*From the editor* –

### Farmers, fish, trees, cold water

When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to John Muir everything else in the Universe.

Here is an editorial aimed to gain agreement from all sides for restoring riparian tree habitat to achieve robust, comprehensive, long-term and adequately financed investment into ensuring cold water for salmon migration waterways:

**President Biden** worse than Carter

LETTERS

Kevin McCarthy, the congressional house minority leader, was asked what he thought Joe Biden's greatest accomplishment in his first year in office was? His answer was that he managed to change Americans long held opinion of Jimmy Carter. Denny Sather

Greater La Conner

Costs of saving salmon

Gov. Jay Inslee recently patronized the Swinomish and other local Indian tribes drumming up support for the proposed Loomis Act, HB 1838. (Weekly News, Dec. 22) The act is intended to "save salmon" and would impose enormous costs on local farmers, landowners and taxpayers by requiring the planting of trees and vegetation on public and private lands bordering streams and waterways. The Skagit Valley Herald's lead article on Jan. 23, "Creating Division," addressed local opposition to the proposal.

Further, an opinion piece published in the Everett Daily Herald (Jan. 9) also argues just the opposite and that "Inslee has dug up a bad idea to protect salmon habitat. The real threat is urban development." The writer asserts that voluntary efforts and millions of tax dollars spent during the past 20 years doing the very thing the Loomis Act advocates has resulted in no measurable fish habitat gains ... and that "the vast bulk of damage to our watersheds comes not from farming (activity) but from urban development." In other words, repeating the same process and expecting different results equals insanity! It is highly likely that urban development will continue to occur throughout western Washington unabated, and that in 50 years or so, the entire Puget Sound region will look like the San Francisco Bay Area does today. This urban development will overwhelm any efforts at preserving fish habitat regardless

It should be noted that Indian tribes have no standing regarding state laws and are subject only to tribal law and federal statutes. Any concession the state makes is purely a gift, and Washington governors have been especially generous, e.g., Booth Gardner's "Centennial Accord" that gave Washington tribes a voice in state government; Christine Gregoire's self-serving decision to forgo federally prescribed tribal casino revenue sharing that has cost Washington taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars in lost revenue; and now Jay Inslee's support and promotion of the Loomis Act.

The issue boils down to which has priority, humans or fish? Ideally, we would choose to benefit both, but when that is not possible geographically or economically, human interests must prevail. Bruce Elliot

La Conner

of effort or cost.

- Ken Stern

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**ONLINE BUSINESS DIRECTORY \$175** FOR 12 WEEKS Town council members fill committee assignments

By Bill Reynolds

The newly formed La Conner Town Council began laying the foundation for 2022 by finalizing committee assignments and tightening up ordinance language related to hazardous buildings during its one-hour Zoom session last week.

New Councilmember Ivan Carlson, III flagged what he termed "broad" and "subjective" terminology in an ordinance section for abating structural dangers, questioning non-tangible references to infringements upon aesthetic and sensory standards.

"They're too broad," said Carlson. "I feel there would be unintended consequences. It might cause undue economic hardships on the working-class people of La Conner."

Town Administrator Scott Thomas agreed in principle, noting that the vague language could be eliminated without weakening it, that other sections more clearly define enforceable nuisance conditions.

"Our preference," Thomas said, "is for buildings to be maintained without the Town needing to go to the ordinance. At the end of the day, we need to make sure properties are safe."

Thomas said addressing overgrown grassy lots or garishly painted homes and buildings in the historic preservation district were not the primary purpose of the ordinance. "Excluding the language to which Ivan objects would be okay," he said, that nuisance situations have over time been defined by code and in

The council unanimously moved to do just that.

Members were also in a consensus-building mood in accepting committee assignments. Prior to the meeting, all had responded to a sign-up list in the prior two weeks to determine their preferred committees.

Only one minor shuffle was required when three - Carlson, Rick Dole and MaryLee Chamberlain – signed up for the two-member Streets & Safety committee.

Carlson volunteered to break the logjam.

"I'm really interested in the streets and safety committee," said Carlson, "but I'm confident Rick and MaryLee will do well there, so I'll shift to the park and port committee since I'm really interested in that, too."

The rest of the Jan. 25 agenda and discussion were a potpourri.

