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Fire Commissioners Defend Real Estate Deal, Consider Plans for Development

KPFD is in the first stage of developing a years-long capital improvement plan. Not everyone is happy.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

At its biweekly meeting Jan. 11, the Key Peninsula Fire District board of commissioners heard a proposal for development of the \$2.125 million worth of Key Center real estate it purchased in November and December and fielded questions from the public about the price and the plan.

David Fergus of the Bremerton architecture firm Rice, Fergus, Miller presented what he called an interim capital improvement plan for KPFD, incorporating research on existing facilities and the new properties with input from the district about its administrative and service space

needs. Ideas ranged from remodeling to rebuilding one or more stations, to building a new headquarters, meeting rooms and fire training facility on the newly acquired Key Center properties.

The presentation can be read on the KPFD website at www.keypeninsulafire.org under the board packet folder tab.

Commission Chair Stan Moffett said the commissioners would study the options and consult with the community before deciding what to price out. "We'll be developing some town meetings both by Zoom and hopefully live (where) people can let us know what their opinions are."

He estimated the planning process would take at least six months.

Some persistent questions about the decision to buy the real estate raised at

earlier board meetings came up again Jan. 11. The purchases include the Olson estate property, consisting of two parcels located almost immediately across KP Highway from the current fire headquarters, with a residence and a portion of the pasture behind it totaling 2.8 acres, and the Calahan property, site of the former O'Callahan's restaurant (aka Reed's and Buck's) located at the corner of KP

Highway and 92nd Street NW.

The Olson parcels were appraised at \$460,000; the department bought them for \$1.2 million on Dec. 15.

The Calahan property was not appraised or inspected, but the Pierce County Assessor-Treasurer tax valuation was \$473,600. The department paid \$950,00 for it Nov. 8.

In an interview with KP News before the meeting, Moffett said the purchase prices were close to the asking prices. "We felt these properties, in our estimation, fit the bill so well to what we feel the district needs, that's why we offered what we did."

"I've had this conversation with a number of people," he said: "Why are

you tying up this prime real estate in Key Center?" Our feeling is the district needs to be within Key Center because the district is such an integral part of the community for safety and health services. With us freeing up the current station, that would free up that property, which is right on the highway and right in downtown Key Center, if you will."

At the meeting, volunteer firefighter Lt. Dave Vezzano said he could not understand why the department would pay double the appraised or assessed values for the properties and called for the resignations of the entire board of fire commissioners.

The commissioners declined the invitation, and Commissioner Shawn Jensen responded by saying "The feeling of the

board, at least in my opinion, was that these properties are available, they're not getting any cheaper, if we're looking to stay in Key Center the best thing to do is to secure them now, knowing that we're in a capital facilities process that's several years down the road."

"Nearly all of the negotiations were handled by Chief Morrow, and we were presented with 'this is the property, this is

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TAXING DISTRICTS, LIKE KPFD, DO NOT PAY PROPERTY TAX.

"IF THE COMMUNITY IS IN AN UPROAR ABOUT THIS REAL ESTATE DEAL, TELL THEM TO GO LOOK AT SOME OF THE OTHER TRAINING FACILITIES AND HEADQUARTER STATIONS OF OTHER SMALL, RURAL FIRE DEPARTMENTS."

"OVERALL, I THINK WE'RE GOING STRONG."



The 1975 HQ may be replaced in coming years. *Tina McKail, KP News*

Interim Fire Dept. Leaders Address Changes, Challenges, Morale

KPFD is searching for a new chief while hiring more firefighters and planning upgrades to its facilities.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

The Key Peninsula Fire Department experienced several significant changes at the end of 2021.

Fire Chief Dustin Morrow left to become chief at Central Pierce Fire & Rescue Dec. 1; his interim successor, Assistant Fire Chief Hal Wolverton, was placed on paid administrative leave Dec. 14 after an employee complaint concerning discrimination; Division Chief Jason Learned was appointed to replace him the next day with Captain Robert Bosch taking over Learned's position; and the department

closed on the last of \$2.125 million worth of property purchases in Key Center with an eye toward building a new headquarters.

Fire Commission Chair Stan Moffett could offer no details on the substance of the complaint against Wolverton but said an investigation conducted by an outside attorney would begin immediately and "take as long as it takes."

The board also voted Dec. 14 to start a search for a new chief to succeed Morrow instead of entering an interlocal agency agreement with Central Pierce that could have allowed Morrow to continue his administrative duties for KPFD. Moffett said he expects to have a new chief in place by June 1.

"I don't have any aspirations to be a fire chief," Learned said. "But that's where I find myself right now."

Learned, 45, is the district's sole division chief and responsible for training and medical services, including overseeing EMS calls and the status of ambulances and medical supplies. He started in the fire service with KPFD in 2007 as a firefighter and paramedic after four years in the U.S. Coast Guard driving motor lifeboats, then working for a private ambulance company and putting himself through medic school. He made lieutenant in 2014, battalion chief in 2018 and division chief in 2020.

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REDEMPTION ON THE RIVER

Here's What I Think About That

LISA BRYAN,
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Some of the best advice I ever got in life came from an old boatman: "The most dangerous thing you can do out here is disrespect the river."

The year was 1990. We were rafting through the Grand Canyon on a 21-day private permit and hadn't seen a soul outside our group in many days. We pulled the boats over for lunch and got out to scout the next rapid, Granite. At the water level that day the rapid was rated a Class 9 out of 10.

We scared the hell out of ourselves for nearly an hour trying to figure out the best way to run it. Out of nowhere appeared a 14-foot raft with two tanned, long haired body builders paddling upfront and a shirtless Hulk Hogan seated in the stern frame with oars in hand and a big pirate flag flying behind him.

One of the women in our group screamed above the roar of the rapid: "That's Fabio up front!"

River raging, we watched in stunned disbelief as they flew right past us, acing the rapid without both-ering to scout. Did that just happen?

Could Hulk Hogan and Fabio just happen to be on the river the same time as us?

People who choose to drop out of their normal lives and civilization for three weeks on the granddaddy of whitewater trips do so for different reasons. Back then, parties of up to 16 people were allowed on a single noncommercial rafting trip, and not everyone on our trip knew each other before launching from Glen Canyon. For some it was their first time, others were seasoned. Like the canyon itself, personalities revealed themselves layer by layer with each passing day.

One guy, Mark, was just coming off a painful divorce. His wife left him for a rock climber. His ego was badly bruised. For him, the canyon trip was a way to redeem himself by conquering his fears.

There were two big rapids rated Class 10, the first of which was Crystal — a famously technical run where the river narrowed against the canyon wall on

the left side, while on mid-right was the legendary Crystal hole. Holes occur where water flows over a rock or ledge into deeper water beneath and then endlessly recirculates, trapping anything that enters. Big holes are to be avoided and giant holes swallow entire boats. Crystal had eaten its share.

The sound of water pouring into the hole was deafening. There is a campsite above the rapid on river-right. An overnigher there meant listening to the endless roar, adding to our anxiety.

What made Crystal so challenging was that navigating the rapid required skirting the left edge of the hole without touching and pushing back out into the middle to avoid a compression wave created by the water flowing against the canyon wall.

Mark was a passenger in Joe's raft, which was rigged with an oar frame so the assistance of paddlers was unnecessary. Joe was an experienced white-water dude and a bit of a macho man. Whenever possible he enjoyed being the first boat in our party to go through the rapids to set the course.

Nervous, Mark had been psyching himself up for Crystal. Even as a passenger with no opportunity to control the situation, he was up night after night wearing his headlamp, reading the waterproof guidebook.

Joe, being his usual cocky self, assured Mark that he was riding with the best boatman on the trip. "No problem, dude. Sit back, relax and watch a pro."

From behind we watched Joe make his entry as planned before he somehow managed to hit the compression wave that forced the raft into the wall and flipped the boat. Both men were in the water and we lost sight of them and the raft. It was the last thing any of us expected.

The rest of our group made our moves

successfully. At the bottom where the water pools and flattens we spotted Joe. He was still stunned. A few feet behind him stood Mark, wearing nothing but a wet t-shirt and his life jacket.

They said that about halfway past the edge of the hole, Mark had abruptly stood up, pulled down his shorts and mooned the hole in defiance of fear.

Joe said, "It was so unexpected. I stopped rowing. We ran straight into the compression

wave that pushed us into the wall sideways and we flipped bigger than life."

Both men spent a fair amount of time underwater. The next thing Mark knew he was staring into the face of Hulk Hogan, who fished him out of the water and said, "Dude, that must have been one hell of a swim."

Joe said he thought he might drown too but popped up just in time to see the Hulk holding Mark, without his shorts, at arm's length in mid-air before pulling him into the boat. "I thought I might die all over again because I couldn't catch my breath from laughing."

Skirting disaster once doesn't mean you'll get lucky again. Defying nature is risky business. But if you must, it's better not to get caught with your pants down. ■



DEFYING NATURE IS RISKY
BUSINESS. BUT IF YOU MUST, IT'S
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WITH YOUR PANTS DOWN.

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FIRE COMMISSIONERS FROM PAGE 1

the price, do we agree, yes or no,” he said. “The board agreed yes, this is the price we are willing to pay.”

Fire Chief Dustin Morrow left the department Dec. 1 to become chief of Central Pierce Fire & Rescue.

One career firefighter who spoke to KP News on condition of anonymity, said “Dustin is a very strategic, manipulative chess player in business, and that’s what makes him successful and a good fire chief administratively. His real estate plan was very strategic and purposeful and very much needed. If the community is in an uproar about this real estate deal, tell them to go look at some of the other training facilities and headquarter stations of other small, rural fire departments.”

KP News incorrectly reported in January that the parcels would remain on the county property tax rolls, quoting Moffett to that effect (see “KPF D Buys Second Key Center Real Estate Parcel,” Jan. 2022). But a subsequent examination of assessment records indicated zero tax liability on the parcels because taxing districts, like KPF D 16, do not pay property tax. Other exempt organizations include schools, churches, hospitals and certain nonprofits, according to the Department of Revenue.

The 2021 tax liability for the two parcels in the Olson estate was \$5,334.48. Tax on the Calahan property for 2021 was \$5,787.56, according to the assessor-treasurer’s office.

Moffett said later he did not intend to provide incorrect information. KPF D does pay county fees, such as for waste water management and noxious weed control, but no local or state tax, he said. The district paid \$1,114.69 in fees for tax year 2021 on its headquarters, which was assessed at \$565,400.

The department financed the two purchases of the three parcels by issuing a private bond for \$2.125 million. “We’re paying 1.82% with no prepayment penalty, which is just amazing,” Moffett said.

According to the bond terms, biannual debt service is interest only, starting at \$13,106.53 on Dec. 1, 2021, until Dec. 1, 2024, when principal and interest payments starting at \$129,337.50 will become payable every six months until 2040.

The commissioners anticipate paying at least part of the debt through rental income from the residence and the restaurant. The properties will be managed by a rental agent for the department until decisions are made about what if anything to build on the sites.

“Again, if we decide we don’t want to do anything with the property, we sell it and pay back the bond,” Moffett said. “We’ve got a lot of possibilities.” ■

INTERIM FIRE DEPT. LEADERS FROM PAGE 1

“There’s a lot more to this job than I think I ever gave credit to,” he said. “Everybody has been great — the battalion chiefs, the captains. A lot of the operational stuff has been pushed down to a lower level to get done, to take that stuff off my plate while we’re moving forward to get other large scale projects down the road.”

Learned’s division chief duties were temporarily assigned to Captain, now Interim Division Chief, Robert Bosch, who had been stationed in Wauna until Dec. 13.

“Literally that Monday before (Wolverton was put on leave), I started working days, for light duty on medical leave,” Bosch said. “We’re already short-staffed on shift and I’m qualified to take the temporary promotion, so to pull another person off the shift to do it didn’t make sense.”

