Urban combat and beyond: Ukrainian recruits get UK training

**Project completed**

Skagit County’s new morgue ready to open

By BRANDON STONE

Skagit County’s new morgue is complete and will be fully up and running by Sept. 1, Coroner Harley Thompson said the facility will help staff to be more specified and efficient, while giving her more consistent oversight over the process.

"As difficult as this is for families to deal with... they want to know their loved ones are treated with respect," she said.

Since 2010, the county has paid $12,000 a year to use the morgue at Skagit Valley Hospital.

This new county facility adds morgue space for the county and has a viewing area for families, Thompson said.

The county only had room for five bodies at the hospital, and Thompson said she sometimes had to push families to make arrangements quickly due to limited space.

This facility has space for 14 bodies. Families will also have a chance to view the body, which they wouldn't do at the hospital, Thompson said.

"Families are really adamant about seeing the body," she said, adding it helps with the closure process.

The space also lets police view an autopsy if it would help with investigating a suspicious death, and can be used in the education of medical students, Thompson said.

The project was awarded $135,000 in the state capital budget and received a $250,000 federal grant.

This would have covered the construction as budgeted in 2021, but costs increased dramatically as the remodel got underway, said Ken Hansen, the county’s facilities manager.

Some of the special-ized equipment — such as the walk-in cooler and autopsy stations — were more expensive than what was budgeted, he said.

The existing building also required more work than originally thought. The final cost is about $590,000, he said, with the county filling the funding gap with its own money.

Skagit County Coroner Haley Thompson holds the door to the cooler open Monday at the county’s new morgue facility in Mount Vernon.

The existing building also required more work than originally thought.

The final cost is about $590,000, he said, with the county filling the funding gap with its own money. Hanson said the county had never built a morgue before, and has little experi-ence with similar facilities.

— Reporter Brandon Stone:

**Skagit County preparing for monkeypox**

By BRANDON STONE

While no cases of monkeypox have been found in Skagit County, the Public Health department is preparing its response if cases do show up.

Sandra Harmon, deputy director of Public Health, said the state sent the county 20 doses of vaccine, and staff is in charge to administer to close contacts of infected individuals — once a case is reported.

If quickly after exposure, the vac-cine can stop infection, she said at a meeting Monday with the county commissioners.

She said the U.S. Food and Drug Admin-istration is reviewing dosage guidance, so if possible those 20 doses can be diluted without making them less effective.

There’s a possibility those 20-doses turn into 40, Harmon said.

Statewide, 240 cases have been reported in 12 counties, according to the state Department of Health. Whatcom County’s first case was documented Aug. 2.

Harmon said the county is working with local health care providers to identify those most vulnerable to infection, and may pre-serve those doses for this group.

Monkeypox is an infection that most commonly causes rashes, and spreads through skin-to-skin contact.

— Reporter Brandon Stone:

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