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HEADING OUT TO SEA – It is complicated. Thursday, Feb. 17, the 100 foot ferry built at Mavrik Marine for California’s Water Emergency Transportation Authority went into the Swinomish Channel on a barge for a trip to Dakota Creek Industries in Anacortes, where it was launched. The MV Dorado came back to La Conner under its own power. Following testing to ensure all systems are a go, it will sail on its own down to San Francisco in March. — Photo by Ken Stern

Mavrik Marine’s MV Dorado has left the building

By Anne Basye

The 320-passenger jet ferry MV Dorado rolled out of Mavrik Marine last week for a brief excursion to Anacortes.

The La Conner boat builder is contracted by California’s Water Emergency Transportation Authority to build four, and possibly five, aluminum ferries for its 15-vessel San Francisco Bay fleet. The MV Dorado is the first.

On Wednesday evening, Feb. 16, the 130-foot long, 36-foot wide and 30-foot

tall vessel was lifted onto a custom-fabricated, 18-wheel, remote-controlled hydraulic dolly that fit between the catamaran’s two hulls.

Thursday morning before dawn Mavrik employees steered the remote-control dolly as it made its way cautiously toward the Swinomish Channel for placement on a barge owned by Culbertson Marine.

“If you watch a caterpillar going across the road, that was about the speed of it,” said eyewitness Brad Bradford, a longtime boater who has been

tracking the construction of the MV Dorado with interest.

“It would go a couple inches, stop, everyone would look to see that everything was okay, then a couple inches more.”

The trickiest part was getting the blue, green and white ferry onto the barge docked at the Pearle Jensen Way parking lot. The Mavrik crew laid a temporary bridge of 1” thick solid steel plates and four girders between the shore and the barge but the barge was

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That’s Knot All: Theft at First Street shop

By Lisa Judy

We had an attempted theft that we caught on camera. Seems as the days go by my artists are finding more items that have grown legs and walked away. We are taking action to protect their inventories by installing an additional camera system for both of our rooms, hanging signs telling guests that we have the camera systems and one artist has had to put a cable system in to anchor her expensive purses.

The busy season is upon us and sadly I see this getting worse. I am asking my artists to request guests that come in with large bags to leave them at the desk or refuse service. For their protection we are also having mace bottles available so they feel safer and hope they do not need to use them.

When we had the attempted theft

caught on camera, I plastered it all over Facebook to alert others. The funny thing is I had just a few days prior installed two cameras in that room. When people walk in the door my artists always talk with guests and this time was no different. The funnier thing is the person who attempted the theft told the artist on duty that he lived in the apartments by the bridge and was waiting for the 10:30 a.m. bus to Mount Vernon. He was asked to leave his bag by the door and did so but when he walked into our back showroom he stuffed the bag in his coat.

My artist was a boarder patrol officer and saw him do it so she yelled “put it back,” ran into the back room, yelled again and told him to get out. We did contact and report the problem with authorities.

When I posted online, Greg Westover of the Olive Shoppe said, “I bet he was wearing ...” which was absolutely true! I received a number of messages from other business owners that are having problems with this individual, but the authorities have not been successful at finding him.

It seems there may be more sticky fingers than this one person. I personally believe that others should be made aware and take necessary precautions. I have notified Mayor Ramon Hayes and Heather Carter, director of the Chamber of Commerce, who I hope will notify chamber members; but not all businesses are members.

I am not interested in writing a letter to the editor because I think this is so important that an article should be written and plastered on the front page.

Vehicle fire Sunday at Swinomish Village

By Bill Reynolds

It was a hot time in Swinomish village Sunday.

And not in a good way. Before 2:30 p.m. firefighters and law enforcement rushed to a van engulfed in flames in front of garages on the waterfront at the Swinomish fish processing plant on Moorage Way. The fire spread to another vehicle and a boat, said La Conner Hook & Ladder Chief Aaron Reinstra Monday.

Hook and Ladder and Fire District 13 crews put out the fire, with Swinomish Tribal Police securing the scene.

