

# Quad City Herald

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## Pateros Peninsula Park beach improvements scheduled for 2025

**By MIKE MALTAIS**  
Ward Media Staff Reporter

PATEROS – Peninsula Park beach is among the projects the city has on its 2025 improvement list, and one discussed at the Jan. 21 monthly meeting of the city council.

City Administrator Jord Wilson reported that Douglas PUD is preparing bid documents for the project that will, among other improvements, more than double the

size of the swim beach. Expanding the beach will also allow access for maintenance equipment.

Three small trees on the shoreline are scheduled for removal and the large red oak will be protected as a source of shade. Wilson said the goal is to award the project and have construction completed in advance of swimming season.

Wilson also noted that the swim dock's leaking floats need significant repairs this season but that will

require two years to complete.

"Our permit will not allow more than fifty percent repairs in a season," said Wilson. "The likelihood a new permit through the Army Corps of Engineers is nil, as they do not permit in waters less than 15 feet deep anymore."

Peninsula Park improvements are also listed in the new six-year Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan adopted by the council last Dec. 16. A current plan is necessary for

the city to maintain its eligibility for grants from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO).

Among Peninsula Park improvements listed in the new plan are:

- Add a beach volleyball court west of the restroom.
- Rehab the old gazebo and upgrade or remove the electricity panel and wiring.
- Expand the patio around the

playground.

- Add a bench to the playground area.
- Add a rinse shower to reduce swimmers' itch.
- Replace the water fountain to include a pet waterer.
- Add a connecting sidewalk to the city sidewalk system at Warren.
- Add safety signage for boaters.

Mike Maltais: 360-333-8483 or michael@ward.media

## Senior Center addresses proposed city ownership, property lines

MIKE MALTAIS/  
WARD MEDIA  
Senior Center officers and board members for 2025 include from left, board member Kay McVay, Garnet Hill, board member Mary McCann, board member Dan Webster, President Klair Lowrey, David Burdick, Vice President Mike Mauk, and Treasurer Charlene Knox. Not pictured is Secretary Suzy Lamoreux.



MIKE MALTAIS/WARD MEDIA

The Center recently purchased this 10'x16' storage shed.

**By MIKE MALTAIS**  
Ward Media Staff Reporter

BREWSTER – The Brewster-Bridgeport-Pateros Senior Center kicked off its first meeting of 2025 with a couple of weighty carryover issues from 2024. One is the offer

discussed last year with the City of Brewster to assume ownership of the Senior Center building. The other is the building property line.

The Senior Center first approached the city in 2019 to help cover its maintenance and operating costs. The city responded with a contract

proposal to assume ownership of the building and allow the Senior Center to remain in the building for as long as it remained operating. A later vote by the membership declined the proposal.

The proposal was revisited in 2024. City Director of Finance Misty Ruiz

discovered that the original contract no longer existed but said the city would entertain another agreement if the Center was interested.

Member Dave Burdick said Brewster is about the only Senior Center in Okanogan County that is not city-owned and maintained. He

cited two pending maintenance issues that concern him about the building. One is the heating unit mounted on the roof that is too small to meet the needs of the building space. The other is asbestos. For any remodel,

See SENIOR CENTER Page B2

## Brewster Senior Center takes its case to Bridgeport

**By MIKE MALTAIS**  
Ward Media Staff Reporter

BRIDGEPORT – Brewster-Bridgeport-Pateros Senior Center President Klair Wicks-Lowrey addressed the Jan. 15 regular meeting of the city council on behalf of the three-community center to deliver a report highlighting the Center's 2025 activities and to request the city to consider a support agreement for 2025.

Wicks-Lowrey was accompanied by Senior Center Vice President Mike Mauk, Treasurer Charlene Knox, and member Angie Wilks-Ronning.

In previous years both Bridgeport and Pateros have provided annual support to the Senior Center.

The agreement is a copy of one negotiated with the City of Bridgeport on Dec. 14, 2016. It asks the City of

Bridgeport "to consider entering into an agreement with the Senior Center in the amount of \$3,000 to go towards the operation of the Senior Center."

In return the Senior Center will provide an annual report of its activities to Bridgeport. That report which Wicks-Lowrey left with the council includes the following:

- Facilitate meals and transportation provided by Okanogan County Transportation and Nutrition (OCTN) at the Senior Center three days per week.
- Facilitate OCTN mobile meals as needed by the community three days per week. Additional frozen meals for the week.
- Monthly fundraiser meals provided by member volunteers. Proceeds go towards upgrading kitchen equipment.

- Veterans Day lunch at Senior Center, put on by Senior Center and American Legion Auxiliary volunteers.
- Facilitate OCTN bus transportation to Wenatchee on Thursdays as needed for appointments/activities.
- Annual Holiday Bazaar.
- Medical Equipment available for loan to anyone in need. Free Food and essentials pantry.
- Monthly pedicures (\$15) provided at the Center by licensed RN.
- Holiday, special occasion live acoustic music after lunch.
- Thrift Store open six days per week, run by volunteers. All proceeds go to supporting Senior Center.
- Support Chamber – Annual Trick or Treat night.
- Guest speakers at board meetings

and after lunch.

- Okanogan Sheriff – how to prevent Scams, in home protection.
- Three Rivers RN – Health Care services.
- Aging Adult Care – In home services.
- Information/referrals for subsidized Utilities/food bank.

Mayor Sergio Orozco said he recalled previous years when Bridgeport provided annual support to the Senior Center.

"I'd like to continue that," said Orozco, noting that since the 2025 budget has already been approved the council must first amend that action to add the requested donation.

Mike Maltais: 360-333-8483 or michael@ward.media



MIKE MALTAIS/WARD MEDIA

Brewster-Bridgeport-Pateros Senior Center President Klair Wicks-Lowrey addresses the January meeting of the Bridgeport city council.

## Okanogan Conservation District unveils new wildfire protection plan

Quad City Herald  
Ward Media

OKANOGAN - After a year-long effort led by the Okanogan Conservation District, the 2024 Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) for Okanogan County was officially approved on January 7 and signed by the Okanogan County Commissioners and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. The CWPP was published on January 16 and is available on the Okanogan Conservation District's website.

This updated document acknowledges the collaborative work

of more than 1,000 community members and over 100 partners, including Okanogan County Emergency Management, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, USDA Forest Service, and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. This includes residents and business owners, fire districts, local government organizations and non-profits, tribal partners, local, state, and federal natural resource managers, and wildfire recovery, air quality, and additional conservation groups.

The CWPP promotes a county-wide wildfire hazard mitigation concept

that is intended to guide the way to a safe and sustainable future for Okanogan County, ensuring that people, structures, infrastructure, wildlife, livestock, unique ecosystems, natural resources, and cultural heritage are protected and resilient to wildfire. An active and up-to-date CWPP is required to qualify applicants for certain wildfire resiliency grants and some forms of federal post-wildfire aid. The accomplishment of this update in 2024 allows Okanogan County to have an active CWPP until 2034.

First authorized by Congress in 2003, CWPPs are intended to identify

and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommend the types and methods of treatment to protect communities and measures to reduce structure ignitability. The first Okanogan County CWPP was drafted in 2009 and was last updated in 2013, one year before the Carlton Complex Fire.

The 2024 CWPP edition, succeeded in incorporating over 1,000 Okanogan County residents who provided invaluable information highlighting their experiences with wildfire, concerns for the future, and areas of priority for action. Public feedback was collected throughout 2024 via

online inquiries, a community survey, and five hybrid public meetings that were organized in various locations across the County.