Bosch, 55, is nearly a lifelong KP resident who joined the department as a volunteer in 1984. He was sent to fire academy and put himself through medic school before being hired as a firefighter paramedic in 1991.

“I am just implementing the programs that Jason (Learned) started; he put a bunch of balls in the air like a juggler and I’m just trying

to keep them up in the air until he gets back,” Bosch said. “I’m onboarding new recruits, showing them how we do things, doing policy reviews, getting them ready for fire academy, and I also manage the EMS medical supplies.”

Those recruits should be on the line by June.

Like Learned, Bosch said he is not interested in the top job.

“I thought I could be a fire chief when Chief Morrow got hired, but when I watched what he was doing as chief I said, ‘Nope, not for me.’” Bosch said. “He had vision and he knew how to move chess pieces in a way that I hadn’t even thought of.”

“We’re immediately starting another hiring process because we didn’t get the full complement that we wanted,” Learned said. “The goal was to hire seven; we’ve hired four for sure, maybe five. We’re looking to open up a job posting for a lateral firefighter paramedic to get some applicants that can be put to work right away rather than having to go through three months of academy.”

Morrow, now in the top job at Central Pierce, has been supportive.

“We’re both very busy, but he has been a good resource for me,” Learned said. “I’ve reached out to some other chiefs in the area; they’ve all been very welcoming.”

Learned also acknowledged there have been difficulties within the ranks adapting to the changes, including the investigation



Interim Chief Jason Learned with Robert Bosch and Adam Morse. *Lisa Bryan, KP News* that necessitated putting Wolverton on leave.

“Overall, I think we’re going strong,” Learned said. “There are some stressors that have been added to this with the change in the leadership multiple times over a short period of time; it just has everybody kind of on edge. We’ve got staffing issues that we’re facing here in the

next four months that we’re getting through. I would say that even given all that, everyone has stepped up in the face of adversity, we’ve just got a rocky path in front of us for a short period of time.”

“Hal (Wolverton) being put on leave caught everyone off guard; I was stunned,” Bosch said. “There are a lot of reasons someone might be investigated and being put on admin leave is a smart, clean way to do it. I’m not stunned that they did it — I don’t know why they did nor should I — I was stunned that it happened because I didn’t know there was an issue.”

“As a person who has gone through a discipline process that was fairly public and getting my job back and finding a way through, I trust the process 100%,” he said (See “KPF D Promotes Firefighter/Paramedic Bosch to Lieutenant for a Second Time,” KP News, April 2017).

In an email to KP News, Lt. Doug Gelslichter, president of the Key Peninsula Professional Firefighters union, wrote: “Morale is taking quite a hit on the front lines. Not only because of the turmoil created by the recent administration changes, but also because of staffing challenges, mostly due to COVID-19, injuries, medical leave, administrative leave. We are short staffed, which is creating a lot of overtime. There really is no one to blame, it is just a culmination of events that have come to a head. We are optimistic that relief is coming soon.”

KPF D Executive Assistant Christina

Bosch confirmed the increase in overtime. “The original 2021 budgeted overtime was \$260,000,” she said. “In April, we increased the budget to \$471,500, but soon realized that this would not be enough and increased it again to \$564,700. We ended 2021 with overtime expenditures at \$564,500.”

KP News spoke to other firefighters about KPF D on condition of anonymity. One said, “Chief Morrow was probably the best fire chief that I worked for, but I’m not sad that he’s gone. That’s part of life; opportunities happen, you move on.”

Another said, “There’s a lot of uneasiness in the firehouse. Whenever you take an organization and you strip it of its leadership, you can’t help but be knocked back and bewildered. I fully believe that Chief Wolverton will be vindicated, and his name restored. He’s served the organization with his whole heart and soul.”

A different firefighter said, “If you’re new here, you’re probably not in Wolverton’s camp; if you’re a long-term person, you are. The reason I say that is he went from being assistant chief responsible for operations to dealing with the fleet, and that was his only responsibility as assistant chief under Morrow. So, all the new guys, all they saw was the guy who takes the apparatus, drives them to the shop, tells you when they’re ready, stuff like that. They don’t know his capabilities and his experience, which is unfortunate.”

Public Information Officer Anne Nesbit said, “The bottom line is we all have jobs to do, which is the focus. Continued uninterrupted service to our community is always what’s most important.”

Another firefighter said, “We have a motto in the fire service: ‘If it was easy, anybody could do it.’”

Editor’s note: In our January edition, Assistant Fire Chief Hal Wolverton was incorrectly described as having been suspended. He was put on paid administrative leave pending the outcome of an independent investigation. We regret the error. ■

KP Civic Center Board Criticized for Considering Vax Proof

What began as an internal survey for board members was shared to a local Facebook group, where outrage sparked reaction.

LISA BRYAN, KP NEWS

Roughly a dozen flag carrying protesters took to the streets of Key Center Jan. 8, holding signs and waving at passersby. They gathered to protest the possibility that Key Peninsula Civic Center Association might require proof of vaccination for entry to events.

"If the civic center starts doing this segregation and discrimination stuff, I think it's just wrong," said protester John Day, pastor of Longbranch Community Church.

Citing an internal KPCCA board survey forwarded to him from a friend, Day said, "They sent out a survey too and one of the questions was, 'Are you willing to serve as a volunteer to turn even unvaccinated family and friends away? Yes or no?'"

"I'm done. People have to stand up and speak out," he said. "It's baloney. It's not following the science. If it were, they would be talking about natural immunity and all sorts of other stuff."

While the protest was modest in size, numerous posts on social media, combined with angry phone calls, ensured record attendance at the next KPCCA board meeting Jan. 13, held via Zoom.

In his first meeting as president of the KPCCA, Chuck Davis welcomed the board and more than 50 guests. Reading from a statement, he acknowledged that measures to slow the spread of COVID-19 have divided the community.

"Throughout the pandemic, the civic center has followed all state and county mandates, including temporary public health measures like requiring that masks be worn indoors," he said. "We also strive to respond to all requests from the community and then to find solutions that honor the mission of our organization."

The discussion was allotted 30 minutes. Participants who signed up were given two minutes to speak.

Many people with children spoke of how much they valued the civic center and enjoyed the many family events and activities, particularly Skate Night, and felt it was important to keep that open without vaccine mandates for entry.

Jeff Wyman said he and his wife had been very active with the civic center, but their kids are older now, so they come less often.

But his son continues to enjoy Skate Night.

"If there is a vaccination mandate in place we will simply cease going there," Wyman said. "Frankly, I think it would be a little bit fun to ignore your mandate and just go ahead and walk on in because I guarantee you, I am bigger than anybody in this room and you won't stop me. But I'm not going to be that guy."

Michelle Hambly of Lakebay spoke through tears as she said, "I will not vaccinate my son because I won't put that poison in him. He volunteers on Fridays and now Sundays. It's his only social activity. He used all his Christmas money to get skates."

"Children are at low risk," she said. "I am immunocompromised on chemo. It is not their responsibility to keep me safe. We need to understand there is getting to be not a lot of places for the unvaccinated."

Caleb Lystad of Lakebay said his family has enjoyed the civic center for years, especially Skate Night. They would like to ensure that space remains open to the public.

"The civic center needs to be kept a neutral place and not allow the sort of clear politics that are going on in King County and

other parts of the state and the country to infect us here in our own little backyard," he said. "We ask that the board take these comments into consideration along with everyone else ... and do the right thing for the community and remain open for and in service of the community."

Catrina Bliss said she and her spouse, a family practitioner in Bremerton for 10 years, along with their two children ages 11 and 7 are all happily vaccinated.

Her daughter has had pneumonia many times. She said she attended the meeting to hear what people would say because they are having a hard time joining indoor events "like these wonderful skate nights" because nobody wants to mask or vaccinate.

Following public comment, Davis said nothing new had changed in civic center policies during the pandemic.

Leading up to the canceled New Year's Eve party, Davis said several people asked if they had a vaccine mandate in place for the event.



Protester Michelle Hambly. Lisa Bryan, KP News

"I told them we didn't," Davis said. "Everyone can wear a mask but not everyone could get the vaccine."

Davis said he brought those concerns to the executive committee, doing his due diligence as president, and after some discussion "determined it was too large an issue to tackle, just the eight or nine of us that are in that committee."

"We determined it was best to take it to the board for full discussion," he said. "That was supposed to be part of the agenda for tonight." ■

Update: Covid on the Key Highest-ever infection spread on the KP appeared to peak in January.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

After a dramatic rise in cases last summer with the delta variant, COVID-19 cases gradually fell on the Key Peninsula until the arrival of the holidays and omicron.

The average daily case rate on the KP in the beginning of December was 3.1, according to the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department. By mid-January it was 24.3, the highest level yet recorded.

There have been 1,553 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 12 deaths on the KP since the start of the pandemic, an infection rate of 8.5% out of a population of 18,318. The Pierce County and state rates are both near 14%. The rate of full vaccination for the KP is 51%; the county rate is 62%, the state is 69%.

In Pierce County, 72% of new infections were in unvaccinated people while 24% were breakthrough cases among the vaccinated, according to the Department of Health.

Over the last 12 months there have been 123,365 such breakthroughs statewide. Of those, 46,879 (38%) reported symptoms and 3,700 (3%) were hospitalized.

Breakthrough cases represent just 2.3% of the vaccinated population.

Compared to the original version of SARS-CoV-2, the omicron variant has more than 50 mutations with over 30 affecting the spike protein, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, making it more contagious than previous variants.

Over 580,000 child COVID-19 cases were reported across the country for the week of Jan. 6, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. "This number is a 78% increase over the 325,000 added cases reported the week ending Dec. 30 and an almost tripling of case counts from the two weeks prior," it said.

According to the report, children represented 17.4% of all COVID-19 cases in the U.S., more than twice the peak last summer. Data from 46 states and New York City indicated 747 child deaths in the pandemic, about one-tenth of 1% of Americans who have died of COVID-19.

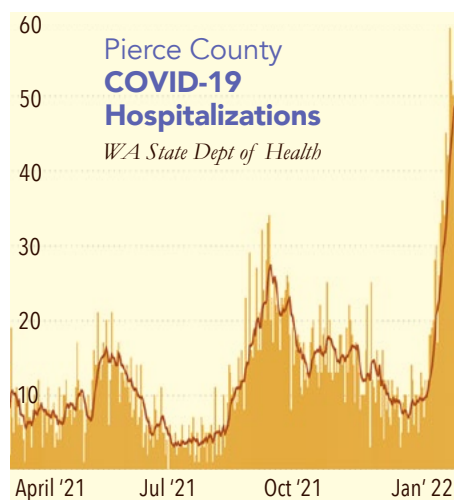
According to the CDC, as many as half of all COVID-19 infections in children may be asymptomatic but they can still spread it and get quite ill from it.

"That's why to avoid worsening the strain on our hospitals, everyone should use a high quality well-fitting mask, don't use the emergency department unless it's a true emergency, and most important get vaccinated and boosted as soon as you are eligible," said Tao Sheng Kwan-Gett, MD, MPH, the chief science officer at DOH.

Reinfections also increased slightly for both the vaccinated and unvaccinated statewide. Between Sept. 1 and Dec. 26, DOH reported that 4,404 people were reinfected out of a total of 264,520 cases statewide; 2,640 (60%) of those reinfected were unvaccinated; 223 (5%) were hospitalized and 22 (0.9%) died.

DOH said it can only identify people who have been reinfected if both their original infection and their second infection were diagnosed by a COVID-19 test and reported to the state. Since many COVID-19 infections are asymptomatic and go unreported, the rate of reinfection is likely higher, it said.