Mayor Ramon Hayes, responding to Dole, said he would facilitate council tours of the Town Public Works Department and wastewater treatment plant.

"It's a great first-hand learning experience into what's going on," said Hayes.

Hayes also said he had received an email from Dr. Brandon Atkinson, one of the principals of the investment group that has applied to develop an apartment complex behind The Slider Café. In that email, said Hayes, Atkinson refuted a letter in the Jan. 19 Weekly News stating that he and his partners were requesting a rezone of the property.

"He said that he hadn't asked for a rezone," Hayes said. "He said there is no interest in a rezone."

Thomas said the Town is looking for a code enforcement officer and will purchase a vehicle in the \$25,000 range for the position.

Dole commented on an increased Skagit County Sheriff's Office presence in town. That, said Hayes, is reflective of the new five-year expanded services contract the Town has signed.

Resident Jim Matthews asked about the status of both a proposed study designed to identify necessary upgrades at the treatment plant and plans by developer Greg Ellis to build homes behind Pioneer Market.

The Town is reaching out to engineering firms seeking proposals to conduct the treatment plant review. "The study will probably begin in the second quarter (of 2022)," Thomas said.

On the proposed housing development, Town Planner Michael Davolio said he is still awaiting a completed project application from Ellis. "He did submit some more information last week," Davolio said.

### February's king tides are here

This morning's 11.5 foot high tide at 6:49 a.m. and Thursday's 7:22 a.m. will be the highest this month, but an 11.4 foot high tide is scheduled for Friday morning with Saturday's 11.2 foot 8:25 a.m. tide finishing six days in a row of 11-plus foot tides on the Swinomish Channel.

The month ends with an 11 foot high tide scheduled for Sunday, the 20th, at 7:41 a.m. with 10.9 foot tides set for the 19th

Data from NOAA Tide Predictions: tidesandcurrents.noaa.

#### **Get free at home COVID-19 tests**

The federal government is providing four free at-home rapid antigen COVID-19 tests to every home in the U.S. The kits started shipping last week and are being delivered by the U.S. Postal Service. Orders will ship in 7-12 days. Order at: covidtests.gov.

Washington state has exhaust-

ed its supply of free COVID-19 tests it will ship directly to households at no cost. The state Department of Health advises watching its social media channels for updates; it expects more tests soon. The state website: sayyescovidhometest.org.

#### **LETTER POLICY**

Please write! Letters up to 350 words are welcome as are longer analyses and statements. Write a 450 word guest column.

Deadline: 5 p.m. Sunday for next issue.

Include your name, address and phone number for verification. Letters are edited for civilty clarity and style.

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## **Contact your District 10 legislators:**

Musings – on the editor's mind

Remember the sun? It was out for a bit in mid-January. Then, a

ing cold, damp and gloom, the days of fog extending into weeks,

bringing more morning cold, damp and gloom. It becomes hard to

believe, as Thoreau wrote, "But alert and healthy natures remember

But it does. Even if February's morning starts continue the over-

cast and damp handed off by January, know that we have made it.

When the sun is out, even as a white ball on the other side of cloud

sunsets, the higher angle of the sun and its more northerly creeping

out of the southern sky? Winter is not over but the darkest, shortest

Yes for the glorious last month of winter. Every year, come No-

vember, my step slows and my frown lengthens with the obviously

advancing earlier sunsets and the longer nights. The next eight weeks

- over now - are a long slow crawl, the winter, if not of my despair,

certainly of darkness, coldness and accompanying gloom. No won-

der throughout December we welcome lights on trees, indoors and

can see for ourselves, if not today, some days, and more of them,

But alert and healthy natures remember that the sun rose clear. We

out, on fences and rooflines and look to Santa so.

cover, do you see in it the brighter light, the softer shadows, the later

weekend turning into a week, and then more, of morning fogs, bring-

Sen. Ron Muzzall: 360-786-7618; ron.muzzall@leg.wa.gov

soon, perhaps by this week's end.

that the sun rose clear."

days of the year are.

Rep. Dave Paul: 360-553-4226; dave.paul@leg.wa.gov

Rep. Greg Gilday

360-939-1211; greg.gilday@leg.wa.gov

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Editorial –

## **COVID** status quo, still

Americans are indomitable. From sea to shining sea our spirits are resolute and our hopes are high. We want heroes. We want to win every battle and defeat every foe. How can it be that we are entering month 15 of the coronavirus pandemic?

