

The Northern Light

May 6 - 12, 2021

Community Newspaper of Blaine and Birch Bay

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Blessing of the Fleet honors those lost at sea



▲ U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary member Gary Farrow lays the wreath at the Blessing of the Fleet ceremony on May 2. The annual ceremony resumed this year to pay tribute to fishermen who have died at sea, including 23 fishermen since the 2019 blessing. See more photos from the ceremony on page 10. Photo by Richard Sturgill

U.S. lawmakers call on help for Blaine company

BY GRACE MCCARTHY

U.S. lawmakers are calling on Congress to close loopholes that, if ignored, could lead to job losses for a Blaine manufacturer.

Lister Chain and Forge, at 3810 Loomis Trail Road, is the only domestic producer of anchor chains, according to a bipartisan letter 13 lawmakers wrote April 29. The letter, spearheaded by U.S. representative Suzan DelBene (WA-01) and signed by Rick Larsen (WA-02), asked Congress to change the language in the 2022 Defense Appropriations bill to close two loopholes that would allow the Department of Defense to outsource its anchor chains to foreign companies.

Lister Chain and Forge provides anchor chains to the majority of the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard's ships, according to the manufacturer's website, but lawmakers say the Navy is trying to cut costs by outsourcing 4.02-inch chains for the remaining ships in a new class of over 20 fleet oilers. Current law requires the Department of Defense to purchase anchor chains in the U.S. if the chain's diameter is 4 inches or lower. The previous contract manufactured 3-and-5/8-inch chains.

The second loophole, lawmakers argue, is the word "shipboard." The Department of Defense is required to purchase domestic shipboard anchor chains, but since the chains are not used aboard the vessels, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers argues the

(See Chains, page 2)

Drayton Harbor no shooting zone reintroduced in Whatcom County Council

BY GRACE MCCARTHY

Whatcom County Council voted 4-2 to reintroduce a proposed ordinance that would establish a no shooting zone in Drayton Harbor. The council also voted 4-2 to introduce a no shooting zone in the Dearborn area, near Drayton Harbor and Dakota Creek. Councilmembers Ben Elenbaas and Kathy Kershner were in opposition.

Although initially introduced to county council in 2019 after urging from the city of Blaine, the process to create a no shoot-

ing zone slowed during the county's outreach effort, and then Covid-19 hit.

Blaine city manager Michael Jones said governor Jay Inslee mandated last March that local governments only conduct necessary and essential work pertaining to the pandemic. Once county council was able to take action again, Jones asked the county in February to continue where it left off. But since the ordinance was dormant for an extended period, it needed to be reintroduced.

County council first discussed reintroducing the proposed Drayton Harbor ordi-

nance during the March 9 council meeting, when the separate no shooting ordinance for the Dearborn area was proposed. Both areas are known for waterfowl hunting.

"We would request that the [county] council take this matter back up and establish a no-shooting zone over the unincorporated portions of the harbor," Jones told county councilmembers during the March 9 county council meeting.

Jones said the city's stance remains the

(See Drayton, page 9)

Birch Bay library volunteers needed by May 14

BY GRACE MCCARTHY

The Whatcom County Library System (WCLS) is looking for volunteers to serve on committees for and against a ballot measure that would increase property taxes to support the Birch Bay Vogt Community Library. Those interested need to contact WCLS by Friday, May 14.

If passed in the November 2021 election, the Birch Bay Library Capital Facility Area (LCFA) ballot measure would in-

crease Birch Bay property taxes by about 13 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. For the average homeowner, this would mean paying about \$3.93 per month to build the library (the Whatcom County Tax Assessor's Office estimates median home values to be \$350,000).

Committee volunteers will prepare statements for the voters' pamphlet either supporting the measure or rejecting it. No more than three members will serve on each committee.

Friends of the Birch Bay Library (FOBBL), a grassroots group, helped secure a \$2-million state appropriation in 2019 to reduce the cost of the estimated \$6.5 million library. The appropriation depends on the community fundraising the remaining \$4.35 million and was set to expire June 30, but FOBBL was able to get an extension into the state's 2023 two-year budget, Perkins said.

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