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# LA CONNER WEEKLY NEWS

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WHEN IT POURS THE SAMISH RIVER FLOODS – Rain from last week’s storms added up to the Samish River cresting Nov. 15 at 14 feet. Chuckanut Drive was closed near Allen West Road. The next day, Tuesday, Ezra Fowler, right, was canoed by his landlord, Ken Vonnegut, to the dry part of the road. Vonnegut had first brought Marissa Conklin out from the couple’s apartment. Story page 5.

– Photo by Marissa Conklin

## Power outages darkened Valley during storm last week

By Bill Reynolds

Last week’s local flooding and storm conditions were bad. Still, as anyone who was here in 1990 can attest, it could have been worse.

Far worse.

Then, Rexville Grange was converted to an emergency staging area for National Guard members called in to provide relief on Fir Island, which witnessed mass evacuations after a 100-year-old Skagit River dike broke, inundating the area.

Fast forward to last week and impacts from relentless rain and high winds in and around La Conner and Skagit County were again severe and stressful, but less so than was the case 31 years prior.

“If you haven’t done so, be sure to thank your dike and drainage commissioner,” Washington State University Skagit County Extension Director Don McMoran said in a public social media post last Tuesday. “The system isn’t perfect, but things are so much better than in 1990.”

Town of La Conner Administrator Scott Thomas concurred, noting that Skagit dike districts closely monitor their infrastructure during flood events, lessening the chances of unexpected and catastrophic levee failures.

That’s not to say effects – and in some cases, hardships – weren’t felt this time around, too.

For instance, Marissa Conklin, the Weekly News sales representative, a Bow resident, had to hail a ride in a canoe to flee her flooded home.

“My fiancé and I had to canoe through

the flood waters so we could leave our house,” she said. “Our landlord picked us up from our backyard in the canoe and paddled us to the dry part of Chuckanut Drive. My fiancé and I had to take turns being in the canoe, so we didn’t tip it over from our weight. I held my dog on my lap!”

Once they reached dry land, the couple was picked up by Conklin’s father.

Dealing with high water for hours on end got to be too much, she said.

“We didn’t want to stay at my house anymore,” said Conklin, “because we needed to go grocery shopping and my dog needed more space to go to the bathroom.”

Meanwhile, farmers on Fir Island were forced to hastily move equipment, the Rexville Grange became a John Deere parking lot. Low-lying rural roads were closed to through traffic; surging, choppy water from Swinomish Channel lapped repeatedly onto a south end La Conner sidewalk; parts of Dodge Valley near the Skagit River’s north fork resembled lakefront property; and high winds across Swinomish Reservation downed trees over power lines, causing extended outages.

Gusts over 50 mph nearly toppled a semi-truck on Deception Pass Bridge. The teetering rig eerily came to rest against the span’s railing.

Emergency responders and those tasked with restoring power were put to the test round the clock.

A crew from British Columbia working non-stop to fix power outages in western Skagit County enjoyed a brief respite Thursday, taking in a meal at the La Conner Pub & Eatery before starting

another 24-hour shift.

As during last February’s windstorms, many La Conner businesses and residences went extended periods without electricity.

“We’ve been closed with the power outage,” Waterfront Café co-owner Marla Vallee, in the midst of planning the downtown restaurant’s annual community Thanksgiving Dinner, told the Weekly News Nov. 10, “but we got the word tonight that the electricity is back on.”

Others shared similar plights.

Pam Fields of La Conner Coffee was loaned a generator from neighboring business The Ginger Grater so she would have electricity to run her ice

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## Waterfront Cafe serving annual turkey day special

By Bill Reynolds

As the oldest town in Skagit County, La Conner takes pride in its traditions.

One of the best of those, it turns out, is also one of the more recent.

For the past 12 years the Waterfront Café downtown has hosted a free community Thanksgiving dinner with all the fixings.

Thanksgiving 2021 will be no exception.

“We’ll be open from 12-noon until 3 p.m. on Thanksgiving,” the Waterfront Café’s Chef Dagmar confirmed to the Weekly News last Thursday.

As always, everyone is invited to dine in or pick up take-out turkey day meals at no cost.

In lieu of payment, those so choosing may make donations benefitting La Conner Sunrise Food Bank and the NOAH Center in Stanwood, which facilitates adoptions of homeless pets, said Waterfront Café co-owner Marla Valle.

“I talked with Dagmar,” Vallee said, “and we’re going to split the donations between the food bank and NOAH.”

Also keeping with tradition, Town Councilmember Bill Stokes will prepare home-baked pies as desserts for the local feast.

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## Comment by Dec. 1 on proposed Center Street apartments

By Bill Reynolds

Tis the season for writing Christmas cards.

In La Conner, it can also be time to write Town Hall to comment on a proposed 20-unit apartment building on Center Street behind The Slider Café.

The deadline for such correspondence is drawing near, however.

Written comments are due by Dec. 1 in response to the formal legal notice of Application of Preliminary Determination of Non-Significance published in the Nov. 17 Weekly News.

The proposal calls for construction of a residential building of 14 long-term rental dwelling units and six units for short-term rental.

The structure would be built in the town’s commercial zone where it juts a block north of Morris Street. As such, the short-term rentals represent an allowable use, but long-term rentals would require issuance of a conditional use permit, according to Town Planner Michael Davolio.

The north side of Center Street and blocks adjacent to the proposed project site are comprised of single-family residences.

Project applicant is Ken Olsen, acting on behalf of owner KSA Investments, of Burlington, whose officers are Kate and Dr. Brandon Atkinson.

Atkinson has practiced dentistry in Skagit County for over 20 years. He owns La Conner Dental on Maple Avenue. Kate, his wife, designed the clinic’s distinct logo – an upside-down image of Rainbow Bridge that represents a wide smile.

The Center Street plan is the latest in a series of in-fill construction projects, such as Maple Field on Maple Avenue and atop Snapdragon Hill at Douglas and Whatcom streets.

In its published legal notice, the Town of La Conner has determined upon initial review that the Center Street proposal is unlikely to pose significant environmental impacts.

To comment on the proposal write Davolio at P.O. Box 400, La Conner, WA., 98257, or planner@townoflaconner.org.

### Holiday Closings Thanksgiving

#### November 25

Bank  
Buses, no service  
La Conner Weekly News  
Trash pick up, no service

#### November 25-26

Library  
Post Office  
Schools  
Town Hall  
County government offices



MAGICAL GOLDEN VALLEY SUNRISE SUNDAY – Sunrise, fog and swans gathered in standing water across from Snow Goose Produce made for a breathtaking combination. Four local photographers gravitated to the scene, each recording their interpretation of the magic Skagit light.

– Photo by Nancy Crowell



WILL THIS CHANGE BE CONTROVERSIAL? – Kate and Brandon Atkinson have an application in to the Town of La Conner to build a 20-unit apartment building on the corner of Center and Fourth streets. A conditional use permit must be approved for the proposed 14 long term units and six short term dwelling spaces.

– Photo by Marissa Conklin