We have long looked to Gov. Jay Inslee to lead us out of the restrictions of 25% capacity of seemingly everything and to loosen the yoke stifling businesses, especially on restaurants, which lengthens tourists stays in La Conner.

Tuesday Inslee gave the state's residents and businesses

a gift, providing a two week pause, keeping most counties in Phase 3 of his Roadmap to Recovery plan even though new COVID-19 cases continue to rise. They are dramatically up in Skagit County. April's 494 cases are a 130% increase from

No, we have not conquered the pandemic, not statewide and

not in Skagit County.

As County Public Health Officer Dr. Howard Leibrand pointed out in a phone call yesterday, besides our physical health. the state of our mental health is increasingly an issue. "The biggest thing he is looking at is the negative effects on our mental health, the negative effects on civility in general. I don't think that going from Phase 3 to Phase 2 would have done the trick. What will do the trick is to get vaccinated."

So, we can all breath a sigh of relief. Do that outdoors, in a small gathering, with some distance between people.

It is clear that the governor and state public health officials are balancing mental and economic health, and are well aware of our civil health, our willingness to get along with neighbors of disparate beliefs. The pandemic is not over. Everyone is not vaccinated, but everyone is tired and there is clear recognition of a social fabric that is frayed.

It is not good that Inslee has continuously revised his regulations on restrictions this year. He constantly refers to public health data and yet three times since January has changed or paused on his own guidelines. His words now create a kinder interpretation that does not align with hard data. Cases are going up throughout Washington state.

The push-pull between opening up and increases in infections is real and continues.

Meanwhile, more people are vaccinated, especially on the west side of the Cascades. The state reports over 110,000 doses have been given in Skagit County. That does not mean 55,000 people have two doses, but perhaps better, perhaps more than half the county's 130,000-plus residents have had

Health professionals and politicians are in lockstep that the way to beat back the pandemic is vaccination. More doses are available weekly. Everyone 16 and older is eligible. The shots are free. The route to recovery is through a needle.

### Musings – on the editor's mind

By the numbers. The cliche is life is a numbers game. Start with 19. COVID-19 stands for coronavirus disease 2019. The year the virus appeared is part of its name.

The favorite number for restaurants is 200. The hope has been that new infections would stay below 200 new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 people in Skagit County in a two week period. That is one-half the magic combination to allow restaurants to continue to seat inside diners at 50% capacity.

The twin metric to beat is five hospitalizations per week.

Skagit County has not struck

out becasue Gov. Jay Inslee and the state health department jiggle and modify their rules. Skagit County counted about 500 total new coronavirus cases in April. The state pegged the county's new cases at 267.5 per 100,000 May 2. That number rose steadily throughout April.

New April hospitalizations in Skagit County were 34, more

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"Since 1913"

than one a day, way above the five The numbers add up but Inslee

kept the county in Phase 3. We are not being returned to Phase 2 at week's end. It remains one of 19 counties, 49% of the 39 counties, with rates of new infections above 200 per 100,000 residents.

Inslee scheduled the next evaluation for May 3, with changes in counties status to take affect May 7. The counties got one more day to prepare when Inslee made May 4 the update date.

The pandemic affects us all. Our children are growing up in the time of the coronavirus. School has changed dramatically in every way, with high school sports completely upended. The superb high school volleyball team had won back-to-back championships in 2018 and 2019. The girls basketball team finished second in March 2020. Most of the players are in school this year. Alas, zero is the number of tournaments for statewide championships in which La Conners high school teams will complete.

Here is a personal number 199. This is the 199th issue of the La Conner Weekly News printed under my ownership. Nine more to 208, finishing my fourth year of publishing. Then, on July 1, the first day of the seventh month, year five starts, in the middle is the second year of the world's most terrible pandemic since the 1918-1921 three year flu pandem-

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#### • LETTERS •

#### No unrepresentative mandates

No Taxation without representation. Remember that slogan? It played a big role in the birth of the United States. Even the most reticent history student must know that a representative government, one "... deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed," is a central feature of both the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.

However, what has taken place on both the state and federal level since early last year is that the president and many, if not all, governors were handed, by the respective legislatures, an authoritarian power. That means, by definition and in reality, that with all the COVID-19 mandates we have been being subjected to government without representation. Should such an abdication of representative responsibility ever be permitted?

