

# The North Fork Merchant Herald

**Digital Edition**  
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## Marlene Searle Named Citizen of the Year Hotchkiss Chamber Makes Some Board Changes

By Thomas Wills

The Hotchkiss Community Chamber of Commerce held its annual meeting in a safe, masked, socially distanced way in the Hotchkiss Memorial Hall ballroom on Wednesday, November 18. It was a very low key affair with no food offered due to pandemic challenges but there was a lot of changes and some celebration..

Longtime president Nathan Sponseller of the Delta County Federal Credit Union (and co-founder of the Herald) is stepping down as president into a regular board position after 17 years in the position and 25 years on the board. Bill Long of TDS Telecom is also stepping back as Vice-President. Replacing the two will be current board members Mitch Swanda of Bank of Colorado as the new president and Kim Shay of Ace/Gambles hardware as vice-president.

The Chamber also announced the naming of the business of the year, non-profit of the year, and Hotchkiss area citizen of

the year. Business of the Year is The Bank of Colorado, Citizen of the Year is departing Town of Hotchkiss Town Clerk- Marlene Searle, and Non-profit of the Year is the North Fork Pool, Park and Recreation District.

The Bank of Colorado's Hotchkiss branch has been very active

in supporting community activities and projects.

Marlene Searle has been the Town Hall's public face of Hotchkiss for nearly four decades, providing a firm, steady, dedicated hand along with a quick smile and quirky sense of humor. As well as serving as Town Clerk she has also been the Town's treasurer/financial officer, during which time the Town has never ended up with an end-of-year budget deficit despite the possibility of that happening in recent years. She joked at each year's budget time that her nickname around Town Hall was "God."

She joins a previous clerk, Jean King, in being one of the two longest serving Town Clerks in Hotchkiss history.

The North Fork Pool Park and Recreation District has had a busy year despite the pandemic challenges finishing up a bike trails projects and well as new sports fields at the Hotchkiss Crossroads Complex. The administrator is Lenore Cambria of Hotchkiss.



Retiring Hotchkiss Town Clerk  
Marlene Searle - Tom Wills photo

## Energy Development in the North Fork Valley Survey Busts "Silent Majority" Myth

(Press Release – Citizens for a Healthy Community)

November 18, 2020--PAONIA – Today, Citizens for a Healthy Community released the report *ENERGY DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTH FORK*

*VALLEY: Community Perspective* that reveals dramatic polarity between constituents and Delta county officials where the extraction industry is concerned, and calls on Delta County Commissioners to develop a Climate Action Plan and to drastically improve representation of the North Fork Valley community in energy development decisions. The report is

based on a community survey designed to evaluate the perspectives of area residents on energy development in the North Fork Valley.

This is the first comprehensive survey conducted in the County on the economic, social, and environmental impacts of energy development and statistically shows that most North

Fork Valley residents reject the direction that officials are taking the county in regard to the extraction industry. The report was conducted by the independent consulting firm, Weise Consulting, and its findings clearly refute the County's claims that a "silent majority" is supportive of increased



fossil-fuel extraction in the North Fork Valley.

Responding to specific questions including perspectives on the future of energy extraction projects, 93% of participants do not support new oil and gas developments in the North Fork Valley: ninety-five percent of participants do not believe

that new developments are necessary for increasing county-wide revenue or creating new jobs; ninety-one percent of respondents want to transition to renewable energy jobs, while only 4% want fossil fuel energy industry jobs.

The survey focused on attitudes towards fossil fuel extraction and

renewable energy, climate and action, economic and social outlooks of the North Fork Valley, and the role of the community and elected public officials in decision-making. Responses consistently reflected priority concern for the health of the community, the environment, and expectation of a County responsibility to support a transition to a renewable energy economy and climate-conscious future.

"The county is currently in the process of approving a Land Use Code based on input from less than 1 percent of the County's residents, and does not take climate and health impacts into consideration in commercial/industrial

Continued on Page 17



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**Local VOGA Farmers Wish You the Best for the Holidays**

Valley Organic Growers Association wants to extend their heartfelt gratitude for your support of local, sustainable agriculture in 2020. It has been a challenging year for our farmers and we appreciate your choice to Buy Local and to support our local growers. As you make your holiday meal plans and start thinking about gifts, please consider supporting our local producers - a 2021 CSA share from a local farm would make a great gift! Visit [vogaco.org](http://vogaco.org) for a list of our producer members.

**Hotchkiss' North Fork Valley Community Christmas Dinner Will be "To Go"**

By Thomas Wills

According to Larry Jakubiak, the longtime organizer of the popular North Fork Thanksgiving and Christmas Community Dinners held each year at the Hotchkiss Senior Center in Hotchkiss, the two events will happen this year despite the pandemic. All North Fork residents are invited. However, it will be a pickup-up-and-go affair in order to comply with State Health Department and CDC guidelines.

This year's Christmas day dinner will be served "to go." From 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. North Fork residents are invited to come and pick up a free Christmas dinner featuring roast turkey and all the trimmings. The meal will be prepared by volunteers and placed into to-go containers. Those arriving for the meal will be required to wear masks and maintain social distancing. They will enter the building through the central Senior Center/Town Hall entrance and proceed through the Senior Center hallway where the food pickup line will be assembled. They will then receive their food in containers and proceed on out the east entrance of the Senior Center.

Attendees are asked to have one or two family members pick up all the food for a single family so as to limit the crowd size, maximize safety, and keep things moving efficiently.

Volunteers will be needed and Jakubiak asks that they call or e-mail him to confirm and arrive an hour before the events. Contact info: 970 260 9628 e-mail: [lwj241@hotmail.com](mailto:lwj241@hotmail.com)

He thanks everyone for their support and looks forward to the dinners despite the challenges. Monetary donations to help fund this year's events may be dropped off at Hotchkiss Town Hall or mailed to: Town of Hotchkiss, P.O. Box 369, Hotchkiss, CO 81419. The Hotchkiss Town Hall/Senior Center is located at Main and Cedar Streets in Hotchkiss.

Jakubiak, who is the former mayor of Hotchkiss and owned and operated the North Fork Valley Restaurant (now Pat's Bar and Grill) for a quarter century, considered cancelling the 2020 events but, after receiving input from the community, decided that it was important to show community resilience during the holiday season. The dinners have been a local holiday tradition for over three decades.

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We sincerely thank our members for placing your trust in us in 2020 and we look forward to serving you in the New Year!



Please note that our business offices will be closed on Christmas Day and New Year's Day. Additionally, we will close at 2pm on Christmas Eve & 3pm on New Year's Eve.



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## Two Surveys are Part of Effort to Get Resident/Business Input on Hotchkiss Downtown and Highway Corridor

By Thomas Wills

The Town of Hotchkiss, with the help of State grants and the Community Builders non-profit and the University of Colorado – Denver’s architectural technical assistance program, is asking the businesses and residents of the town and area to help form a vision of a more prosperous economic future and an updated look for the downtown and highway corridor. The consultants are working closely with the Town represented by Mary Hockenbery and Mayor Larry Wilkening, business leader Kim Shay or Ace/Gambles and other volunteers.

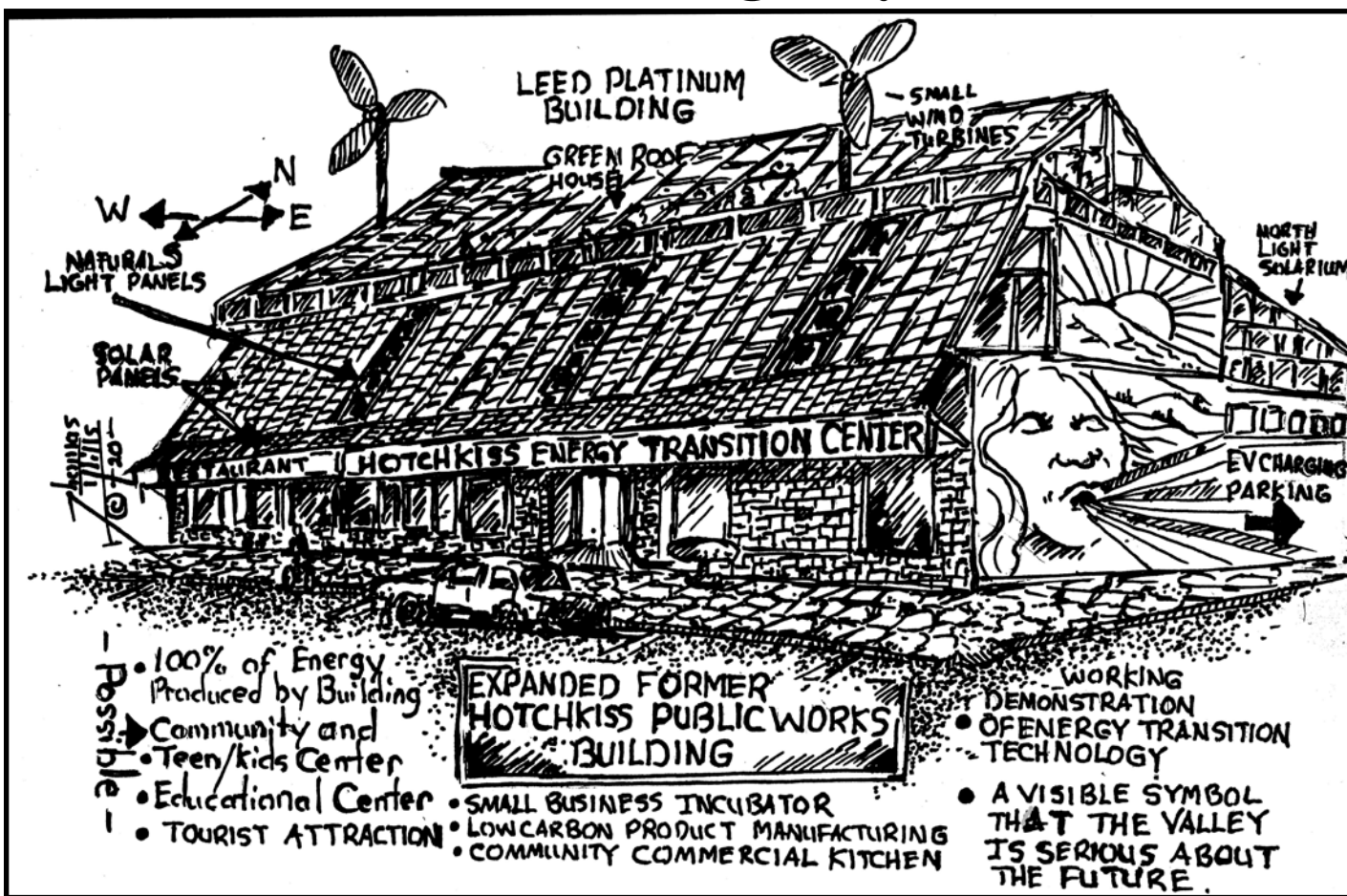
### UTA (University Technical Assistance) Survey

The Town of Hotchkiss and the University of Colorado-Denver released a survey in late October asking how people would like to see improvements happen on the highway corridors in Hotchkiss. Mayor Larry Wilkening put out the following statement kicking off the UTA Survey:

“The Town of Hotchkiss has initiated a number of programs in the last two-plus years that address economic development. The following survey is part of one of those programs. Giving us your visions and opinions on how Bridge Street in Hotchkiss can evolve will be very important in determining the direction the Town will take in future efforts. I wish to express my appreciation to everyone that submits the survey for their time and interest. Citizen involvement is a key component in any successful project.”

The survey, being put together by CU-D architecture students focuses mainly on improving the look of the Town’s downtown and highway corridors.