"We see early evidence this wave has peaked," DOH said in a Jan. 18 statement. "We expect hospitalizations and deaths will continue to increase in the weeks ahead because they usually lag case counts."



According to the CDC, there is no way to reliably predict who will have mild or severe forms of COVID-19. Many studies indicate recovering from the disease provides “some natural protection” for at least 90 days after infection, but there is no scientific consensus on how long or how well that protection lasts.

“A mild case of an illness may not result in strong natural immunity,” according to a study by the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. “Natural immunity to the coronavirus weakens over time, and does so faster than immunity provided by COVID-19 vaccination ... At present, evidence from Johns Hopkins Medicine and the CDC supports getting a COVID-19 vaccine as the best protection against getting COVID-19, whether you have already had the virus or not.”

About 10% to 30% of people who recover from COVID-19 still have symptoms for weeks or months after testing negative, according to an August report in *The New England Journal of Medicine*. “Though most Americans may be able to do so, restoration of normality does not apply to those who are still experiencing debilitating symptoms months after being infected with COVID-19. Unfortunately, current numbers and trends indicate that ‘long-haul Covid’ (or ‘long Covid’) is our next public health disaster in the making.”

The report concluded that long Covid can affect anyone — old and young, healthy people and people with pre-existing conditions. It has been seen in patients hospitalized with COVID-19 and in people with very mild symptoms.

Free weekly COVID-19 vaccination clinics are held most Fridays from 3 to 6 p.m. at the KP Community Office in the Key Center Corral located at 9013 Key Peninsula Highway NW. Walk-ins welcome, but registration encouraged. Call 253-432-4948.

Free vaccinations and boosters are available by appointment at Cost Less Pharmacy in Wauna. Call 253-857-7797. ■

Lakebay Marina Sold: New Owners to Restore and Partner with State

The historic landmark, once a stop for Mosquito Fleet steamers, is getting yet another second chance.

LISA BRYAN, KP NEWS

After two years of negotiation and fundraising, the purchase of Lakebay Marina from owner Mark Scott closed Dec. 28 for \$1.6 million in a joint effort by the Recreational Boating Association of Washington (RBAW) and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Additional funds were raised to ensure the historic facility located on Mayo Cove, next to Penrose State Park, will receive the full restoration needed to preserve it and its 2.8 acres of uplands and tidelands for continued public recreational access.

The bulk of the funding came from a \$1.776 million boating facility grant from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office. Another \$250,000 came from Pierce County, together with a \$100,000 allocation from the 2020 state legislature supplemental capital budget and tens of thousands raised by RBAW.

Commissioner of Public Lands Hillary Franz, who oversees DNR, praised the partnership of three critical state agencies — DNR, Washington State Parks and the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) — that was key to the funding.

DNR and RBAW teamed up to apply for an RCO grant through its boating facilities program.

“It’s a very competitive grant pool and the fact that we came in as the No. 1 ranked project was essential for us to be able to get the significant funding needed,” Franz said. “I love this facility and the value it has for recreational boaters in the South Sound and how the history of this facility is also critical to hold onto.”

Franz said that DNR owns the aquatic tidelands to be leased to RBAW for restoration and management of the facility. State Parks will have a role in managing the uplands for public access.

Bob Wise, who owns marinas on the Olympic Peninsula, recalled looking at Lakebay Marina when it initially came on the market about 10 years ago, but said it was a small property and long neglected.

He said he was glad when Scott stepped up to purchase the aging facility and thought to himself, “Hey, brave man.”

Initially neighbors surrounding Lakebay Marina along with the broader Key Peninsula community were glad too, eager to see Scott restore the historic site after his purchase in 2012. Many appreciated the old building on the wharf that Scott turned into a café where people could meet friends, enjoy the scenery along with fish and chips or listen to live music and dance.

But conditions at the marina worsened on multiple fronts as the years passed. The property was cited for serious code and safety violations, a deteriorating situation further complicated by illegal liveaboard tenants.

By February 2019, boats at the marina began sinking, further threatening the envi-

ronment, the docks and other vessels. (See “County, State and Federal Authorities Take Action at Lakebay Marina,” KP News, May 2019.)

“We called every agency under the sun: the sheriff, the county, the Department of Ecology, DNR, Fish and Wildlife, the Coast Guard, the fire marshal, the health department ... you name it,” a neighbor to the marina told KP News under condition of anonymity in March 2019.

Another resident told KP News in April 2019, “We’ve been complaining for years, doing everything they tell us to do but nothing seems to stop Mr. Scott.”

The real game changer came after a local resident reached out directly to Franz via Facebook to say how derelict the facility had become, along with the environmental and public safety impacts.

Franz told KP News she remembered that day well. She immediately called her aquatics team into the office for a briefing on Lakebay Marina and said, “We need to fix this and make it right.”

At that point her team began conversa-

tions with Scott to address the issues that were very dangerous.

“It was clear the owner didn’t have the resources to truly repair the facility to make sure it wasn’t a public safety hazard and also that it was environmentally sound for the critical values of the ecosystem there,” Franz said.

DNR began looking for a new owner to help purchase, manage, improve and maintain the marina.

Meanwhile Wise, because he was in the industry, was aware of the problems at Lakebay “but got most of my information about the property by reading the Key Peninsula News.”

Wise was president of RBAW by then and decided to return to the organization’s roots: acquiring properties to put into

“IT WAS CLEAR THE OWNER DIDN’T HAVE THE RESOURCES TO TRULY REPAIR THE FACILITY TO MAKE SURE IT WASN’T A PUBLIC SAFETY HAZARD AND ALSO THAT IT WAS ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND FOR THE CRITICAL VALUES OF THE ECOSYSTEM THERE.”

permanent conservation, as it had done 65 years earlier with Sucia Island Marine State Park in the San Juans. He wondered if Lakebay Marina would be a good place for them to start again.

“I literally thought to myself that would be an easy one to do,” he said. “I got that part wrong. But I think we picked the right property as the one that turned out to be so important to protect.”

DNR is now looking at all facilities on its 2.6 million aquatic acres to take whatever steps are needed to improve or preserve the environment or for public safety and has helped several other marinas secure funding from the state legislature.

“We can use this story as one that shows success,” Franz said. “If it wasn’t for the community engagement this wouldn’t have happened. I’m appreciative the community was engaged and got me engaged and that our agency could actually move this forward in a really positive way.”

Former owner Mark Scott did not respond to requests for comment on this article. ■

Lakebay Marina. *Chris Konieczny*



Phyllis Henry COAST TO COAST



What To Do About Mom?

Three meals a day are served in the dining room at the independent living facility where I live. Recently at lunchtime I noticed a new resident sitting alone. After I asked her if I could join her, I introduced myself and she told me her name. When I asked where she had lived before coming here, she started to answer, and then tears flowed. She hid her face with her napkin for a moment until she was able to talk.

She told me a variation of a story I have heard over and over since I moved into this place. The new resident (I'll call her Lily) was living near Boise, Idaho, when her husband, Carl, died two months earlier. Their children, let's call them Rob, John and Debbie, came for the funeral and stayed for a few days before they had to go back to work. Obviously, they had the late night discussion about "What if Mom falls in the night?" and "What if she has a stroke and no one rescues her?" Questions that loving children ask.

Debbie insisted that Lily visit her for a while, so Lily's clothes, make-up and toiletries were packed into the trunk of Debbie's Mazda before they drove to Debbie's home in Washington for a nice visit.

In the meantime, Rob and John packed into a large U-Haul the items necessary for Lily's new home in Washington and then immediately drove to Debbie's home. When she saw her sons, Lily was pleased, but much less pleased when they took her directly to the retirement home and told her she would be living there — because they were concerned about her safety, because meals would be provided so she would eat healthy food, because if she fell or was sick there would be people around to help her, because there were activities like bingo and book club and musicians so she wouldn't be lonely.

Stunned, Lily sat in a chair and watched her furniture being arranged in her new apartment. Her Victorian sofa was much too big, but Rob said he would buy a smaller love seat. The day ended with boxes piled in closets and in the corners of her bedroom, with an assurance from Debbie that she would be back the next weekend to "get her settled in." When Lily and I spoke, Debbie had stopped by to see her but so far hadn't found time to unpack the boxes.

People are living longer today, and they may need to be housed in apartments, but consider the following. (I'll call the

parent Mom because most of the elderly are women.) Absolutely let Mom choose the apartment. Does she want first floor, third floor, a balcony, kitchen, one or two bedrooms? Are there enough closets? She will probably live with this decision for many years.

Before moving, work with a floor plan while discussing where furniture will be placed, measuring each item before it is moved. Let her decide to give up the piano if it means she can't have her recliner. It's very important to let Mom decide what to pack. One woman told me her kids packed a 12-place setting of Haviland dishes and sterling silverware, which only take up cupboard space. In another case a daughter got rid of a much-read King James Bible, which had been a confirmation gift for her mother, and replaced the personal Bible with a nice leather-bound Revised Standard Version. Birthday flowers arrive but there is no vase. It's a bit chilly for a walk outside, but the heavy, cream-colored sweater is missing.

If Mom has a cat or dog, where should it live? Or can Mom have it in her apartment? In most places big dogs are discouraged, but lots of tiny fluffy dogs as well as all kinds of cats live with their owners in the kind of residences we are discussing. However, adopting a new animal to keep Mom company needs consideration. Whether inside or outside, dogs need to be walked. Is Mom's balance good enough to pick up dog poop? Where does the cat's litter box live?

Does she have a car? Is she a safe driver? Sure, a family member will drive her, but only at certain times. Does the facility have a bus or taxi service? Is it free?

Consider items she might need: a shower chair that can be raised and lowered, a toilet riser, a walker, even a wheelchair. In a building big enough to house around 100 people, halls are long and difficult to maneuver with a walker or crutches. Today many elderly people use power wheelchairs to move long distances. Some of these wheelchairs will easily park at a dining table.

If Mom has a computer, make certain she knows how to order from grocery stores and Amazon, and how to email or text you and her friends. Make certain the in-house Wi-Fi provides plenty of channels, especially movie channels. If not, arrange other providers.

Once Mom is settled into an independent living facility, what can her offspring bring her? Don't give her things that "sit around" — there is no extra space in these apartments. One friend complains that her daughter insists on bringing food; she has a bag in her closet full of crackers and chips and sodas. With three meals a day provided there is little need for extra

food. Gift a book you have read so you can discuss it with her or bring two servings of a favorite dessert to eat with coffee, creating a chance for you and your mom to talk and remember, and laugh.

Some elderly people really like independent living housing. They enjoy having their lives simplified. Others complain that they are in prison because their children don't want them around anymore.

My dad often said that if you get up in the morning and look in a mirror and there's somebody there, it's a good day.

Award-winning columnist Phyllis Henry lives in Gig Harbor.

Bob Perry TO MY WAY OF THINKING



It's My Right

Every day I hear people demanding their rights. It's my right to a living wage, affordable housing, health care, food, free education, high-speed internet — the list seems endless. And for our younger generations, does this unending stream of proclamations of "rights" undermine the true nature of "rights"?

Interestingly, these proclamations are rarely accompanied by proclamations of individual responsibility and obligations.

It seems today that many have lost sight of the fact that the incredible freedoms of our country are tied to the concept of individual rights and liberty, and so-called rights that impose an obligation on others are fundamentally not rights at all. While society may agree through taxation to provide certain benefits, these are not rights. Governments may decide to take possession of private property for public good, but this necessarily includes compensation (eminent domain laws) to comply with the rights of private property.

Conflating benefits approved by voters as rights is a very slippery slope.

Current events are causing us to focus on these issues and they are worthy of discussion — calm, reasoned and thoughtful discussion.