This feedback was combined with local partner input and previous CWPP action item information to assist the CWPP planning committee in the development of over 180 action items. These project actions are not legally-binding but are intended to help prioritize and guide planning efforts for wildfire resiliency, forest and shrubsteppe health management, and wildfire recovery in Okanogan

See CONSERVATION Page B2

### Inside The Quad City Herald this Week

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29 S. Wenatchee Ave,  
Ste A, Wenatchee,  
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# Quad City Herald

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## On the Internet

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www.qcerald.com

### News E-mail:

news@ward.media

### Advertising e-mail:

advertising@ward.media

### Office hours

Mon. to Fri. 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

## Contact information

### CEO & Publisher

#### Terry Ward

509-731-3284

terry@ward.media

### COO & Co-Owner

#### Amy M. Yaley

509-731-3321

amy@ward.media

### Reporter/Photographer

#### Michael Maltais

michael@ward.media

### Reporter

#### Quinn Propst

quinn@ward.media

### Classifieds/Legals

#### Laura Husa

classifieds@ward.media

### Circulation:

#### Laura Husa

509-293-6780

laura@ward.media

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The Quad City Herald welcomes letters to the editor. All letters must be accompanied by the author's name, a home address and a daytime phone number (for verification purposes only). Letters may be edited for length, clarity, accuracy and fairness. No letter will be published without the author's name. Thank you letters will only be printed from non-profit organizations and events. We will not publish lists of businesses, or lists of individual names. Email your letters to: terry@ward.media

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Quad City Herald regrets any errors. If you see an error, please call 509-689-2507. We will publish a correction.

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## Get your event in the spotlight with Ward Media!

If you have an exciting event to share, email Reporter Quinn Propst at [quinn@ward.media](mailto:quinn@ward.media). We'll showcase the five most captivating events of the week, giving your event the recognition it deserves. Even if your event isn't among the top five, it will still be added to our events calendar and featured online. Don't miss this chance to make your event shine!

### Friday Night Trivia at The Cove

The Cove Wine and Games in Chelan will host Friday Night Trivia on Friday, January 31, from 7:30-9:30 p.m.

"Enjoy a fun evening after a long work week filled with brain teasing questions, friendly competition and great prizes," the event page states. "Don't miss out on the fun - come join us for a night of entertainment and challenge paired with your favorite beverage."

For more information, visit [insidethecove.com](http://insidethecove.com).

### Blind Date with a Book

The Pateros Library will host a Blind Date with a Book

throughout the month of February.

"Go on a Blind Date with a Book this month at the library," the event page states. "Check out a wrapped book with goodies from our display, read it, rate it using the included bookmark, and return your rating at the library to be entered into a drawing for a Cozy Basket. Your date awaits."

For more information, visit [nculibraries.org](http://nculibraries.org).

### Big Sax Daddy live

Tsillan Cellars in Chelan will host live music by Big Sax Daddy on Saturday, February 1, from 1-4 p.m.

"Join us for live music in the tasting room 1-4 p.m.," the

event page states.

For more information, visit [tsillancellars.com](http://tsillancellars.com).

### Wine Down Wednesday

Campbell's Resort in Chelan will host Wine Down Wednesday at the Pub and Veranda on Wednesday, February 5, from 5-8 p.m.

"Join us every Wednesday for Wine Down Wednesday at the Pub and Veranda! 50% off select bottles and 20% off all glass pours," the event page states.

For more information, visit [campbellsresort.com](http://campbellsresort.com).

5 THINGS TO DO THIS WEEK



### Pub Trivia at Stormy Mountain Brewing

Stormy Mountain Brewing in Chelan will host Pub Trivia on Wednesday, February 5, from 6-7:30 p.m.

"Join your friends and family for the local favorite - Stormy

Mountain Pub Trivia," the event page states. "We have fun questions made for all ages - culture, history, sports, and more. Awesome prizes and as always - free to play."

For more information, visit [stormymountainbrewing.com](http://stormymountainbrewing.com).

## Okanogan & Douglas County Sheriff, Brewster Police Dept Report

This report is compiled from records provided by the Okanogan & Douglas County Sheriff, Brewster Police Dept. The publisher cannot certify the complete accuracy of the information provided.

### Douglas County

#### Jan 17

08:50:18 Assist Agency, 1510 Douglas Ave, Bridgeport Db10  
09:57:49 Welfare Check, 32 Wilmot St, Mansfield, W Db20  
11:04:28 Trespass, 911 Foster Ave, Bridgeport Db10  
14:13:17 Traffic Offense, 2300blk Columbia Blvd, Bri Db10

#### Jan 21

01:41:04 Alarm, 1300 Douglas Ave, Bridgeport  
15:54:27 Assist Agency, 119 Whitlam Ave, Bridgeport  
21:26:55 Assist Agency, 1255 Fairview Ave# 5, Bri

#### Jan 22

17:58:52 Trespass, 483 14th St, Bridgeport, W

#### Jan 23

18:02:33 Welfare Check, 317 Walnut St, Mansfield

### Brewster Police Dept.

#### Jan 18

20:33:54 - Missing Person, Ferry Ave, Brewster, Wa  
Comments, Rp Is Spanish-Speaking, 11-Year-Old Grandson Has Been Missing For 2 Days.

#### Jan 19

20:31:20 - Agency Assist, Sr 173

Hwy; Nb, Brewster, Wa  
Comments, None Provided.

#### Jan 21

16:08:51 - Accident Non-Injury, W Jay Ave & N 6th St, Brewster, Wa  
Comments, 2-Vehicle Collision, No Injuries.

19:50:59 - Found Property, Old Hwy 97, Brewster, Wa  
Comments, A Firearm And Case Were Left In The Men's Bathroom. Rp Does Not Have Access To The Cameras. Rp Has Possession Of The Firearm Now And Will Store It In The Office Safe.

22:28:54 - Alarm Burglary, E Main Ave, Brewster, Wa  
Comments, None Provided.

23:44:05 - Alarm Burglary, E Main Ave, Brewster, Wa  
Comments, None Provided.

#### Jan 22

08:18:59 - Theft Other, S 7th St, Brewster, Wa  
Comments, None Provided.

#### Jan 23

19:40:09 - Harassment, Industrial Way, Pateros  
Comments, Subject In A Gray Ford Focus Is Trying To Get Rp's License Plate, Won't Leave Them Alone. Attempting To Force Rp Into Their Vehicle Using Their Voice, Nothing Physical.  
21:50:27 - Animal Stray, 4

Highway 97, Brewster  
Comments, Female Lab Mix Found.

#### Jan 24

03:13:02 - Runaway Juvenile, S 3rd St, Brewster, Wa  
Comments, 12-Year-Old Sister Snuck Out Of The House, Possibly To See Someone.

### Okanogan County Sheriff

#### Jan 17

13:17:48 Animal Abuse Beach St, Pateros, Wa  
Comments: Home Owners Have Been Gone For 2-3 Days 2 Dogs Have Been Left In The Back Yard. Rp Hasnt Seen Anyone Drive By To Take Care Of Them And Is Unsure If They Have Food Or Water

#### Jan 21

13:25:44 Civil, Unger Rd, Brewster, Wa  
Comments: Rp's Advd Her Brother Is Damaging Her Property. Advd This Is An Ongoing Issue.

#### Jan 23

08:56:26 Civil Highway 97, Brewster, Wa  
Comments: Male Posted On Fb About Rp. Rp Is Not Sure If He Was Actually Served But Is Assuming He Was, Or That He Is At Least Aware That He Is Not Allowed To Do That. Rp Is At Her Res For Contact.  
12:48:58 Violate Order Highway 97, Brewster, Wa  
Comments: Rp And Her Husband Has An Order With Subj And He Is Currently Outside Rps Res.  
19:40:09 Harassment Industrial Way, Pat  
Comments: Subj In A Gry Ford Focus, Trying To Get Rp's Lic Plate, Won't Leave Them Alone. Trying To Force Rp Into His Veh W/ His Voice, Nothing Physical

## Washington farmers want agritourism law reforms

COURTESY PHOTO

Sen. Judy Warnick, R-Moses Lake, is seeking reforms to agritourism regulations.