Introduction to the on-line Survey from CU-Denver -UTA: “Hotchkiss has begun working with the University Technical Assistance Program at the University of Colorado Denver and sponsored by the Department of Local Affairs, to provide an update to previous downtown plans for Hotchkiss that reflect the community today and into the future. The opportunity to envision Bridge Street through town in a way that benefits the sense of place of Hotchkiss will benefit current and future generations by clearly presenting an environment that reflects the heart



Do you have any big ideas about what the old Town Shop building should become? Here’s a really, really big one from the Herald editor. - Tom Wills drawing

and soul of the community. The following survey aims to set the foundation of a placemaking plan that will be translated into design and aesthetic enhancements to Bridge Street and Downtown.”

The survey asks basic questions like how the present downtown/corridor makes you “feel” and what you like best. Then various ideas are presented with photos from other similar projects and respondents are asked pick items that would work in Hotchkiss. These are things like curb extensions, additional trees, and enhanced crosswalks. Then it asks how the arts could help improve the downtown/corridor?

The project will conclude by the spring of 2021 and will produce renderings of the highway corridors and downtown by the students that show what the commercial areas could look like reflecting the input received from the community. The drawings could then be used when applying for grants to conduct actual construction of improvements.

The link to take the UTA survey is: [https://ucdenver.col.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_8wxanQHkMKIQY9](https://ucdenver.col.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8wxanQHkMKIQY9) and paper copies are available at Town Hall.

### Community Builders Survey.

The second survey is from an overlapping, but separate, project being done by the non-profit Community Builders with Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) funding. It focuses more on economic development and the downtown area of Hotchkiss.

Community Builders, in a project that will conclude at the end of the year, that was framed as a “feasibility study”, has been looking at how the town could facilitate establishment of light manufacturing or “maker spaces” possibly combining manufacturing with a retail component. One specific property that is being studied is the old public works building at West Bridge and Oak Drive since the Town owns it and is planning to place it on the market in early 2021.

At the same time residents have been given the effort to express additional comments by applying colored dots to maps to indicate their “favorite” places in the town. On the map posted on the outside of the window at Ace/Gambles the favorite place with the most dots is the Hotchkiss Public Library, one block

north of the Bridge Street core business district.

At the old public works building a chalkboard has been installed where residents are being invited to finish the sentence: I wish this building were: Answers range from the Herald editor’s big dream of a center highlighting efforts of the Valley to show leadership in transitioning from extractive fossil fuel industry/energy to low carbon sources, business incubator, thrift shop, low income housing, car dealership, bowling alley, and even a strip club.

Before the building is sold for whatever new purpose, there will need to be an assessment of the property to determine if there is any contamination that needs to be cleaned up after some 70 years as equipment shop building used by a series of government entities, the last being the Town of Hotchkiss. Then, according to discussions of the Town Council, a new appraisal will be done followed by the development of a request for proposals (RFP) for purchase of the building. The Town ideally would like to see the property become something that would generate retail sales taxes as well as new jobs for the area residents.



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**NOVEMBER JOURNAL**

**Correction:** Apologies to Terry O'Brien for my writing in the November edition that he came in "fifth" in the 2020 Hotchkiss Municipal election. There were only four candidates, and he was the fourth -place vote getter. Sorry for the mistake and kudos to O'Brien for his ongoing COVID-19 data tabulation and clear analysis and other public service efforts. (TW)

Whew! The very tense 2020 election is over with a new president elected, a colorful new U.S. representative, a new (if familiar) U.S. Senator and a new (equally familiar) District 3 County Commissioner. And the world didn't come to an end, and all those conspiracy theories proved to be just wacky ideas. Now if everyone could put as much energy into serving their communities and really improving stuff as they did in posting signs and arguing about politics, maybe some progress will be made.

Then, there is the COVID-19 pandemic. The numbers tell us it is far from over and this holiday season is not going to involve kissing stranger under the mistletoe. Mask up in enclosed public spaces. stay well apart from people you don't live with, sanitize stuff regularly, and wash your hands often for twenty seconds. And work on being patient, and loving thy neighbors, despite wanting to smack them occasionally.

Predictions are that a vaccine should be available to the general public by April or May.

December also marks the end of a year of economic and land use planning in the Valley and County. Delta County wrote their first land use code that contains some basic zoning in it. Although on the surface it doesn't seem to clearly address the biggest land use/development issues as we head into a new growth period, it is in many ways a step forward from the past three decades or generally arbitrary and capricious land use decisions.

Hotchkiss is looking at developing ideas in improving their downtown and encouraging economic development. Similar efforts in the past resulted in little beyond a few flower planters. Will the Town be able to move to actual on-the-ground projects that make a difference? Maybe...

Then, Paonia is finishing up their Master Plan and looking at some of their own downtown improvements. That, and some new funding, if and when, someone puts a cannabis business in Paonia, should result in some positive progress.

**October 26-** Snow! About six inches of very wet, heavy snow fell in

**Another Month in the Valley**

By Thomas Wills  
Publisher - Editor

Hotchkiss and more or less around the Valley.

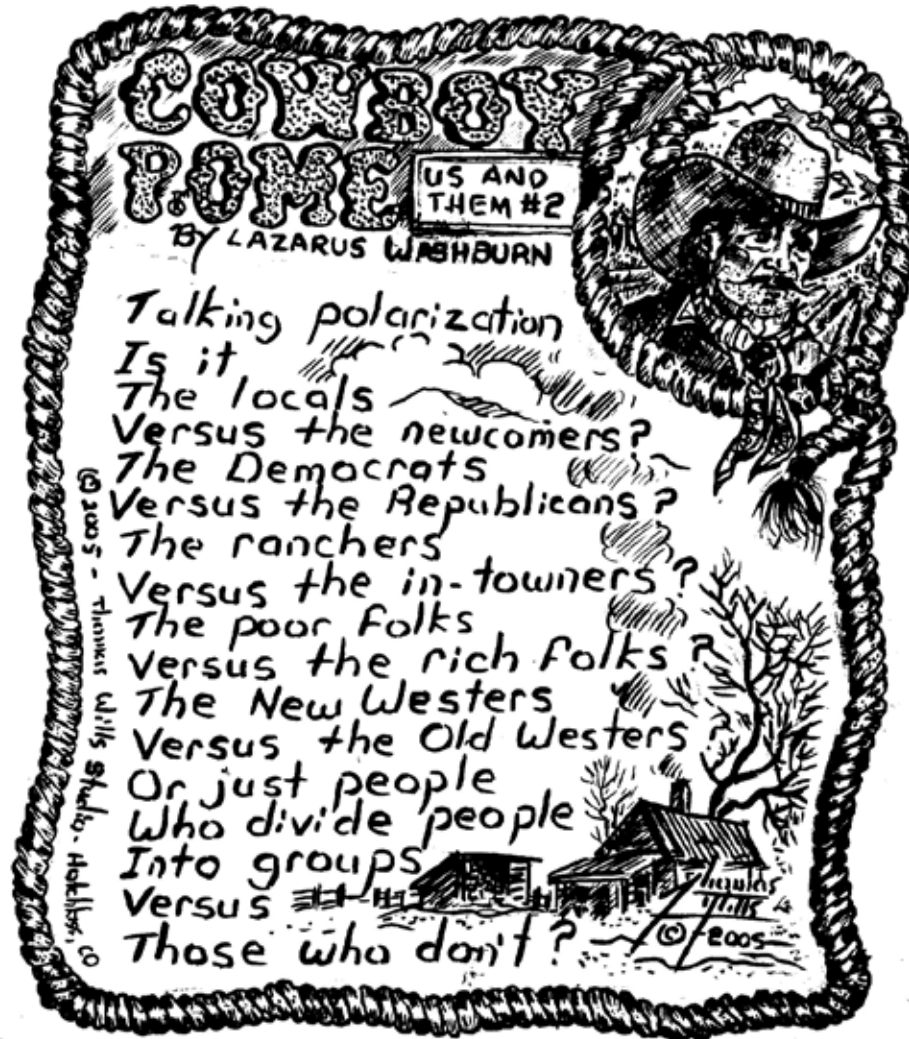
**October 27** – Still really cold but the roads and streets, where the sun can reach them, are mostly clear. It was under 10 degrees at sunrise in Hotchkiss.

The Paonia Town Council



of volunteer work in preparing for, and encouraging, residents to participate in the two Hotchkiss downtown improvement surveys and other input.

**October 30** – The melt of the sudden snowy freeze continued. Hotchkissians were encouraged to fill out a couple of on-line surveys concerning



decided to not automatically renew their contract at year's end with a building inspections company after complaints of excessive fees. They are looking at other options and negotiating new terms.

**October 28-** Sunny and warming. Kudos to Mary Hockenbery for dropping my/bookstore's name to the Montrose Recreation District for making me a stop on their periodic senior tours, which spent time here today. Delightful group of people that appreciated books, art and the Herald.

Mary is also busy doing a lot

downtown improvements and economic development. What should the old public works building become? How about a large demonstration project focusing on a transition to low-carbon energy? A LEED Platinum expanded structure that produces all of its own energy and serves as introduction/visitors' center to the Valley that coal, fruit, and cows

built and now leads the way to the Great Energy Transition. Why not think big and take advantage of the moment?

**October 31** – Halloween. Trick or Treating in Hotchkiss' Willow Heights neighborhood went off despite any pandemic concerns; it being an outdoor event where people kept moving. The kids looked to be having a great time and the mostly costumeless/maskless parents did a little socializing. The Fisk family provided an amazing treat with their free Halloween labyrinth at their Knob Hill home.

**November 1** – Daylight Savings Time began to the relief of some and to the surprise of others. I was up at 5:30 a.m., which became 4:30 a.m. when I turned the clocks back.

With an extra hour of morning daylight, I made it to services at Hotchkiss Methodist. Pastor Josh made it a point to pray for a peaceful election week.

The Herald staff took a COVID-conscious tour of Hotchkiss' newest business, Wellspring Vitality alternative health center, located in the Ultramat building at 110 7<sup>th</sup> Street. One takeaway was that owner, Liz Evans, has zeroed in on the new North Fork economics/demographics and really has her marketing ducks in a row.

**November 2** – Another delightful fall day spent cutting firewood and doing seasonal prep work in my garden. Thanks again to my amazing landscaper neighbor, Marilyn, for sharing the organic grass clippings and shredded leaves. Great stuff! I owe you some snow shoveling this winter.

**November 3** – I tried to avoid the national news all day and succeeded—mostly. It was a lovely day across the Valley.

**November 4** – Americans awoke to presidential election results that were still uncertain. In Colorado former governor John Hickenlooper defeated one term senator Cory Gardner tipping the state as whole a little more purple with a return to two Democratic senators. But there is still a clear divide in political philosophy between rural and more urban areas, with Delta County on the rural side, as Lauren Boebert's success demonstrates.

In Valley-specific results the big news was that Paonia finally approved commercial recreational marijuana businesses. This should give a modest boost to Valley tourism as well as to the Town of Paonia budget.

**November 7** – The presidential election was finally declared for Biden; it taking a while due to more time needed to count mail-in ballots, which were more numerous in some key states due to COVID concerns. A "Trump Train" of vehicles was announced on social media as driving from Montrose to Delta in support of the incumbent's baseless claims of election fraud.

In the bookstore, several customers had

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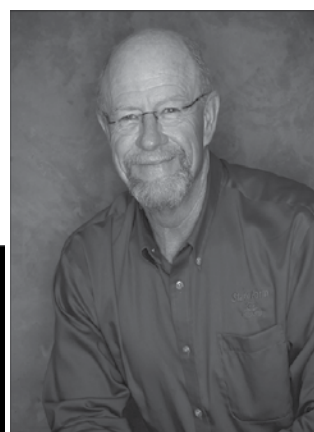
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**Continued on page 15**

# Hotchkiss Council Approves Condominiumization of Historic Structure • Trustee Ignores Masking Mandate

By Thomas Willis

## Hotchkiss Town Council

November 12, 2020

*Present: Mayor Larry Wilkening, mayor-pro-tem Mary Hockenbery (by phone), Patricia Medina, Patrick Webb, John Marta, Jim Wingfield and Kris Hillman. Staff: Public Works Director- Mike Owens, Town Clerk - Ginger Redden, Deputy Clerk - Karen Laing, and Town Attorney - Bo Nerlin. Town Engineer - Joanne Fagan- (by phone).*

### Historic Bridge Street Building Divided into Two Deeded Units

It's called condominiumization, something not all that common in small towns. That is when separate units in a single building are legally owned under separate deeds with shared areas and infrastructure such as some walls, the foundation and the roof.

