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Wednesday, May 12, 2021

SEQUIM GAZETTE

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JCPenney to close in Sequim on Sunday

Retailer spent 101 years on peninsula

BY MATTHEW NASH
Sequim Gazette

This Sunday ends a 100-plus year run of JCPenney on the North Olympic Peninsula.

The liquidation of the Sequim JCPenney at 651 W. Washington St. ends on May 16 after progressive discounts went in place in January for clothes, housewares, fixtures and more.

This week, items remain 70-90 percent off retail prices with operation hours of 10 a.m.-7 p.m.

through Saturday and 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday, staff confirmed.

"It's getting sad as it clears out in here," store general manager Beverly Nelson said.

"I'm grateful to my team who has been able to stick with me."

Staff learned of the closure on Dec. 10 last year after new owners Simon Property Group and Brookfield Asset Management Inc. reported plans to close as many as 200 stores for financial restructuring, following the retailer filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

Prior to the announcement closure, Sequim's store employed about 35 full- and part-time employees, Nelson said. Now it employs 22 people with one of them transferring to the Silverdale JCPenney in Kitsap Mall, the next closest store to Sequim.

The JCPenney Styling Salon inside the Sequim store has also closed.

Nelson said of her 22 employees, she's trying to help nine people find new jobs.

Multiple staffers confirmed that customers continue to provide an

See JCPenney, A-12



Sequim JCPenney closes its doors at 6 p.m. Sunday, May 16, after more than 101 years between multiple locations in Port Angeles and Sequim. Sequim Gazette photo by Matthew Nash

Irrigation Fest turns 126

Organizers look ahead to live event in 2022

BY MATTHEW NASH
Sequim Gazette

And the fest goes on ...

Sequim celebrated its civic pride this past weekend with a slew of online events combined with an Innovative Arts and Crafts festival and a parade-turned-procession to celebrate the annual Sequim irrigation Festival on Saturday, May 8.

Julianne Coonts, the festival's first-year volunteer executive director, said the day of events went well.

"We had a lot of positive feedback and we were able to get all of our events out there," she said. "We had more participation virtually this year than last year, too."

This was the second year for the festival

See Fest, A-8



With emcee Stephen Rosales serving as virtual guide, the 2021 Sequim Irrigation Festival Grand Parade-turned-Procession makes its way through downtown Sequim Saturday afternoon. Festival royalty includes, from left, princesses Allie Gale and Zoe Kuperus, float builder Guy Horton, princess Sydney VanProyen and queen Hannah Hampton. Sequim Gazette photos by Michael Dashiell

Council members look to election

BY PAUL GOTTLIEB
Olympic Peninsula News Group

Current office-holders will crowd the Nov. 2 ballot for city council races in Sequim, according to interviews with those planning to register anew for positions during candidate filing week May 17-21.

Four of the Sequim City Council members running for election were appointed, making the fifth candidate running, Brandon Janisse, the only incumbent seeking a second term.

"I'm a glutton for punishment, I think," he said.

"You are living under a rock if you don't understand what's going on in Sequim right now."

Hiring a new city manager to replace the forced-out Charlie Bush is but one of the many challenges that Janisse is girding himself to face if he is re-elected, he said.

Janisse acknowledged being on the losing end of numerous 4-3 votes on a council that has "a very sharp divide," he said.

"Communication is also something I think that needs to be addressed with the council."

"It absolutely needs to happen to have a functioning council."

Janisse's top priorities include pursuing housing and getting a crime lab to locate in the city to address a backlog of criminal cases.

Sequim council members Rachel Anderson, Keith Larkin and Mike Pence were all appointed.

Sequim City Council member Sarah Kincaid, appointed the same night in April 2020 as Pence to fill out the unexpired term of Jennifer States, who resigned, said Friday she has not decided if she will seek the position but that she would make a decision after she met Friday with advisers.

See Council, A-13



ANDERSON



JANISSE



KINCAID



LARKIN



PENCE



Left: Eleanor Jones, who along with Emma Chapman represents Helen Haller Elementary School on the 2021 Sequim Irrigation Festival Junior Royalty court, waves to the crowd in downtown Sequim; her chauffeur is Jim Stoffer. Right: Jenny Preston of Chimacum's Snow Creek Leather works on a belt at the Sequim Irrigation Festival's Innovative Arts and Crafts Fair in downtown Sequim Saturday, May 8.



Mayor's T-shirt draws criticism, support

BY MICHAEL DASHIELL
Sequim Gazette

A photo of Sequim mayor William Armacost wearing a T-shirt with a profanity on it made the rounds on social media last week, prompting some criticism and some support for the city representative.

Armacost confirmed the photo was of him, taken recently while on a short visit to Costco.