Debates over how to handle COVID-19 and its endless stream of current and future mutations are a raging issue today and probably will be for years to come. Do you have an obligation to protect yourself, or do I have an obligation to protect you? Can I be required to take medicine that may harm me at some statistical level to protect you from some potential statistical risk?

In 1905, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Jacobson v. Massachusetts* ruled on this

issue of individual rights versus societal rights regarding immunization, deciding that a state legislature (not the executive) has the power to mandate immunizations to protect the whole at the potential expense of the individual. Underlying this decision is the assumption that the legislature is expressing the will of the electorate — that the public, through its representatives, approves of the trade-off, and that if you don't like the acts of the legislature, you are free to vote them out or move somewhere else.

The Supreme Court just heard a case regarding abortion rights. Is *Roe v. Wade* a constitutionally defensible ruling by a prior court? Should there be a federal position on this issue or is this something best left to the states? Does the privacy right enable mothers to terminate pregnancy without the intervention of the state? If there are limits, do some fetuses have more rights than the women carrying them, or fewer rights than others (such as the result of rapists)?

Can I enact a wealth tax? A wealth tax simply takes your property. Can I decide you have saved too much money, and therefore take some of it? How does this square with your right of private property and the takings clause of the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution, which states that no "private property (shall) be taken for public use, without just compensation"? If you take \$100 from my savings account, are you required to replace it with \$100?

My hope is that our discussions as a community and society will lead to greater understanding and mutual respect. And this will lead to more reasoned and thoughtful recognition of our rights and our responsibilities.

My greatest fear is that our society is changing from a majority who achieve, contribute, take personal responsibility for their actions and life and create value to one where a significant group of people believe they are entitled to that which is not earned or deserved, making them devoid of individual responsibility.

My view is that the greatest gift my generation can give our younger generations is the clear understanding that they are entrusted with the individual responsibility to care for themselves and prosper. That the role of government is not to take and dole out, but to safeguard individual liberty and freedom to allow for individual achievement and the pursuit of happiness. That they truly hold their future in their hands. Anything less threatens the American dream.

Bob Perry lives in Lakebay.

Joseph Pentheroudakis ON THE WING



A Higher and Enduring Interest

In 1862, as the Civil War raged, President Lincoln signed the Homestead Act, a law that would have a profound effect on the development of the West and transform the nation forever. The act granted up to 160 acres of public land to individual settlers, men or women, at the cost of only a small filing fee, provided they lived on the land and cultivated it for five years.

The disposition of public lands had been hotly debated since the dawn of the republic. A homestead proposal was discussed in the U.S. Senate in the years before the Civil War, but Southern senators firmly opposed it. Plantation owners wanted instead to buy up public lands and introduce slave labor into the new territories in the West. They also believed that homesteaders in those territories would oppose slavery, since small family-owned farms would be unable to compete with large plantations that had the unfair advantage of an enslaved labor force. Several senators from the North had also been against the act, fearing that giving away free public land would depress property values.

By 1862, however, the South had seceded from the Union, and on May 6, 1862, the Senate passed the act by a vote of 33 to 7. On May 20, Lincoln signed it into law.

The homestead law and its successor statutes remained in effect for over 100 years, until 1976, with a 10-year extension for Alaska. During that time almost 300 million acres, about one-tenth of all the land in the United States, were conveyed to over 1.5 million private owners and their families.

In his 1863 annual message to Congress, Lincoln reported that 1,456,514 acres had already been distributed through the law, adding that “it has long been a cherished opinion of some of our wisest statesmen that the people of the United States had a higher and more enduring interest in the early settlement and substantial cultivation of the public lands than in the amount of direct revenue to be derived from the sale of them.” Farmers settling on and cultivating the land were a better investment for the nation than the government selling the land for cash — for example, to plantation owners from the South.

Those public lands, of course, had been wrested from indigenous communities, staining our history with blood and

suffering that we’re only now coming to terms with. Settlers had been coming and staking claims to what would later become Oregon and Washington since the 1830s; their title to the claims was not recognized until the 1850s after the territory was organized and recognized by Congress. Subsequent settlers, however, took advantage of the Homestead Act and had clean title once they met the law’s residence and cultivation requirements. And they came by the thousands, some from other parts of the country but the greatest number as immigrants.

Lincoln did not sign the Homestead Act out of the kindness of his heart. Giving away public land was not a government handout intended to benefit the underserving poor, even though most homesteaders were often destitute. There was political advantage to be gained, and giving land away also meant jumpstarting an economy; individuals and their families paid back that gift in spades.

On the Key Peninsula, homesteaders cleared land and started farms, farms turned into communities, communities were connected by the Mosquito Fleet and then by wagon roads, highways and county roads. Commerce thrived, stores were built, along with churches and schools. Families grew, and grew again, generations came and went, and then came back, land was divided up and passed on, an explosion of communities everywhere owing their birth to Lincoln’s homestead law.

The government and those governed worked together for the common good. Homesteaders who settled on public land and fulfilled their dreams of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, did not do so in a vacuum; no man is an island entire of itself, as John Donne wrote. They gave back and enriched their communities, in the literal and figurative sense.

That was an investment by all of us for all of us. We are all settlers on this land; whatever we build, we build together.

The Senate and Lincoln in 1862 could have chosen to listen to those who did not want public land to be given away, land that was the property of the U.S, however ill-gotten. I invite you to imagine what our little corner of the world might have looked like if they had, and how many of our friends and neighbors would never have made it to these shores.

A conversation about the proper relationship between government and the governed is always timely and important. And history can always help if we get lost in the thicket.

Joseph Pentheroudakis is an artist, historian and avid birder who writes from Herron Island.

José Alaniz WE LIVE HERE: BRAMBLES COLOR BY DAVID LASKY

BRAMBLE-CLEARING SEASON! PRETTY MUCH A YEAR-ROUND THING, BUT WITH THE COLD WEATHER THEY’RE RELATIVELY DORMANT. PULLING AND CUTTING, ONE’S THOUGHTS TEND TO WANDER. IT’S KINDA ZEN, EXCEPT FOR THE PAIN AND BLOODSHED. I OFTEN SING. STILL, I’VE NEVER FELT SUCH MIXED EMOTIONS TOWARDS A PLANT. INVASIVE HIMALAYAN BLACKBERRY CHOKES OTHER SPECIES OUT. I DESPISE BULLIES. TAKE THAT! BUT THEN IT GIVES SUCH DELICIOUS FRUIT. I STRIKE AT IT, TASTE A JUICY BLACK CLUSTER, IT SLASHES ME ACROSS THE FOREHEAD. A REAL WAR: HERACLES VS. THE HYDRA, THE PRINCE HACKING HIS WAY TO SLEEPING AURORA. IT’S RIPPED MY WORK GLOVES TO SHREDS. MANY TIMES I’VE NOTED WHAT



OTHERS TOO HAVE DISCOVERED: A CUNNING INTELLIGENCE. SOMETIMES IT YIELDS MORE EASILY, LIKE AN ANIMAL SACRIFICING A LIMB TO ESCAPE. AS I TOSS BRANCHES — SOME SEEM THE LENGTH OF A FOOTBALL FIELD — ONTO THE PILE, THEY VICIOUSLY BITE, LIKE THE BALROG’S TAIL SWIPING YOU AS IT GOES DOWN. I FEEL SORRIEST FOR COLLATERAL DAMAGE. ONCE WE FOUND A BIRD’S NEST DEEP IN THE CANES. IT NEVER ENDS. I CLEAVE AND CURSE AND DREAM OF THE NATIVE POLLINATOR PLANTS NOW TAKING ROOT IN THE LIBERATED ZONES, BASKING IN NEXT SUMMER’S SUN.

Richard Gelinas EMPIRICALLY YOURS



Hydrogen Will Help Replace Fossil Fuels

Since we’re continuing to dump greenhouse gases into our air that come from our use of fossil fuels, the Earth really is getting warmer. The average temperature has risen 1.5 degrees Centigrade since the 19th century. While it sounds like such a modest change, serious weather-related consequences are increasingly frequent around the world.

In addition to droughts, floods, rising seas and ocean acidification, there are record-breaking tornados. In December 2021, tornados ripped through five states in a few hours; winds reached 150 mph; nearly 100 people were killed; and 400,000 lost power.

This is our new climate.

If we can limit the rise in the world’s temperature to 5 degrees Centigrade, we’re told maybe the worst effects of climate change can be endured. But how can we stop using fossil fuels?

You may already know the answer: Electricity from renewable sources. And hydrogen.

Hydrogen is a colorless gas that can be thought of as electricity in disguise. It does not occur naturally in useful amounts, but

it can be made cleanly from electricity and water with a device called an electrolyzer. It can be turned back into electricity with a fuel cell, with water again as the only byproduct. Year by year as the cost of renewable electricity declines, the cost of hydrogen made from renewables declines in turn. It is expected to achieve cost parity with fossil fuels by 2025.

Until recently hydrogen was made using fossil fuels, resulting in the release of the greenhouse gas CO₂ in a process called steam reformation.

But that was then. Now, “green” hydrogen can be made by splitting water through electrolysis using electricity derived from renewable sources like solar and wind power. Soon the cost of green hydrogen will become cheaper than “black” or “brown” hydrogen, which is made from black or brown coal. Hydrogen can also be made from natural gas or methane, which is inexpensive, but the process produces CO₂. If that CO₂ is captured and pumped into the ground rather than released into the air (carbon capture and sequestration) this is “blue” hydrogen. If nuclear energy is used to split water, it’s called “pink” hydrogen. Most interesting is “yellow” hydrogen, which is produced in solar panels by a process related to electrolysis.

Diverse private industries are paying atten-

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tion to the declining costs of renewables and green hydrogen. Especially exciting is using hydrogen to clean up industries that were considered difficult to abate, such as heating, transportation, production of basic materials like steel and cement, and energy storage.

For heating, hydrogen can be mixed with natural gas, delivered via existing pipes and burned in boilers or furnaces. This is already taking place in the United Kingdom.

For transportation, the batteries in today's electric cars offer a useful range of a few hundred miles. That range will improve, but automotive batteries remain expensive and must be replaced eventually. In contrast, hydrogen can be compressed, raising its energy density beyond that of fossil fuels or conventional batteries, enabling hydrogen to power heavy trucks and trains. Its use in ocean-going ships and even airplanes is being planned.

Hydrogen also has useful chemical properties that will clean up other uses. It can be used to make ammonia for fertilizer, steel from iron ore, and the fuel and industrial chemical methanol. If that hydrogen is made from renewables, these industrial products become green, since no carbon dioxide is produced. The Swedish company Hybrit, owned by steelmaker SSAB, is already making green steel and its customers are familiar: Volvo and Mercedes.

Hydrogen is helping Europe store excess wind energy. Offshore wind farms in Germany and the U.K. at times produce much more electricity than their grids can accept. Last year German utilities curtailed \$1.5 billion and U.K. utilities curtailed \$227 million worth of electricity because of this imbalance. Storing this energy by making hydrogen would yield significant savings. European companies now propose making the green hydrogen at sea as part of the wind farms and storing it in salt caverns in the seabed.

Back on land, almost all utility-scale solar plants that rival the output of old-fashioned nuclear plants are now built with on-site energy storage using either batteries or hydrogen. This enables large renewable installations to integrate their production with the grid, much like coal or gas plants of the last century.

We can hope that black, brown and blue hydrogen will fade and eventually disappear entirely, even as green, pink, and maybe yellow hydrogen become economically irresistible.

Richard Gelinas, Ph.D., whose early work earned a Nobel prize, is a senior research scientist at the Institute for Systems Biology. He lives in Lakebay. Suggestions for further reading are at keypennews.org.