The historic Barrow building at 178 East Bridge Street is now two condo units with an upstairs apartment that is for sale separate from the downstairs commercial space. The Council after hearing a presentation by realtor Dave Mitchell representing owner Denise Howard of White Crane Gallery LLC, unanimously approved the legal division of the building. No-one opposed or commented on the structure's subdivision although former owner, Kim Shay, submitted some informational points since her family had owned the building since 1991.

One very early use of the approximately 115-year-old brick building was a pool hall operated by the Barrow family. An interior wall mural still remains from that time.

### Trash Fees Raised

As was discussed last month, Hotchkiss trash pick-up fees were raised by resolution as mandated in a new five-year contract with Double J Disposal. The monthly regular residential trash service will now be \$15.25 (up from \$14.00) and \$19.00 (up from \$17.00) for a 94-gallon toter supplied by the company. This includes a \$2.00 Town administration fee. Dumpster fees have also been raised commensurately. The new rates will take effect in December.

### Board of Adjustments Needs More Volunteers

State law requires municipalities to have a board of adjustment to hear challenges to decisions made by building inspectors and other staff on construction and land use related issues. Hotchkiss, is having a hard time filling a five-member board. By ordinance, echoing State statute, four citizens plus a member of the planning commission are needed. Mayor Wilkening said that two Hotchkiss citizens have volunteered so far and two more are needed. Any Hotchkiss resident over the age of 18 is invited to submit a letter of interest. It is an unpaid volunteer position and the board, after some orientation, will probably meet infrequently. Send your letter to Town of Hotchkiss - P.O. Box 369 Hotchkiss, CO 81419 or e-mail to [clerk@townofhotchkiss.com](mailto:clerk@townofhotchkiss.com)

Mayor Wilkening also asked for a trustee to volunteer to serve as one of two trustee members of the seven-member planning commission. There were no takers.

### Public Works Building May Need Cleanup Before Appraisal and Sale

After a wide-ranging discussion, the council decided to see how a proposal by Community Builders to do an assessment of the old public works building for a possible EPA Brownfields cleanup grant works out before doing a new appraisal of the property prior to putting it up for sale.

"We have to know what it is we are putting on the market," Mary Hockenbery said, referring to any possible contamination of the property from automotive fluids or other things.

The Town hopes to encourage the purchase of the property by a developer/business that would generate retail sale tax or otherwise benefit the economic vitality of the town.

### Hotchkiss Will Have Cheaper Building Permits

The Trustees voted 5-1 to base new construction home values at 75% of the national average rather than the normal 80% used by other towns and cities in the region. The valuation is then used to determine the cost of a building permit for a new home. Both Mayor Wilkening and mayor pro-tem Hockenbery advocated for the norm of 80% but the majority agreed with Trustee Jim Wingfield who is a builder and said he wanted to encourage home building in Hotchkiss.

It was noted that building costs were higher in some towns not because of the percentage valuation used but rather because of additional added fees on top of those in the codes, some of which are intended to help growth pay its own way.

### Wingfield Continues Political Statement by Refusing to Wear Mask

Near the end of the November 12 Council meeting Mayor Larry Wilkening, like Paonia Mayor Mary Bachran two days before, brought up the local significant rise in COVID-19 cases and wondered if it might be necessary to move back to doing on-line Zoom meetings? The consensus was to wait and see. As serious cold weather moves in, the cases and risk are expected to rise even further if residents in general do not engage in greater caution.

At the meeting, everyone, with the exception of trustee Jim Wingfield, were properly masked, and stayed that way the whole meeting. Wingfield wore no mask despite a State masking mandate still being in effect and COVID cases rising sharply. It was an apparent political statement since he has previously publicly questioned the data collected by health experts. The board members were socially distanced about six feet apart as was the audience, but with fifteen people in the room if there had been an infected person present during most of the hour and a half meeting, the chances of contraction would have been very high.

Mayor pro-tem Mary Hockenbery attended by phone for health safety reasons and expressed concern about attending an upcoming budget work session unless all of the council members were masked. Four of the seven council members are in the later age groups that suffer from heightened COVID hospitalization and mortality, and one is in his 80s.

A few days later Mayor Wilkening posted a statement on the Town of Hotchkiss Facebook page urging everyone to wear masks and observe other recommended precautions in public spaces, including the grocery store. Responses included general praise for his adding his voice to those

urging caution. A minority expressed doubt at the seriousness of the pandemic and the efficacy of masks despite a consensus by normative health experts including the local health department and State and federal government agencies..

### Other Discussion and Actions:

The council agreed to contribute \$900 to the North Fork Pool Park and Recreation District after the District requested a partial refund of their building code costs for 2020 related to structures at the new ball fields. Mary Hockenberry reminded the council that they had promised to contribute \$900 in in-kind

work, which wasn't done due to timing issues. The council agreed to contribute that amount of cash instead, something that delighted NFPPRD administrator, Lenore Cambria.

The council donated \$500 for the North Fork Community Dinners, held on Thanksgiving and Christmas days (11-1) at the Hotchkiss Senior Center. This year's events, coordinated again by former mayor, Larry Jakubiak, will be take-out, pick up only.

The council also donated their usual \$200 for the North Fork Children Christmas Party, which for many years has supplied needy local kids both gifts and necessities at Christmas.

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# HOTCHKISS MUNICIPAL COURT

## Court Still Observing Caution

By Thomas Wills

Hotchkiss Municipal Court  
November 12, 2020

Judge Lynn French presiding:

Gracie Elizabeth Pham, 18, of Hotchkiss, pled guilty to driving after dark with her headlights not lit. A charge a failure to present proof of insurance was dismissed. A fine of \$22 plus \$50 in court costs were assessed.

As the result of a trial to the court, Misty Marie Taylor, 36, of Crawford was found guilty of harassment and was ordered to stay away from, and not contact, the victim including by e-mail or phone except in limited specified circumstances. No fine was assessed.

Ryan William Cole, 35, of

## Hotchkiss Proposes Seven “Principles” for Downtown

The group of Hotchkiss Town and business leaders meeting virtually with the consultant non-profit, Community Builders, has come up with seven proposed principles for Hotchkiss Downtown/ economic improvement. They are:

1. Downtown needs to reflect the community and highlight the character of Hotchkiss.
2. Increase anchor businesses that attract residents and visitors alike.
3. Agriculture, outdoor recreation and art culture are major drivers in the community and should be expanded and incorporated more in downtown.
4. Expand availability and affordability of spaces to new and existing businesses.
5. Improve downtown by increasing walkability, activating underutilized buildings, signage, increasing

Hanson Mesa -Hotchkiss saw his case continued once again on charges of disregarding a traffic control device (2 counts), failure to present proof of insurance, and driving without a valid license. The charges were from August of 2020.



**Judge Lynn French**  
Town of Hotchkiss Municipal  
Judge since 1979

The COVID -19 protocol of limiting the persons present at court to the judge, law enforcement and defendants continued at the October Hotchkiss Municipal Court. Thanks to Marshal Dan Miller for the docket and case resolution notes.

*As always, anyone accused of a violation or crime in municipal court should be presumed innocent until declared by themselves or the court to be guilty.*

public gathering spaces, and façade improvements.

6. Capture through traffic on Bridge Street by creating a welcoming downtown environment that offers services for travelers.

7. Make downtown Hotchkiss a destination for residents, visitors, and businesses by increasing nightlife activities, dining and drinking establishments, locally made goods, and workforce housing.

A new mini-survey asking if people support the principles is on line with the link on the Town of Hotchkiss Facebook page. Community Builders is also hosting a Zoom meeting to discuss future repurposing of the old public works building. Ideas for the structure can also be written on the chalkboard mounted on the building.

# HOTCHKISS MARSHAL’S REPORT

## Marshal Thanks Everyone for Their Support of Back the Badge

By Thomas Wills

October and November 15, 2020

Marshal Dan Miller

Marshal Miller sent the Herald the following in response to our request for his feelings after the success of the Back the Badge sales tax initiative, which is expected to result in about \$107,000 in new revenue dedicated to the Hotchkiss Marshal’s Department along with larger amounts going to larger municipalities and the Delta County Sheriff’s Office.

*“We are pleased that our citizens have come forward to help us by passing the Back to the Badge. It will help each agency within Delta County with keeping up with our tools and the retention with officers. It will be a benefit to each Community with the increases in revenue for us to do a better job and to have the personnel to cover our shifts and lower the response times to calls. It will take a while to get everything in place and for the changes to be seen, but we are confident this will help to make our communities a better place to live, work and raise their families.”*

*“The Hotchkiss Marshal’s Office thanks everyone for their support and voting for the Back to the Badge sales tax.”*

Marshal Miller reports that Halloween went well with no issues. There was a pretty good turnout of trick and treaters in Willow Heights.

End of year training is coming for the department and they have very nearly completed all of the annual POST training

## Hotchkiss Marshal’s/Town Clerk’s Office 12th Annual Secret Santa Program Seeks Donations

By Thomas Wills

Sgt. Chad Lloyd, of the Hotchkiss Marshal’s office, has been out and about encouraging support and donations for the 12th annual Town of Hotchkiss Secret Santa Program. The program provides needy families in Hotchkiss with a Christmas they might not otherwise have had by supplying food, clothing, and other necessities along with fun gifts for the kids. The families are identified through information supplied by local organizations and citizens. Businesses and individuals then donate monetary funds or items that are then processed, wrapped and prepared for each family by Town staff and volunteers. Purchases are conducted locally whenever possible.

requirements for all officers.

Deputy Kelsey Shumway has completed her certification with the exception of the shooting requirement, which she will retake in April.

Sgt. Chad Lloyd has been out promoting the Secret Santa program, which he directs each year.

There were 124 logged incidents during October with nothing out of the ordinary.

45 incidents were traffic-related with: 27 traffic contacts, 19 VIN inspections, six traffic accidents investigated, one abandoned vehicle, and two hit and runs (parking lot bangs usually). There was one incident of “vehicular assault.”

In other types of offenses there was one forced entry burglary of a residence, one larceny theft from an auto, two swindle type incidents reported, and four more assorted larceny thefts including two with items taken from yards. Value of items stolen in any one incident was under \$50 with no value listed. Political signs may have been included.

There were two DUI arrests, four civil problems where police were called, four incidents of criminal mischief public and private and four harassment level things reported. There were eight items regarding suspicious persons or circumstances.

Minor things included one fireworks complaint, one noise complaint, some lost and found property turned in, and a couple requests for information. Medical assists kept officers busy with 11 assists to other agencies and citizens.



Prior to Christmas the Hotchkiss Marshal’s Department officers then deliver the Christmas bounty to the needy families. Each year about ten local families are served with a total of over 125 families receiving an extra Christmas boost over the 12 years the program has been in effect.

Sgt. Lloyd has been known to dress up as Santa at Christmas time and the program gives all of the officers a chance to show a different aspect of their service to the town.

Questions can be answered by Sgt. Lloyd at the Marshal’s Office (970)872-3848 or 872-5457. Nomination forms for those in need are available at Town Hall. Monetary contributions, of any size, to the program can be mailed to P.O. Box 369 Hotchkiss, CO 81414 or delivered to the Town Hall at 276 West Main – Hotchkiss.



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## District 3 Commissioner Race: County Commissioner Candidates Contributions and Spending Modest

By Thomas Wills

One part of Colorado election law is a requirement to disclose who paid for your campaign and to file publicly available reports. On a local level this can be interesting. As a rule, Republicans support Republicans and Democrats – Democrats, and those with specific interests tend to support those who share those interests. During the 2020 campaign for District 3 (North Fork) County Commissioner a combined total of \$6,675.62 was received by the two candidates according to reports filed by the campaigns with the Secretary of State’s office.

