

# WHITE MOUNTAIN Independent

FRIDAY - JULY 10, 2020  
\$1.00 | NAVAJO AND APACHE COUNTIES

THE WHITE MOUNTAINS' AWARD-WINNING NEWSPAPER

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## Helicopter crashes near Polles Fire

BY ALEXIS BECHMAN  
Payson Roundup

GILA COUNTY — A helicopter working on the Polles Fire reportedly crashed in the forest Tuesday afternoon, killing the pilot.

In a press conference held by Tonto National Forests officials, the pilot was identified as Bryan Boatman, 37, with Airwest Aviation out of Glendale. He leaves behind a wife and 8-year-old child.

The helicopter, which only Boatman on board, crashed north of the burn area around 12:20 p.m., said Sgt. Dennis Newman with the Gila County Sheriff's Office.

"His family has already arrived in Payson. S.O.

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A helicopter working on the Polles Fire reportedly crashed in the forest Tuesday afternoon, killing the pilot. There were no other passengers onboard.

Photo by Alexis Bechman/Payson Roundup



Photo courtesy of NCSO Shane Michael Badding, 48, of Wagon Wheel, was arrested June 30 after a June 25 deputy involved shooting in Wagon Wheel during which he allegedly threatened a grandmother and deputies with a firearm.

### Info on shooting released

BY MIKE LEIBY  
Special to the Independent

WAGON WHEEL — A 48-year-old resident, who threatened a grandmother with a firearm, is in jail on a \$5,000 bond after a Navajo County Sheriff's Office deputy shot him June 25 around 7:30 in the evening.

Shane Michael Badding was arrested on four counts of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon and three counts of disorderly conduct with a weapon and booked into the Navajo County Jail in Holbrook.

He was taken to Summit Healthcare and then

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## Navajo County health director pleads with people to wear masks in public

COVID-19 cases exploding, hospitals filling but few people taking precautions

BY PETER ALESHIRE  
Special to the Independent

NAVAJO COUNTY — Navajo County Health Director Jeff Lee this week implored people to stay home if they feel sick, avoid crowds and wear masks in public.

He said Navajo County had 1,800 new cases in June — roughly equal to the number of cases confirmed in March, April and May.

The county has so far confirmed more than 4,000 cases. Studies suggest only about 10% of people

infected ever get tested and 30 to 40% of people will never have noticeable symptoms, although they can still spread the virus.

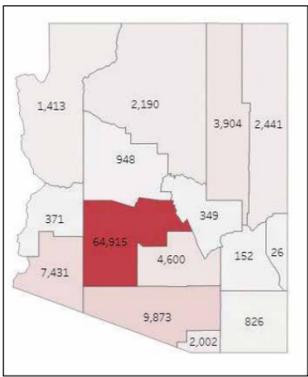
"I don't have any positive news to report," said Jeff Lee at Tuesday's Navajo County Board of Supervisors meeting. "Our numbers continue to rise. We are trending in the wrong direction. As of this morning, the state reported 117 new deaths. We have to treat this virus like it is everywhere we go. The virus is in every one of our neighborhoods, our back yards, our streets — unfortunate-

ly, our behaviors are just helping to spread the virus. We all need to really do our part to slow the spread. There isn't currently a way to prevent it or stop it completely, but we have tools we can use in our daily lives to reduce the risk and slow the spread."

He urged residents to stay home if they feel sick — or even a little off.

"Many of our cases have linked back to a workplace exposure. Please, if you feel sick — contact

See COVID-19, Page A7



## Town of Taylor business park suit heats up

Town wants it thrown out of court

BY RT LYNCH  
The Independent

TAYLOR — The Town of Taylor has found itself a defendant in a lawsuit over the so-called Taylor Business Park, conceived in 2003, but as yet, not even started.

The park was to have developed about 150 acres around the Taylor airport. Plaintiff property owners, tax payers and residents sued the town in May, 2020, al-

leging improper shenanigans by the town council including open meeting law violations, conflicts of interest and sweetheart deals benefitting Hatch Development, LLC, ("Hatch") the purported developer of the park and its principal, Jason Hatch. The plaintiffs say that these allegedly nefarious actions make null and void any of the recent actions the town has taken with regard to the park. Plaintiffs are Aaron and Gary Solomon, Marion Hatch and Richard and Alice Franco, represented by the Radix Law firm of Scottsdale.

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The unimproved dirt road named Airport Loop Road runs north-south through the 147-acre Taylor Business Park. The 'park' is essentially raw land and does not contain improved roads, water lines or any buildings.

File photo

## WMAT Awarded \$3 million from HUD for quarantine housing

BY BARBARA BRUCE  
The Independent

WHITERIVER — Good news came to The White Mountain Apache Tribe's Housing Authority last week when they were awarded \$3 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to construct eight transitional housing units for COVID-19 patients and their families.

According to a July 2 press release from HUD, the White Mountain

Apache Tribe (WMAT) was one of sixteen tribes across the nation who were awarded a total of \$15 million out of \$100 million allocated for tribes through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). Monies distributed are specifically to be used by the tribes to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19.

Due to the rapid spread of COVID-19 on the reservation, and no quarantine housing available for tribal members, WMAT's

Housing Authority made a request on June 1 for federal funds to build quarantine housing. In the meantime, with the tribe's Hon-Dah Resort Casino & Conference Center's operations temporarily suspended, the hotel was designated as the isolation and quarantine site for tribal members who tested positive.

A news release by the tribe's housing authority stated there would be eight total units constructed. Four units would be in McNary with the remain-

der in Cibecue on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation. Each unit will have three bedrooms, be built on raw land close to existing infrastructure and have a 6-foot chain link fence.

The news release also stated, "Once the threat of COVID-19 has passed, the homes will be used for temporary housing for low-income tribal members who are homeless, or who are otherwise in transition while their homes need substantial repairs."

The building project was

to begin this month and be completed by June 2021 but is now on hold due to tribal closure.

WMAT Tribal Chairwoman Gwendena Lee-Gatewood issued a press release on June 22 announcing a 57-hour lockdown to begin on June 26 at 8 p.m. through June 29 at 5 a.m. Immediately following the lockdown a week of sheltering-in-place began with extended closure of all non essential tribal offices.

Extremely hard hit by

the virus, as of July 8, the tribe confirmed 1,982 COVID-19 cases and 26 deaths.

"From helping tribes build more affordable housing to building a place where families can go to quarantine, this funding will help Native Americans persevere during this unprecedented time," said R. Hunter Kurtz, assistant secretary for public and Indian housing.

WMAT was the only Tribe in Arizona to receive quarantine funds.

VOLUME 112 NUMBER 55  
USPS Publication 027-520 © 2020 White Mountain Publishing LLC.  
(928) 537-5721  
1 86154 00003 2

**3-day forecast**  
Today: 93/63.  
Mostly sunny, partly cloudy. Saturday: 95/65. Mostly cloudy, 10% chance of thunderstorms & showers. Sunday: 94/65. 20% chance of thunderstorms & showers.

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**Mother Nature's Miracle:**  
Outdoors Section  
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USDA Choice  
1lb Angus Top Sirloin Steak

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Your White Mountain Grocer

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