By MARY FEUSNER  
Washington State Standard

OLYMPIA - Farmers across the state say regulations are getting in the way as they develop products they can sell directly to the public. From pumpkin patches to u-pick berry farms, the impacts are real, a state panel was told Jan. 16.

"Without the agritourism industry to supplement our income, we wouldn't be able to make it," said Robby Rutledge, owner of Rutledge Family Farms in Tumwater.

To carve out new rules, Sen. Judy Warnick, R-Moses Lake, introduced Senate Bill 5055.

The bill establishes new zoning laws for all farms, which in turn would lower property taxes. The bill also allows farmers to repurpose areas of land unsuitable for agricultural use and remove commercial standards now in place for agritourism. It would also allow agritourism venues to receive beer and wine licenses.

Hilary Jensen, president of Jensen Farms in Kittitas County, said the state issued a cease-and-desist order in October 2016 during the height of her pumpkin selling season. The order said the farm was operating illegally because buildings were approved for residential use only. Jensen had to

apply for a commercial building permit and retrofit the buildings to sell pumpkins legally.

"It cost \$6,000 to do all that at a time when I was only open eight to 10 days out of the year," said Jensen.

Keith Stocker, president of Stocker Farms in Snohomish, said this year his family could not have survived off the commercial market price for blueberries. If Stocker had sold to canneries they would have received 68 cents a pound. Instead, with a u-pick operation at the farm, they were able to make \$3.25 a pound.

According to the Washington State Department of Commerce, agriculture and food manufacturing operations support more than 171,000 jobs in the state of Washington. The industry is responsible for over \$21 billion in revenue each year.

Jensen said she believes the state should be hands-off and less restrictive so counties can decide what they want their agritourism landscape to look like.

Washington State Standard ([www.washingtonstatestandard.com](http://www.washingtonstatestandard.com)) is part of States Newsroom, a nonprofit news network supported by grants and a coalition of donors as a 501c(3) public charity.

## Genealogy educator to present land records program Feb. 10

NCW News  
Ward Media

EAST WENATCHEE. — The Wenatchee Area Genealogical Society will host genealogy educator Lisa Gorrell for a presentation on using the Bureau of Land Management's General Land

Office website on Feb. 10. The hybrid meeting begins at 2 p.m. at the FamilySearch Center, 667 10th St., and will be available via Zoom. For virtual access, contact [Library@wags-web.org](mailto:Library@wags-web.org).

The event is free and open to the public. For more information, call 509-782-4046.

## Death Announcements

**Mary Ernestine Roe**  
Mary Ernestine Roe, 95, of Brewster, Washington, formerly of Chelan, Washington, passed away on January 22, 2025. Barnes Chapel is handling the arrangements for the family.

## NORTH CASCADES

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# Community Bulletin Board

## Local, Regional Community News & Events

Any non-profit 501(c)-(3) group, person(s). Must provide: full name, city, phone number. Items pertaining to local events that are free or minimum charge. Garage and Yard Sale Ads are paid events, please email: [classifieds@ward.media](mailto:classifieds@ward.media). To submit info call **509-548-5286** or email: [ruth@ward.media](mailto:ruth@ward.media)

### Meetings

#### Mondays

**Okanogan County Fair Advisory Committee:** Second Monday, 6 p.m. Meetings are open to the public. Okanogan County Commissioners' hearing room, 123 N. Fifth Ave., Okanogan.

**Family and friends Support Group:** Third Monday, 7-8:30 p.m., Grace Lutheran Church, 1408 Washington Street, Wenatchee. Contact: 509-860-3620, website at: [tcfwenatcheevalley.org](http://tcfwenatcheevalley.org)

#### Tuesday

**Okanogan County PUD:** The commission meets the second and fourth Tuesday of the month at 3 p.m. Information: [okanoganpud.org](http://okanoganpud.org)

**Douglas County PUD meetings:** The commission meets the first and third Tuesday of the month at 1:30 p.m. in the East Wenatchee office. Information: [douglaspu.org](http://douglaspu.org)

**Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group:** Second Tuesday, 7-8:30 p.m., Grace Lutheran Church, 1408 Washington Street, Wenatchee. Contact: 509-860-3620, website at: [tcfwenatcheevalley.org](http://tcfwenatcheevalley.org)

#### Wednesday

**American Legion Post #97:** Current members meetings are on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at the American Legion Post in Brewster. Information: Greg Wagg, 206-550-6474.

**American Legion Auxiliary #97:** Meets the first Wednesday of each month, at 5 p.m. at the American Legion Post in Brewster.

**Brewster Chamber of Commerce:** Meets the third Wednesday of each month at 12 p.m. at the Senior Center, 109 Bridge Street. Information email: [brewsterwachamber@gmail.com](mailto:brewsterwachamber@gmail.com)

**Death Cafe Chelan:** Third Wednesday, 11:30 a.m.-12:30

p.m., Chelan Public Library, 216 N. Emerson Street; and 5:30-6:30 p.m., Chelan Senior Center, 534 Trow Avenue, Chelan. Contact: Concie Luna at 509-630-2972 or Vita Monteleone at [monte419@nwi.net](mailto:monte419@nwi.net).

**TOPS® Chapter Paves the Way to Healthy Lifestyle:** Weekly on Wednesdays, 10-11 a.m. TOPS® chapter (weight loss support group) meetings at Lake Chelan United Methodist Church, located at 206 N. Emerson St. in Chelan. Attendees should use the side entrance of the church between the Lake Chelan Health Express Care Clinic and the church. TOPS empowers people to stop dieting and start creating healthy, enjoyable lifestyle habits that will work for them over the long haul.

#### Thursdays

**Brewster bus trips:** OCTN takes Brewster area residents to Wenatchee, second

Thursday of the month. The bus starts picking folks up at their homes at 7:30 a.m. Riders may request destination(s); medical appointments etc. On the third Thursday of each month, riders will be taken to Omak for the day. Riders request their destination(s). Wenatchee: \$12/boarding for General Public, \$6 suggested donation/day for Seniors (60 plus). Omak: \$5.50/General Public, \$2.75 suggested donation Seniors (60 plus). (509) 826-4391 to reserve your seat.

**Chelan Cancer Support Group:** First Thursday, 11:30 a.m.-1p.m., Lake Chelan Health Hospital. Lunch (purchase from hospital cafe)/meeting in Bragg Room. Meetings are open to anyone impacted by cancer. Including: patients, survivors, caregivers, family members and especially those who are recently diagnosed. It is also open to folks wanting to learn ways to support someone affected

by cancer. It's a place where members can offer advice, share coping strategies, and build relationships along their journey. More info: Anne Brooks, 509-682-8718.

**Family Caregivers/Support Group:** Third Thursday, 10 a.m.-11:30 a.m., Lake Chelan Chamber of Commerce, Coldwell Banker Board Room, 216 E. Woodin Avenue, Chelan.

#### Other Events/meetings

**Brewster Senior Meals:** The Senior Center serves meals at noon on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Home delivered meals are delivered those same days. Call 509-689-2815 to reserve meals. For those over age 60 \$5. For those 60 and under \$12.

**Senior Center Thrift Store:** The Brewster- Pateros-Bridgeport Senior Center Thrift Store is open Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. They are also the Brewster

Visitor Information Center and the Brewster Chamber of Commerce meeting room.