All the closed businesses, all the lost jobs, all the isolation, with all the harmful effects which have occurred along with it, have been by authoritarian dictate. That is exactly what America's founders sought to escape and avoid. What has been determining the mandates is not the observations, the realities and wishes of the people, but numbers on a page manipulated by statisticians and bureaucrats. Our "data daddies" is how I have heard one Seattle radio talk show host refer to them. They are amplified by a media all too eager to support the authoritarian real-

Would we still be experiencing, would we ever have experienced, the sweeping shut-downs that have been taking place if the reference point for the severity of the COVID-19 impact and all subsequent reactions had been based on the perceptions, needs and desires of the people of Washington rather than tests and spreadsheets? How much more authoritarian "caretaking" can our communities survive?

It is time, past time, our representative governmental functions be fully restored. Ken Dunning

Mount Vernon

#### Get vaccinated now

July 4th is a proposed vaccine deadline for public service personnel. It is time to get vaccinated. Plan ahead and just get COVID-19 contained.

Taxes pay for police, military, healthcare, fire, education, ambulance, clerks, judges, all city state and federal workers. No reasons to avoid your work unless you are recovering from an upper respiratory problem on shot day (Best Life). Enjoy working? This is job security.

If you have a weak immune system or are in a medical procedure, ask an MD. This free vaccine saves lives above a 90% rate CDC/Fauci report. Still wonder? Ask any MD.

Once you get the shot/s a new freedom might be felt. Everyone you serve will be safer as will your family, friends and strangers. Notice WSU and other colleges are taking care.

Take good care of yourself and thank you. **Dundas Winn** 

Mount Vernon

### **Maple Avenue** water shutoff

La Conner Public Works will be replacing the fire hydrant on Maple Avenue and Caledonia Street May 10- 12.

The water shut off from Myrtle to Caledonia streets will be 8 a.m.-2 p.m. May 11 Questions? Call Todd Park, public works: (360)770-4536.

Source: Town of La Conner

### A path to healing our divisions

By Fr. William Treacy

I read with great interest the article of March 22,2021 in The Seattle Times. The headline said, "A Christian Vision of Social Justice." From previous columns I had learned that the writer, David Brooks, is of the Jewish faith but is very ecumenical, as the article indicates. His approach for division "is based on the idea that we are all made in the image of God. It abhors any attempt to dehumanize anybody on any front." He then tells us, "Christian social justice emphasizes the importance of memory.

Today, many Americans are trying to tell the true history of our people, a tale that does not whitewash the shameful themes in our narrative nor downplay the painful but uneven progress - realist but not despairing.' The article then moves to a discussion of sin. He writes, "Rac-

ism is not the problem as much as sin." Then, in Christianity, as in Judaism, "we must confess the sin, ask for forgiveness for the sin, turn away from the sin, and restore the wrong done .... If racism is America's collective sin then the tasks are: tell the truth about racism, turn away from racism, offer reparations for

He then adds the names of some of those who have worked for social justice, such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and John Lewis in America, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Germany, who gave his life

He quotes Esau McCaulley, a New Testament professor at Wheaton College, who asks, "Why is forgiveness required again and again? Why is forgiveness heard but the demand for justice ignored? When the Church is at its best it opens up the possibility of change, to begin again.'

This article recalls for me fourteen years on KOMO TV with the late Rabbi Raphael Levine and different Protestant ministers discussing issues of the day. It was at a time when many Americans were unhappy that John F. Kennedy, a Catholic, was seeking to be president. We also discussed Christian-Jewish relationships. I often felt embarrassed by past Catholic policy toward Jews. I was very pleased when 2,000 Catholic bishops, with the Pope, on Dec. 7, 1965, declared "that the human person has a right to religious freedom" and further declared that "the right is based on the very dignity of the human person." Rabbi Levine and I started an interfaith camp in Skagit County,

which operated for fifty years until it was sold to Camp Korey in 2016. He died in 1985 but by that time we had agreed "that we must lead both Jews and Christians to admit that all our faiths are limited epressions of that total religious understanding of humanity. Hence, in a spirit of humility, and conscious of our uniqueness, we must stand ready to learn from each other as well as together from other religions.