The shirt reads: "This is the USA - We Eat Meat - We Drink

Beer - We Own Guns - We Speak English - We Love Freedom - If you do not like that get the f*** out." The shirt also features a

See T-shirt, A-13

Mayor William Armacost's T-shirt worn during a recent shopping trip has been posted on a variety of social media sites. (Editor's note: We have blurred a profane word on the shirt). It is not known who took the photo that prompted many social media comments and letters to the editor.



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Jim got his **NEW KNEE** at **OMC**



Read about Jim's experience at olympicmedical.org/JimsStory



Fire District 3 works with frequent 9-1-1 caller

Emergency call load up from 2020 so far

BY MATTHEW NASH
Sequim Gazette

Paramedics and firefighters with Clallam County Fire District 3 continue to work with a frequent caller and a few other Sequim area residents for abusing 9-1-1 for non-emergency incidents.

Assistant Fire Chief Dan Orr said in a phone interview that one unnamed man who lives on the 1000 block of Old Olympic Highway has called for aid assistance about 140 times since January for non-emergency reasons.

"It's gotten worse; he called that much for all of 2020," Orr said.

He said the man has been a persistent caller for more than two years

about issues, such as needing help out of bed and having his catheter emptied.

Orr said the man is "of sound mind" and appears he doesn't want to spend money for home health care, but he was admitted Sunday to Sequim Health and Rehabilitation with help from Capt. Derrell Sharp, the fire department's medical safety officer.

"Derrell has gone above and beyond," Orr said. "He has a good knack for creating relationships and having those discussions and laying out options."

A few days prior on May 4 at the fire commissioners' board meeting, District 3 Fire Chief Ben Andrews gave a chief's coin to Sharp for his ongoing assistance with the man.

"His unique talents led him to be successful in this," Andrews said.



SHARP

Fire commissioner Steve Chinn said he overheard a conversation between Sharp and the man and felt Sharp "empowered and helped him realize he had some control in his life."

Orr said the man's calls became so frequent that the fire district hired a collections agency for the first time after sending several letters indicating he'd be charged a fee for every call.

Andrews said the balance is about \$11,000 and the man is making an effort to pay it off with more than half paid as of May 4 with a payment plan being established for him.

Orr said Sharp has been working with the man to find additional financial assistance for medical care.

He said it's not uncommon for frequent calls to come from one address for short spurts, i.e. a person becoming ill and his/her partner is unsure how to handle it until they

"(Capt. Derrell Sharp) has gone above and beyond," Orr said. "He has a good knack for creating relationships and having those discussions and laying out options."

Dan Orr,
District 3 Assistant Fire Chief

establish care at home or in a facility with trained professionals.

Call load

April saw a large jump in calls compared to last year, Andrews reported to fire commissioners, but that he's not alarmed.

He reports the fire district received 729 calls in April compared to 530 in 2020 and 656 in 2019.

Andrews said the increase could be attributed to 9-1-1 being abused more and/or numbers going back to normal, pre-COVID-19.

Calls for service declined in eight months of 2020 (January to May, July, August and October) compared to 2019.

Orr said this year's numbers will be more comparable to 2019 as more provisions are lifted.

He added that with the booming housing market, Sequim's demographic appears to be aging as more older residents move to the area and potentially need emergency aid.

For more information about Clallam County Fire District 3, call 360-683-4242 or visit ccfd3.org.

T-shirt

From page A-1

skull decorated in the American flag colors along with two American flags and two handguns.

The photo was taken inside the Sequim Costco and posted on Facebook on May 3.

"I didn't know we had paparazzi," Armacost said in a phone interview Saturday, May 8. "I think we're in a low in society (when people) spy on you in your personal time."

Armacost said that if he had he to do over, he would not have worn the T-shirt.

"I regret I had the damn shirt on," he said Saturday. "I didn't think about the shirt I had on for a 10-minute run into Costco."

Among those sharing the post online was State senator Kevin Van De Wege.

A posting on KONP's Facebook feed, since taken down,

drew hundreds of comments. Armacost noted that many of those comments were in support of him wearing the shirt.

Armacost said the photo and corresponding criticism is spurred on by a group of locals in town who are jumping at the chance to levy negativity toward him. In recent weeks, a number of Sequim citizens have called on Armacost to step down (along with councilor Mike Pence for what they see are blatant discrepancies on Pence's resume).

"I'm not going to step down from anyone's attempt to shame me. I'm going to uphold constitutional rights that I have," Armacost said. "I'm not going to give in to a few goons ... who keep fanning the flames."

Armacost's comments about QAnon at a Coffee With the Mayor session on KSQM in August 2020 similarly drew criticism, drawing national media attention and

"I'm not going to step down from anyone's attempt to shame me. I'm going to uphold constitutional rights that I have. I'm not going to give in to a few goons ... who keep fanning the flames."