Letters to the Editor**CALL FOR THOROUGH INVESTIGATION BY FIRE COMMISSIONERS**

At the Dec. 14 fire commissioners meeting the board decided to proceed with hiring a new full-time fire chief instead of pursuing the previously discussed possibility of a part-time chief shared with Central Pierce Fire & Rescue. I am glad the commissioners are acting in the best interest of the community; we need a full-time chief. However, I am disappointed they are again wasting tax dollars by hiring an executive search company.

The Dec. 14 meeting also included an executive session where allegations of discrimination were leveled against Interim Fire Chief Hal Wolverton, who was not included in the executive session, and he was put on paid administrative leave pending the outcome of a third-party investigation.

The timing of these events is very troubling. On the same day the commissioners decide to hire a full-time chief, administrative action was taken that destabilizes the department and could be an attempt to push it toward a part-time chief or consolidation with Central Pierce.

The allegations against Chief Wolverton appear to have occurred at a very convenient time. Maybe too convenient. Perception is not reality, truth is reality, but one plausible perception is "Don't like the Interim Chief, make accusations to get him out of the picture, create turmoil, make an interagency agreement with Central Pierce look more palatable, and ta-da, get your way."

I hope this is not the case.

As the board resolves this issue, I trust they will consider all the facts, such as when the alleged infraction(s) supposedly first occurred and were reported, and when they were first brought to the board's attention. If the infraction(s) occurred prior to Dec. 1, was then serving Fire Chief Dustin Morrow informed and what actions did he take? If no actions were taken, why not? If Chief Morrow was not informed, why not?

John Mohn, Wauna

ON 'BEING DIVERSITY'

Wow! What a great column. Mr. Tisino summed up my feelings and fears exactly. I am sad that he had that experience at Evergreen Elementary School, but I get it.

I love that his article was printed at the same time as Grace Nesbit's, my daughter ("Learning Prejudice," KP News, Jan. 2022.) I hope it gives him strength from the knowledge that there are those who do teach their children about love, acceptance and

tolerance regardless of race and cultural background. I hope that he indeed does stay on the Key Peninsula.

This was a gutsy call-out piece to write. If possible, will you share with him that he is not alone in his fight to educate people in our area? He is making a difference. The season that our community, our society, our nation is living through right now is definitely concerning. I am glad he shared his story. It has value and must be heard. Thank you for providing the platform.

Anne Nesbit, Lakebay

KPFD LAND ACQUISITIONS

I have been reading with interest the articles in the Key Peninsula News regarding the expansion of facilities for the fire department.

While I completely agree that growth and expansion are needed, even necessary, I would ask that fire commissioners reconsider the locations of that expansion.

The locations you are considering are the very rare properties that can support business on the Key Peninsula. They produce income for our families and the county, the schools, parks, fire department, and income for grants for our nonprofits. In short, they generate revenue through employment, sales taxes, B&O taxes and others.

Should the department use those commercial parcels, those revenue streams would be lost. A clear example is the parcel recently purchased for \$950,000 from the Calahan family. Prior to the KPFD purchase, the facility produced income through its business operations. Now there is zero income. This loss of revenue must be shouldered by the taxpayers.

The location for department expansion could be elsewhere on the KP with much less impact on the prime commercial hub of Key Center. With some research and patience, I'm sure a location could be found that is just as suitable with a smaller price tag, has far less impact on revenue, and allows for commercial business to expand in the best location for its expansion. Public safety services can be permitted in R-10 areas.

In short, the expansion could be accomplished with far less expensive real estate, perhaps a larger parcel of land, without loss to prime commercial business opportunities in Key Center, and without loss of revenue streams, which contribute to lower property taxes.

Chuck Odegaard, Lakebay

A MODEL OF COURAGE

In his January 2022 column, Rion Tisino identifies some deep rifts in the Key Peninsula community caused by racism.

I was particularly disheartened to read his perceptions of bias in the Peninsula School District on the part of parents and PSD staff. Tisino's direct experience reveals there is much work to be done.

The only statement of his with which I disagree is his assertion that in spite of his many accomplishments, he is not regarded as a role model because of the color of his skin. Tisino is a role model to me for his courage in delivering hard truths that are controversial and painful to confront. I believe his role as an "intense Black man" is exactly what the KP community needs.

Susan Solstice, Vaughn

IMMUNITY VS. VACCINATION

Why are we being segregated into vaxed vs. unvaxed? What about the third group: Those of us with natural immunity. According to the CDC, about one third of the U.S. (100 million) have had COVID-19, and those people now have naturally acquired immunity.

I have natural immunity and I am unvaccinated. I have had COVID-19. Over 100 peer reviewed studies say that my natural immunity is better than vaccination. The largest of them, an unreviewed study from Israel, says that natural immunity is at least 13 times better. Even a National Institute of Health study published Jan. 6, 2021, in Science found "durable immune response in the majority of the people studied" after infection. There are many other studies; Harvard, Oxford, even the UW, that testify to the same thing.

There are no studies saying that I, a person with natural immunity, will spread the virus any more than a vaccinated person. If one third of the population now has herd immunity, why not recognize it? Instead, they want to lump me in the category of unvaccinated.

I don't believe the vaccine is bad, or that they are implanting anything with it. But pharmaceutical companies don't have a great track record when it comes to long term effects of FDA approved drugs. And this vaccine is having problems with longevity, requiring boosters after just a few months. So, why would I want to take something I don't need?

I am being held back from travel, attendance at conferences and generally shunned by others that believe the rhetoric being spread. Do some research. Read the studies. Wake up and look at what is happening. Why is basic science being ignored?

Chuck West, Lakebay

Key Peninsula Community Council President

OBITUARIES



Stefan Fritz

Born in Austria May 25, 1970, Stefan Fritz came to live in this country at age five. He enjoyed a happy childhood on the Key Peninsula, in Alaska and in Austria. He died in Lakebay Dec. 20, 2021.

Stefan's summers were spent fishing in Alaska on his parents' purse seiner and with his grandparents back in Austria where he had a large extended family. He loved the fishing life as well as hiking and skiing in the mountains of his hometown in the Alps.

He bought his own fishing boat, the F/V Hansa and later the F/V Yarrow.

Stefan loved making music with his friends and family. He forged lifelong friendships in high school and the fishing fleet where he was valued for his kind, empathetic and unfailingly upbeat attitude.

He loved joking around and his humor was refreshing. A quintessential mechanic, he could fix just about anything, be it an engine or electrical device. His calm, thoughtful demeanor contributed to his ability to focus while competing with his colleagues in commercial fishing. He fished for halibut every spring with his mother, Sissi Babich, and stepfather Günter Math, who was a best friend and colleague.

A loving father to his three children, they enjoyed their many field trips together. Stefan loved nature and could name every indigenous tree, shrub and grass on his property. Every fishing season, the children flew up to Alaska to spend time with him out on the fishing grounds.

Stefan leaves behind his wife Therise; children Yarrow, Stoyan and Ean; mother Sissi Babich; father Sigi Jochum and his wife Hegla, along with brothers Florian and Martin Jochum; stepfathers Günter Math and Randy Babich; and many relatives in Austria who loved him dearly.

A devoted father, son and a great fisherman, he was a friend to us and many others.



Norma Alice Meyer

Norma died peacefully at home near Wauna Jan. 5 at the age of 92. She was born May 22, 1929, in Tacoma to Alice and Norman Wilder, who owned and operated the Wilder Berry Farm in Puyallup and Tacoma Beauty Supply. Norma graduated from Puyallup High School and later attended the University of Washington in Seattle, studying art and fashion. She married her high school sweetheart, William R. "Bill" Meyer. Together they raised their children on Wollochet Bay in Gig Harbor, where they commuted to Tacoma for work at Harold Meyer Drug and Mini Auto.

While their children were growing up, the couple built a cabin on the Hoh River in the Olympic Wilderness, enjoying a deep Northwest experience. In 1987 Norma and Bill purchased a house in San Carlos, Mexico, and turned the shell of a home into a showpiece. Norma filled it with stained glass windows, handmade tile, paintings and other artwork, much of which she created. During those years, Norma and Bill also traveled to San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, many times to enjoy the culture, food, and their great love of dancing.

Norma continued to create unique and beautiful homes throughout her life for the love and enjoyment of her family. Her interests included stained glass art, garden and pond design, tending roses, and good food and friends, along the way developing a fashion style all her own. Norma attained mastery in oil paint, which was a lifetime study and passion of hers.

She was preceded in death by husband, Bill, and grandson, Justin. She is survived by daughters Robin of Friday Harbor, Shelley Sass of Gig Harbor, Tweed of Wauna, and Shawn McAllister of Quinalt; her adopted son, Steve; 10 grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren; and two great-great-grandchildren. A private family celebration is planned.



Dulcie Jean Schillinger

Dulcie Jean (Van Slyke) Schillinger, 93, died Dec. 7 at Saint Anthony Hospital. She was born the daughter of a pioneer and a farmer in Vaughn Sept. 27, 1928, just two years after electricity arrived on the Key Peninsula.

Dulcie attended Vaughn Grade School (now the Key Peninsula Civic Center) until 1942 at the end of seventh grade, when the Van Slyke family moved to Tacoma where she attended Jason Lee Junior High and Stadium High schools.

In 1946, Dulcie married Ron Schillinger Sr. of Victor. By 1952, when she was 24 years old, she had three small children: Ron Jr., Susan and Denise. Dulcie and her husband built their home together in Vaughn on land that had been owned by the Van Slykes for three generations.

In 1953, Dulcie began teaching swimming and life-saving every summer on the Key Peninsula for the Red Cross and Pierce County. She received a bachelor's degree in teaching from the University of Puget Sound in 1964 and taught home economics, child development and family relations at Peninsula High School for 10 years.

She was a charter member of Vaughn Bay Church, where she was also a deaconess, pianist and board member. The Vaughn PTA honored her with a lifetime membership award for her leadership activities in 1960. She was part of the group that acquired what is now the civic center from the Peninsula School District and served as secretary in its early years. She was a board member and treasurer of the KP Historical Society and a board member, secretary and historian for the Vaughn Bay Cemetery.

Dulcie was preceded in death by her parents, Chester and Dorothy Van Slyke; husbands, Ron Schillinger, Sr. and Tyman Fikse; brother, Chester Van Slyke; and daughter, Susan Rouse. She is survived by her son, Ron (Janet) Schillinger, Jr.; and daughter, Denise (Steve) Wood; and son-in-law, Richard (Beth) Rouse; sisters-in-law Patti Schillinger and Betty Van Slyke;

13 grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren; and many nieces, nephews and cousins.

Memorial donations can be made to the KP Historical Society or the Vaughn Bay Cemetery, where Dulcie is buried.



Linda Conner Smith

Born in Dallas, Texas Oct. 9, 1941, Linda Conner Smith died peacefully attended by family Jan. 6.

Linda started working at a downtown Dallas bank at age 16. She had three children and after a terrible car accident in her 20s, decided to go back to school and earned her bachelor of arts and master's degrees in science from Dallas Baptist University.