David Brooks sums it up by saying "This vision has a destination, and thus walks not in bitterness but in hope." Father Treacy will be 102 years old this month.

### **Town Council reviews local** infrastructure priorities

By Bill Reynolds

Town of La Conner officials made fast work last Tuesday of major capital project priorities that are sure to be years in the

Technology glitches, which made audio reception iffy at best for much of a 35-minute April 27 Town Council Zoom meeting, shortened discussion of plans related to an array of topics from replacing the aging Channel Drive water main to the long-sought ring dike north of the La Conner schools campus to anticipated state mandated upgrades at the wastewater treatment plant.

Channel Drive, an immediate need, garnered the greatest atten-

"In the past year we've had three breaks out there that have been a real pain to work with," said Town Public Works Director Brian Lease.

Lease noted that the Channel Drive/Skagit Beach water system was initially maintained privately, then eventually conveyed to

But now, he said, the failing water line has reached its life ex-

"There are a lot of complications," said Lease, "because of encroachment of landscaping Lease recommended, and the

Council agreed by a 4-1 vote, to undertake a right of way survey in preparation for future construction of a new main.

"The survey needs to happen before we can get into the design phase," Lease said.

Actual construction could approach \$1 million, according to Lease. How it will be paid, whether by a grant or some degree of a

(Continued on Page 5)

### **SBA Restaurant** Revitalization Fund

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Small Business Administration is taking registrations for the Restaurant Revitalization Fund. The online application will remain open to any eligible establishment until all funds are exhausted.

In the first 21 days, the SBA will prioritize funding applications from businesses owned and controlled by women, veterans and socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. All eligible applicants are encouraged to submit applications as soon as the portal opens. Following the 21 days, all eligible applications will be funded on a first-come, first-served basis.

Established under the Amer-

ican Rescue Plan, and signed into law by President Joe Biden March 11, the Restaurant Revitalization Fund provides a total of \$28.6 billion in direct relief funds to restaurants and other hard-hit food establishments that have experienced economic distress and significant operational losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This program will provide restaurants with funding equal to their pandemic-related revenue loss up to \$10 million per business and no more than \$5 million per physical location. Funds must be used for allowable expenses by March 11,

Information: sba.gov/restaurants. Source: SBA

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Editorial –

## Loose lips still sink ships

During World War II the U.S. government promoted the campaign "Loose Lips Sink Ships," engaging the public to protect the country - ourselves- challenging us to review our thoughts before speaking: without self-reflection people might let slip information the Germans and Japenese could use to their advantage in the war. Citizens were united in fighting an enemy that could kill their families, friends, co-workers and neighbors and defeat the nation. Lives were at stake and shortening the war was every-

Today the uncovered lips of our fellow citizens pose the same threat to the health and security of every person in the United States. The coronavirus pandemic – pandemic means worldwide epidemic and epidemic means out of control community disease spread - has every country worldwide battling to save their citizens. Public health is exactly that: its definition is, simply, the health of the entire community. When political leaders and idealogues thump their chests, beat on podiums, wave banners to "unmask the children" and organize rallies against school leaders, they are dragging red herrings and waving bloody shirts. They are not addressing the public health tragedy that has killed their constituents in every county in the country and filled to overflowing the beds of hospitals in every state.

The unmaskers have as much right to their position as those who found witches in 17th century Salem. They have as much evidence as the witch hunters did in that cause and today are bringing immeasurably more damage.

Freedom of belief is one issue. It belongs in this public health crisis like a bathing suit at a high school prom. People need to prepare and dress appropriately for every

No one has to wait history's judgment for the Republican response to the coronavirus pandemic. Whether they win control of Congress in 2022 or win the presidency in 2024, our children will not crown them with success. This will not be looked back on as their shining moment in the sun.

Cartoonist Gary Trudeau started drawing then President Donald Trump with blood on his hands last September in every panel in which he placed him. The Republicans may win and rule every election till kingdom come. In the long term no one will judge their campaign of promoting lose lips in public a success. Whatever their short term gains, they have betrayed the people they want to rule.

### Musings – on the editor's mind

Is the editor of the La Conner Weekly News a crank and a scold? Does he – me – criticize the town council unfairly, randomly or casually, without cause? Do I have an agenda or a vendetta?

