

Dalesandro resigns from
Battle Ground City Council

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Woodland Planters Days to
celebrate 99th year

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The Reflector

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Port of Kalama announces lease for proposed methanol facility will end

Company behind project says current "regulatory and political landscape" stopped work to build facility

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The proposed \$2 billion methanol production facility in Kalama is likely out of gas as the city's port says the project backers will end their lease.

On June 11, the Port of Kalama announced it had received word from Northwest Innovation Works (NWIW), who planned to terminate its lease of port property. In a release from NWIW themselves, the company pointed to the January denial of a key permit by the Washington State Department of Ecology as the reason for its decision, stating the regulations have "become unclear and unpredictable."

NWIW's release stated the company was "temporizing its development activities to assess the new regulatory and political

landscape and determine an appropriate path forward."

The company — which planned to build a facility that would produce methanol from methane that project backers said would be used for plastics manufacturing in China — stated it would "remain committed to addressing the global climate challenge," while creating economic growth, and would continue to develop on net-zero pollution projects.

In its own statement, the Port of Kalama said the decision to end the lease effectively ended

efforts to develop the plant. The port said benefits of the project would have included 1,400 construction and 200 permanent jobs, millions in tax revenue, and reduced global greenhouse gas emissions due to making methanol from natural gas as opposed to coal.

Port officials pointed to the state's regulatory and political environment as a hindrance to the project that would have brought "local, sustainable jobs just when the need is the greatest."

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Woodland council mulls change of government structure

Switch to council-manager government would go before voters for approval

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The conversation to change how Woodland government operates is back before council following a workshop session that considered putting the decision back on the ballot after voters rejected the move years earlier.

During its June 7 meeting, Woodland City Council discussed the potential to let residents vote on changing the city government structure from a mayor-council form to a council-manager system. The forms differ on where executive authority lies in government. Under the current system in the city, the elected mayor has that authority, while under the other system a city manager appointed by council has it.

Woodland voters shot down a 2009 vote to go to a council-manager form with 72 percent in opposition. Following the election of current Mayor Will Finn, the city ended up hiring city administrator Pete Boyce in 2016, who handles the day-to-day operations of the city much like a city manager would.

Finn brought forth the decision to reconsider changing the city's government because he felt it was a good time to bring the idea back up for discussion, pointing to the city's track record with Boyce who is now five years into his position.

Finn said when he ran for

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Clark County schools celebrate graduation

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Folding chairs spaced 6 feet apart, a podium set to center stage, and family members carrying flowers and balloons filled the Battle Ground Public Schools stadium each evening last week as a different high school held a graduation ceremony to commemorate its seniors.

The Prairie High School class of 2021 included 343 students who graduated on Thursday, June 10. The class recognized Kylee Lemmon, Caden McCray and Annalise Newberry as its valedictorians and Sharon Dao was named the salutatorian.

"Your parents, family, friends and teachers are so proud of you today, although some may not be able to say it today because of the restrictions," Lemmon said during her valedictorian speech. "It's clear to see, even with the masks, all the excitement that everyone has here."

Commencement speaker Britt Pedlar was nominated by his students to give the annual graduation speech.

"What can I say to a graduating class who just pioneered a pandemic?" Pedlar, the PHS culinary arts teacher, said. "I think something along the lines of a job well done. We're all so proud of you and most importantly, did that actually just happen?"

Other BGPS high schools also held in-person events. Battle Ground High School walked 340 students across the stage on June 11. Six students earned the valedictorian title, including Gage Hay, Kaelyn White, Alexander Forstrom, Gabrielle Steinbrenner, Lane Landas and Mallory Cowl.

River HomeLink had 109 students graduate with Drew Rachor

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PHOTO BY MADYSEN MCLAIN

Prairie High School celebrated 343 students during its in-person graduation ceremony on June 10 at the Battle Ground District Stadium.



PHOTO BY MADYSEN MCLAIN

Parents brought items to gift their children after the reception, like posters, flowers and balloons.

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Woodland

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mayor in 2015 — the first of two elections to the position in which he ran unopposed — he “made it perfectly clear that no one should be able to walk off the street without any knowledge or experience on how to run a city of our size without professional management.”

He said having that management in Boyce led the city to raise its overall level of professionalism.

Councilor DeeAnna Holland said opposition to establish a city administrator happened because it appeared the city went behind the backs of voters to install essentially the same position.