District 3 winner Wendell A. Koontz contributed almost half of the total funding for his own campaign and his major contributors, besides himself, were: The Delta County Republican Central Committee - \$1,500, and Dave and Sue Whittlesey (Redlands Mesa bison and elk ranchers) \$500 each. Mr. Whittlesey, active with the local Farm Bureau chapter, has been prominent during 2019 -2020 in opposing county regulation of CAFOs (confined animal feeding operations). There were several \$100 donations and a few smaller ones. As of October 30, the campaign reported total monetary contributions, including self-funding, of \$5,005.62.

Koontz was late in filing his campaign committee, bringing two official complaints, but his October 30 report

apparently listed all contributions up to that date.

District 3 unaffiliated Commissioner candidate Jeremy “Jere” Lowe, who was defeated by Koontz in the November 3, 2020 election, received a modest number of contributions including: \$500 from Eric Reichwald (Healing Hollow Farm – farmer), \$300 from Edward Tuft (Leroux Creek Foods – orchardist), \$250 from Elaine Brett of Paonia, and \$250 from the Delta County Democratic Central Committee. (Lowe ran for Commissioner as a Democrat in 2016.) Another \$350 was received in smaller contributions. There were \$1,670.00 in total contributions listed in his report to the State through October 30, plus \$23.88 in total non-monetary contributions during the three reporting periods.



## Delta County Commissioners on Final Approach to Adopt Land Use Code

By Thomas Wills

The Delta County Commissioners will hold a public hearing on Thursday, December 3 at 6:00 p.m. to receive final input from the public regarding the proposed Delta County Land Use Code. The address is 560 Dodge Street in Delta but it is recommended that the general public attend via Zoom. The registration link is available on the County website.

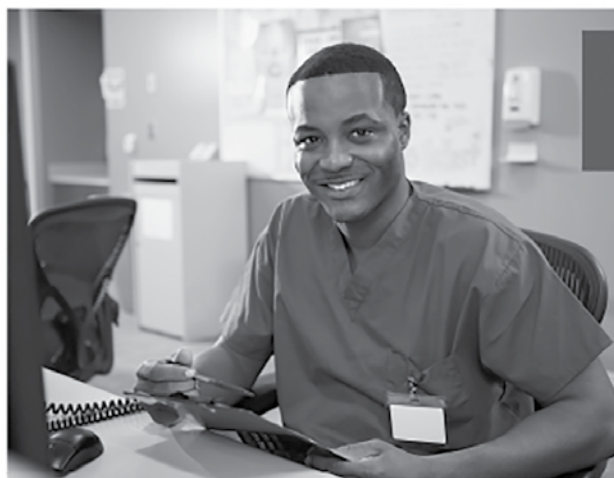
The new land use code includes some limited zoning regulations along with standards and review procedures for such things as controversial confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs). The County Planning Commission has certified the code in October and sent it on to the Board of County Commissioners.

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# Flavors of the Valley

## The Adventure of Cooking With Local Chicken Feet

By Colleen Hansen

Hello and welcome to the season of food, fun and family! However and whatever you celebrate this year, remember to tend to your health. No, not only the mask and social distancing, the entire body, from the inside out, from individual cells, to organs and entire physiological systems. This month we return to our fowl friend the chicken, specifically the feet: that's right, chicken feet. Be brave, you don't have to eat any, just read on to discover how to prepare this misunderstood (by many), highly valued (in traditional cooking and throughout the world today) "foul" body part.

I'd heard long ago about the health benefits of making stock out of

this new ingredient (to properly garner the wealth of hidden nutrients contained within despite its daunting appearance and rather unclean association based on its practical use in life). First, I had to boil the feet for 5 minutes, remove, rinse with cold water, then...mani/pedi time! Yes, each claw must be removed at the first knuckle to assist in the extraction of the luscious and coveted collagen (also many vitamins, minerals and amino acids) that will give the gelatinous quality to the stock and renewed health to skin, hair, nails, aching joints, bones and muscles as well as assisting in repair of connective tissue in all parts of your body. Collagen is a structural protein our bodies produce and use as building blocks in almost every system: as we age, we produce less. Therefore, getting collagen and precursor amino acids that assist in forming collagen are key to keeping our bodies in healthy working order and looking youthful; who's not interested in that! And though multitudes of supplements are available and acceptable, extracting collagen and the other naturally occurring vitamins and minerals from chicken feet (or other



Local chicken feet simmering in stock. Photo by Colleen Hansen

chicken feet but never had the nerve nor inclination to try. A couple months ago at one of my Paonia go to farms, one that is a bit off the radar and from where I get the raw milk and cream, I noticed several bags of chicken feet in the freezer, convenient, right in front of me. I hadn't considered undertaking this endeavor in my recent past so, instead of impulsively purchasing them, I left them for someone else; apparently they are a valued item in these parts. A few weeks passed when again I looked into that same freezer and discovered not only chicken feet but also a bag of turkey feet. Well, guess what went home with me?! My culinary adventure and emotional fortitude test could commence.

Making homemade stock is nothing new to me; that part is familiar. I did have to discover how to prepare

bone broth) is much less expensive, and more importantly, provides the body with bioavailability of these nutrients; they are more easily used and absorbed by the body.

I worked first with the turkey feet and, as they are larger animals, found the nail removal required my large chef's knife whereas the chicken nails acquiesced nicely with only my kitchen scissors. I don't consider myself too intimidated by dead animal parts, but I did pause a bit and collect myself before diving into my cosmetological task. Possibly the closer the part resembles something human, hands for example, the greater the creep factor; texture can elicit a similar response as well. Don't forget your sense of humor. Maybe

Continued on Page 9



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Colleen Hansen, Blue Sage Center, North Fork Senior Connections  
and others.



## Chicken Feet

Continued From Page 8

chasing your family members around the house with fowl feet and making scary noises will freak them out and allow you to dispatch your job more with peace and calm!

With feet prepared, all I needed was some standard stock ingredients: garden carrots, onions, celery, garlic (of course), a few herbs like fresh thyme, bay and peppercorns ( I kept the chicken and turkey in separate pots though I am sure making mixed fowl feet broth is just fine!) All went into the pot and got covered with COLD water, apparently this also helps extract more collagen from the feet. Something else I learned about stock-making in the process of researching, is that you want the stock to simmer not boil. Simmering (180-205F with small, gentle bubbling) encourages even cooking and leaches out the vitamins and minerals from the ingredients (exactly what we are after in making stock). Boiling, up to 212F with vigorous bubbling, can be “rough on food and often damage it” according to the Spruce Eats. Also I learned from the same website that stirring the stock while it simmers (for 4 hours) is a no no. “Stirring agitates the proteins and causes the finished stock to turn out cloudy.”: Who knew?

At long last, the stock fully simmered, I strained the fragrant, rich liquid gold into jars for later use. Good broth like this can be used as a base for soups, sauces, as cooking liquid for grains, risotto, for braising vegetables, deglazing roasting pans replete with drippings or simply consumed as a tasty and life giving broth preventatively or when someone is ill. A South American saying told to me by my dear Chilean friends “Este caldo levanta muertos” (this broth raises the dead), maybe not literally, but depicts and corroborates traditional knowledge throughout the world and across many religions and cultures about the health benefits of traditionally prepared broth. The feet themselves are coveted as appetizers, cold dishes, in soups and as a main course across the globe especially in Asia, South American countries, South Africa, Trinidad, in the deep South of our own country and getting more popular. A recipe for hot and spicy chicken feet on the Spruce Eats site allows you to “bring Asian street food into your kitchen for you to enjoy. This amazing appetizer doesn’t have much meat to it but it is packed with complex flavor.”

This time around, I only wanted to make broth....but the dog: Let’s get Sadie to try the feet!! No surprise there, excellent treat. Chicken feet are composed mostly of cartilage, skin, connective tissue and very tiny bones and can be eaten either raw or dehydrated, bones will break not splinter like bones cooked with dry heat. Also, they help remove tartar from their teeth. Dehydrated chicken feet are readily available for sale as dog treats, but are expensive. Of course, they can be frozen and defrosted when needed, but dehydration helps them last forever (practically) and frees up freezer space. Whether for yourself or for your animal’s benefit, or both, most Asian or Latin markets will carry chicken feet. We have plenty of great poultry growers around the North Fork to contact for a local supply.

If ever I get more brave and try eating the feet, I will be sure to update you. Until next time, be brave, courageous and healthy; peace and joy to all!

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# Marla's Valley: Masked Up Holiday Shopping Ideas, Avoid Moldy Cider, the Joy of Winter Nights, and So Long Bob Lewis

All by Marla Bear Bishop – Fruitland Mesa, Crawford Country and beyond correspondent

Here we are in pandemic December!

Thanksgiving was strange for some of us, for others life went on as normal. Families gathered by Zoom and families gathered around the table with not a care in the world for the Virus amongst us. Two different worlds and again here's me hoping we will all be healthy through and beyond the coming winter. I love so many folks in both camps. I hope they love me, too, no matter our decidedly different beliefs.

There is yet another divide we have. Those are **Camp #1** the shoppers who are prepared with all the presents for twenty people on their Christmas list well before now and **Camp #2** those of us who can't believe December is here. Period.

Luckily, we live amongst many talented artisans, massage therapists, vintners and craftsmen of every kind. A gift certificate to Farm Runners, a great haircut, a take-out meal, a beautiful necklace... the possibilities for local super gift giving are endless.

Holiday mailing? You'll be fine even at the last minute because if gifts such as a locally handcrafted mug don't make it in time for the holiday you celebrate then your intended will have an automatic Happy New Year's gift in advance! Who doesn't want a New Year's mug?

This year as in every year before, pandemic or no pandemic, holiday food is important. Now is the time to make sure you have eggnog and fresh unfiltered apple cider from apples grown in this Valley. Go buy some fantastical heavy cream liqueur to sip while the snow hopefully falls as you sit by the fire. I enjoy the drive-up window at Tri-R in Hotchkiss because they are so very helpful and cheerful and encourage me to step up my drinking selection. I haven't had my \$4.95 Moscato in months.

I'm enjoying Blue Sky Bakery pumpkin pie, apple pie and several



**Dining in the Snow. 2018**

Photo By Marla Bishop

delicious treats every single day until this 2020 is over. You can bliss out on the many incredible bakery choices and your accommodating liquor store in Paonia as well. Just make sure you can't button your pants by the New Year.

So this happened to me on a recent chilly evening; an apple cider segue since I brought up the apple cider. Made a steaming hot mug of cider, added the cinnamon stick and a bit of

peppermint sprinkles. Got comfy by firelight with the snoring hounds, wind whipping the cold world outside the door. So romantic until that first sip was sipped. Acccccchhhh. First a hellatious taste and then a good-sized clot, not a little one, popped into my mouth. Again with the mold! I went and examined the dredges of my cider jug and saw that, yes, it was infected through and through. The lesson learned yet again. Don't just go willy-nilly into that good night. Check for mold.

Winter clothes, breaking frozen water for the beasts of no

burden, bringing wood in for warmth, all things I dreamt about when it was 90 in the shade. Now I don't know if I'm ready for the cold months ahead. I can hear my knees creak in the dry air. I do however find I enjoy a long winter's night. Maybe because if one allotted guest shows up there is no dust or spider web to see. No unsightly dirty windows and I'd have to say people after a certain age look better out of the sun. A foot or more of snow would be most welcome in the hills and even around here on the mesa. Bring on winter if it acts like one with plenty of snow and a minimum amount of gray, just as autumn was so showy, so vibrant and picture worthy. A true Colorado winter season is what we need.

Crawford is dressed up with streetlights from back in time and plenty of decorations to put a smile on our faces in these challenging times. Come on up after dark and drive through town. Thanks to the fine citizens who did the decorating! You are appreciated. The annual after-Thanksgiving Parade of Lights brought cheer to participants and audience alike. I do miss being in the line-up, (animals are happy to stay home) but it's still fun to cheer other's on!