I do, actually. Let me propose that I am just doing my job, sometimes more aware and sometimes less. My failure to pay attention earlier to all the details and the players around the sale of the Hedlin ballfield property has sharpened my focus. Then I was not on top of the issue, as your local newspaper editor has to be.

What does the newspaper's editor need to be doing at government meetings? Show up, having read the agenda and supporting documents ahead of time. Watch. Listen. Take notes. Go back to the office. Reflect. Connect past and present dots. Think. Present the facts. Report. Share the connected dots in an analysis.

Just paying attention and taking those steps is doing my duty, as in the old days, when the press was called the community's watchdog,

I almost never think about my dad, but he came to mind after the last council meeting. He was a career journalist, the last 20plus years as editor of the Toledo Union Journal, a labor weekly published by the Jeep local of the

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"Since 1913"

United Auto Workers.

He chose to cover city council, keeping the 10,000 members and their families current with local government.

In the 1960s Toledo was a union town with primarily Democratic Party elected officials. One day my dad's boss, the regional UAW director, told him to stop covering council. Maybe the issue was fair housing. Maybe it wasn't. What was certain was that my dad's critical reporting of council meetings did not sit well with council members.

I don't know who told me that. Not my dad. He never shared anything. I was 15 in 1970. I probably heard that story years

My dad had a strong integrity. He took pride in his work. He probably paid attention to details and connected the dots, because that is the job of the press. Over time facts create a pattern and from that there is perspective and actions come into focus.

It is not a matter of council members being good people or bad people or kind of unkind. It is matter of reporting what they say and do, meeting after meeting and month after month. It is a matter of paying attention.

#### Masks ...

(Continued from Page 1)

Jo Wolfe, director of the Skagit County Historical Museum, sees the possibility of case "numbers will continue to rise and we will have to totally shut down again."

Jensen, a naturalist, noted that without a very high percentage of a vaccinated population providing herd immunity "it was only a matter of time for the variant to spread faster than the original virus. As for the future, we hope that those who haven't been vaccinated, will have this done and we can put the pandemic behind us! Otherwise variants will still develop and we're in an endless circle. It depends on this outcome how our businesses in town will be doing in the future!"

#### LETTERS

#### Pushback against editorial

Ken Stern, editor and publisher of the La Conner Weekly News, seems determined to demonize the town administration, mayor and town council members in at least two areas: the Maple Avenue ballfield transaction and now parking fees for the new library.

In a scathing editorial Aug.18 he paints an (incorrect) depiction of myself and fellow councilmen Bill Stokes delaying start of construction of the library by trying to extract parking fees for the code, which requires 10 excess (additional – ed.) parking spaces which future operation of the library will require. Au contraire ... Mr. Stokes and

I were requesting more information on the financial impact to the town if the requested deferral was approved. When the discussion was tabled for further discussion/ fact-finding and upon hearing that this process would delay project start, Councilmember Stokes and I immediately requested an expedited discussion so as to minimize the construction schedule impact.

Mayor Hayes then suggested we join a previously scheduled meeting the next morning that would include the library project team. We both dutifully attended the next morning and a satisfactory agreement amongst all parties was achieved. There was no delay of the project's start attributable to our efforts to protect future necessary town revenues and to maintain conformance with an existing code.

Speaking on behalf of myself, Mr. Stokes and our other council colleagues, we serve on the town council to collectively protect and further the town's overall inter-

Come on Ken Stern: please stop needlessly stirring the pot of animosity where there is none. John Leaver

Town Council Position 2

### **Gem retires**

(Continued from Page 1)

to get her talking. It's worth the effort." Gem has been passionate about

building the large print section. Though officially retired, she was visiting the library the other day, when a woman came in looking for large print books for her 92-year-old mother. Gem went right over and asked her a few questions about reading preferences and then started making suggestions. The woman left, happily loaded with eight or nine books, saying: "This will keep my mom busy for a week!" Gem said quietly, "I just love doing that."

### Bid now at **Rotary Club** auction

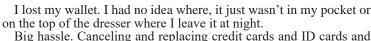
The La Conner Rotary Club's annual auction starts today, going live at 7 p.m. The best pack-

ages await your bids. The silent auction started Aug. 18. It closes 12 p.m. Thursday.