**Brewster American Legion events:** Bingo every Thursday night at 6 p.m. Open to the public. Friday Steak Dinner starts at 5 p.m.; Sunday 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., order from the full breakfast menu. Daily lunch specials except for Mondays and Saturday when they are closed.

**Chelan Valley Hope:** As the winter temperatures in Chelan and surrounding areas drop, our warming station is here to support those in need. When temperatures reach 20°F or below, we open our doors from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. to provide a safe, warm space for individuals who are unhoused or unsheltered during extreme weather. Stay updated on warming station hours by following us on Facebook or Instagram. Your awareness and support make a difference in keeping our community safe and warm this winter.

## After arson, WA lawmakers advance bill to warn of ballot box tampering penalties

By JAKE GOLDSTEIN-STREET  
*Washington State Standard*

OLYMPIA - Following an arson attack ahead of last November's election that torched hundreds of ballots in a southwest Washington drop box, state lawmakers are looking at modest ways to better secure the boxes.

On Friday, a state Senate panel advanced a bill to include messaging on drop boxes about criminal penalties for tampering with them.

Senate Bill 5011 would require each visible side of ballot boxes to display two messages. One would note the box is the property of the county that bought the box. The other would state tampering with the box may violate state and federal law.

The bill's sponsor, Sen.

Jeff Wilson, R-Longview, said the deliberately set fire in Vancouver before the election inspired the legislation.

"What is contained in those boxes is the most precious thing I can certainly think of, which is everybody's vote," Wilson told the Senate's State Government, Tribal Affairs and Elections Committee last week. "That individual's vote is to be protected and guarded."

Some wonder whether signage alone would deter bad actors.

Wilson thinks it could help. "The label does matter," he said.

Authorities still haven't arrested anyone in the October attacks on ballot drop boxes in Vancouver, Washington, and Portland, Oregon. The FBI is offering a \$25,000 reward for information leading to a

conviction in the ballot box fires.

Early the morning of Oct. 8, someone in a Volvo S-60 sedan placed an incendiary device in a downtown Vancouver ballot box, causing minor damage, according to the FBI. On Oct. 28, officials believe the same suspect placed similar devices in two more boxes, one in Vancouver and one in Portland.

The Vancouver fire damaged nearly 500 ballots just days before the election. The fire in Portland damaged only three.

The devices used thermit, a mixture of metal shavings and iron oxide, authorities said last week.

Brian Hatfield, the legislative director for the secretary of state's office, called the actions "terrorism." Hatfield, a former state lawmaker, said the bill

"is at least talking about the issue and saying we need to do something."

Washington has between 545 and 560 drop boxes. Officials project the new labeling proposed under Wilson's bill would cost about \$1,000 for each box.

But the cost could vary by county. For example, Kittitas County paid \$222 to wrap each of its nine boxes, while King County estimates it will cost \$1,350 per box.

Hatfield said he hoped the state would budget money to reimburse counties for the labels.

Greg Kimsey, the auditor in Clark County where Vancouver is located, said in an interview Friday he doesn't see the harm in adding the labels.

But "I'm also not sure it does

much in the way of deterring someone from bad behavior," he added.

Another measure Wilson has proposed, Senate Bill 5010, would create a grant program in the secretary of state's office for counties to install cameras around ballot boxes. That bill hasn't been scheduled for a public hearing.

Kimsey said Clark County is already working to install cameras at each of its drop boxes by this year's general election. The fires last October spurred the effort.

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## Forest Service seeks public comment on proposed changes to Northwest Forest Plan

By TAYLOR CALDWELL  
*Ward Media Staff Reporter*

PORTLAND, Ore. - The United States Forest Service (USFS) is currently taking comments on its proposed changes to the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) through March 17.

The NWFP dates back to the mid-1990s, serving as the blueprint for conserving forests and wildlife habitat along the West Coast. It covers over 24 million acres managed by the Forest Service and other federally managed lands, spanning from California and up through Washington.

The proposed amendments intend to provide an updated management framework that incorporates best available scientific information and current conditions in order to better address the social, economic, and ecological changes experienced over the

last 30 years.

The proposed changes outlined in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement focus on themes of fire resilience, economic benefits, and forest stewardship, with Tribal inclusion and adapting to changing conditions interwoven throughout these themes.

With fire resilience, the proposed amendments would prioritize proactive fire management to protect communities and forests, such as strategic planning for community safety and risk reduction, the reintroduction of fire to maintain fire-adapted ecosystems, and collaboration with communities to use and develop wildfire protection plans.

Forest stewardship amendments would tailor management for dry and moist ecosystems, combine restoration with timber harvesting activities to maintain ecological health

and economic output, use modern forestry methods to improve resilience, and retain mature and old-growth forest conditions.

The forest stewardship amendments distinguishing dry and moist ecosystems could be most impactful for improving fire resiliency in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, which is primarily dry forest.

"The original 1994 plan amendment basically grouped, lumped the whole area to have the same management direction, but we know that dry and moist ecosystems are quite different ecologically, and how fire behaves on those landscapes is quite different. So, one of the goals of this amendment is to improve our ability to restore dry ecosystems, to restore ecological integrity in those dry ecosystems, which is currently difficult to do under

the existing Northwest Forest Plan," said Shasta Ferranto, special assistant to the Forest Service's regional forester.

The proposed amendments would open up dry forests to more mechanical thinning and burning, while retaining trees older than 150 years.

The amendment would also seek to ensure forests contribute to economic growth for communities, including enhancing the predictability in timber supply while balancing conservation needs, supporting workforce development in forest management, encouraging local businesses, Tribes, and underserved communities to participate in contracts and agreements for restoration projects, and recognizing the importance of outdoor recreation and tourism.

However, conservation groups worry that the proposed changes could weaken protections for old-growth

forests, increase logging under the guise of wildfire management, and prioritize timber production over long-term ecosystem health.

"The Forest Service has proposed its own sweeping changes to the NWFP that could double—and potentially triple—logging levels on our national forests and re-open mature and old-growth stands to aggressive logging," conservation groups Oregon Wild, Bird Alliance of Oregon, Cascadia Wildlands, and WildEarth Guardians stated in an analysis of the proposal.

Aside from the proposed action (labeled "alternative B"), the Forest Service also provides three other alternatives that take varied approaches to the themes. Alternative A would mean no action and reflecting management practices under the 1994 NWFP. Alternative C builds upon the proposed action

while taking a conservative approach to hazardous fuels management and relying on natural processes, while alternative D builds upon the proposed action and provides flexibility for restoration and hazardous fuels management.

The proposed action is in the "Publish and Review EIS" stage of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process, which is required of a federal agency when proposing a federal action that is determined to significantly affect the quality of the human environment. During this stage, the Forest Service is taking public comment, which will be considered when publishing the final draft.

More information about the proposed amendments and comment submissions may be accessed online: [fs.usda.gov/goto/r6/nwfp](http://fs.usda.gov/goto/r6/nwfp).

Taylor Caldwell: 509-433-7276 or [taylor@ward.media](mailto:taylor@ward.media)

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## Brewster girls, Chelan boys win in second shootout

By **MIKE MALTAIS**  
Ward Media Staff Reporter

CHELAN – The Brewster Bears and Chelan Goats met for the second time in two weeks this season on the Goats’ home court, Jan. 21. While the outcomes for both varsity games were the same in one respect to their first Jan. 13 meeting – Brewster girls and Chelan boys won – the point spread between the girls was much closer this time.

Chelan took the first quarter lead by two points, 10-8, but a low scoring second quarter – three points- allow the Lady Bears catch and pass their host by eight, 21-13, at halftime. Brewster was up by 10 by the end of the third quarter and despite being outscored by Chelan in the fourth, had enough margin to win by seven, 45-38. That was much closer than the 68-26 first game win.