Darold was here to trim up Stormy, Blue Barney and the elusive Pickle. They all feel good now without high heels. (Darold will be sporting a new knee by the time you read this so if you see him, don't be kicking him in the shins) The shoes are off my riding horse, Hanky McPanky, but maybe I'll get him some boots. CGH and CGC still riding daily. CGPamela almost ready to saddle up as new hip is just about perfect. Strong and resilient are good words to describe my Cowgirls.

What can be said about this year except that we're all ready for a brand spanking new one. This is good-bye to cantankerous Bob Lewis; many will miss your sharp barbs, your ready smile and teasing ways. To all the families of those lost this year, our thoughts are with you. Be safe out there.

Keep your heart open but not so open that you allow deceit to feel normal. Keep your head up; spend time with those who make you feel safe and loved. Let it snow.

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# Paonia Suspends Space to Create Renegotiating Building Inspection Contract

By Thomas Wills

## Paonia Town Council

October 27, 2020

At the October 27 Paonia Council Meeting the council members decided to renegotiate the Town's expiring building inspection contract with Colorado Code Consulting and/or consider other options like returning to an independent local inspector.

The issue came out of community complaints, some of which CCC inspector Dan Reardon termed as "unfounded". One complaint that appears to have some traction and teeth are higher costs compared to other towns like Hotchkiss, possibly due to the company, and not just one inspector, needing to make a profit.

Reardon, as quoted by the DCI in a Lisa Young, November 4 story on the meeting, which was also streamed on YouTube, said that perhaps some general complaints had something to do with the fact that there are no building codes in the nearby unincorporated county. He also noted that if Paonia were to adopt the updated 2018 IRC/IBC codes, that might lower fee costs somewhat. There is a recommended fee schedule included in the codes.

Mayor Mary Bachran and Trustee Dave Knudson expressed support for Reardon and CCC appreciating the professionalism compared to issues with previous inspectors.

Meanwhile Hotchkiss has adopted tweaked versions of the 2018 IRC/IBC codes and recently hired Bruce Stanley, who also serves Orchard City and Cedaredge, as building inspector there. He is paid by the hour, with fees determined by the code schedule.

The current contract between the Town of Paonia and CCC expires at the end of 2020.

It was suggested that the Town first adopt the updated building codes (as urged by the State) and then consider a new fee schedule in consultation with whatever building inspector that is chosen in 2021.

November 10, 2020

## Council May Go Back to Zoom Meetings

Mayor Mary Bachran noted the sharp rise in COVID cases in the county along with higher infection risks and said that the Council meetings may have to move back to Zoom online presentations. Currently limited in-person public attendance is allowed and the meetings are streamed on YouTube but the sound recording quality is so bad to make understanding what is said nearly impossible.

## State Health Department Inspection Notes Violation and Deficiencies in Water System

The November 10 packet of information included a report dated October 8, 2020, on an inspection conducted by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment of the Town's water system. The inspection notes several significant violations of drinking water treatment procedures and standards. The concerns involved both of the Town two water treatment facilities: the Clock treatment plant and the Lamborn Mesa Upper Treatment (LMUT) plant. At the Clock facility an improper cross connection situation was noted as were some technical issues regarding proper operation of the plant.

At the LMUT plant there were

some operational concerns as well as a failure to allow for a complete inspection of the 2-million-gallon tank. Inspectors also ordered that an old half-million-gallon tank, that had been abandoned for 10 years, was not properly disconnected or removed and could pose a contamination risk.

There were also question about whether periodic water system sampling sites were truly representative of the whole system and its 7 different pressure zones. This was termed a significant deficiency and the CDPHE will require detailed documentation of properly spaced testing.

Violations included incomplete record keeping, improper testing procedures using unapproved equipment/supplies, and an incomplete cross connection/backflow prevention report.

In a response form filled out by the Town the violations were noted along with actions taken or planned to be taken and the time estimated to complete the corrections. CDPHE gave the Town until November 22 to respond to reported concerns and until February 5, 2021 to make needed corrective actions.

## Paonia Suspends Space to Create Project

The trustees voted to approved a resolution at the request of the Space to Create Committee that cancelled the Town's participation in the affordable housing project that would have constructed some 17 living units aimed at artist/artisans. Afterwards Town Administrator provided the following:

*"The Town of Paonia voted to suspend its participation in the Space to Create Program at the Town Board meeting on November 10, 2020. In light of the State's budgetary reallocations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Town, at the recommendation of the Space to Create executive committee, the Town Board decided not to continue in the program. The Town graciously acknowledges the resources that have been provided by all of the Space to Create Partners, and specifically wishes to thank: ArtSpace, Colorado Creative Industries, the Boettcher Foundation, the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, History Colorado, the Colorado Office of Economic Development & International Trade; the North Fork Valley Creative Coalition, and the citizens of the Town of Paonia."*

## Water Rates Increased

The Trustees approved a raise to base water rates by two dollars per account for both residential and commercial. The standpipe rate was increased from \$1.00 per 100 gallons to \$3.00 per 100 gallons. Final meter reading for accounts was increased from \$15 to \$25. New accounts fee raised from \$35 to \$50 to close out one account and set up another.

## Garbage Rates Adjusted

Garbage pickup rates were increased in some cases. Single can pickup remained the same at \$17 per month with weekly pickup. Standard User rate was increased by \$3.00 to \$23. Heavy User rate was increased by \$3 to \$30 per month. Dumpster charges were also increase commensurately.

## Other Discussion and Actions:

The Trustees approved adjustments to a range of Town fees.

The Trustees approved a franchise renewal agreement with Charter Communications.

The Trustees approved renewal of insurance coverage for "excess crime" namely any thefts made by Town staff.



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# VALLEY ARTS AND CULTURE

## Blue Sage Center for the Arts: Shop the Blue Sage's Local Artisan Gift Gallery

2020 seems like it's been with us forever—but suddenly it's coming on December with the New Year just around the corner! The Blue Sage has worked hard to bring you a fantastic array of holiday gifts, on display in the historic bank building on Grand Avenue in Paonia. Perennial

favorites like aromatic lavender products—including gorgeous new wreaths—from Lamborn Mountain Farmstead and gleaming creations by local silversmith Nora Zappa O'Brien share the Holiday Shoppe with a plethora of new products by local artisans. Award-winning weaver Bonnie Inouye's intricate scarves and household goods will thrill

the most discriminating person on your gift list. Earth Spirit Designs by Colorado native Chris Gentry of Crawford capture the beauty of the high desert landscapes and river corridors, combining sculpture and weaving with sustainable natural materials, much of it found on the family acreage. We're excited to offer skeins by Linda Friemuth of Blue Mesa Yarns, handspun and hand-dyed featuring fibers like camel, bison, alpaca, cashmere and merino in glorious shades.

If you missed National Geographic's mention of "Dark Skies Paonia" you can still enjoy the "13 Moon Colorado Astro Events Calendar for 2021" from organizer/photographer Aaron Watson. A portion of the proceeds aid the effort to protect the wonder of our night skies. And know that when you purchase any of the wonderful gifts from the Blue Sage (even if it's a present for yourself) you're supporting local artisans during a difficult time and helping to keep the Blue Sage solvent.

As well as the pleasures of the Holiday Shoppe, effort continues behind the scenes to offer programs for the community. Some of you were fortunate enough to enjoy the world-renowned violinist Midori in her past Gala performance, as well as experience her talented young protégé Maria Ioudenitch. In 2021, through her organization Partners in Performance, the visionary virtuoso will offer three virtual programs in the New Year, with details to follow. In the meantime we hope you'll celebrate the New Year with us when we reinvent the beloved BlackEyed Pea Jubilee for the pandemic. Even virtual it's going to be a great party with music, "Back Alley Bowling,"



food and favors. Details to follow at [www.bluesage.org](http://www.bluesage.org).

You can also visit our website to do your shopping! Follow the link to purchase online for curbside pickup, or call us at 527-7243 for a private appointment to visit Tuesday through Saturday 10-11 (before we open) or after we close from 4-6.

We'll leave you with a recipe guaranteed to add cheer to your holidays, even if we can't gather in person:

### Recipe: WASSAIL


Cook a gallon of Big B's Organic Apple Cider with a cup of brown sugar, 1½ tsp. cinnamon and 1 tsp. pumpkin pie spice till sugar dissolves. Add 2 each thinly-sliced lemons & oranges and heat

thoroughly (great in a big CrockPot.) Pour into mugs and garnish with whipped cream and nutmeg.

Non-driving adults only: add rum, brandy, and/or orange liqueur if desired.

*Happy Holidays!*

**Recycle Your Greeting Cards!**  
Rather than throwing your unwanted holiday/greetings cards and/or picture calendars in the trash, donate them to Nan, who will creatively repurpose them. Drop the cards off at Wills Gallery and Used Books/Herald Office in Hotchkiss.



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## CREAMERY ARTS CENTER The Place for Creative Local Gifts

During the month of December the Creamery Arts Center in Hotchkiss will be featuring a wide selection of fine arts and artisan work suitable for seasonal gift giving in a wide range of prices. Almost everything is produced locally.

How about hand crafted, locally made pottery created by some of the Valley's most skilled artisans? Some original, unique artwork?

Stop by on Saturday mornings to enjoy some of the outdoor Saturday Market vendors. Weather permitting some vendors may be present through the end of the year.

And don't forget all of the ongoing

educational opportunities at the Creamery as well as bringing your fall and holiday season visitors by to peruse the latest creative offerings.

If you are an artist or artisan and would like have a table display of your work during December call Rich Powell at the gallery at (970) - 872-4848.

The Creamery retail gallery will be taking a winter break during January and February of 2021.

If you would like to be a member of or otherwise help support this valuable arts-anchor to Hotchkiss and the Valley check out the CAC's website at [www.creameryartscenter.org](http://www.creameryartscenter.org)

## Merry Christmas from the Creamery Arts Center

Your one stop shop for all your Christmas/Holiday gifts made by local artists, artisans, potters and craftspeople.

Pottery • Jewelry • Paintings • Photography • Quilts • Unique Artwork • Greeting/Holiday Cards • And SO much more!

Shoppers are welcome to come in and browse anytime the Creamery is open. Be Kind. Wear a mask.

**Holiday Hours: November 26 thru end of December**

**Wed. Thurs. & Fri. 11 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.**  
**Saturdays 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.**



Thanks for shopping locally during these challenging times

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(970) 872-4848 [www.creameryartscenter.org](http://www.creameryartscenter.org)

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Limit of one adult, or two from one household, in shop  
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# COVID-19 in the Valley Journal: New Cases & Deaths Shoot Up

By Thomas Willis

November was the worst month ever for COVID-19 infection numbers and deaths in Delta County. If you haven't taken it seriously yet you are probably starting to wise up.

After months of seeing a low risk environment in Delta County and the Valley, with only a very few cases detected despite a more robust testing program, infection rates, cases, and even deaths, began to accelerate rapidly in early November. This was not surprising since several surrounding counties, particularly Mesa County had already seen sharp rises. Nationwide, an even steeper rise in cases is being seen with a second wave in urban areas as well as a real first wave in some more rural areas, including here.

With any COVID-19 vaccine probably not being available to the general public before next summer (one prediction says April), health experts are urging continued caution including: mask up in enclosed public spaces like the grocery store and other businesses. stay well apart from people you don't live with, sanitize stuff regularly, and wash your hands often in soapy water for twenty seconds. All responsible health experts, including the CDC, NIH, and WHO agree that proper masking when appropriate is essential in slowing the spread of COVID.

Apparently, after nine months of this pandemic, people are becoming understandingly bored, and misinformation is common.