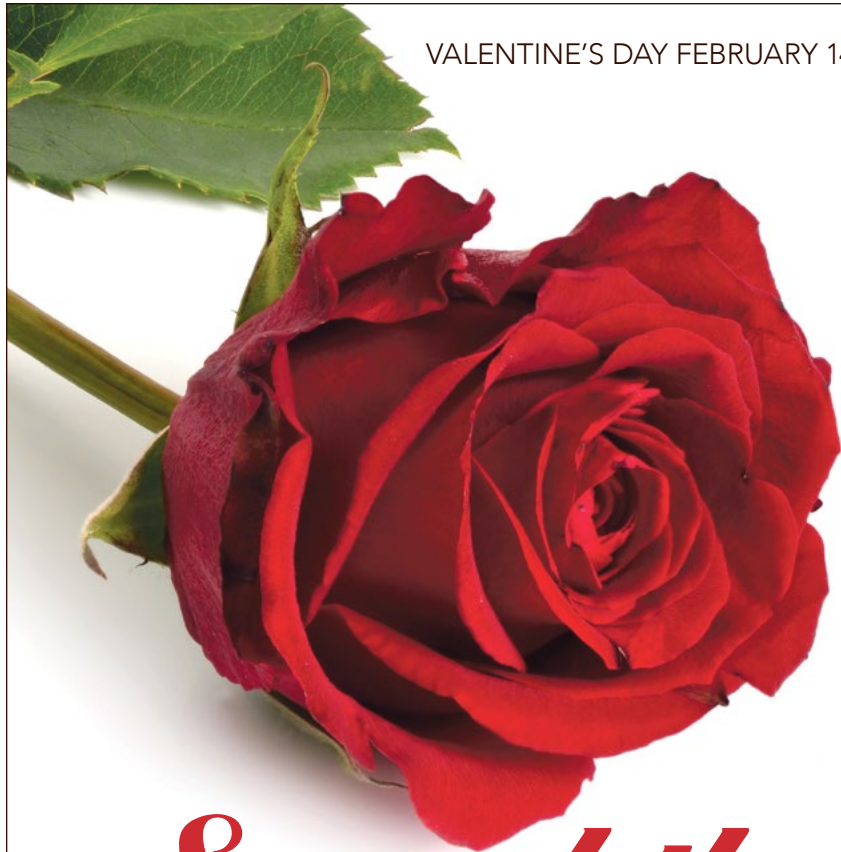
She worked as a teacher in Irving, Texas, and after raising her own children and her granddaughter Robin Price, she moved to Washington and continued teaching in Tacoma and Port Orchard. She continued as a substitute teacher until she was 78.

Linda loved children, her own kids and grandchildren as well as her students. She told them stories about Longhorns and blue bonnets in Texas, her travels in Mexico and Hawaii, and wowed students with photos taken of herself with pythons.

She loved gardening, was an amazing quilter and provided hundreds of free crocheted hats to schools and community centers in Gig Harbor, Port Orchard and the Key Peninsula in the last 10 years. She was a joy to be around and will be missed by family, friends and church friends at WayPoint.

Linda is survived by her son Clint Rosson and his wife Inessa; grandchildren Daniel and Lexi; son Boyd Rosson and his wife Cathy; granddaughter Randi and great-granddaughter Sequoia; granddaughter Robin Kotelnicki and husband John; great-grandsons Buckley and Ethan; nieces Lynette and Kay Conner and their children; and stepsisters Anna and Jenny Kocyan. Linda was preceded in death by parents Ralph Conner, Louise (Pat) Morris Kocyan and her brother Wayne Conner.

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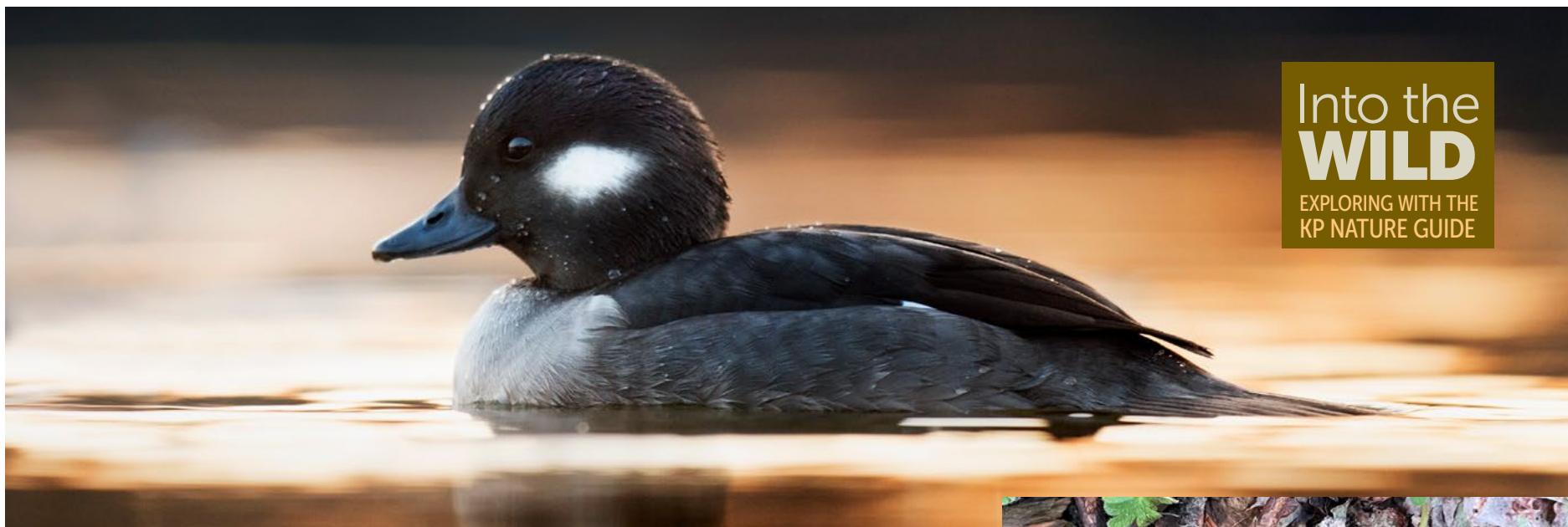
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Naturalist's Notebook

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

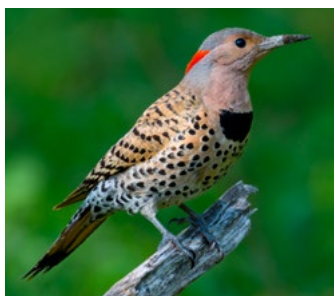
BUFFLEHEADS AND FLICKERS

All this rain has flooded the nearby pastures. You know your pond has just about become a lake when the regular dabblers like mallards and wigeons are joined by diving ducks. Today I've found a pair of buffleheads swimming along a mostly submerged barbed wire fence.

Always entertaining and energetic, buffleheads are one of our smallest ducks. They are here in winter. The females are slate gray with white ovals on their heads. The males remind me of the Nike basketball shoes I used to wear, gleaming white on black.

Along the edge of the flooded field, two birds spook from the ground with a flash of white butt patches. They land upright on the trunk of a dead fir. Their big bills swing as they look back to admonish me. Black spots cover their breasts.

These are northern flickers, the only local woodpecker you will find pecking the ground. Flickers eat ants. Often this



means they are high in snags searching for carpenter ants, but just as often they will walk awkwardly through grass and probe the ground. I wonder if the heavy rain has concentrated ants in this place, perhaps even flooded them from their homes.

Research has shown that flickers can read the weather to anticipate where ants will be most active. For example, below 75 degrees ants in open habitats tend to be more active than ants in the forest. Above

75 degrees it is the opposite. Indeed, on a recent warm-for-January day, a fence line that ant nest was crawling with ants while a massive one back in the woods remained in its winter dormancy. Foraging animals go where prey is most abundant and safe. Following flickers would be a good way to learn ant behavior.

Which makes me wonder, why are the buffleheads here? They eat snails and aquatic insects and, in saltwater, loads of crabs. Did they merely come to relax or has this pasture somehow held snails or aquatic insects in reserve, waiting for a flood to offer them life? That's the kind of question I like: one best answered in waders.

Far to the north, in summertime Canada and Alaska, buffleheads and flickers have a connection. Buffleheads use old flicker nests, which are holes in trees, for their own nests. A flicker's nest hole is just small enough that larger ducks cannot get in to harass the buffleheads.

RAIN, SLUGS, AND THE BIRD'S NEST FUNGUS

I'm out in a pasture gathering branches that have been blown out of firs when I see a half-buried stick adorned with white growths that look like molds for casting pearls.

Hello to the bird's nest fungus. They are tiny, scurfy things. They grow on wood and dung. The smooth interiors of their cups hold "eggs," each of which contains a mass of spores. The nests I have found are half full of rainwater and empty of eggs — except for one, I notice, which is tucked off to one side. The tiny eggs look like misshapen jelly beans covered

in brown goo.

The stick is not big. It will be gone in another year or two, rotted by bacteria and fungi. And there are no bird's nest fungi up in living trees. So how do they get to these fleeting homes? How did the egg that

birthed these nests travel through dense tangles of pasture grass, where it cannot grow, to arrive at this fallen stick?

Enter the slug. The spores of bird's nest fungi pass unharmed through the digestive tract of slugs (and that of insects as well). I cannot find any studies on the speed of slug digestion, but it is slow enough that, even at the pace of slug travel, the spores make it a good long way by the time they are pooped out again.

So, you might think the slugs raid the nests to eat the spore eggs, but apparently that would be far too simple. In fact, the eggs are usually eaten off surrounding vegetation, up to several feet from the nests. How they get there explains another old name for bird's nest fungi: splash cups.

When a raindrop hits the lip of a nest, its energy boomerangs around the curved bottom of the cup and flings the eggs into the air. (A raindrop hitting the center of the nest does not disturb the eggs.) The eggs fly off at up to 10 mph. In some species they reach heights proportionate to a human throwing a discus a mile into the air.

And then they must stick to whatever they hit, lest they drop into the dirt below. In species like the one I have found, the



Log with bird's nest fungus cups. *Chris Rurik, KP News*

eggs are coated in a sticky goo. In other species, the egg is not sticky but attached to a sticky thread coiled in a tiny purse. When the egg hits a blade of grass, the thread gloms on and, like the rope of a tetherball, swings the egg back to rest.

As long as I'm walking backward through the chain of these fungi's reproductive events, let's follow the raindrop upward from its splashdown. For a naturalist like me, acting like a tracker who follows a coyote's prints back to its den can bring to light otherwise hidden connections in the flows of life and energy. A raindrop falls at 20 mph. If it is large, it has the power to dislodge far more than just spore eggs, which need less than 2% of a raindrop's energy to fly. Conservation districts warn against leaving your soil bare because raindrops can literally splash away soil that has taken a thousand years to accumulate.

And from whence did the raindrop come? The energy it holds is not magically created high above. Like the spore eggs it is carried there by a larger force, in this case global weather patterns of evaporation driven by the sun itself. Energy flows in circles — sometimes at the speed of a splash; sometimes at the speed of a slug. ■

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Multi-trunked maples are good tapping candidates. *Nate Daniels*

The Sweet Reward of Tapping into Bigleaf Maples

While no small labor, the depth of flavor in bigleaf maple syrup is worth the effort for hobbyists and possibly commercial producers.

LISA BRYAN, KP NEWS

Nate Daniels, executive director of the Great Peninsula Conservancy, considers himself a syrup hobbyist. His introduction to tapping maple trees came the year he worked at a University of Rhode Island extension farm. Inside one of the barns he found a dusty old crate with an evaporator pan and all the equipment inside to produce syrup. He cleaned it and set it up at what's called a sugarbush — the area where tree tapping takes place.

"They were real sugar maples and the sap was running in February as it has for a couple hundred years in the northeast," Daniels said. "It was super fun and produced a significant amount of syrup."

He said it's fun to sit around and feed logs into the fire and smell the syrup start to condense. "It's a relaxing thing to do on a Saturday. It's a winter hobby."

It takes about 40 gallons of sugar maple tree sap to produce a single gallon of syrup in places like Rhode Island and Vermont. When a forester from the Mount Baker area told Daniels about the future of bigleaf maple syrup here, it piqued his interest. Different species, but the same idea.

It takes over twice the amount of sap from bigleaf maples, about 86 gallons

of sap to produce a gallon of syrup. Sap contains somewhere between 97 and 99% water, but also minerals, vitamins, amino acids and sugar, mostly sucrose.