Plumes of black smoke just upland from the tribal pier on the west side of Swinomish Channel were clearly visible over the La Conner waterfront, an image that disrupted an otherwise quiet Sunday.

Sources told the Weekly News the fire’s source was electrical, though

— Photo courtesy of Richard Doerflinger

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Snapdragon Flats: Apartments planned for north Park Street

By Ken Stern

New apartments are planned for La Conner in a perhaps unlikely place. C.J. Ebert of Harbor Mountain Development plans to build two three-unit apartment buildings at the base of Snapdragon Hill on Park Street following administrative approval of setback variances and conditional use permits by the Town of La Conner.

Titled Snapdragon Flats, the development calls for twin buildings, each with three one-bedroom loft apartments of 800-900 square feet over individual garages. The south building will border the Campbell’s garden shed at the base of the scarp.

The north building will be built into the slope near Hill Street. A substantial amount of rock will be removed and reused to construct a gabion wall at the base of the scarp for the south building.

The site plan shows excavation as high as 30 feet above street level. “I will have to take up some of that rock. It is an excavation. That will be kind of cool,” he believes. Gabion walls are wire cage structures filled with salvaged rock. “It is required geotechnical protection for this site” Eber explained. Any rock fall will be contained by the gabion walls.

The setback variance addresses the geotechnical requirements for building on this irregular shaped and sloped lot platted in 1890. Without the approval of a variance, virtually nothing could be built there.

Ebert is meeting the modern challenge of parking codes, noting “the important thing is all the required parking is on site, in the garages, plus five stalls” of angled car parking between the buildings. The garages will be wired with 220-volt outlets for electric vehicle charging.

It is too early in the process to have building designs, he said. Nothing moves forward until the town approves the permits. Landscapers have been removing dead material, brush, small trees and debris from the scarp the last two weeks, using a portable lift. When the weather warms, the

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Indoor mask mandate ends statewide March 21

By Ken Stern

Wearing masks indoors will no longer be mandated by Gov. Jay Inslee come March 21, he announced last week. That decision is based on the data, showing dropping hospitalization rates, improving vaccination rates, and broad access to masks and tests, he said at a Feb. 17 news conference.

Face masks will no longer be required in most settings, including K-12 schools and childcare facilities. Masks will still be required in health care settings such as hospitals, outpatient and dental offices, long term care settings and correctional facilities. In addition, beginning March 1, vaccine verification for large events will no longer be required.

Businesses and local governments can still choose to implement vaccination or face mask requirements for workers or customers, and school districts can choose to have students and teachers wear masks. Federal law still requires face masks in certain settings such as public transportation and school buses.

“Requirements” regarding distance, ventilation, and sanitation in schools will be downgraded to “recommendations”, with new guidance expected from the state by March 7.