The final score reflected a better example of two well-matched teams. The 9-5 Goats are 3-1 in the 1A Caribou Trail

Brewster girls (8-13-13-11)	45	Brewster boys (10-16-23-30)	
M. McGuire	14	F. Nava	8
T. Wulf	13	G. Baker	8
P. Boesel	6	N. Marciano	7
K. Schertenleib	5	P. Thompson	6
B. Reagles	5	J. Piechalski	4
G. Becker	2	T. McCarthy	4
<b>Chelan girls (10-3-11-14)</b>	<b>48</b>	S. Covington	2
B. Hughbanks	18	<b>Chelan boys (16-24-47-59)</b>	
L. Peterson	10	Z. Noyd	18
G. Peterson	4	T. Uttich	12
M. Williams	4	J. Allen	9
T. Simmons	2	L. Falletto	8
		T. Falletto	6
		H. Miller	4
		G. Berajas	2

League while the 10-4 Bears are ninth (0-1) in the 2B Central.

Morgan McGuire led Brewster with 14 points. Brynn Hughbanks led Chelan with 18.

On their first meeting, Jan. 13, the Chelan boys won by single digits, 59-48 on the Bears’ home court. In front of the hometown crowd Jan. 21, the Goats widened the winning gap to 20, 59-39.

The Goats took an early 16-10 lead on their home turf and led at all stops, 24-16 at

halftime, 47-23 at the end of the thirds quarter, and 59-39 at the buzzer.

Zach Noyd led Chelan with 18 points while Fabian Nava and Grant Baker paced the Bears with eight apiece.

Mike Maltais: 360-333-8483 or michael@ward.media

### Brewster High School

Boys Basketball Schedule					
Thu, Jan 30	7:15 PM	Brewster vs.	Omak	Away	
Tue, Feb 4	7:30 PM	Brewster vs.	Okanogan	Home	
Girls Basketball Schedule					
Thu, Jan 30	5:45 PM	Brewster vs.	Omak	Away	
Tue, Feb 4	4:30 PM	Brewster vs.	Okanogan	Home	
Boys Basketball Scoreboard					
Tue, Jan 21	Brewster	39	Chelan	59	Loss
Thu, Jan 23	Brewster	37	Lake Roosevelt	69	Loss
Fri, Jan 24	Brewster	83	Bridgeport	50	Win
Girls Basketball Scoreboard					
Tue, Jan 21	Brewster	45	Chelan	38	Win
Thu, Jan 23	Brewster	67	Lake Roosevelt	34	Win
Fri, Jan 24	Brewster	72	Bridgeport	22	Win

### Bridgeport High School Scoreboard

Boys Basketball Schedule					
Fri, Jan 31	7:15 PM	Bridgeport vs.	Chelan	Away	
Tue, Feb 4	7:30 PM	Bridgeport vs.	Omak	Home	
Girls Basketball Schedule					
Fri, Jan 31	5:45 PM	Bridgeport vs.	Chelan	Away	
Tue, Feb 4	6:00 PM	Bridgeport vs.	Omak	Home	
Boys Basketball Scoreboard					
Tue, Jan 21	Bridgeport	54	Tonasket	67	Loss
Fri, Jan 24	Bridgeport	50	Brewster	83	Loss
Girls Basketball Scoreboard					
Tue, Jan 21	Bridgeport	33	Tonasket	58	Loss
Fri, Jan 24	Bridgeport	22	Brewster	72	Loss

### Pateros High School

Boys Basketball Schedule					
Fri, Jan 31	7:30 PM	Pateros vs.	Waterville-Mansfield	Home	
Tue, Feb 4	7:30 PM	Pateros vs.	Oroville	Away	
Girls Basketball Schedule					
Fri, Jan 31	6:00 PM	Pateros vs.	Waterville-Mansfield	Home	
Tue, Feb 4	6:00 PM	Pateros vs.	Oroville	Away	
Boys Basketball Scoreboard					
Mon, Jan 20	Pateros	66	Easton	44	Win
Tue, Jan 21	Pateros	40	Soap Lake	83	Loss
Thu, Jan 23	Pateros	47	Garden City Academy	49	Loss
Girls Basketball Scoreboard					
Tue, Jan 21	Pateros	65	Soap Lake	31	Win
Sat, Jan 25	Pateros	2	Valley Christian	0	Win

### Waterville High School

Boys Basketball Schedule					
Fri, Jan 31	7:30 PM	Waterville-Mansfield vs.	Pateros	Away	
Sat, Feb 1	4:00 PM	Waterville-Mansfield vs.	Moses Lake Christian Academy	Home	
Girls Basketball Schedule					
Fri, Jan 31	6:00 PM	Waterville-Mansfield vs.	Pateros	Away	
Sat, Feb 1	5:30 PM	Waterville-Mansfield vs.	Chelan	Home	
Boys Basketball Scoreboard					
Fri, Jan 24	Waterville-Mansfield	52	Soap Lake	41	Win
Sat, Jan 25	Waterville-Mansfield	38	Oroville	43	Loss
Girls Basketball Scoreboard					
Fri, Jan 24	Waterville-Mansfield	62	Soap Lake	20	Win
Sat, Jan 25	Waterville-Mansfield	72	Oroville	18	Win

## ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

### Bronson Becker Boys Basketball Guard Sophomore, #3

Sophomore guard Bronson Becker is developing as a key swing player for the team this season. Splitting time between varsity and JV, Bronson shows promise with his hard work and ability to knock down open shots when confident. As a guard, he’s focusing on creating offensive opportunities by attacking defensive openings, drawing help defense, and creating shots for teammates. His continued improvement will be crucial to the team’s success this season and in the next two years.



# Washington lawmakers look for ways to build more housing in rural areas

By **LAUREL DEMKOVICH**  
Washington State Standard

OLYMPIA – Building more housing in rural parts of Washington is again top of mind for some state lawmakers.

Bills to allow backyard cottages in new areas, to expand where developers can receive tax breaks for building apartments and to let property owners split their plots are all making their way through the legislative process.

Similar proposals came up last year, but many failed, sparking criticism from Republicans who said the Democratic majority was not doing enough to expand rural housing.

This year, bipartisan support and early public hearings could signal an opening for getting the proposals across the finish line before the legislative session ends in April.

#### Expanding ADUs

One bill from Rep. Sam Low, R-Lake Stevens, would allow counties to approve detached accessory dwelling units, like backyard cottages or mother-in-law suites, in areas outside of cities. The proposal is cosponsored by House Housing Chair Strom Peterson, D-Edmonds.

Under the bill, owners could have one additional detached unit on their property. It must use the same driveway and sewerage system as the primary home. Water usage must be metered and cannot exceed the limits under current law when combined with the usage of the main property. The detached units could not be bigger than 1,296 square feet, excluding garages, porches and unfinished basements.

The proposal would also require counties to penalize those who build these units without proper permitting and to keep track of all the units built outside of their urban areas.

A similar idea last year got pushback from Democrats and groups like Futurewise, who warned of suburban sprawl in areas that lack transit, public sewer systems, firefighting services and other resources.

Supporters of the bill reject that argument.

“This is not about destroying the environment. This is not about blowing up the GMA,” Low said, referring to the state’s Growth Management Act, which is designed to concentrate development in urban areas and to preserve open space, among other goals. “This is truly about having more affordable housing options for our young people, for our seniors.”

Senate Housing Committee Chair Jessica Bateman, D-Olympia, said there will be a similar bill in the Senate and that supporters will continue to work on concerns around sprawl. Low’s proposal will receive a public hearing in the House Housing Committee on Monday.

