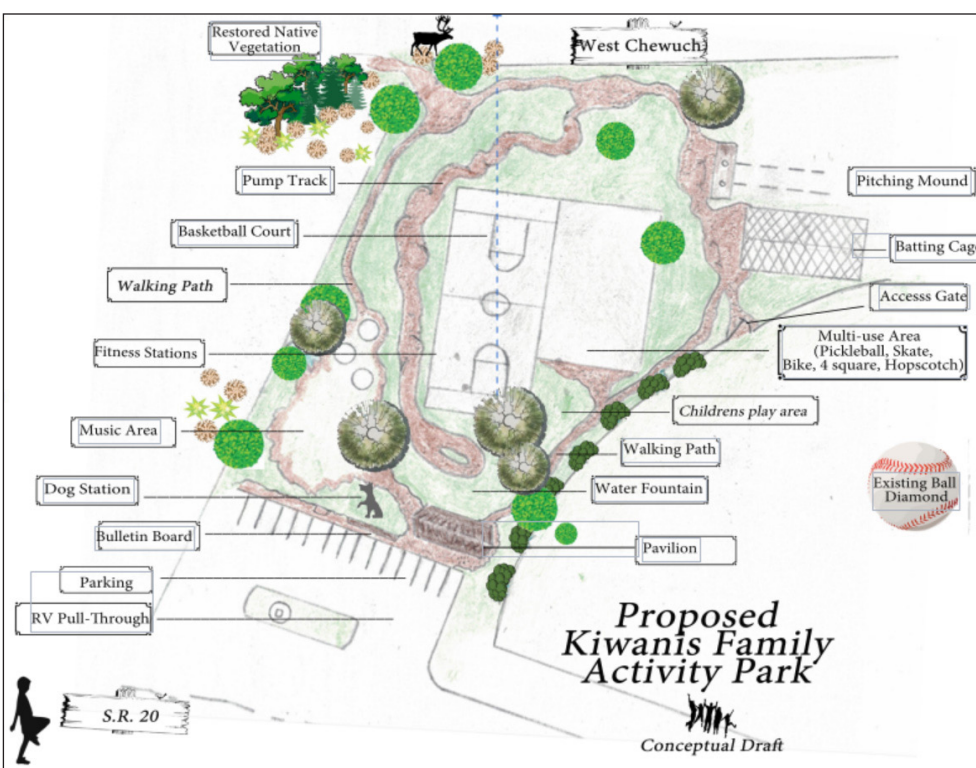
BY DON NELSON

The Winthrop Kiwanis Club's ambitious "Fund a Dream" project for improvements to the town's pump track and ball field has been in hibernation for the past couple of years, thanks to COVID.

But with the help of seed money from the town, Kiwanis is reviving plans that include estimated expenditures of more than \$200,000 for various projects over a four-year period, intended to increase recreation opportunities for all ages at what the club is calling a "Family Activity Park."

The Winthrop Town Council recently agreed to include \$10,000 funds in the town's 2022 budget to help advance the Kiwanis project to improve the town-owned pump track and adjacent ball field on Highway 20. The funds are earmarked for the town's participation in providing water and power to the site this year, the Kiwanis Club's first priority.

The project was first detailed in 2020 as a Kiwanis



Graphic courtesy of Winthrop Kiwanis

Winthrop Kiwanis envisions a multi-purpose complex with outdoor activities for all ages and a wide variety of interests.

"Fund A Dream" effort, which is largely supported by the organization's annual Bite of the Methow event. But COVID has prevented the Bite from being staged for the past couple of years.

Kiwanis President Rick Jones said the project is being

developed in partnership with other local organizations. He said Kiwanis will also be asking for funds through the town's Lodging Tax Advisory Committee (LTAC), which determines how locally collected hotel and motel taxes will be used to support and

promote tourism-based activities.

Kiwanis will also be seeking grants from the state Recreation and Conservation Office, which has helped fund many local projects including the Winthrop Rink and the Susie

See KIWANIS, A3

Reactions to coach's suspension include campus protest

Coach's wife asked to leave game

BY NATALIE JOHNSON

In the weeks since the Methow Valley School District suspended the varsity boys' basketball coach, community reaction has included incidents that district staff say are a distraction from education and from the success of student athletes.

The incidents included a protest on the district campus by as many as 25 people during school hours, and a parent — the wife of the suspended coach — being removed by an Okanogan County Sheriff's Deputy from a basketball game at the Liberty Bell High School gym on Feb. 1.

"I won't comment on a particular individual situation or

See PROTEST, A3

ADDRESS LABEL

THURS.	FRI.	SAT.	SUN.	MON.	TUES.
Feb. 10	Feb. 11	Feb. 12	Feb. 13	Feb. 14	Feb. 15
45°	42°	43°	38°	42°	41°
30°	27°	27°	29°	23°	21°
Partly cloudy	Some clouds	Mostly sunny	Partly sunny	Rain or snow	Mostly sunny

WEATHER DATA BASED ON ACCUWEATHER.COM FORECAST FOR TWISP

INSIDE ...

OPINION	A4
HARTS PASS	A4
SPORTS	B1
CLASSIFIEDS	B2-B3
COMMUNITY	B5
VALLEY LIFE	B6