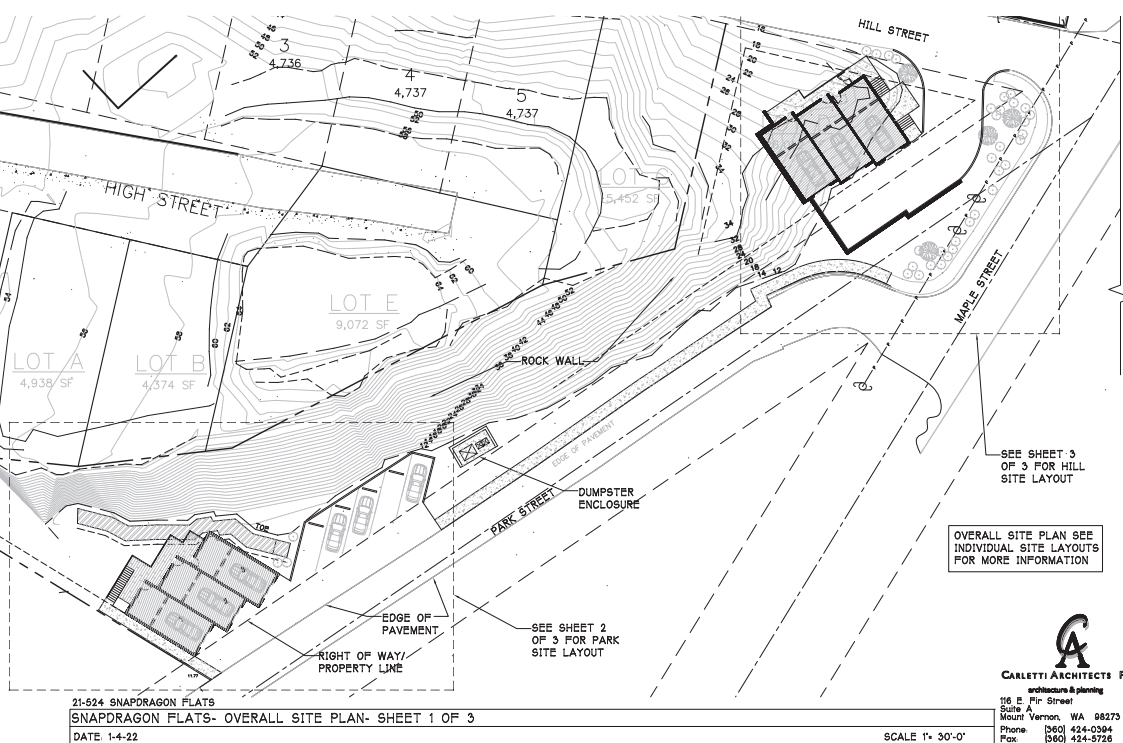
In its news release Skagit Public Health noted “there may be certain settings where wearing a mask makes sense, like when caring for someone who is high-risk, if you are sick, if you’re in a location where social distancing isn’t possible or if you are not fully vaccinated.”

The statewide outdoor mask mandate ended last week.

“While caution is still needed, we are entering a new phase of the pandemic,” Inslee said. “Vaccination remains our most essential protection against severe illness and death from COVID-19. It’s also crucial to prevent our hospitals from being overwhelmed again. If you’ve been procrastinating, now is the time to get the shot.”

March yard waste pick up

The Town’s Public Works Department will be picking up yard waste March 21-25. The crew will pick up small branches, clippings and other yard waste, but cannot take large limbs, grass clippings or anything in a plastic bag. If you live within La Conner’s town limits and are interested in scheduling a pick-up, please call Town Hall at 360-466-3125 by Thursday, March 17. Limit your one pile to 60 cu ft. e.g. 5’x4’x3’.



— Site plan courtesy of Harbor Mountain Development

Apartments. . . (from page 1)

plan is to hydro seed the scarp with native wildflowers. “I am excited about this project. I am going to build it and own it and I am going to keep it. I don’t know rental prices yet because I don’t have my budget total in order.” He projects leases will be moderate, saying “these are not high-end condos. I have to be able to rent them.” The most optimistic schedule is for a spring 2023 completion and move in. Probable target dates start with land use approval in March; then site review and architectural design through July, followed by utility work and rock excavation with construction starting in September, with roofs

on by the start of fall rains. Ebert has retained Carletti Architects of Mount Vernon in conjunction with Tim Hossner of RHO Architects in Seattle. BYK Construction of Sedro Woolley is planned as the builder. The Town of La Conner determined that significant environmental impacts are unlikely to result from the project and expects to issue a mitigated determination of non-significance on this proposal. Comments can be submitted through March 2, 2022. Comments should be as specific as possible. The application can be reviewed at Town Hall. Contact Michael

Davolio, 360-466-3125, planner@townoflaconner.org. A legal notice was published in the Feb. 16 Weekly News. Ebert bought Snapdragon Hill, off Whatcom Street and above Park Street, from brothers David and Michael Bird’s family in the fall of 2019. He developed the seven platted lots and sold them to BYK Construction in June 2021, he said. Snapdragon Flats is a totally separate project. Ebert resides in the La Conner area and is president of the board of directors of the Museum of Northwest Art. He has developed historic and waterfront properties, primarily in Everett.