#### Third time’s a charm?

Another proposal that has support this year would allow property owners to split their lots into smaller parcels.

The lot-splitting bill has passed the House multiple times in recent years but has yet to clear the Senate.

Sponsor Andrew Barkis, R-Olympia, is hopeful this is the year. He told the House Housing Committee last week that there has been a lot of work done since the last session to address opponents’ concerns, particularly when it comes to ensuring that the lots are developable after they are redesigned.

The bill would prevent cities from denying applications to split lots into two. Both lots must be at least 1,000 square feet and must follow local zoning laws. The split could not result in the demolition of any existing housing that has rent restrictions.

“We’ve worked on a lot of policy with regards to increasing supply and the ability to build within the confines of an urban growth area,” Barkis said. “This is a bill that is integral and important to that process.”

Bateman said the bill would be particularly helpful in increasing homeownership opportunities for duplexes, triplexes or fourplexes. Being able to split those lots could bring down the costs significantly for people who want to own a unit in those buildings, she said.

“This is the third year this bill is introduced, and this is going to be the year that we’re going to pass it,” she said.

The proposal received a committee hearing in the House during the first week of the session. It had support from builders, realtors and housing developers who said it was essential to increasing the number of homes in many areas. It is scheduled for a committee vote on Monday.

#### Incentives to build

There’s also a bill to expand tax breaks developers get for building multi-family housing.

Washington’s Multi-Family Housing Property Tax Exemption exempts developers from paying taxes on the construction, conversion or rehabilitation of residential property for eight years. The exemption can be extended to 12 years, if at least 20% of the units are affordable.

Currently, only five of the state’s more heavily populated counties are allowed to offer the exemption.

A proposal from Low would expand the exemption to all counties that complete comprehensive plans under the Growth Management Act. That would include 28 counties.

In a public hearing last week, the idea drew support from counties and developers who said the exemption could help get more housing up quickly.

“This is a tool that works,” said Anthony Hemstad, who represented Washington Housing Development, LLC. “If you pass this, it will open areas and more housing truly will be built.”

Bryce Yadon at Futurewise said the organization supports the reasoning behind the bill but had concerns about development in parts of the state that lack infrastructure like roads and transit.

“We don’t want to incentivize the development of more areas that don’t have those amenities if we can,” Yadon said.

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## Confluence Health adds new security dog

NCW News  
Ward Media

WENATCHEE - Patients and visitors to Confluence Health Hospital's Central and Mares campuses soon might see the newest member of the Confluence Health staff on duty, and this staff member wears a fur coat rather than scrubs.

A part of the newly launched security dog program at Confluence Health, Atlas - a male 3-year-old German Shepherd originally from Slovakia in Eastern Europe - and his handler, Justin Bennett, recently returned to the Wenatchee area after completing their extensive training. The four-legged addition to the security team is one of two dogs planned, with the second dog and handler arriving later in the year.

"Like programs at healthcare facilities around the country, our new security dog program features animals that are rigorously trained along with their specially selected handlers to help make Confluence Health patients and visitors, as well as staff and providers, feel safe," commented John Urdahl, security and emergency preparedness director at Confluence Health. "While trained for a wide range of situations, the dogs' primary roles will be to deter violent behavior by assisting their human counterparts in their rounds in the various facilities."

Though they are working dogs, rather than pets,

and their primary role is in assisting security, these new canine officers also love to interact with and visit staff and visitors while performing their duties, though dog-lovers should always be sure to ask the handler first before interacting with the security dog so as to not interfere with their work.

"Atlas is a real sweetheart to me and everyone he meets," commented Bennett, Confluence Health's first security team K9 handler. "Like most working dogs, he lives with me when not on duty and he has shown himself to have a really goofy and fun personality when not on the clock. In particular, he loves to run and explore new smells, like most dogs."

Bennett himself is also new to the Confluence Health team, having been born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri. Growing up with dogs as a kid, he moved to Chicago after going to two of the top dog trainer schools in the country and later served as a training director for another dog training facility. Following this, Bennett then worked as an explosive detection K9 handler for the United States Department of Energy at both the Y-12 National Security Complex in Tennessee near the Oak Ridge National Laboratory and then at Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, protecting the nation's nuclear stockpile. In addition to his canine co-worker, Bennett also has another dog at home named Maple.



COURTESY OF CONFLUENCE HEALTH

Members of the Confluence Health security team pose with Atlas, a German Shepherd who recently joined the hospital's new K9 security program. Atlas and his handler completed extensive training before beginning their duties.

Along with the money provided by Confluence Health for the handlers' positions, the Confluence Health Foundation contributed significant funding to help secure the dogs, their training, and the necessary vehicles for this new program.

"The Confluence Health Foundation works each day to enhance and support Confluence Health's ability to provide safe and superior healthcare close to home," explained Suzanne Carté-Cocroft, vice president of philanthropy at Confluence Health. "Because of its

important focus on staff and patient safety, we knew this was an important program to be a part of and it had enthusiastic support from our board."

In thanks for their contribution, the security team offered to allow the Confluence Health Foundation to select the name for the new four-legged member. The Foundation Board, in turn, reached out to Confluence Health staff and providers to help narrow down the list of names from those provided by the security officers, conducting an

organization-wide vote held at the beginning of this year.

"We were so excited to see the engagement and enthusiasm from the staff," continued Carté-Cocroft. "Staff and providers could vote for up to five of the 10 possible names. After 2202 votes cast by 930 people, the name 'Atlas' was the clear winner. Ultimately, the board wholeheartedly agreed with the staff choice and we're all looking forward to meeting Atlas when he arrives."

"We are excited to start up this new canine security

program at Confluence Health," remarked Dr. Andrew Jones, CEO of Confluence Health. "I have seen similar programs around the country and have witnessed the amazing benefits this brings, not only to the safety of patients and staff, but also in the joy it brings when the security dog visits on their rounds. These canine officers build community, as well as protecting it, and we're looking forward to Atlas joining our team to help us in continuing to better serve and care for all the residents of North Central Washington."

## Debate revived in WA Legislature over unemployment benefits for striking workers

By JACQUELYN JIMENEZ ROMERO

Washington State Standard

OLYMPIA - When workers go on strike, they're often making a bet to temporarily lose their wages to fight for better ones.

This year, the Washington Legislature is again trying to decide whether they should help offset that lost pay by extending unemployment insurance to striking workers. Those on strike typically aren't eligible for this safety net benefit in Washington.

Sen. Marcus Riccelli, D-Spokane, is sponsoring Senate Bill 5041, which would change that. Inspired by his working-class district, Riccelli said he took up the legislation this year because he wants to help level the playing field for workers.

"The pendulum has swayed so far one way, that I think these workers are just trying to make sure that they have leverage to negotiate contracts and get good benefits and fair wages," Riccelli said.

Business groups strongly oppose the legislation, and last year it failed as Republicans

and some Democrats withheld support.

If the bill passes, people who have worked more than 680 hours in a year would be able to access unemployment insurance starting the second Sunday following the first date of a strike.

The bill was first introduced last year in the House by Rep. Beth Doglio, D-Olympia. It passed in that chamber but died in the Senate where former senator Karen Keiser was the lead sponsor.

Labor advocates say the bill would help workers during

tough contract negotiations. Other states, like New Jersey and New York, already provide unemployment insurance for striking workers.

"We've been really motivated to get workers like them a tool to ensure that they don't have to sacrifice the totality of their economic health, to assert their rights to form a union or to reach that all-important first contract with their employer," said Joe Kendo, chief of staff for the Washington State Labor Council.

Opponents say the bill would go against federal law and put added strain on the state's unemployment trust fund.