**November 1** – Terry O'Brien, the COVID data wonk here in Hotchkiss, shared some thoughts today on why the Delta County Health Department is not breaking down their new case data to reflect what zip codes or general areas of the county the cases come from. They have claimed that there is a HIPAA (patient privacy law) restriction, but that apparently is not the case since other places *do* share that information and the County itself has consistently shared general area references (North Fork, Delta, Surface Creek) relating to West Nile Virus cases. Also, the County has released information about specific outbreak sites, something that would seem to contradict their claims. Some Paonia folks, including the mayor would like to see information that gives them a heads up on community-specific spikes. (*Update - they later changed to just saying that zip code breakdowns weren't seen as useful.*)

**November 3** – Election Day, apparently coincidentally, saw the highest single day COVID case number increase in the pandemic locally with 10 new cases reported. This may be a result of the previous downturn in temperatures driving people inside. This may also be a harbinger of what to expect as more consistent cold weather begins to set in.

**November 4** – Risk assessment for the county is seen as high as cases spike. Delta County reported an outbreak at HopeWest, the hospice non-profit.

**November 5** - Four new cases reported. Delta County reported in a press release that there have been 43 new cases in the past two weeks and urged caution.

**November 6** – Eight new cases according to the State COVID site, or seven listed on the County dashboard. This, plus the trend over the past two weeks puts us in a very high-risk category. There was one school age case and the rest evenly distributed among age categories.

In surrounding counties Mesa County is exploding with new cases with 476 so far in just the first six days in November. Garfield is also high with 117

over the period and Delta in third place for number of new cases in November will 33 so far. Montrose County – 32, Gunnison – 13 and Ouray – 12.

This second wave (or first real wave in our case) is happening across the country with record numbers of infections and hospitalizations. In many cases it is the first time that some rural areas that thought they were buffered are feeling real impacts.

**November 7** – Nine more cases reported.

**November 8** – In my periodic trip to the Hotchkiss City Market today I observed a slightly higher masking percentage of about 80% (despite very clear signage that mask are "required") but everyone seeming to maintain adequate social distancing with the checkouts being a pinch point. City Market is still not enforcing their masking policy on patrons although staff compliance was excellent. Stocking was very good for most things. (*A week later and City Market was reported as having an employee at the door encouraging masking.*)

Six more cases reported.

**November 9** – While extra caution is being urged by Governor Polis there is good news in that one major vaccine effort is showing great promise in testing with a 90% effectiveness rate. They are still waiting to make sure no serious side effects are forthcoming.

Ten more cases were reported in the county.

**November 10** – Delta County changed the driver's license office to appointment only due to the case increase.

Outbreak news today: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) has informed Delta County Public Health of two new outbreak sites, Horizons Care Center and Gateway Residential Services; Delta County has experienced a total of 8 outbreak sites since the beginning of the pandemic. There are currently 4 active outbreak sites; two were identified today, one was named last week, and one was identified in September. The other 4 outbreak sites are no longer active.

Seven more cases.

Delta County Schools moved to Level 2 – Safer at Home with changes including: *"All 6th grade through 12th grade students are required to bring and wear a mask when in the school building at all times including when seated during instruction. (This is a change due to the number of cases in the county.)"*

**November 11** – Six more cases reported from yesterday. Delta County Memorial Hospital is putting stricter limits on visitors. The positivity rate for tests done in the county has now risen to over 7 percent.

**November 13** – A startling 19 new COVID cases were reported as of Friday night.

**November 14** – 24 new cases. A visitor to the Delta County Courthouse in Delta reported that they did not see any staff wearing masks while working with the public.

Checking the jury trial schedule for Delta County Combined Courts today it was noted that all trials scheduled through the end of the month had been canceled.

**November 15** - Six more cases.

**November 16** - 14 more cases. Hotchkiss mayor, Larry Wilkening posted a statement on the Town's website urging residents to wear masks in public spaces such as the grocery store and to observe other recommended precautions.

**November 17** - Delta County

announced that COVID deaths in the county had more than doubled, from three in eight months, to seven with four more in the last few days. One death was of a younger woman.

Some of the deaths were as a result of a nursing home outbreak.

**November 18** - 18 more Delta County cases were reported by the State.

It was announced that the North Forks three United Methodist Churches

will stop live in-person services through the end of January.

**November 19** - 24 more cases were reported today. The County notes that the number of tests being performed has doubled since November 1.


**November 20** - 5 more and the State raised the local alert level to yellow caution.

**November 21** - Fifteen more cases and one more death - 8 total.

## NEW LIBRARY HOURS

Beginning Saturday, November 14, 2020


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<p><b>Delta Library</b> Wed &amp; Thu 10-12 &amp; 2-6 Fri &amp; Sat 10-12 &amp; 2-4 970.874.9630</p>	
<p><b>Hotchkiss Library</b> Tue 10-12 &amp; 2-6 Wed 10-12 &amp; 2-4 970.399.7781</p>	<p><b>Paonia Library</b> Wed &amp; Thu 10-12 &amp; 2-6 Fri &amp; Sat 10-12 &amp; 2-4 970.399.7881</p>

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Visit the libraries or [deltalibraries.org](http://deltalibraries.org) for more information.

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## North Fork Senior Connections: Service Saturday – a Multi-generational Event

Submitted by Linda McCone – North Fork Senior Connections

Despite the cold and the rain, fifty volunteers turned out to help their older neighbors with seasonal chores on November 7<sup>th</sup> for NFSC’s Service Saturday. They raked leaves, washed windows, trimmed bushes, cleaned gutters and stored swamp coolers for 24 households in the North Fork Valley. The response from recipients was gratitude for the diligence of the helpers and pleasure at the chance to interact, even at a distance of course, with the volunteers.

New and long-time volunteers with the organization worked in small groups or “pods” with people they were

been able to talk to them longer.”

“It was a delight to watch the young men washing our windows and making such an effort to get at the hard to reach spots.”

From this last quote comes a longer story: unable to reach windows located above sloping ground and lacking a step stool, three middle school aged boys got their cleaning job done by sitting on one another’s shoulders – cleaning and entertaining all in one morning.

Service Saturday is one of the events sponsored by North Fork Senior Connections. Twice a year, volunteers gather to help with seasonal chores in keeping with the NFSC mission to “find



**Hotchkiss High School volunteer group.**

*Photo courtesy of North Fork Senior Connections*

used to being around to minimize the risk of contracting COVID-19. The ranks were swelled by the addition of a large group of students from the Hotchkiss High School Honor Society and Student Council as well as students from the Paonia Experiential Learning Academy (PELA). Seeing the young people was extra special as so many elders have been isolated from their community during this pandemic.

Among the comments from beneficiaries:

“We were the recipients of help from 4 wonderful young people from HHS. They cleaned our many windows in short order. This they did in the rain!”

“Those girls did such a good job raking the leaves and I only wished I had

solutions to help seniors age in place”. Thank you to everyone who helped with this endeavor. For more information about joining NF Senior Connections or becoming a volunteer, please visit our website: <https://nfseniorconnections.helpfulvillage.com> or call us at (970) 527-3482

## OTHER VOICES: Brotherhood of Local Coal Miners Helped Keep the Valley Agricultural

Opinion by Jill VanDenBerg – Rogers Mesa – Hotchkiss

I spoke to a well-read woman the other day about the protests against the access road that West Elk Coal Mine needs to build thru a wilderness area and did not realize that the necessity of the road was not to antagonize the populace, but to give coal miners a chance to breath!

Coal mining is extremely dangerous, dirty work...yet we do depend upon coal to fire our electrical

friendship. There are bonds between them that very few other occupations forge. It is a true brotherhood. I greatly honor and respect these miners. (My husband, Eddie, mined coal, was a safety director, and was a Federal Coal Mine Inspector.)

We are all aware that coal mining is being phased out. In the meantime, the wages that are paid to these guys (and gals) are greatly enriching this county. Sadly, most of the taxes paid by the mines go to

Gunnison County. Few realize that almost all the small farms that so many take for granted were kept agricultural by coal miners who worked the soil by day and mined at night (or vice versa). So, some of your “organic” little plots were created and kept agricultural by coal miners.

The huge necessity of getting air into the far reaches of the mine does require a vent. The mine owners have no choice but to keep the air vents open, thus the road to them. Do you really want to deny a miner the right to a breath of air? I am a lifelong resident of Delta County; my ancestors came here in 1897 and 1912. I love this county and its people but deeply resent those who come in and try to change or negate our way of life. Please have a bit of respect to some very wonderful, hard-working

miners. When you flip the lights on, or bask by a warm fire, a nod of respect and thanks to the coal miners, please.

*(Editor’s note: besides improving air circulation in the mines, vent well shafts and their fans draw explosive methane gasses out, making the safer mining possible.)*



plants, so if you use electricity please give a bit of appreciation to those men and women who daily risk their lives to mine coal. There is a comradery that these miners feel as the safely, and even lives, are dependent upon the men they work with. It brings them to an appreciation of their fellow coal miners that brings them very close; it borders on a deep respect, deeper by far than

## Conservation Center Names New Director

By Thomas Wills

The Paonia -based Western Slope Conservation Center has announced that they have named Tanya Henderson as their new executive director, replacing Patrick Dooling who departed this past June. WSCC board member Scott Braden has served as interim director since then.

Henderson, who began work as of November 16, comes to the North Fork from Shoshone, California where for the past three years she had led the Amargosa Conservancy.

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# Another Month in the Valley

Continued from page 4

opinions on the outcome, but many said they were avoiding listening to the news. As is normal these days, the bookstore received another large donation (several boxes) of pretty nice, quality books.

A cooler, mostly overcast day.

**November 8** – Some snow fell on the mountains and higher areas of the Valley overnight. Just a sprinkle in Hotchkiss. On my morning run I jogged up the Barrow Mesa hills to the top level and back through Willow Heights where some political signs were still posted. Then, down into old Hotchkiss where the Sunday (open to the public) breakfast at the Elks Lodge was drawing a good size crowd, if the number of vehicles parked outside was any indication.

Temperatures began to drop late in the day. I continued to prepare my raised bed planter boxes for next season digging in grass clippings and leaves and adding in newly made soil from my ongoing compost/soil pits. Kale and arugula are still green.

**November 9** – Rain fell overnight in Hotchkiss with more snow in the surrounding higher areas.

**November 10** – A little snow in the Valley in the morning and more serious stuff in the mountains.

My morning run took me south of town across the river where some deer and a lot of migrating geese were enjoying TK's recently harvested cornfield, gleaning some leftovers.

**November 11** – Clear and cold overnight followed by a welcome sunny day.

**November 12** – The Hotchkiss Town Council met in person in the evening despite the rising COVID infection rate. And Trustee Jim Wingfield continued to refuse to comply with the State mask mandate and no enforcement was suggested at the meeting. Municipal Court in the afternoon.

**November 14** – Some light rain fell overnight and in the early morning in the Valley. Snow in the mountains.

**November 15** - Clear and sunny.

## Business News and Other Rumours

**Erickson's**, a new Paonia deli/restaurant is now open at 5<sup>th</sup> and Grand Avenue in the previous Subway/Peppers building. Their fresh ingredient gyros are drawing positive reviews.

Little town – lots of food choices. And I don't think we've mentioned the self-serve bakery run by **Mountain Oven Organic Bakery** out of Edisea Community Kitchen at 395 Clark Ave just north of Third. They also do a "pop-up café on Fridays 8-11.

**The Delta County Library District has named Sarah Smith**, a very familiar face at the Hotchkiss Public Library, as the library manager at both Hotchkiss and Cedaredge. Besides her many accomplishments with the District, Sarah was founder of the innovative Seed Library.

**KVNF** has moved reporter/morning news host **Gavin Dahl** up to being News Director replacing Jodi Peterson, who has moved to the Front Range.

As mentioned elsewhere, **Wellspring Vitality**, health spa/gym/alternative wellness center, has held its grand opening with tours of its Seventh Street Center facility in Hotchkiss. [www.wellspringvitality.com](http://www.wellspringvitality.com) for detailed information on this great new

Hotchkiss business. Introductory tours are available.

**The Hotchkiss Elk's Lodge** is serving breakfast on Sunday mornings from 8 a.m. to 12 noon. Information about that and other dinners and to-go food opportunities are posted on social media including on the **Hotchkiss, Colorado Message Board** on Facebook.