Mavrik. . . (from page 1)

higher than the access road. As the dolly moved uphill, some wheels left the ground and the rear I-beam scraped the bridge deck. It was a tense moment. “One inch, scrape, a couple more inches, scrape, but they seemed to go for it and the dolly kept moving until it got on the barge,” Bradford said. “If the ferry had started to tip, they’d have done a world of hurt. It was a happy group when the boat was finally on the barge.” The Dunlap Towing tugs Rosa-

rio and Port Susan delivered the barge to Dakota Creek Industries in Anacortes. There a Syncrolift transferred the ferry to the water. Friday, the tugs guided the ferry back, mooring it near Mavrik. After the MV Dorado passes its March sea trials in the Puget Sound, it journeys to San Francisco under its own power. Thomas Hall, WETA public information and marketing manager, explained that plywood will be nailed over the windows near the bow, a measure to secure the

ship for its 36-to-48-hour trip. WETA is excited to christen the ferry at a public celebration in April, executive director Seamus Murphy said, welcoming MV Dorado to its fleet. “To say that I’m proud of our team at Mavrik is an understatement,” said owner Zach Battle. “What they have accomplished here in La Conner with the final product is amazing and so cool.”

Lorraine Loomis salmon habitat bill will now be a 2023 priority

By Bill Reynolds

The late Lorraine Loomis is gone, but not forgotten. Nor is the salmon habitat restoration legislation bearing the name of the longtime Swinomish leader, though it stalled in Olympia after public hearings in January, joining the vast majority of bills not advancing to floor votes. Introduced by State Rep. Debra Lekanoff, D-Bow, the Lorraine Loomis Act faced opposition from the agricultural community over concerns that farmers and private landowners would shoulder the financial burden and lose acreage in the creation of tree-shaded buffer areas along salmon streams. Supporters, however, have insisted that the legislation – a key element of Gov. Jay Inslee’s salmon recovery program – is not a “fish versus farm” measure and must be enacted to save salmon, the region’s signature migratory fish.

“Salmon are the keystone that supports dozens of other species of fish and wildlife,” wrote Ed Johnstone in his monthly “Being Frank” column last week. “Their survival and ours,” said Johnstone, who succeeded Loomis as chair of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission upon her death last summer, “depends on clean, cool, flowing rivers and streams.” Riparian habitat area is wooded land nestled along rivers and streams. Farmers told state lawmakers during the hearings that they support rebuilding wild salmon runs and restoring habitat areas. They wanted more input into the crafting of the legislation. Another problem, they testified, is that creation of riparian management zones under terms outlined in the bill would take significant amounts of farmland out of production – estimated at 30,000 acres in Whatcom County alone. In his February column, Johnstone responded. He said costs to farmers would be mitigated by state commitments that offer

financial assistance to those needing help complying. “Getting trees in the ground is the first step toward protecting riparian habitat,” Johnstone said, adding that “planting trees won’t put anyone out of business.” Climate change is a primary culprit when it comes to threatened wild salmon stocks. According to Johnstone, temperatures in Washington streams are the highest on record, along with an increase in temperature-impaired salmon stream segments. Thus the need to prioritize riparian habitat, contends Johnstone and the various environmental groups, such as the Orca Conservancy, that supported the act. Inslee announced his \$187 million salmon initiative, highlighting the Loomis legislation, during a Dec. 14 appearance at Swinomish. “We applaud the governor’s strong commitment to create climate resiliency in our salmon streams,” Swinomish Senate Chair Steve Edwards said at the time. Johnstone vowed continued endorsement of the Lorraine Loomis Act. “We understand that the bill is not progressing in the state legislature this year,” he said. “But that doesn’t mean the work stops. It can’t. We’re already behind schedule.”

Fire . . . (from page 1)

Reinstra could not confirm that. “We’re not 100 percent sure of the cause,” he said. Reinstra said he understood one person may have been treated by Fire District 13 personnel for a light burn that did not require patient transport. “The La Conner fire department did not treat anyone, but maybe District 13 did,” said Reinstra. District 13 Chief Wood Weiss was unable to respond to a request for comment before the Weekly News went to press.



Time to get boosted!

To schedule your appointment:
skagitcounty.net/COVIDvaccine

Need assistance?
 Call Skagit County Public Health:
(360) 416-1500