“It goes back to (the fact) we already said ‘no’ ... you just called it something else and you’re doing it anyway,” Holland said, adding she was supportive of Boyce’s role. “(With) the shenanigans that go on in

this town on a daily basis, Mr. Boyce has the patience of a kindergarten teacher.”

Councilor David Plaza said he heard complaints when Boyce was hired, though he wasn’t on council yet. He spoke critically of the mayors that served Woodland prior to Finn.

“We had a mayor, our last mayor, that was a narcissistic, corrupt piece of crap, and then we had the other mayors ahead of that who just wanted to wave at people in the parade,” Plaza said. “It became the ‘good old boys network,’ which is something that I constantly hear people complaining about and that we needed to get away from. Just because you’re from the city doesn’t mean you’re going to do a good job running the city.

“I think it can be a very good thing for the city, and I think it could move the city in the direction it needs to go to,” Plaza said.

Councilor Benjamin Fredricks was more positive about past mayors, who he

felt came into their positions “with the best interest of trying to make the city a better place.” He said he was responsible for bringing the 2009 resolution before voters, adding it was in Woodland’s long-term interest to change the form of government.

Fredricks didn’t bring the idea back to council once he saw a lack of support from the executive branch. Finn noted the decision would essentially strip him of executive powers, but noted it was something he was ultimately fine with.

“I enjoy doing this. I enjoy being here. I enjoy helping make decisions and making our community wonderful, but at some point I need to be the bigger person” and take a bigger-picture view of city government, Finn said.

Fredricks pointed to Finn’s lack of challenges as evidence that other people aren’t willing to step up to the position.

He said one reason to change the form of government when the city already has someone ostensibly doing a city manager’s

duties is because there have been municipalities across the state where a new mayor came in and fired the city administrator.

“The aftermath of that is not a pretty sight and it’s very expensive,” Fredricks said.

Concerns over the financial impacts a city manager would have on the city are “already baked into the (city’s current) expense,” Fredricks noted.

Boyce has an annual gross salary of roughly \$133,000, according to a list of city employee salaries provided to council during consideration of this year’s budget.

When asked, Boyce said he would be happy to take a change in job title should the council decide to make him the city manager. Fredricks said maintaining the city’s professionalism through an executive hired directly through council would limit potentially unwanted changes in city staff.

“If you want to keep this crew that we have ... this is the next logical step,” Fredricks said.

Kalama

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“This was the kind of innovative, job-creating project that originally was supported by the Governor’s office. Jay Inslee stood on Kalama’s waterfront to tout the climate benefits of the project, then turned on us when he ran for president,” Port of Kalama Director Mark Wilson said in the port’s statement.

Inslee eventually reversed course on backing the plant in 2019.

“In the early days of (the Kalama project), I said they could help reduce greenhouse gas emissions as we transition to cleaner energy sources,” Inslee said in a prepared statement at the time, “but I am no longer convinced that locking

in these multidecadal infrastructure projects are sufficient to accomplishing what’s necessary.”

First announced in 2014, the facility has faced permitting issues for years, with Ecology’s January 19 decision to deny a Shoreline Conditional Use Permit for the project being the last straw for project backers. The department said that if built, the facility had the potential of preventing Washington from meeting greenhouse gas emission limits set by the state Legislature last year, and could have used out-of-state offsets for its mitigation plans.

The proposed facility would be tied to 4.8 million tons of carbon emissions annually, according to Ecology’s analysis, most related to activities outside of the plant’s operation itself, includ-

ing the extraction of methane to use in the plant’s production, as well as the uses of methanol in Asia. The department noted that though the facility had the potential to have less greenhouse gas emissions than other sources of methanol, “constructing the new facility would not actually decrease emissions.”

“The known and verifiable emissions from the facility would be extremely large and their effects on Washington’s environment would be significant and detrimental,” Ecology Director Laura Watson wrote in a statement included in the announcement of the permit denial.

“All the state has accomplished is to encourage more severe greenhouse gas emissions outside the borders of Washington and declare a false climate victory,” Wilson said in the port’s statement. The port stated the project went through “an unprecedented series of environmental studies.” The January denial followed the second of two supplementary environmental studies for the project.

“We’ve lost an opportunity to become a global showcase for innovation and environmentally conscious manufacturing in Washington,” Port of Kalama Commission President Randy Sweet said in the port statement. “Unfortunately, this is part of a larger pattern of the unwillingness to listen to differing opinions and find common-sense, balanced solutions.”

