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# LA CONNER WEEKLY NEWS

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**RECORD WEIGHT ZUCCHINI OLYMPIA GROWN** – Christianson’s annual pumpkin festival brought Cindy Tobeck, from Olympia, and other out-of-valley competitors. Tobeck took multiple wins: the largest zucchini, largest field pumpkin, second for giant pumpkin and second largest watermelon. The zucchini is a new national record holder. – Photo by Sarah Walls

## Folks flocked to Christianson’s Pumpkin Festival

By Kevin Pavoni

After the wind storm Friday night, John Christianson, owner of Christianson’s Nursery, wasn’t sure about the attendance at the next day’s annual Pumpkin Festival. After he spent all morning standing up plants and saving uprooted dahlias, Christianson found the large crowd “a bit of a surprise.” He said, comparing the day to 2019’s turnout, it was as good as they could expect, especially considering the days’ forecast was for rain. But the overcast broke around noon, with bright blue sky and white clouds all afternoon.

The winning pumpkin this year was grown by Team Gadberry from Spokane with a weight of 1,527.5 pounds. Cindy Tobeck, from Olympia, took second place. Hers weighed 1,452 lbs.

Glen Snodgrass, of Lynden, was third with his 776 pound pumpkin. Mount Vernon resident Steve Radich came in fourth, with a 694.5 pound pumpkin. Prize money was \$1,500, first place; \$750, second place; \$500 third place; and \$200, fourth place. The weight of the giant zucchini was not available.

Emma Christianson, the festival’s organizer, said while these numbers are not as high as some years, the fact that these pumpkins even survived the blistering summer was impressive. The second place winner even had an inverted stem due to the heat, she said, but miraculously survived and kept growing.

Farm Animal Rescue and Mentoring (FARM) with ambassador animals, was new. Three very talkative donkeys, some goats and a pig helped the day have a great farm feel to it.

The organization works closely with local organizations such as the Humane Society of Skagit Valley and Friendship House.

To find out more about FARM or hire them when a little more braying, is needed visit [farmanimalrescue.org](http://farmanimalrescue.org).

One family came all the way up from Mill Creek to see the pumpkins and have a family outing. Naveen, Harini and their son Aadvik Kumar were marveling at the large pumpkins and said they had been planning to come to the festival for over two weeks. When asked about his favorite part, Aadvik enthusiastically claimed that he loved seeing the “GIANT pumpkins!”

With lots of good food, pumpkins and squashes for sale and a corner of adorable farm animals, the 2021 pumpkin festival was a hit for all ages.

## Hedlin ballfield sale challenged as illegal

By Ken Stern

Was the Town of La Conner’s sale of the Maple Avenue ballfield property to developer Landed Gentry illegal? A letter from Bricklin & Newman, a Seattle law firm, to Brian Gentry dated Sept. 1 and delivered Sept. 7, advises that “your purchase of the property from the Town of La Conner was likely illegal, in violation of Article 8, Section 7 of the Washington Constitution.” The Town bought the property from the Hedlin family and then sold it the same day in April.

La Conner area resident Linda Clark asked the Bricklin firm to review “the applicable documents concerning the sales transaction of Hedlin Field” in August, based on her posting on the Nextdoor app Sept. 8. Bricklin attorneys apparently told Clark, she writes, “the citizens of La Conner possess a legitimate and viable legal claim against the parties involved in the sales transaction; and have the right to sue to undo the sale.”

Clark posted that Landed Gentry, as Maple Field, LLC, was to respond within seven days to a “compromise in order to avoid protracted litigation” offered in the Bricklin letter. That deadline has passed.

The group “Reclaim Hedlin Field” is represented by Bricklin, the letter says and they would forgo a lawsuit if Landed Gentry agrees “not to disturb or develop the Hedlin Field property for one year, giving them time to raise money to purchase the property for public use.” Seven-hundred-thousand-dollars is stated as the repurchase price.