This year's theme is "Harvesting Hope" for La Conner students, local families, local communities and projects abroad. Funds raised will go to targeted project, with the majority going to local support.

Register at https://rclcf2021. ggo.bid.

# If I ran the zoo



Big hassle. Canceling and replacing credit cards and ID cards and

my driver's license.

Oh, let's not forget the \$400 plus I had in cash in that wallet. For starters, I got a new wallet and I carried my passport in it so I

had one form of ID. I got new credit cards and spent time at the DMV waiting in line to apply for a new driver's license. Got it all done. Big sigh of relief and then, a month later, I lost my

new wallet! And my passport! A few hundred more dollars wasted.

It took me a week or so to get over my frustration and self-incrimination. And while sitting in front of the television, my puppy Rosie drags the original wallet out from underneath the sofa and it's chewed up with cards beyond recognition. Needless to say, I must have left my wallet on the coffee table where Rosie could easily reach it.

Soon after, I sold my house at Lake Tyee and there was a really nice piece of art that the woman who had sold me the house left on the wall just above a book case. When I resold it, I decided one good deed deserves another so I left the same small painting on the wall, totally forgetting that I had hid my new wallet there so neither my dog nor any of my human visitors could get their hands on it. Several days later I get a call from the realtor saying the woman

who purchased my place found the wallet behind that painting. And passport. And a few hundred dollars in cash.

when you are moving from one house to another. But I forgot to make

There's a thing called a "dummy check" you should always do

a mental note that I had stashed my wallet away and moved out of that house without doing a dummy check. I profusely thanked the young woman who bought the house from me and I somehow managed to combine the two lost wallets into one. There is an old saying that "no good deed goes unpunished" and originally that was the case for me. I left a nice painting on the wall

second wallet and passport. But, this is a story with a happy ending because of the fact that the wallet ended up back in my pocket.

for the new buyer to claim as her own and that caused me to lose my

Both of them, And my passport. So a good deed can indeed go unpunished and even rewarded and the storyteller here has learned to be much more careful and much more conscious about where he puts

Now I narrate whatever it is I'm doing if it's something that is important. As I'm writing this column, my wallet is in my front left pocket and it will be high up on the bedroom dresser when I'm asleep, out of reach from my darling dog Rosie so she can't rip it up and hide it under the sofa.

### **County rent assistance** website launched

Skagit County residents have a convenient option to get pre-approved for help with rent and utility bills. Monday the County launched a new online portal where renters can complete a simple eligibility survey and get matched with a rental assistance provider, or complete an application for assistance. Access the portal at www.

skagitcounty.net/renthelp.

The Skagit County Rental Assistance Program provides financial assistance to income-eligible Skagit County renters, and their landlords, who may be struggling to afford rent and utilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Skagit County Rental Assistance Program is made possible by an \$8.9 million grant provided by the Washington State Department of Commerce and funded by the Treasury Rent Assistance Program (T-RAP). The program is intended to prevent evictions during the ongoing COVID-19 health crisis by paying past due and current/future rent and utilities for people needing relief.

'We know that many Skagit County residents have been impacted by COVID-19, and some are having trouble staying current on rent," said George Kosovich, Skagit County Public health analyst. "Help is available, and we are hopeful that the new online portal will make it easier for residents and landlords to connect up with rental assistance providers."

Households must meet all four of the following screening criteria to be eligible for rental assis-

- Someone in the household has been unemployed for at least 90 days, or experienced a reduction in income, incurred significant costs, or experienced financial hardship during the COVID-19
- ing housing instability or risk of housing instability, which may include unpaid rental fees or anticipation of inability to pay fu-· Household income is at, or

• Must be currently experienc-

- below, 80% of Area Median Income.
- · Household resides in Skagit County.

Rental assistance providers available after completing the eligibility survey are for residents, including young adults and farmworkers, including:

- FORWARD Online Applica-· Housing Authority of Skagit
- County Volunteers of America Western Washington
- · Community Action of Skagit
- · Catholic Community Ser-

vices Farmworker program

 Northwest Youth Services Three organizations will offer outreach and extra assistance to

complete the online assistance

application: • Skagit Legal Aid

· Community to Community Development

• Parent to Parent Information and to check eli-

gibility and apply for assistance: skagitcounty.net/renthelp or 360-Source: Skagit County govern-

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