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# LA CONNER WEEKLY NEWS

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COMING SOON: THE LA CONNER-SWINOMISH REGIONAL LIBRARY – Last Wednesday the Friends of the Library’s Thrift Shop was demolished. Today at 1 p.m. a groundbreaking ceremony at the corner of Morris and Sixth streets marks the beginning of the construction of the new library. Finally!

*Photo by Nancy Crowell*

## New library’s construction starting

**By Ken Stern**

The future is being built for residents of greater La Conner with the start of construction of a “zero to 100” new La Conner-Swinomish Regional Library designed to meet the needs of new-borns’ mothers and their great grandmothers, says its project manager. The demolition Sept. 22 of the Friends of the Library Thrift shop marked the start of significant changes coming to the southwest corner of Morris and Sixth streets in La Conner.

After over a year’s delay due to the coronavirus pandemic, the now empty lot will be occupied by a 5,500 square foot building, twice the size of the current library, by June if the schedule is kept.

Be a part by joining the groundbreaking ceremony on-site at 1 p.m. today, Sept. 29.

That will be the most exciting and vis-

ible action this week. Contractor Tiger Construction, of Everson, will mobilize to the site in October, after they finish another project.

Project Manager Jeremy McNett of Underwood & Associates says it will be a slow start this fall, starting with an office trailer moving on site along with equipment. By the end of the year he expects the foundation to be in, the walls up and, “hopefully, have a roof over this thing in January.”

The quick assembling of the building will be due to using cross laminated timber, CLT. McNett described it as “a bunch of 2’ x 6’ boards glued together to make one solid panel.” He praised its acoustic and insulating qualities.

That it creates a very solid frame for the building is only one reason the material was chosen. It helps the project gain a silver LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standard. CLT framing is sustainable because it is

a renewable resource. It stores carbon. McNett ticked off other LEED features: low energy usage; LED lighting; solar panels; day light controls and sensors, very high efficiency mechanical equipment and the site’s urban location.

Once they start inside, he aims for the interior work to be finished at the start of April. “We are shooting for substantial completion by May 1st,” he said. By June 1 he projects staff will be moving in furniture, shelving books and preparing and working out all the bugs of their library software systems, as well as becoming comfortable in the new space.

McNett, an architect, likes the potential the library offers, calling it “a beacon for community togetherness. My hope is that this building will motivate other development within La Conner; I hope this triggers other people to invest the same kind of time energy and money to invest in improving the lives of the community.”

## No compromise on Maple Field development

**By Ken Stern**

The Town of La Conner did not violate Washington’s constitution in its purchase and sale of the Hedlin family’s Maple Avenue property last April. The lawyer for Maple Field, the Landed Gentry development company responded with a three page letter Sept. 15 to the Bricklin and Newman law firm representing the Reclaim Hedlin Field group organized by resident Linda Clark. Bricklin lawyer Bryan Telegin sent a Sept. 1 letter to Landed Gentry calling the sale “likely illegal.”

There will not be a “compromise of Maple Field agreeing to not develop the property for one year so that your client can attempt to raise \$700,000 to purchase the property from Maple Field in exchange for your client agreeing not to sue,” Holly Stafford, attorney with Chmelik Sitkin & Davis, wrote. Telegin has a “misplaced reliance” on the 1978 state Supreme Court case Lassila v. City of Wenatchee, Stafford wrote, and the firm “disagree(s) with your assessment.”

She asserts “the Town did not finance Maple Field’s acquisition of public property.”

Stafford’s point is “The lending of credit clause of the Washington Constitution is intended to prevent public funds from being used to benefit private interests where public interest is not primarily served.” La Conner did not take a financial risk, she writes, but “the opposite occurred – Maple Field lent its credit to the Town to acquire the Property.”

The property sale to Maple Field benefitted the public, she writes, because residents gained a park and the terms of the sale included ensuring “the Town maintains a supply of affordable housing” by limiting the size of the homes.

Two attorneys the Weekly News consulted with agreed that Linda Clark, organizer of Reclaim Hedlin Field, will incur significant legal expense if her attorneys pursue this case by filing the action in Skagit County Superior Court and asking the court to halt construction pending a hearing on whether the status quo should be maintained until a hearing on the merits could be held.

Clark would not speak on the record when asked about a two-page flyer that has been left at doors around town that summarizes “the Town’s intentions” and provides an almost two year timeline of events, quoting from town records. The appeal states “donations made payable to Bricklin & Newman, LLP, Subject line: Reclaim Hedlin Field.”

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## Council discussed law enforcement at budget hearing Tuesday

**By Ken Stern**

La Conner’s Town Council used the development of the 2022 budget to consider law enforcement options at its 5 p.m. budget hearing Tuesday. This often brought up topic at council meetings this year, has the group’s attention, with the Skagit County Sheriff’s Office \$331,000 contract up for renewal. Councilmember John Leaver has long questioned the value provided and some residents have shared that concern throughout the year.

When Mayor Ramon Hayes called the meeting Thursday, the 10 page packet Town Administrator Scott Thomas provided had two memos addressing public safety services and how those services may legally be provided:

- 1) continue to contract with the Skagit County Sheriff’s Department for law enforcement services;
- 2) contract with the Swinomish Tribal Community for law enforcement services; and
- 3) have police services provided in whole or in part directly by the Town of La Conner.

Thomas summarized three categories: criminal acts, traffic control and civil code enforcement. The sheriff’s office provided 2018 and 2019 La Conner crime statistics in 11 categories, grouped under property and assault. Thomas noted that property crimes – burglary, theft, and malicious mischief

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ANOTHER FALL MIGRATION ON THE WING – Summer was two days past last Thursday when these snow geese were spotted just before sunset at Fir Island Farms Reserve. Another photographer saw others the day before.

– Photo by Sarah Walls