Mayor William Armacost

interviews, including CNN and most recently in Time magazine in mid-April.

"QAnon is perfect an example. I made it clear, I never supported it, I'm not a member. I simply suggested people take a look (at the information)," Armacost said Saturday.

"We're in America. We have freedom of speech ... (and) I have not stepped up to the role of public servant to do anything but preserve those rights for my grandchildren."

Armacost said he estimates he's lost about \$40,000 in business from the negative press

(Armacost owns a downtown Sequim salon).

"Obviously the hate component (is alive); we used to have a healthy debate," Armacost said.

City council meeting

At the May 10 Sequim city council meeting, Armacost addressed the T-shirt after a few Sequim area residents made remarks in public comments about his negative impact on the community by wearing it.

Armacost said his jacket was dirty after working on

a property, so he took it off before going into Costco.

"Unfortunately, I had no idea and was not even conscious of the fact of the T-shirt I put on that morning," he said.

The mayor said he attended an earlier Alcoholics Anonymous meeting with the shirt on.

He said during the pandemic, there's been a significant spike in suicides nationally and a rise in people turning back to alcohol locally resulting in deaths.

At AA meetings, he said people look to find common ground and that skulls, like the one on his shirt, are affiliated with Harley Davidson Motorcycles and say "we are all created equal."

"In an AA meeting, there is no one who has a higher rank than the other," he said. "We're there to share the same common experience and how we learn to deal with addiction."

"The balance of my intention when I put on that shirt at 5:30 a.m. was to make it easier for someone struggling with addiction."

Armacost said, "If I had been thinking I would have turned the shirt inside out."

He apologized to those who were offended saying he came from an immigrant family, his grandfather was an Irish immigrant and his family are products of "the American Dream."

"My experience is whenever I can lend a helping hand to a person that is struggling with addiction, I would do anything I can to help them," Armacost said.

He reiterated he regrets living in a time with paparazzi looking for any opportunity to have a "gotcha moment."

"If I had to do it again, I would not have put the shirt on," Armacost said. "I am deeply sorry for those offended by it."

Council

From page A-1

Kincaid ran an unsuccessful write-in campaign in November 2019 general election for States' seat.

Pence, who retired as a public works supervisor in Liberty, Mo., is filling the unexpired term of the late Ted Miller.

"Serving with some great people on common matters has been a great opportunity. I believe that my executive experience has been a help to my fellow councilors," he said in a statement announcing his candidacy on May 10.

In an interview last week, Pence also cited a need for the 24-7 emer-

gency medical facility.

"We need to have ways to have cost-effective housing by reducing building fees where it's more feasible for development to occur," he added. "We need to reduce some regulations and fees to encourage more businesses to locate in Sequim."

As for controversy focused on the City Council that led to a news segment on QAnon on CNN, "we just keep getting thrown under the bus," Pence said, blaming "an outside group that has no intention of making Sequim a better place to live."

The group, which he said he was unable to identify, "is trying to tear (the city) down and I don't know what their reasons are."

Larkin, a retired California fire

chief, was appointed in October to fill the unexpired term of Troy Tenneson, who resigned in August.

In a press release announcing his candidacy sent on May 9, Larkin noted, "My intent has always been to run for the City Council. This appointment gave me the opportunity to serve alongside some really first rate people early. I consider public service a privilege and a trust. I can never be about me or an ideology."

In an interview last week, Larkin said his familiarity with government operations "are skills I could probably bring to the council and help support what's going on in the city."

Larkin's "first and foremost" priority is hiring a new city manager followed by addressing the need for

affordable housing and fostering managed growth, he said.

He, too, cited the need for a 24-7 urgent-care facility.

Larkin said he recognizes much of the ongoing political disagreements are emotionally charged.

"Having worked in the fire service for 41 years, I'm pretty good about handling emotional situations," Larkin said.

Rachel Anderson was appointed Feb. 16. Three days later, the 30-year-old business college student, wife and mother of three registered her candidacy with the PDC.

"I love getting to hear public comments and reading all the emails from all the citizens and hearing their concerns," she said.

"It's no secret that most of the council is older than me, so I was kind of concerned that there would be kind of like a barrier as far as communication goes, but honestly, it hasn't been too bad. I've loved the job."

She said her family is low-income, allowing her to bring that perspective to her decisions to help those in need.

Affordable housing is the priority for her, as well as the 24-hour emergency clinic and small-business and environmental sustainability.

With filing week beginning in eight days, "it feels just like Christmas," Anderson said.

"I just want everyone to feel happy and to feel like faith and comfort, and that's a lot of my personal philosophy."

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