Local conservationist Kit Ellis was intrigued as well. She has 194 wooded acres in conservation, so she and Daniels gave it a shot last year and learned a lot. The goal was to produce one gallon of syrup, a modest goal they thought. But Ellis said it never got cold enough that winter. Without the cold freeze and thaw process, the sap doesn't run very much. They collected maybe 10 gallons total of sap.

"I made the mistake of boiling that down on my stovetop," Daniels said. "The result was small and steamed up my whole house. This year we will try a different method."

The University of Washington and Washington State University Extension Forestry teamed up with a small grant from the USDA to explore the feasibility of commercial tapping of indigenous bigleaf maples.

Patrick Shults, WSU Extension forester described the processes in a Jan. 12 webinar, "Introduction to Bigleaf Maple Sugaring."

Shults operates a sugarbush demonstration at the Meyer's Point Environmental Field Station in Olympia, set up as part of a University of Washington research project.

The sap season for Bigleaf maples begins

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Kim Daniels runs tubing from the spile to a collection bucket. *Nate Daniels*

when temperatures go below freezing, anywhere from November through March depending on elevation, and requires keeping a close eye on weather forecasts.

Freezing temperatures create negative pressure inside the tree. That pressure draws water up through the roots into the xylem, or sapwood, to the upper part of the tree where it stays until warmer temperatures thaw out the sap, which runs back down through the tree picking up sugars and minerals along the way.

“Because there is a higher relative pressure inside the tree at that point, it actually pushes the sap out through a tap hole that we create and that’s how we go about collecting sap,” Shults said. “This is a feature that is pretty unique to maples and a handful of other species.”

Shults said people often ask if tapping hurts the tree. “Technically yes. But it is minimal, if we’re doing it correctly.” He likened it to giving blood.

“Nobody likes being poked with a needle and having blood drawn but you heal up and your body makes more blood. It’s the same with the tree and similar to a pruning wound.”

Bigleaf maples suitable for tapping are greater than 10 inches in diameter at the base. Sick, dying or stressed trees as well as large old growth trees or trees with heart rot should be avoided. Other site factors

include grade and water table.

Tapping basics include strategic drilling of a 2-inch deep hole and immediately inserting a metal or plastic tap using a hammer or rubber mallet until hearing a “thud.” Proper placement of taps is essential and multi-stemmed clumps of trees can work well. The number of taps per tree depends on the diameter of the tree, ranging from one to three taps. Keeping future taps in mind, one cannot tap the same spot twice. Trees begin to heal immediately and may be tapped two or three times in a season.

There are several types of sap collection systems for hobbyists, each with pros and cons, including buckets or bags directly from the spile, or tubing carrying the sap to a bucket on the ground. Another is making use of gravity to create a natural vacuum and connecting taps to plastic tubing to drain into a collection tank.

Clean equipment is essential. To avoid bacteria growth, sap should be processed immediately. Processing means evaporating all the water from the sap; there are many options from homemade to commercial at varying costs. Wood fired evaporators are best at the hobby scale.

The resulting syrup can be finished on the stove, measuring with a brix gauge to achieve a 66-69 brix. Once filtered, the syrup can last a year in the fridge, and several years canned in glass jars or in the freezer. ■

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VAUGHN TUE/THUR MORNING

- 9:00 Vaughn Elementary School
- 9:03 Wright Bliss Rd NW @Olson Dr NW
- 9:04 Wright Bliss Road @104th St Ct NW
- 9:06 Union 76 @SR 302/4 Corners
- 9:09 SR 302 @150th Ave/Lake Holiday bus shed
- 9:12 SR 302 @140th Ave/Lake of the Woods
- 9:15 SR 302 @Charboneau Construction
- 9:19 Lake Kathryn Village
- 9:25 Purdy Park & Ride

VAUGHN WEDNESDAY MORNING

- 10:00 Vaughn Elementary School
- 10:03 Wright Bliss Rd NW @Olson Dr NW
- 10:04 Wright Bliss Road @104th St Ct NW
- 10:06 Union 76 @SR 302/4 Corners
- 10:09 SR 302 @150th Ave/Lake Holiday bus shed
- 10:12 SR 302 @140th Ave/Lake of the Woods
- 10:15 SR 302 @Charboneau Construction
- 10:19 Lake Kathryn Village
- 10:25 Purdy Park & Ride

EVERGREEN TUE/THUR MORNING

- 9:00 Evergreen Elementary School
- 9:05 Palmer Lake public access 24th St SW
- 9:07 Palmer Lake 21st St SW @193rd Ave
- 9:13 KPCS Senior Center & Food Bank
- 9:14 Home Gas Station @KP Hwy N
- 9:20 167th Ave Ct NW @KP Hwy N
- 9:22 Food Market in Key Center
- 9:25 KP Hwy N @Minterwood Dr NW
- 9:33 Lake Kathryn Village
- 9:40 Purdy Park & Ride

EVERGREEN WEDNESDAY MORNING

- 10:00 Evergreen Elementary School
- 10:05 Palmer Lake public access 24th St SW
- 10:07 Palmer Lake 21st St SW @193rd Ave
- 10:13 KPCS Senior Center & Food Bank
- 10:14 Home Gas Station @KP Hwy N
- 10:20 167th Ave Ct NW @KP Hwy N
- 10:22 Food Market in Key Center
- 10:25 KP Hwy N @Minterwood Dr NW
- 10:33 Lake Kathryn Village
- 10:40 Purdy Park & Ride



A partnership of KP Community Council, Puget Sound Educational Service District and Peninsula School District.

TUE/WED/THUR AFTERNOON

- 4:42 Purdy Park & Ride
- 4:47 Lake Kathryn Village
- 4:50 SR 302 @Windermere Realty
- 4:52 SR 302 @140th Ave/Lake of the Woods
- 4:53 SR 302 @150th/Lake Holiday bus shed
- 4:55 4 Corners gas station @SR 302
- 4:57 Wright Bliss Road @104th St Ct
- 4:58 Wright Bliss Road @Olson Dr
- 5:00 Food Market in Key Center
- 5:04 167th Ave Ct NW @KP Hwy N
- 5:08 Home Gas Station @KP Hwy N
- 5:10 KPCS Senior Center & Food Bank
- 5:13 Palmer Lake public access 24th St SW
- 5:14 Palmer Lake 21st St SW @193rd Ave
- 5:18 Evergreen Elementary School



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A Trio of Treats for Valentine's Day

BARBARA VAN BOGART

The origins of Valentine's Day are murky, lost in the annals of history. One theory is it commemorated the anniversary of the death of Saint Valentine, somewhere around 270 AD. Another theory is the Christian church decided to place Saint Valentine's feast day in mid-February to normalize the pagan celebration called Lupercalia, a festival dedicated to Faunus, the Roman god of agriculture, as well as Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome.

Whatever the true origins of Valentine's Day might be, it has come to be known as the holiday that celebrates love. Flowers, dinners, candy and cards have marked this occasion ever since. In keeping with the theme of displays of affection, what could be better than a trio of baked treats?

As the great gastronomist and New York Times food writer Craig Claiborne once said, "For those who love it, cooking is at once child's play and adult joy. And cooking done with care is an act of love."

One Pan Fudgy Brownies

— adapted from "365 Great Cookies and Brownies" by Bonnie Tandy Leblang and Joanne Lamb Hayes

2 sticks (8 ounces) unsalted butter
¾ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
2 cups white sugar
4 eggs at room temperature

2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 cup flour
½ teaspoon salt
2 cups semisweet chocolate chips
Preheat oven to 350. Grease a 9 by 13 inch pan. Melt butter in medium-sized saucepan over low heat. Add cocoa powder and stir until well blended. Mix in sugar. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Stir in vanilla, then flour and salt. Do not overbeat. Stir in chocolate chips. Turn into prepared pan, leveling surface.

Bake 20 to 25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near center comes out with just a few moist crumbs. Cool completely on rack before cutting into squares.

Orange Chocolate Mousse

— adapted from "The Prairie Homestead" by Jill Winger

2 cups heavy cream
4 egg yolk at room temperature
4 tablespoons maple syrup
3 tablespoons orange zest
6 ounces semisweet chocolate chips, melted and slightly cooled
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
Whisk the yolks, syrup, orange juice and zest together in a small bowl. Heat ¾ cup cream in a saucepan over medium

low heat until it's steamy but not boiling. Slowly whisk the hot cream into the egg yolk mixture and return it back to the saucepan and cook over low heat until it's thick enough to coat the back of a spoon. Mix in melted chocolate and vanilla extract. Chill.

Once chocolate custard has cooled completely, whip the remaining ¼ cups of cream until stiff peaks form. Fold the custard into the whipped cream until it's completely blended and no longer streaky. Spoon mixture into dessert cups, ramekins or, even better, martini glasses, and chill an additional 30 minutes.

Garnish if desired with additional orange zest, sifted cocoa powder, chocolate chunks or whipped cream.

An easy and elegant way to serve eight.

Easy Cheesecake Bars

Preheat oven to 350. Butter one 9 by 13 inch pan.

Mix together well in a bowl one box yellow cake mix, 1 cup chopped pecans, 4 ounces softened butter and one egg. Pat into prepared pan. Mix one pound powdered sugar, 8 ounces softened cream cheese and two eggs. Spread on top of prepared crust. Bake 40 to 45 minutes. This is so easy and delicious! ■

We'd love to feature a dish from your KP kitchen that friends and family ask for. Email the details to editor@keypennews.org with your phone number; we'll be in touch. PS: There's a printable, shareable pdf with the complete recipe on keypennews.org

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Mushroom Cabin Brings Never-Never Land to Lakebay

Vintage Never-Never Land statues find a new home at eccentric Lakebay cabin.

KRISA BRUEMMER, KP NEWS

In the woods near Penrose Point State Park, Rod Collen and his fiancée Shannon Garrett have spent the last two years building a 900-square-foot mushroom-shaped cabin.

They purchased a 2-acre parcel of forested property in March 2020 and have been there every weekend since, completing nearly all the work themselves, including clearing a quarter-mile trail lined with eclectic art and secondhand items. The path will feature statues from Never-Never Land, a 10-acre enchanted forest that brought fairy tales and nursery rhymes to life at Point Defiance Park from 1964 until the early 2000s, and sparks nostalgia across multiple generations.

For decades, an 8-foot tall Humpty Dumpty sat perched atop a stack of gigantic books, welcoming children to visit life-sized storybook characters such as Old Mother Hubbard, Little Red Riding Hood and Little Boy Blue. Ongoing vandalism, theft and weather damage led to the park's closure and in 2011, an arson

attack on the historic pagoda where the collection was being stored destroyed half of what remained of Never-Never Land. When Metro

Parks Tacoma put 35 remaining items up for auction in September, Collen couldn't resist bidding.

"It was meant to be," Collen said. "I was going there quite a bit in the late '70s when I was a toddler and I remember it just fascinating me and creeping me out at the same time."

The original sculptor, Hungarian refugee Elek Imredy, died in 1994 and his molds for repairs and replacements were destroyed in the pagoda fire, so the remaining statues are irreplaceable.

Collen won his favorite character, Little Jack Horner, as well as Miss Muffet and Three Men in a Tub: the Butcher, the Baker and the Candlestick Maker. The painted fiberglass statues did not survive the arson unscathed; Jack's hair is burnt and peeling and they all sustained scarring. "I think I'm going to leave it because it kind of tells the story," Collen said. "They look kind of rundown, so it's almost dystopian."

Collen and Garrett's plan for the property is more about originality than perfection. Most of the cabin's finish work will be done with reclaimed materials. Pews, salvaged during a remodel of an opulent Mormon church in Bellevue, have been refurbished into a spiral staircase leading to a lofted bedroom with French doors that will open onto a multilayered back deck.