The port stated NWIW spent

tens of millions of dollars to address concerns from state permitting agencies, “which shifted constantly over the course of the process.”

“NWIW did everything right, and their understandable decision to pull out of this project is a real loss for families trying to make ends meet, the future of economic development in our state and our environment,” Port of Kalama Commissioner Troy Stariha said in the statement.

Port and economic development officials were concerned about the broader implications the project’s demise has.

“This project would have brought manufacturing jobs back to the U.S. from China and significantly lowered a host of environmental impacts,” said Cowlitz Economic Development Council President Ted Sprague in the port’s statement. “The reduction in global greenhouse gases would have been greater than the GHG emissions of Seattle. If not a project with benefits like this, then what is good enough?”

“Victory” for environmental groups

Following the port’s announcement, groups opposed to the facility heralded the end of NWIW’s lease as a victory for environmental activism.

“Kalama was a disaster waiting to happen, so this is a crucial victory for our climate and the people and wildlife along the Columbia River,” Center for Biological Diversity Senior Attor-

ney Jared Margolis said in a joint statement along with other groups in opposition. “We need to move away from these climate bombs that would lock us into an unsustainable future and pollute the air and water we all need to survive.”

In an interview with The Reflector, Columbia Riverkeeper Executive Director Brett VandenHeuvel said the project’s process followed a similar pattern to other fossil fuel-related developments his organization has opposed, where a company comes in, local residents raise concerns and a long fight against the project ensues.

“I think the science and policy decisions around fracked gas are showing that it’s not acceptable to a clean energy future,” VandenHeuvel said.

Opponents said the project would likely source its methane from fracking.

VandenHeuvel said one of the major changes in perception of the facility happened when project backers began promoting the methanol produced would be used as fuel in Asia, contrary to initial claims that it would be strictly for plastics production.

“To the state’s credit, they evaluated all of the new evidence and came down with what I think is the right decision,” VandenHeuvel said.

He also gave credit to Kalama and Cowlitz County residents for rallying against the now-shelved facility.

“It’s truly inspiring what the Cowlitz County residents accomplished,” VandenHeuvel said.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

ROY ELMER

Roy Elmer, 97, died at his Battle Ground home, May 25, 2021. He was born at Red Cross Outpost, Bengough, Saskatchewan. His family had a farm near the Village of Viceroy.

The family moved to Grandview, Wash., where Roy graduated from high school in 1942. After graduation, he moved to Battle Ground and lived in Clark County for the remainder of his life.

Roy was preceded in death by parents, William T. and Irma Lyvere Elmer; brother, Erwin Elmer; and sisters, Esther Ham and Laura Root.

He did many things in his long and busy life, such as farming, logging, running

a sawmill, being an x-ray technician at the Clark County Hospital, and developing rural home sites. Roy retired in 2000, but kept busy landscaping his gardens and enjoying time with his grandchildren.

Roy married Kathleen L. Sederburg, June 12, 1954. They celebrated nearly 67 years together. He is survived by his wife; and daughters, Bonnie York (Robert) and Jerilyn Braskett; sons, Daniel and Michael Elmer (Debra Strom); eight grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren; and a great-great-granddaughter, Mabel Eileen Bosch.

A family graveside service was held at 11 a.m., June 1, 2021, at Lewisville Cemetery.

TO VIEW THE OBITUARY, PLEASE GO TO THEREFLECTOR.COM/OBITUARIES.

In Loving Memory Of

Cecil Kopman

Cecil Felix Kopman was born in Brookings, S.D. on May 6, 2019 to Chance and Natasha (Reddig) Kopman. He was baptized into the Old Apostolic Lutheran Church of Lake Norden, S.D.; He spent most of his life there before moving to La Center, Wash. with his mom, dad and big sister Kendyl. Cecil went to heaven on June 3, 2021 to join an angel baby and many relatives.

He was a happy little boy with a dimple in each cheek and one on his chin. Cecil could usually be found with his excavator in one hand, screwdriver in the other and pockets full of treasures. He loved being outside riding dirtbike with Dad and popping wheelies. Grateful to have shared his precious life are his parents Chance and Natasha; sister Kendyl; grandparents



Rhonda Kopman, Matt and Sharon Kopman, Randy and Carol Reddig; along with great-grandparents and many aunts, uncles, cousins and Christian friends.

Funeral services will be held on Wednesday, June 9, 2021 at the Old Apostolic Lutheran Church in Woodland at 1:00 p.m. A viewing will be at the church on Tuesday evening 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

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