

The Northern Light

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Community Newspaper of Blaine and Birch Bay

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August primary ballots mailed July 14

BY GRACE MCCARTHY

The Whatcom County Auditor's Office mailed August 3 primary election ballots to voters July 14.

The ballots should be delivered by Friday, July 23, but if they're not, Whatcom County auditor Diana Bradrick says people should contact the auditor's office for a new ballot.

Primary ballots have a fair number of offices in Whatcom County up for election including Blaine City Council and Whatcom County Council. North Whatcom Fire and Rescue, also known as Fire Protection District 21, has a ballot measure for a property tax levy.

Bradrick said the year following a presidential election typically yields a lower voter turnout, but she hopes voters will follow the record-breaking voting trend of 2020.

"Please vote," Bradrick said. "Return your ballot and get it returned on time. You don't have to vote for everything."

People are now allowed into the auditor's office, previously closed because of Covid-19, in the Whatcom County Courthouse at 311 Grand Avenue, Suite 103, in Bellingham. At the auditor's office, people may register to vote, update registration and get a replacement ballot.

Although people don't need to schedule an appointment, the auditor's office recommends people either call or email the office before visiting. Masks and social distancing are required.

The auditor's office will be open weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. July 14 to Monday, August 2 and from 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Election Day on Tuesday, August 3.

A voters' pamphlet with candidate information was mailed to households July 12.

Primary ballots need to be mailed and postmarked by August 3 or placed in a ballot drop box by 8 p.m. August 3. Drop boxes are located at Blaine Library, Custer Elementary School and the North Whatcom Fire and Rescue parking lot at 4581 Birch Bay-Lynden Road.

(See Election, page 13)

Runners race from Peace Arch Park



▲ Teams set to tackle the Ragnar Road Northwest Passage, a 200-mile relay running race from Blaine to Langley, send off their first runners at Peace Arch Park July 9. See more photos on page 4.

Photo by Ian Haupt

City council amends 2021-22 budget to include federal funds, intent to fix sewer pipes

BY GRACE MCCARTHY

Blaine City Council unanimously voted 6-0 during the July 12 meeting to amend the city's 2021-22 budget to include federal aid and commit \$6 million to fixing the East Blaine sewer system in 2022. Councilmember Charlie Hawkins was absent for the vote.

The city of Blaine will receive over \$1.5 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to help offset revenue the city lost due to the pandemic during 2020

and 2021.

Congress passed the \$1.9 trillion ARPA in March to help local governments with its \$360 billion Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Act Fund. The money will be delivered in two tranches: The first payment of \$782,591 was delivered in late June and the next payment of the same amount is expected by mid-2022.

The U.S. Department of Treasury requires ARPA funds be used to help close the gap for revenue lost during the pandemic. City officials estimated the city of

Blaine lost \$745,170 total during 2020; \$404,000 in general revenue, \$222,400 in street revenue and \$118,000 in lodging revenue.

Proposed ARPA allocations were presented to council in late April and then approved unanimously 6-0, with councilmember Eric Davidson excused, during the June 28 city council meeting. The city's budget was amended to account for the new-found money during the July 12

(See Budget, page 6)

Blaine and Birch Bay projects receive grants

BY GRACE MCCARTHY

Two Blaine projects have been green-lighted, thanks to recent grants the state allocated to the Blaine-Birch Bay Park and Recreation District 2 (BBBPRD2) and the city of Blaine.

Washington state's Recreation and Conservation Funding Board announced 342 grants totaling \$164 million to go toward recreation, conservation and to protect forests and farms. The competitive grants, announced June 30 by the state recreation

and conservation, are given every two years and were given from 10 state recreation and conservation grant programs.

"These grants are fundamental to keeping Washington the beautiful state it is," governor Jay Inslee said in a statement. "The funding comes from state and federal sources and is invested in hundreds of projects to give our kids places to play, ensure our food is grown close to home and keep our green spaces healthy for wildlife."

Of the \$4,889,260 awarded in Whatcom County, about \$1 million went toward two

Blaine and Birch Bay projects.

Blaine Marine Park

The Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) granted the city of Blaine \$500,000 for revitalizing the Blaine Marine Park through preventing erosion, creating lookout access and habitat for wildlife. The city of Blaine will give \$300,000, which had already been set aside for the project, to complete the project's proposed restoration cost of \$800,000.

(See Grants, page 15)

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