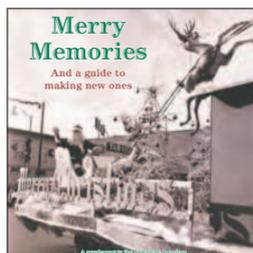


# HAPPY Thanksgiving

Make the holidays count

Inside



# ANACORTES AMERICAN

QUALITY NEWS, LOCALLY SOURCED

goanacortes.com

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2021

\$1.50

## Island Views



STEVE MARTIN / CONTRIBUTED

Readers shared these scenes of life around Fidalgo Island. Rains pelted the area in recent weeks, and Steve Martin captured the above photo of the flooding at Swinomish Golf Links. At left, Laura K. Ferguson captured a photo of the sunrise behind the Guemes Island ferry terminal on Nov. 19.

To share your photos of life around Fidalgo and Guemes islands, send them to [news@goanacortes.com](mailto:news@goanacortes.com).



STEVE MARTIN / LAURA K. FERGUSON

## City gives OK to 1% property tax hike

BY BRIANA ALZOLA  
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The City of Anacortes is implementing a 1% property tax increase for 2022, as it has done for several years.

The City Council has talked about the increase over several meetings, held a public hearing for more than three weeks and heard verbal and written comments about the tax.

In the end, it passed the tax increase with a 5-2 vote at its Nov. 22 meeting.

Council members Matt Miller and Jeremy

Carter voted against the increase.

The tax is based on the previous amount collected, not the increase in assessed value of the district, city Finance Director Steve Hoglund said.

The increased rate will bring in about \$53,000 more for the city's general fund. That fund is used for things like public safety, parks, the library and streets.

Those are essential to the quality of life in Anacortes, Mayor Laurie Gere said.

She said she felt for all

See *Tax*, page A7

## February ballot to feature two school levies

BY BRIANA ALZOLA  
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Two Anacortes School District tax levy ballot measures will be in front of voters in February after the School Board approved them at its Nov. 18 meeting.

The levies, an Educational Programs and Operations Levy and a Technology and Capital Levy, each would replace expiring levies approved by voters in 2018.

Their combined rate is estimated at about \$1.28 per \$1,000 in valuation, which is about 32 cents lower than previously approved rates, according to the districts.

The first operations levy on services at the school, such as smaller class sizes, advanced classes, mental health

support, activities, athletics and other programs and services not funded by the state.

That levy has a rate of 93 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value. For a \$500,000 home, that amounts to about \$465 a year. District-wide, it will bring in roughly \$7.4 million in 2023.

The technology levy will help students stay connected via laptops, online systems and technology specialists and staff. That levy also covers capital improvements to improve energy efficiency, safety and building quality.

That levy rate is 35 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value. For a \$500,000 home,

See *Levy*, page A7

## Gather safely during holidays

BY BRIANA ALZOLA  
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As everyone gets ready to gather and share a meal this Thanksgiving, health officials are asking people to take measures to make sure everyone stays safe.

Skagit County Public Health reported 400 new COVID-19 cases for the seven-day period running Nov. 14 through Nov. 20. The number has been slowly dropping since a high of 463 new cases from Oct. 24 to Oct. 30.

However, the county reported

10 new COVID-19 deaths for the seven days running Nov. 14 to Nov. 20.

Though the past week is the fifth consecutive week of 400 or more cases, the number is 22 less than the previous week.

With the holidays approaching, Island Hospital spokesperson Laura Moroney recommended everyone get their vaccines or boosters to keep their families safe. She also recommended testing and taking precautions if gathering with people outside of immediate family.

"This holiday season, being vac-

inated is the safest way to protect yourself and those around you, especially those who are not eligible to get vaccinated, such as young children," a post on the state COVID-19 website states. "If you or someone in your family is not yet fully vaccinated against COVID-19, you should consider the risk of gathering. Limiting your in-person gatherings will help protect you and your unvaccinated loved ones from becoming seriously ill."

See *COVID*, page A6

## Community paramedic program aims to reduce city's 911 calls

By Skagit Publishing staff

Steve Monrad is the Anacortes Fire Department's first community paramedic. His job is to be proactive with the medical needs of community members.

"The primary goal is to actually prevent 911 calls, to help work with patients," said Anacortes Fire Chief Bill Harris.

The 18-month pilot program that began in July is designed to reduce the number of 911 calls made by some of the system's most frequent callers. Reducing the number of calls saves time, money and resources.

The Anacortes Fire Department is the first in Skagit County to have a community paramedic



SKAGIT PUBLISHING PHOTO

Steve Monrad, the first community paramedic at the Anacortes Fire Department, poses for a portrait in his office in October. The goal of the program is to reduce 911 calls, and ultimately save money and resources, by giving personalized help to those who use the service the most.

program up and running, Monrad said. It is based on similar programs in Camano Island and Bellingham.

"This is just a new opportunity to help the community in a different way," Monrad said.

In 2020, the Anacortes Fire Department responded to 3,156 calls for medical aid, he said. During that time, 10 people accounted for 136 calls — about 4.3% of the calls.

"The objective was to work with those folks to get those numbers down," Monrad said.

For each call, a fire truck, ambulance and sometimes a police officer would be sent to the scene, Harris said.

But sometimes, all of

that isn't necessary.

Monrad, who has been a paramedic for about 25 years, works as a one-man team.

As the community paramedic, he can directly attend to the needs of individuals, whether it be helping them get their prescriptions and medical equipment, or ensuring their living environment is safe.

"You have the luxury of spending more time with them," he said. "You get to know the patients, and you get to know the

See *Medic*, page A7