### The Town of Paonia Community Financial & Food Support Program Opened November 1st

North Fork Senior Connections will partner with the Town of Paonia to provide individual assistance through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to residents of the 81428 zip code whose income or employment has been affected by COVID-19. Eligible expenses include utility assistance, rent or mortgage assistance, or food assistance in the form of gift cards/certificates to City Market, Don's or Indigo Autumn. From November 1, 2020 through December 30, 2020 applications can be picked up at Paonia Town Hall. Send completed applications, along with copies of utility bill, rent or mortgage invoice to; NFSC, PO Box 1738, Paonia, 81428.

Dollars will be released on a first come, first served basis. Senior Connections will mail checks directly to utility providers, landlords and mortgage companies. Senior Connections will mail gift cards/certificates to you for use at the grocery store you choose.

If you have questions about the application, please call 970-527-3482.

### Valley Organic Senior Lunches Continue

The Valley Organic Senior Lunch Program continues to serve our seniors. We have 2 senior lunches left in 2020, Nov. 20 and Dec. 4. We will send out our regular email to notify you the week of these meals with the menu options. After a short break for the holidays, we will resume with a new calendar on Jan. 8th and you will be notified via email. Stay well and healthy during these upcoming winter months. We look forward to continue sharing local foods, supporting our local farmers, and providing you with the best of our valley's food options. (Chrys Bailey & Staff)

### Paonia Holiday Festivities

- Saturday December 5, 10am-4pm 200 block of Grand Avenue in Paonia.

The safest and most fun way to shop for your holiday goodies is The Paonia Holiday Fair! This year's Paonia Holiday Fair festivities are designed with your safety and health in mind. We will close the 200 block of Grand in Paonia to create some holiday cheer! Local vendors and downtown businesses will line the street for an outdoor shopping experience. Live music and hot drinks will keep you toasty with handmade craft activities for your little elves. Free movies for the family. Join us for safe family fun the first Saturday in December! Shop safe. Shop local. Please wear a mask and observe 6-feet of social distancing. Artists/vendors call (970)462-8849 for booth information.



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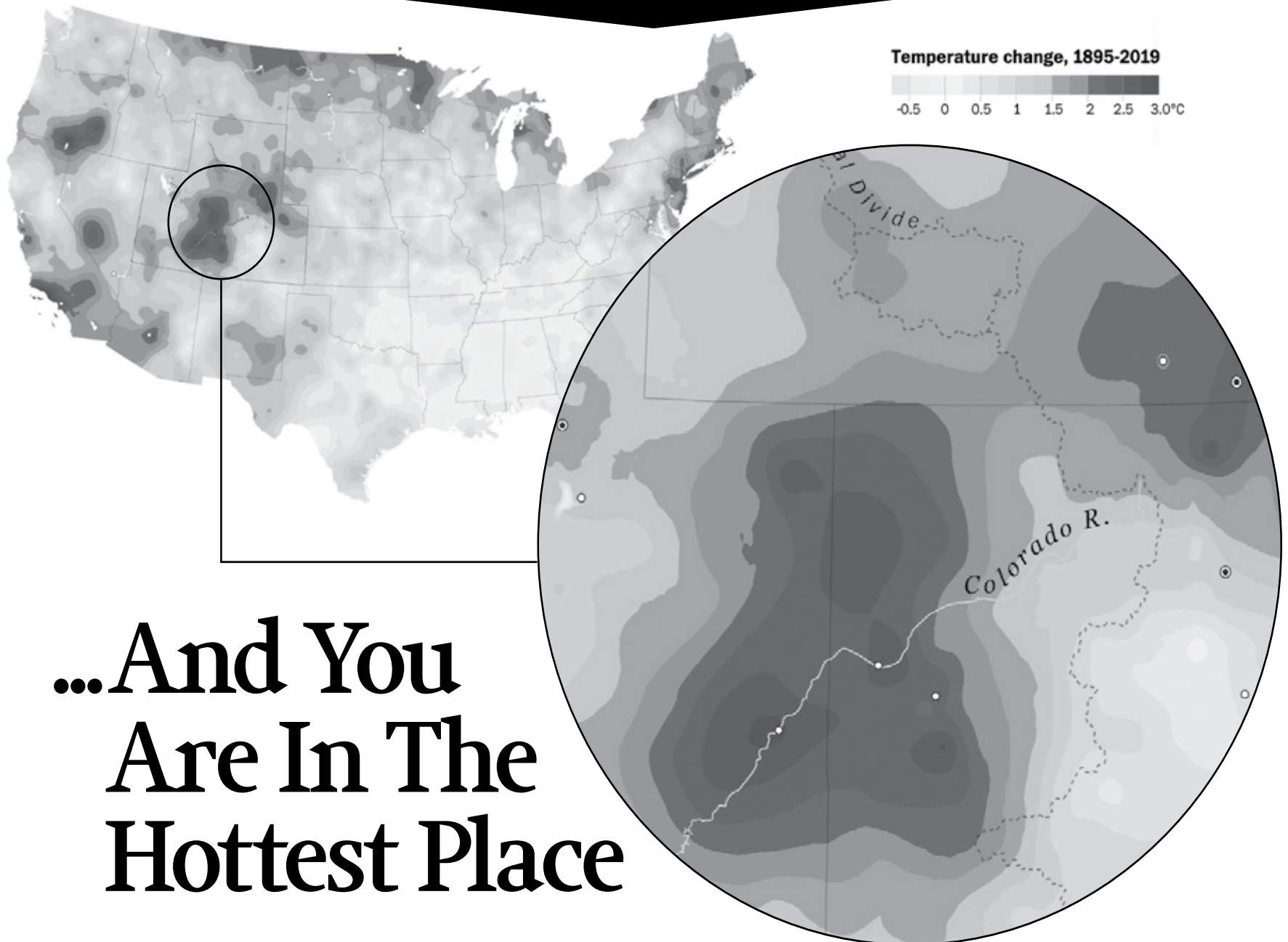


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# Extreme Climate Change Has Arrived...



## ...And You Are In The Hottest Place

### It's Time for Climate Action:

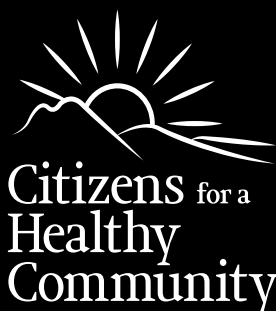
**Join CHC in the movement for a county-wide climate action plan before it's too late!**

Delta County has warmed 2.1°C (3.9°F) – double the global average.

This means hotter, drier weather, more frequent and severe drought, and extreme fire risk.

CHC has worked for a decade to ensure a livable and resilient North Fork Valley for present and future generations. We do not compromise on the protection of public health, safety, welfare and the environment.

**PLEASE KEEP CHC STRONG. WE NEED YOU NOW MORE THAN EVER.  
GIVE JUST \$1 A DAY, OR WHATEVER YOU CAN TODAY AT [WWW.CHC4YOU.ORG](http://WWW.CHC4YOU.ORG).  
TOGETHER WE CAN KEEP OUR HOME SAFE AND LIVABLE.**



[www.chc4you.org](http://www.chc4you.org)



**CHC Survey  
From Page 1**

land uses. Ninety-two percent of participants support the establishment of a Delta County climate action plan” said Natasha Léger, Executive Director, Citizens for a Healthy Community. “It’s time that this County starts listening to frontline community members on what they want for the future of their community.”

“These results don’t surprise the over 125 Valley Organic Growers Association (VOGA) members who have been working to maintain and expand a sustainable agricultural economy threatened by gas and oil development upstream of us. We encourage the County to support the businesses that are here and thriving, and make land-use decisions that keep our agricultural traditions alive” said Molly Moore, Board President, Valley Organic Growers



Association.

The report also recommends that County officials conduct an economic assessment of the impacts of extraction-based versus sustainable, environmentally conscious industries on the region prior to making any future energy-development decisions.

“It is difficult to get good data from sparsely populated rural areas. Usually assumptions are made based on regional or statewide studies. We are grateful to CHC for putting in the effort to survey our immediate area. Defining local communities in terms of our environment, our economy and our social network is important work in these changing times” said Elaine Brett, Founding Member, West Elk Community Fund.

This survey comes at a time when the County, State, and Federal Public Lands management agencies are making decisions that will impact the North Fork Valley for decades to come. “Delta County is a climate hotspot, warming faster than the global average, in severe drought, and the target for increased oil and gas development in the North Fork Valley watershed. We thank those who came before us and enabled our modern economy, but it is time to transition to a clean and renewable energy economy so that we can ensure a resilient and livable future for present and future generations. This survey sought to assess the viewpoints and elevate the voices of community residents, mobilize partnerships, and engage in community-wide conversations with the hope of influencing policy decisions” said Léger.

The Energy Development in the North Fork Valley Survey was made possible in part by a grant from the West Elk Community Fund.

**LOCAL CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION:  
How Green Can the North Fork Valley Become?**

*Analysis by Thomas Wills*

On the previous page Citizens for a Healthy Community (CHC), the local environmental group that battles inappropriate natural gas development in the Valley region announces that “Extreme Climate Change has Arrived.” It is really true?

In many ways, yes. CHC bases their statement on studies, reported this year, that show that our southwest region has already exceeded the red line of human caused global warming that most scientists agree may be the point at which bad things begin to happen even in temperate climates—two degrees celcius of warming since about 1870. While the world as whole has warmed about one degree C. in that time, our region is a hot spot in the lower U.S., increasing about 2.1 degrees C.

Regional climate assessments show a long list of impacts: declining

snowpack over the long term (less irrigation water), warmer mountain winters resulting in more pest damage like the pine beetle, more frequent and severe drought, heightened wildfire conditions, and many changes affecting the flora and fauna of the region.

What it comes down to is that if everyone, globally, does not take immediate dramatic action on reducing human release of green house gasses and things like deforestation, and changing methods of cement manufacturing, etc., our region will continue warm and suffer impacts. Americans, on a per capita basis are at the top of those responsible, and are the top emitters overall if one figures in responsibility for all of the products we import and consume.

The present consensus is that we (everyone) need to reduce human GHG emissions to near zero by mid century in order to avoid the global average

temperature rising to well above 2 degrees C, a place our region has already blown past.

Our little Valley, with a century-plus history of coal mining, gradually coming to an end, may be perfectly positioned to benefit economically by concentrating on a transition from old energy sources to new. Making a big deal of it.

Imagine this narrative: a coal mining area in scenic Western Colorado home of many artist creatives, along with organic farmers and winemakers, and a leading training facility for the solar power industry, decides to create a new economy based on all of these things AND an overlapping transition to renewable, low carbon energy. Low carbon food, low carbon art, low carbon buildings and homes, low carbon wine, and low carbon life in general. Low carbon as a marketing tool. Why not?

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- Whitewater Hill



# Colorado Oil & Gas Conservation Commission Unanimously Adopts SB 19-181 New Mission Change Rules, Alternative Location Analysis and Cumulative Impacts

*Commission concludes four months of comprehensive oil and gas rulemakings that increase protections for Colorado's public health, safety, welfare, wildlife and environmental resources*

(Press Release)

**DENVER** - The Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) announced today it has completed the rulemaking hearings addressing Mission Change, Alternative Location Analysis, Cumulative Impacts, and Compensatory Mitigation for Wildlife, as required by SB 19-181. The hearings began Aug. 24, addressed the 200-600 Series and then the 800,900 and 1200 Series started in October. The rulemakings were required to implement the change to the COGCC's mission from "fostering" to "regulating" oil and gas development in a manner that protects public health, safety, welfare, the environment and wildlife resources.

"Today is a watershed moment in Colorado's oversight of oil and gas development in our State. As a state legislator, I sponsored HB 2007-1298, which first set out to find a balance between protecting our wildlife and oil and gas development. Now as Director of Colorado's Department of Natural Resources, the new nation leading rules passed today, finds the right safeguards for wildlife, our air, water and communities while providing certainty and a streamlined process for oil and gas operators," said Dan Gibbs, Executive Director, DNR. "I am extremely proud of the work of the COGCC staff and both the interim volunteer commission and our new professional commission, who have conducted a collaborative and transparent rulemaking to implement SB 19-181."