Brian Gentry, in a phone call with the Weekly News Friday, declined to discuss the letter but said “We are trying to get started here hopefully before the end of September and hope to be done the end of October or the first of November” with initial site work. He said delays from August were due to “working through construction plan details between our engineer and the town engineer” and with his contractor’s schedule.

Town Administrator and Attorney Scott Thomas said he received a copy of the letter from Gentry’s attorney only later, but that the Town was not asked to take any role. He also confirmed delays in finalizing plans for connecting the project’s sewer lines.

Thomas suspects that Clark sent the “results of a huge public records request” she made to the Town to the Bricklin firm for them to build their case. He noted they “have a solid record on those kinds of cases” and called them “a well-established plaintiff’s land use/environmental law firm.”

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## Town council vacancy open for applications

By Ken Stern and Kevin Pavoni

The La Conner Town Council started the process for filling the vacancy left by Jacques Brunisholz’s resignation at its Sept. 14 meeting, but the eight week schedule they agreed to means whomever they choose will be approved Nov. 9 at the earliest. That is after the Nov. 2 election and only two council meetings before the 2022 budget will be approved Dec. 14.

While the only qualifications for council are being a town resident and a registered voter, council was presented by Town Administrator Scott Thomas with a 14 page packet. The town is required by law to advertise

the position for two weeks in the local newspaper before they can close applications. That ad is in this week’s Weekly News.

Councilmember John Leaver asked if they could interview at their Oct. 12 meeting after approving the process, but after members responded Thomas pointed out the Oct. 26 meeting would be the first opportunity to consider applications. No one endorsed his suggestion for calling special meetings to hasten the timeline. MaryLee Chamberlain wanted the seat filled sooner than later, but discussion revolved around application materials and the interview schedule.

Mary Wohleb called for no formal

application to make it easier to apply and then have councilmembers discuss issues at the interview. Leaver and Chamberlain endorsed applicants submitting a cover letter and resume. While Wohleb suggested interviews be done by Oct. 26, Bill Stokes’ call for council making the “final decision on applicants on the 9th of November” won the day, with applications due Oct. 15.

Thomas said two people had already submitted letters and resumes for the position.

Council approved 4-0 a resolution setting next year’s business license fees following their adopting Ordinance 1202 in August. Licenses will be purchased through the Washington state Business License Service. Council voted to expand to nine categories from four and base fees on business revenues rather than number of employees. See story, page 3.

Council also approved a \$2,000 contract for software services with Vision Software of Spokane.

Resident Matt May again asked council for changing the times of the noise ordinance for New Year’s Eve for a fundraiser dance for La Conner Live’s summer Sunday concerts. Russell Chandler, a resident representing La Conner Live, also spoke, requesting guests be allowed in Maple Hall until 12:30 a.m. and give organizers till 2 a.m. for cleanup. The facilities committee will meet to discuss it.

(Continued on Page 6)

## Fill out new Maple Park survey

By Ken Stern

Town and greater La Conner residents: Your answers to the 14 question survey on the purpose of the Town’s new 24,000 square foot park on Maple Avenue at Talbott Street will help shape its development. The survey was enclosed with the August utility bill. Those sent e-bills, via email, and everyone, can fill it out on the Town of La Conner’s website or print and fill out a paper copy.

Residents and the town’s park commission developed the survey, using public comments and results of the 2019 parks survey.

The website introduction says:

“Please help design La Conner’s newest park by completing this 5 minute survey.

“What type of park would you use?

“What type of park do you think would best serve La Conner’s needs?

“Your input is important!”

One response is allowed per household. Out-of-town residents are invited to complete it. The deadline is Oct. 1. Comments are asked for.

Start the survey by clicking on the anchor on the left side of the town’s website homepage: [townoflaconner.org](http://townoflaconner.org). Print a copy from the parks commission page on the town website. Questions, call: 360-466-3125.



**SLOW DOWN, YOU’RE MOVING TOO FAST** – Watch your speed on every La Conner Street and get clocked heading north, as here past Caledonia Street, or south near Laurel Street on Maple Avenue or on North Third Street. Those signs are on either side of Basin Road.

–Photo by Ken Stern

(Story on page 7)