"We want it to look like nothing here came from Home Depot," Collen said. "Once we get the finish work done it's going to look like it's 100 years old and super cozy."

Despite its rustic appearance, staying at the cabin will not require any roughing it. There will be a modern kitchen, a shower with a hand-laid mushroom mosaic wall, a washer and dryer, radiant floor heating, two gas-powered fireplaces, an Italian chandelier they found on the street in Seattle, and a hidden TV.

"You'll come in and you won't see any technology," Collen said. "I want to find somebody to do some murals in here too, really make it special."

Outside, the well house looks like a small windmill. There will be a hot tub and sauna, multiple decks, an owl-themed shed, a powered gate and a security system.

Collen learned construction skills from his father, a general contractor in Tacoma. He has always worked on his own homes while dreaming of building a unique cabin from the ground up. "This is something I've wanted to do for 30 or 40 years," he said.

The property started out fully forested with no power or water. "Just cutting the driveway was so much fun,"

Collen said. "The very first time we drove a car down here was so exciting"

"I REMEMBER IT JUST FASCINATING ME AND CREEPING ME OUT AT THE SAME TIME."

While waiting on permits, Collen went around the property with a chainsaw while Garrett followed with a woodchipper, clearing the trail that would eventually be home to the Never-Never Land figurines.

The mushroom shape was Garrett's idea. "When we first started talking about this, we were in a bar somewhere and (Collen) just sketched it out," she said.

"We came up with this design and then went down to the county and they went 'OK, that's cute but you've got to get it engineered,'" Collen said. "We've gone through inspectors and everything's engineered, permitted to code."

Collen and Garrett trenched 250 feet out to the road to put power in and did all the excavation and drain rock installation themselves. Concrete was poured in the summer of 2020. They purchased most of the materials before supply chain issues drove up costs, and did the rebar installation, framing, sheetrock, plumbing and radiant floor heating themselves, working through rain and cold under a large tarp before the roof went on.

"It's not really round, it's 24 sections," Collen said. "I've got a background in rock climbing so in order to put the roof on I created an anchor at the top and hung off on a harness, on a rope, and basically put wheels on it so I could walk around the entire thing and then Shannon threw shingles at me."

"He's adventurous," Garrett said. "I think he gets bored if he's not doing something different than what other people do."



Little Jack Horner considers his thumb. The mushroom house nears completion.

Tina McKail, KP News

Collen, who has climbed Mount Rainier four times and is a scuba diver and pilot, said some parts of the building process were scary, such as putting up the beams, but now there is a memory associated with just about every nail or screw. "If someone else were to do it, hiring it done, it doesn't mean anything," he said. "It was an epic journey — it was just like climbing Mount Rainier, or more, twice in a day."

Collen proposed to Garrett Dec. 7 at the mushroom cabin's front door and she said yes. The two of them look forward to completing the cabin over the next few months, remodeling their 1909 home in Tacoma, getting married, and sharing their one-of-a-kind Lakebay hideaway with family and friends.

"Everything's easy after this," Collen said. "This is staying in the family forever." ■



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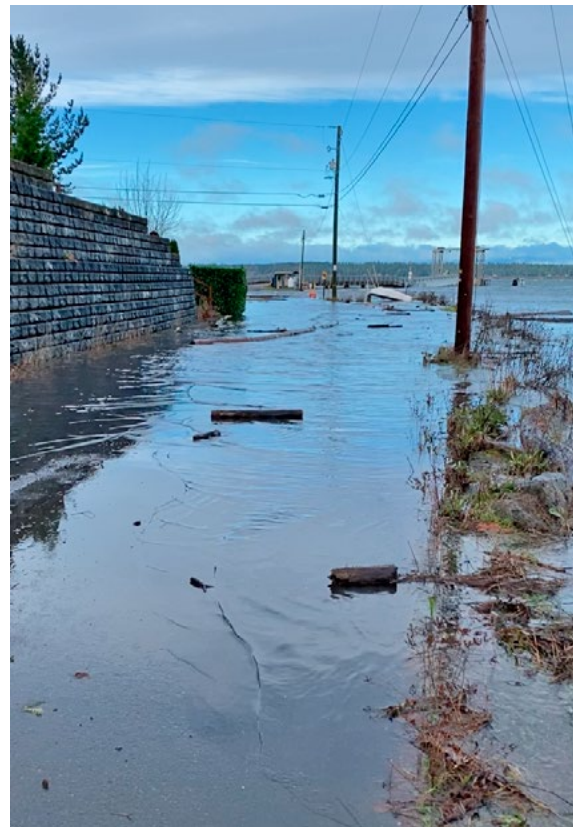
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Left: North Herron Road. *Judy Cleghorn* Burley Lagoon reaches the Bridgeport parking lot. *MyCoast*

Amplified King Tide Causes Dramatic Flooding

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

One of the highest tides of 2022 was predicted for just after sunrise Friday, Jan 7. Daylight revealed a tide two feet higher than the prediction. Seawater filled the parking lot of Purdy's Bridgeway Market. Around the Key Peninsula, bulkheads were submerged, yards flooded and sand spits disappeared.

At the nearest official recording station, in Tacoma, the tide broke the 15-foot mark for the first time in a quarter century of data.

King tides are expected every winter due to the relative positions of the sun and moon, but any given day's actual tides can vary from the predicted level — usually on the order of inches. The tide Jan. 6 was predicted to be higher than that of Jan. 7. It turned out to be a foot lower than the Friday showstopper.

"What struck me most," said Rachel Easton of the environmental education nonprofit Harbor WildWatch, "was imagining the volume of rain and snow melt from the entire watershed and how much that fresh water amplified already high tides to create flooding all around the Sound."

In the 48 hours prior to the high tide, nearly 4 inches of rain fell. At the same time, the New Year's cold snap ended, thawing snow and ice. Upland flooding was at its highest stage so far this winter.

Other factors contributed, particularly a low-pressure weather system passing

directly overhead at the time of the high tide. High atmospheric pressure acts to suppress high tides, while low pressure allows them to rise higher.

At the same time, a southwest wind blew, pushing waves and higher water northeastward, slightly boosting the tide at Purdy and along the eastern shore of Case Inlet.

All of it combined in record-setting fashion to amaze observers around Puget Sound. Citizen scientists helped to document the event by uploading photographs from their homes and local parks to the Department of Natural Resource's MyCoast portal. Anyone can contribute to the portal's King Tides project, which creates a map of images of the year's highest tides.

"King tide events like this give us all a greater appreciation for the power of nature and serve as a preview to how sea level rise from climate change can affect us here on the Key Peninsula," Easton said. "It's an excellent reminder to work toward solutions and focus our efforts to become a more resilient community in times of change."

According to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, sea level has risen 8 to 9 inches since 1880 and is accelerating. It more than doubled from 0.06 inches per year in most of the twentieth century to 0.14 inches per year between 2006 and 2015. In 2020, global sea level set a record high of 3.6 inches

above 1993 levels.

The rate of sea rise is expected to continue to accelerate due to climate change, though models differ as to how fast. ■

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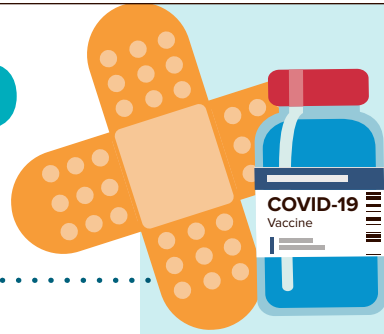
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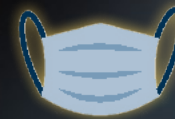
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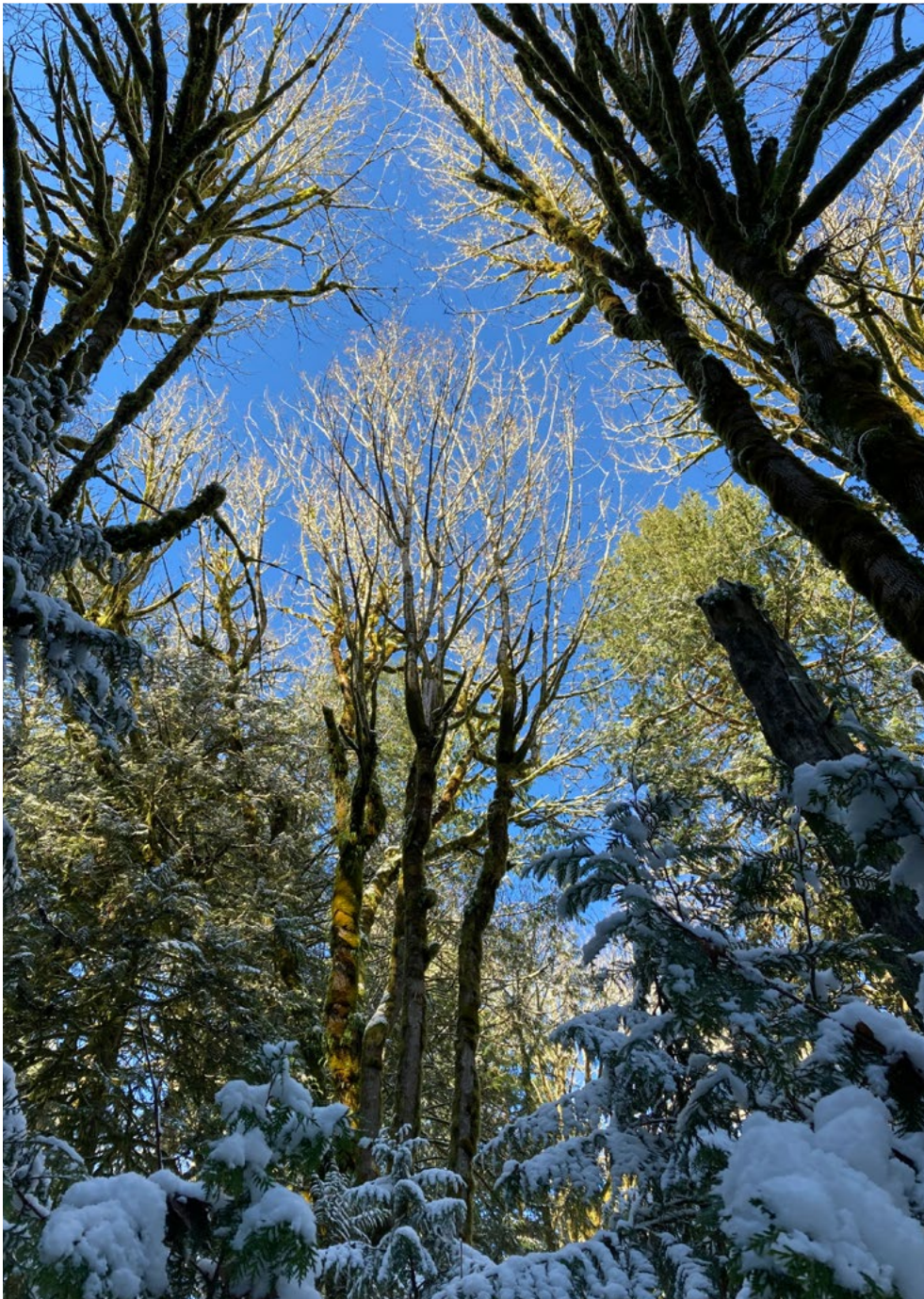
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TOP LEFT Gypsy the Great Pyrenees all but disappears in the snow. *Tina McKail, KP News*
TOP RIGHT A light dusting of snow at Glen Cove. *Ed Johnson, KP News* **LOWER LEFT**
 Along the wooded trail at Haley State Park. *Richard Schwartz* **MID RIGHT** Purple finch
 hunting for food. *Tina McKail, KP News* **LOWER RIGHT** Snow-covered beach at Haley
 State Park. *Richard Schwartz*