"Federal law is coded [so] that workers who are not demonstrating that they plan to come back to work are not eligible for unemployment insurance," said Rose Gundersen, of the Washington Retail Association. "So it really is against the basic principles in the federal law."

Gundersen also argued that having access to unemployment insurance could disincentivize employees from bargaining in good faith during labor negotiations.

Unemployment insurance is funded by state and federal taxes that employers pay. When the program sees surges in claims that deplete state trust funds, it can drive up tax rates.

Washington's unemployment trust fund is in good shape, according to Riccelli. And the Washington Employment Security Department estimates the bill would lead to a less than 1% increase in unemployment insurance claims when a qualifying strike occurs.

A strike by Boeing factory workers last year stretched nearly two months. But labor advocates say strikes are the last resort and ones lasting for more than two weeks are rare. They also say that employers refusing to negotiate with

workers is becoming a more common bargaining strategy.

"The notion that having a partial wage replacement through unemployment insurance would incentivize workers to not take the bargaining process seriously is just not one that I think is rooted in reality," Kendo said.

"Nobody goes on strike on the whim," he added. "I mean, these are not decisions that are made at the snap of a finger, they are very disruptive for a family's budget."

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## Winthrop set to host International Fly Fishing Film Festival

NCW News  
Ward Media

WINTHROP — The International Fly Fishing Film Festival (IF4) will make its 2025 appearance in Winthrop on February 18, showcasing seven films centered on fly fishing culture and conservation.

The Winthrop screening of IF4 will be at Sun Mountain Lodge, 604 Patterson Lake Road, on Tuesday, February 18, at 6:00 pm. Doors open at 5:30. Advance tickets are priced at \$20 for adults and \$10 for kids under 18 and can be purchased online at <https://www.flyfilmfest.com/winthropwa/>, in person at The Outdoorsman in

Winthrop, or at the door. The total running time of the film festival is two hours.

The Methow Valley Fly Fishers is a charitable organization with a focus on providing internships and scholarships to students involved in the enhancement of our fisheries. In addition, we organize volunteer activities and provide funding for conservation projects and improvements in waters of the Methow.

Among the films in the festival are Silent Spotter, exploring the extraordinary life of Tommy Batum, a deaf and mute fly-fishing guide in Xcalak, Mexico; Native Range, where friends explore

the remote expanses of Utah in search of native cutthroat trout; Fishing Diaries, takes viewers to the breathtaking flats of the Seychelles in search of giant tarpon; Legacy, a story of the life and legacy of fly-fishing's best-known couple, Barry and Cathy Beck; New Beginnings, fly-fishing legends Chico Fernandez and Dan Blanton tell untold stories from the past; Above the Clouds, follows five friends as they embark on a challenging journey into Colorado's alpine; and Time Will Tell, a testament to following a dream, the story of acclaimed artist Paul Puckett and his impact on the world of fly-fishing.

## CVCH expands behavioral health services with new East Wenatchee clinic

NCW News  
Ward Media

EAST WENATCHEE — Columbia Valley Community Health (CVCH) announced Tuesday it will open a new behavioral health clinic in East Wenatchee to expand mental health services in Chelan and Douglas counties.

The facility, located at 980 Eastmont Ave., will begin operations in two phases: February 10 for children's behavioral health services,

followed by adult services on February 17. The clinic has space for up to 29 behavioral health providers.

"We are excited to expand our mental health services and provide crucial support for all of Chelan and Douglas counties," said Manuel Navarro, CEO of CVCH.

The new state-of-the-art facility will offer comprehensive mental health treatments and interventions, with specialized services for both adult patients and

children requiring behavioral health support. Mental health organizations across the country have reported growing demand for services in recent years.

CVCH officials confirmed the clinic is currently accepting new patients. Community members seeking services can access additional information through the organization's website or contact the clinic directly at (509) 662-6000 for appointment scheduling.

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**NCW NEWS** CONNECTING COMMUNITIES ACROSS NORTH CENTRAL WASHINGTON

# In tight budget year, pressure builds to boost WA school funding

**By JERRY CORNFIELD**  
*Washington State Standard*

OLYMPIA - Lawmakers have begun another hard conversation on what it may cost the state to amply fund basic education in public schools as required by Washington's constitution. A state Senate panel on Wednesday held a hearing on bills that would collectively boost funding for special education, transportation and operations by \$2 billion in the next budget, and bring the state closer to covering its share of the tab in those three areas.

Superintendents of school districts on both sides of the Cascades voiced strong support, saying they are forced to use local levy dollars to pay for programs and services that are the state's financial responsibility.

"Without a solution that addresses the true costs of doing business now and in the future, schools will face growing financial pain," Ben Ferney, superintendent of Cheney Public Schools told the Senate Early Learning and K-12 Education Committee.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction is already keeping close watch on the finances of several cash-strapped districts.

Special education emerged Wednesday as the area where the gap is largest between what districts receive from the state and what they pay for with local dollars. There were two bills heard, each of which would increase funding by roughly \$1.5 billion in the next budget.

Senate Majority Leader Jamie Pedersen, D-Seattle, and Senate Minority Leader John Braun, R-Centralia, are the co-sponsors of one. It calls out special education as a component of basic education that the state has a duty to fund.

"These are kids in our public schools who have disabilities of one sort or another, and state and federal law require our school districts to provide them services. So in what world can we say with a straight face that that is not basic education," Pedersen told the committee.

Pedersen emphasized to

reporters earlier in the week that it is a statewide concern. It will be expensive. Those costs come at a time when lawmakers are trying to solve a budget shortfall estimated to be around \$12 billion spread over the next four fiscal years.

"How much we can actually fund this year, I'm not sure," he said Tuesday. "But every school district that I have talked to tells me that a significant amount of their extra resources that ought to be available for enrichment is now going to pay for the needs of kids with disabilities."

In 2012, in the landmark case known as McCleary, the state Supreme Court ruled the state was not meeting its constitutional obligation to provide ample funding for basic education. It took the state six years to comply.

Superintendent of Public Instruction Chris Reykdal said recently that the state has backslid on its investments since then and is at risk of getting sued again.

Pedersen agrees, especially in the arena of special education.

"We are in a position already where we should expect to be sued if we fail to provide the money to amply fund education for kids with disabilities," Pedersen said.

Breaking it down Special education funding is distributed in Washington using two key guidelines.

First, there is a cap on the percentage of a school district's student population that can receive extra dollars for special education services.

Under current law, the state only provides additional funding for up to 16% of a district's student population. In other words, if 20% of a district's population requires special education services, the district cannot get additional money for the remaining 4%.

Second, the state distributes an amount of money for each student enrolled in a school plus additional dollars for each special education student under a formula known as the multiplier.

Both Senate Bill 5263, Pedersen's bill, and Senate Bill 5307, sponsored by Sen. Lisa Wellman, D-Mercer Island, would remove the enrollment cap and increase the multiplier

in order to drive more dollars to districts.

Pedersen's bill also simplifies the formula used by the state to determine how much will be provided per student.

Both bills also look to make it easier for districts to qualify for additional special education dollars through a safety net program run by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Neither proposal is cheap. The bill from Pedersen and Braun carries a \$1.64 billion price tag for the next two-year budget, according to a fiscal analysis. That grows to \$1.93 billion in the 2027-29 biennium. Wellman's bill, which Reykdal requested, would cost a little less — \$1.55 billion in the next budget and \$1.83 billion in the 2027-29 period.

The other stuff In addition to special education, materials, supplies and operating costs — called MSOC in state budget lingo — are also weighing on districts' finances. These costs, which cover non-employee-related expenses tied to a district's daily operations, have been on the rise.

Sen. T'wina Nobles, D-Fircrest, has authored Senate Bill 5192 to increase the state's allotment for this line item by \$300 million.