Many key issues identified in SB 19-181 were addressed in a thorough examination of the COGCC's Rules, including defining the new relationships between state and local government, addressing cumulative impacts by developing a new program with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, establishing setbacks for location siting purposes, establishing a streamlined permitting process that incentivizes landscape level planning, a reorganization of the rules using updated language to ensure accessibility, enacting a prohibition on routine flaring or venting, and increased protections for wildlife.

The rulemaking hearings have been overseen by the new professional Commission seated July 1, 2020 by Gov. Jared Polis, which was also a SB 19-181 requirement.

"The COGCC is committed to conducting rulemakings in a manner that reflects how oil and gas will now be regulated with increased access,

transparency, public participation, engagement and information," said COGCC Chair Jeff Robbins. "Over the past months, the Commission took public comment on all the rules, heard testimony from over 90 parties and diverse stakeholders, conducted hundreds of hours of discussion and deliberation during the rulemaking hearings. The rules not only meet the spirit and mandates of SB 19-181, but they were done so with a unanimous vote and largely with consensus from all sides."

The Commission gave direction to Staff for this rulemaking to reflect the spirit and mandates of SB 19-18. Significant changes and outcomes from this rulemaking include:

#### *Public Participation:*

- Create broader access to the COGCC.



- Expand standing to allow citizens the ability to participate in hearings, permits applications, and requests from operators for a variance or waiver from a rule.

#### *Increased Protections for Public Health, Safety, Welfare, Wildlife and Environmental Resources:*

- Incentivize comprehensive landscape-level planning through the permitting process.
- Create a solidified one permit process rather than the current multi-step process.
- Transfer the permitting authority from administrative approvals by the Commission's Staff to the Commissioners through a public hearing, which increases transparency and public participation.
- Establish new regulatory relationships with local governments, which includes COGCC involvement early on in local permitting and siting processes and includes recognition that operators must comply with the most protective regulations.
- Ensure environmental justice for disproportionately impacted communities and allow them to be involved in the permit process. These are Colorado's first ever rules to be

adopted that incorporate environmental justice as a consideration in facility siting.

- Create a first-of-kind Cumulative Impacts data gathering system with an annual reporting requirement to the public for transparency.
- Establish protective setbacks for oil and gas development from residential building units, schools, and high priority habitat, including riparian areas.
- End routine flaring and venting.
- Increase protections for wildlife management.
- Increased protections for water resources.

"I am so proud of the COGCC Staff and our stakeholders for our work to deliver meaningful, impactful and implementable rule revisions to address Mission Change, Alternative Location

Analysis, Cumulative Impacts, and wildlife in a spirit mandated by SB 19-181," said COGCC

Director Julie Murphy. "COGCC Staff has had the dual job of their day-to-day duties, along with supporting the rulemaking efforts. The key to our success is linked to our strong relationships and ability to collaborate with all our partners during the rulemaking process to craft the best solutions. Now Staff will begin the critical work of implementing these rules and we will continue to work collaboratively as this new chapter begins."

As of January 15, 2021, the professional Commission will assume responsibility for reviewing and deciding oil and gas permitting and SB 19-181's objective criteria permitting will cease.

The COGCC is in the midst of reviewing its rules and procedures to evaluate what changes are required to reflect SB 19-181's requirements.

Prior to today's action by the full time current Commission, the interim volunteer commission called for by SB 19-181 adopted these additional required SB 19-181 rulemakings:

**500 Series Administrative Law Judge rules enacted, August**

**2019.** Allowed COGCC to use Administrative Law Judges in Hearings. This process increases the efficiency of the COGCC Hearing Unit.

#### **Flowline Rules (1100 Series) adopted in November 2019 .**

Increases protections to the public by:

1. Strengthen the state's oversight of flowlines and operators returning inactive wells to production or injection within Colorado.
2. Create for the first time a map of the actual paths of all flowlines in the state of Colorado, while at the same time balancing transparency with the need for public safety.
3. Ensure flowlines are abandoned in a manner that is least impactful, which balances the varying ways in which abandonment – in place or through removal – creates impacts or risks to public health, safety, welfare, the environment, or wildlife resources.

#### **Wellbore Integrity**

##### **Rulemaking adopted June 2020.**

Focuses on protecting Colorado's groundwater from potential contamination from oil and gas activity throughout the lifecycle

of oil and gas operations, from development to production to abandonment. Rules provide the nation's strongest protections for groundwater by the following:

1. Health checks, using regular testing and maintenance, throughout the well's lifecycle.
2. Isolate all fluids associated with the well from escaping to protect groundwater.
3. Increase public access and transparency of precautionary measures to protect groundwater near homes and drinking water sources. Other key new protections include provide:
  - Strict protections and detailed subsurface geological reviews for any wells that are proposed to fracture within shallow groundwater formations where the risk of contamination is at its greatest.
  - Increased transparency so local governments, water-well owners and the public can readily learn about what precautions are being taken to protect groundwater near their homes and drinking water sources.

The Commission will take up additional rulemakings at future Commission hearings, including Financial Assurances around oil and gas development, Worker Safety, and the enactment of Permit Fees in 2021. To learn more about participating, upcoming hearings and the rulemaking schedule, visit the COGCC website: [cogcc.state.co.us](http://cogcc.state.co.us) .

## Paonia Delays Adoption of Marijuana Regulation Ordinance Clark Avenue Six Home Development Approved

By Thomas Wills

**Paonia Town Council**  
November 24, 2020

Present: Mayor Mary Bachran, Dave Knudson, Tamie Meck, Mick Johnson, Michelle Pattison, Bill Bear, and Karen Budinger.

### Marijuana Regulation Ordinance Draws Discussion and Confusion

An ordinance regulating retail marijuana sales in Paonia was presented for discussion and possible approval with an eye towards having the law in place by the first of the year so that the application process could begin.

In discussion concerns were raised that the number of licenses for shops needed to be limited so as to not end up with too many. Karen Budinger moved that the Town limit the number of licenses to two saying that such shops could sell both medical and recreational cannabis. Trustee Tamie Meck said she would rather see the free market decide the number of shops and was concerned that the two shops would be recreational only, which would then preclude a separate medical marijuana shop.

Michelle Pattison suggested that the number of shops could be limited by establishing minimum distances required between cannabis shops.

Several prospective cannabis shop license applicants and others chimed in and offered to help fine tune regulations. These included local industry consultant, Jere Lowe. Ultimately it was decided that the Trustees needed to sleep on it and have some work sessions, form a working group, and take adequate time to study the options. The matter of regulations was tabled pending more discussion.

The Paonia 2021 budget includes income of \$25,000 in taxes/fees from retail marijuana shops.

### Clark's End Minor Subdivision Approved

The Trustees approved the Clark's End minor subdivision of three lots with six possible residences, after a redesign was done of the proposal.

The subdivision on North Clark Avenue was first proposed on the R2 zoned property, by owner Lynn Mattingly as a major subdivision with eight possible residences in 2019 and was denied despite apparently meeting the requirements of the subdivision regulations. Neighbors and others were concerned about increased traffic on the dead-end street. In the meantime, the Town approved the nearby Edesia Community Kitchen facility, also on Clark, to operate with multiple business uses, including retail sales, and as an events center.

The proposal was then redesigned as a minor subdivision and re submitted in 2020. There will be three lots with up to two single family homes, or one duplex, per lot. Six total residences.

### Other Actions and discussion:

In the first in a new round to Council meetings held on-line via Zoom Mayor Mary Bachran cautioned everyone that the COVID case in the county were trending upward sharply and care should be taken including: masking, social distancing and handwashing etc. She noted that while the County has been moved up to the yellow "caution" level the county is trending towards the red level with 71 new cases in just three days.

Trustee Dave Knudsen, who follows oil and gas issues closely, reported that the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) had concluded their rulemaking with much stronger regulations related to protecting the environment as mandated by SB 181 passed in early 2019.

Citizen activist and former Trustee, Suzanne Watson, alleged that at a November 3 Work session the Council improperly took a vote and made decisions regarding utility rate increases. If correct this was a violation of the Colorado Open Meetings Law notifications requirement. (The increases were formally approved by resolution on November 10.) Apparently, minutes of the work session were taken but were not available for review.

Town Administrator/Clerk, Corinne Ferguson, announced that the Town's municipal code on municode.com had been improved with access to new posted documents including budgets and resolutions.

Police Chief Neil Ferguson reported that there were some major investigations underway regarding juveniles but offered no general details. He also noted that some of the signs that had been put up with COVID masking information had been vandalized and would be replaced. One trustee inquired as to the possibility of security cameras being installed near the signs.

Tamie Meck of the Water and Sewer Committee reported that the Town is moving ahead on correcting deficiencies in the water system identified by State inspectors in a "sanitary survey". She also noted that public works director, Travis Loberg, needed to have higher certifications in order to be the water and sewer plant operator. He is working towards those Meck said. She stressed that despite the inspection issues the Town's water plants have continued to produce safe water and the Town has not failed any water tests.

## Bring in Your Seeds for the Delta County Libraries' Seed Library Program

Bring in your seeds!

Gardeners across the county have been reaping late harvests, putting garden beds to rest, and preparing for the cold, quiet months of winter. Many local gardeners have added a new activity to their fall checklist with the popularity of the Delta County Seed Library: seed saving.

Seed saving is a vital step in the process of maintaining the seed library. "The seed returns that we receive in the fall stock the seed library for spring checkouts," explains Leah Morris, Collections and Systems Administrator for Delta County Libraries. "We do not require that patrons return seeds to the library if they check out seed packets in the spring, but we do rely on the patrons who are willing to do so."

The library district also relies on volunteers every winter to assist in packaging thousands of seed packets by hand. This year, the typical seed-saving and packaging events are not possible, due to Covid-19 guidelines that restrict in-person programming.

"We have had to find creative ways to involve the community in the process this year," Morris says. "Take-home activity kits have become very popular with all age groups during the pandemic. This year, seed enthusiasts and library supporters can pick up take-home

seed packaging kits to help us prepare the seed library for the 2021 growing season."

"The process of collecting, sorting, and hand-packaging seeds, keeps us busy year-round, and we would not be able to handle the workload without the help we receive from community volunteers," says Morris. "Despite the pandemic, and library closures mid-March through mid-May, we checked out 1,865



seed packages to patrons during the 2020 planting season. We expect that number to go up in 2021."

Take-home seed packaging kits can be picked up at any library in Delta County December 8 through December 28. Seed returns and donations can be dropped off at any library in Delta County during open hours through Saturday, January 23. Seed returns must be completely dry, clearly labeled, and sealed in a plastic bag. To learn more about the seed library visit [www.deltalibraries.org/](http://www.deltalibraries.org/)

## Libraries Offer Portable Internet Hotspots for Checkout

Hotspots available for checkout

(Press Release)

In the time of COVID-19, having access to a reliable internet connection is important. Many more people are working or schooling from home, applying for unemployment benefits, job-seeking, or simply wanting to connect with friends and family through technology.

With funding awarded through a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant, Delta County Libraries is able to increase public access to valuable technological resources.

Library patrons can now check out hotspots from the library for a one-week period. Hotspots provide patrons the opportunity to connect up to 10 Wi-Fi enabled devices to T-Mobile/Sprint's network. In other words, patrons can use the hotspots to access to the internet

from anywhere, anytime, as long as they are within the network's serviceable range.

All that is needed to take advantage of this service is a library card in good standing.

Along with hotspots, the grant covers funding for Chromebooks that will also be available for checkout in the coming months.

"We understand that many of our patrons do not have access to these valuable resources and we are excited to help fill this need in our communities," says LaDonna Gunn, Interim District Director and writer of the LSTA grant. To learn more about this service, including instructions for checking out hotspots and other items, please contact your local library or visit [deltalibraries.org](http://deltalibraries.org).

This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. CFDA: 45.310 State Library Programs.