And on student transportation, Wellman introduced Senate Bill 5187 to come up with a new funding model that pays districts an amount that more accurately reflects mileage and ridership.

Wellman, who chairs the Early Learning and K-12 Education Committee, said when lawmakers worked on getting the state in compliance with McCleary, it was understood that special education, transportation and MSOC are part of basic education.

"This has got to be our number one responsibility. It is the paramount duty of the state," she said. "We intend to honor that duty."

*Washington State Standard (www.washingtonstatestandard.com) is part of States Newsroom, a nonprofit news network supported by grants and a coalition of donors as a 501c(3) public charity.*

# Proposal loosens controls on birth control prescriptions



COURTESY PHOTO

From left: Elena Vega de Soto, Sophie Pinck, Genevieve Gujral and Calypso Bettis welcome new members to the University of Washington chapter of Generation Action at the beginning of the 2024 school year.

**By TAYLOR RICHMOND**  
*Washington State Standard*

OLYMPIA - Insurance companies will be required to fill up to a 12-month supply of birth control pills, if a bill by Sen. Emily Alvarado, D-Seattle, is approved.

"I experience difficulty and frustration every month when I need to return to the pharmacy and fill my birth control," testified Elena Vega de Soto to the House Health Care and Wellness Committee.

As a University of Washington student, she said she relies on public transportation or her friends to make it to the pharmacy.

"While this isn't convenient for me," she said, "I often think about constituents in rural areas, people who are disabled, those without the resources or time to travel and people who live in areas where public transportation is unavailable or insufficient."

In 2017, Washington was one of the first states to require insurance to cover 12 months of birth control. However, there was some "hesitation" about being such early implementers of 12-month contraception

coverage, according to Rep. Nicole Macri, D-Seattle. As a result, insurance companies require patients to refill prescriptions every three months or less.

"There's a greater likelihood of having an unintended pregnancy," said Alvarado. "The barrier disproportionately impacts younger people and people with lower incomes."

Calypso Bettis testified it can be painful when she misses pills and her digestion and her mood can be affected as well.

"It made it difficult to do my regular life and do homework," she said. "It made it increasingly difficult to get work done."

Bettis and de Soto are both part of the University of Washington chapter of the Planned Parenthood-affiliated Generation Action.

HB 1090 is simple: it would amend RCW 48.43.195 to use the words "12-month supply" instead of "twelve-month refill."

"This just makes it so that the insurance company is not deciding how long the prescription is and how often a person has to come back to fill the prescription," said

Alvarado. Patients do not have to get a full year's supply, but they have that option based on their doctor's recommendations.

A study published in the JAMA Health Forum in Aug 2024 says that a 12-month supply of contraceptives results in fewer trips to the pharmacy, greater prevention of unwanted pregnancies and reduced costs for clinics.

"We try to make progress, we hear back from residents — how it works on the ground, in real life — and then we make tweaks," said Macri on why it took so long to close the loophole. "Now, patients, legislators [and] providers are a lot more comfortable with the ability for folks to get access to contraception."

HB 1090 was unanimously voted to move forward by the House Health and Wellness Committee.

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## Senior Center

*Continued from page A1*

the asbestos must be removed or enclosed.

"Our ceilings, our walls and our floors are full of asbestos," said Burdick. "I see things like that, and I think dollars."

Opposing views expressed doubts that the city would shoulder the high repair costs and would opt to close the building instead. Options to explore grant funding or seek assistance through the Economic Alliance were also discussed.

Center Treasurer Charlene Knox's motion that the Center's status remain unchanged won board approval.

The board also revisited an earlier claim that the Senior Center building's property boundary includes more area than previously thought.

Wicks-Lowrey recalled an older member who mentioned that a portion of the gravel driveway along the west side of the building belongs to the Senior Center. Subsequent research into property lines and titles appears to support the Center's claim to a 50-foot section of the driveway.

In new business the Center purchased a 10'x16' shed to store Thrift Store overflow and seasonal items.

The board appointed a Bylaws Committee headed by Dan Webster to review the nonprofit's conflicting bylaws.

"The bylaws in several different places contradict themselves," said former president Kay McVay. "They tell you to do it one way, you read on through them and they you to do it a different way."

Vice President Mike Mauk will be head the Building Committee. That and other

committees such as Thrift Store will be posted on the bulletin board for volunteer signups.

Recent break-ins at the Omak Senior Center and the food bank prompted Knox to recommend the installation of security cameras for the two back doors of the Brewster Senior Center. A motion was approved to research the cost of a camera system.

Member Dan Webster was elected to fill the remaining board position of Bob Isenhardt who passed away on Jan. 6. The board also acknowledged the recent loss of member and former Brewster Food Bank director Dan Biddle of Bridgeport, who died on Jan. 7.

*Mike Maltais: 360-333-8483 or michael@ward.media*

## Conservation

*Continued from page A1*

County for the next decade.

Action items range from supporting already existing fuel treatments, education programs, and efforts in pursuit of funding to retrofit and build new fire halls to supporting the use of prescribed fire on private and public lands, the expansion of critical infrastructure, and increasing access to air filtration systems to reduce wildfire smoke impacts on public health.

In addition to those action items, the 305-page document provides a narrative of the drastic changes to the landscape and recent history of wildfire in Okanogan County, assesses current and future wildfire risk, includes newly added sections to highlight air quality and shrubsteppe management challenges, and includes educational information and resources for best practices to assist

property owners, residents, and natural resource managers with their wildfire resilience and recovery efforts.

The CWPP draft was offered for public review in September 2024 and received final approval from the Okanogan County Commissioners on November 17th, 2024. It was then approved by George Geissler, Washington State Forester (WA DNR) on January 7th, 2025, surmounting its last hurdle in the process of becoming officially approved. The partners involved have committed to annually revisiting the plan to assess the success of implementing the numerous action items, with plans to perform a formal update in five years and a new plan in 2034.

The CWPP is available online at <https://www.okanogancd.org/cwpp>. Physical copies are not yet ready, but once printed will be available at the Okanogan Conservation District's office and other locations will be noted on the website.

## Quad City Church Guide

BREWSTER • BRIDGEPORT • PATEROS

BREWSTER

CALVARY

Baptist Church

www.cbcbrewster.com  
Sunday Worship 9:30 a.m.

To place your Church information in the Guide call Ruth at 509-682-2213; email: [ruth@ward.media](mailto:ruth@ward.media)

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## Employment

**Help Wanted**

**PUD No. 1 of Okanogan County is seeking to fill a Lineman Journeyman position headquartered in our Oroville office.**

Please see [www.okanoganpud.org](http://www.okanoganpud.org) for job description. requirements and submit application with resume. Okanogan PUD is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



**NCW News Network**

**Leavenworth Echo**

**Cashmere Valley Record**

**Lake Chelan Mirror**

**Quad City Herald**

## Help Wanted

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**Organization: Okanogan County Transit Authority (TranGO) TranGO IS HIRING A DRIVER;**

Full-time (36+ hours per week) positions available now:  
hourly non-exempt. Compensation is \$21.64-\$23.41 per hour. DOE. Benefits include health, dental, vision, life insurance, retirement (see website for benefit details), sick leave, and vacation.

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## Help Wanted



The City of Leavenworth is hiring for:

- Contract & Grant Coordinator
- Mechanic
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Details at [cityofleavenworth.com/employment/](http://cityofleavenworth.com/employment/). EOE

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I B D M A E G O C C R A E T U E F M C P  
V L S G S V P R P E N V N H V U L B P V  
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G R D N I D C R U N C H Y M E E D C B P  
A L V N Y P H C D G A R N I S H L U E H

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

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