

# The North Fork Merchant Herald

The Digital Version of the  
Newspaper From the Valley That  
Thinks That the Crawford Pioneer  
Days Outhouse Races are Pretty  
Entertaining

**Digital Edition**  
**Volume 26 - Number 6-E**  
**June 1, 2023**

**FICTION:  
FLOODING IN  
ANTHRACITE**  
Page 25

**Return of the Killer  
Mosquitoes • Page 24**

**Pride Month:  
Pride Flag (Windsock)  
Prompts Positive Changes  
in Delta - Page 12**  
**Paonia Pride at the  
Paradise -Page 14**

**Crawford Pioneer Days  
-Page 2 & Page 10**

**WSCC: CAN A RIVER  
GET HEARTBURN?  
PAGE 21**

**Paonia Clarifies  
Water Moratorium  
Clarification- Page 9**

**• Big City Parking  
Trend Comes to  
Hotchkiss? - Page 3**

**13 Cows on Duke Hill in  
Hotchkiss • Page 5 •**

**Town of Paonia vs Bill  
Brunner -Page 7**

**Honoring Victor  
Haglund Jr. - Page 15**

**North Fork Pool/  
Recreation District Has  
Changes• Page 17**

## CITIZENS FOR A HEALTHY COMMUNITY: Your Voice Matters! Summer Comment Deadlines to Protect the North Fork Valley

*Press Release – Natasha Leger –  
Citizens for a Healthy Community*

There are a number of federal, state and county rulemaking and permitting processes concurrently taking place this summer, and the government agencies involved are taking public comment and need to hear from you.

Some of the projects subject to public comment are overlapping, such as the federal 35-well North Fork Mancos Master Development Plan (NFMMDP) Supplemental Environmental Assessment on climate impacts, and the state Gunnison Energy Iron Point Oil and Gas Development Plan (OGDP) application. The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) proposed rule on conservation and landscape health, *aka The Public Lands Rule*, will have broad implications on management of BLM lands and minerals. For the first time, it will clarify that conservation and land health are on equal footing with other multiple uses of public lands.

The BLM and US Forest Service are also taking scoping comments on the proposed 20-year Thompson Divide Administrative Withdrawal, which would result in no new oil and gas leasing in the Thompson Divide, including the upper North Fork Valley in Gunnison County. Lastly, Delta County will be submitting a draft revised Land Use Code for public review in June.

All this is happening at the worst time, when everyone is busy with growing season and summer activities. It's also pretty confusing when there are so many public comment periods occurring all at once. But it's important for the relevant agencies and decision-makers to hear community voices on projects and rules that will determine the future of our air, water, and lands that we depend upon every day.

Climate is at the center of all

these proposed rules and projects. Delta County is getting hotter and drier (despite this unusual wet winter), and experiencing more extreme weather (for example unusually heavy snowfall this winter), and climate related disasters (for example closure of Highway 133 due a failed culvert caused by rapid snowmelt).

The North Fork Valley



Plan (NFMMDP)--Supplemental Environmental Assessment on Climate Impacts. Submit your written comments through the BLM ePlanning portal at <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2021953/570/8003700/comment>

**June 16: FEDERAL**— The US Forest Service is proposing a 20-year Thompson Divide Administrative Withdrawal. This proposed mineral withdrawal includes no new oil and gas leasing in the Thompson Divide, which includes the upper North Fork Valley in Gunnison County. Submit your written comments through the US Forest Service public comment webpage at <https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?Project=63679>

**June 20: FEDERAL**-- Bureau of Land Management is proposing a new rule on conservation and landscape health, *aka The Public Lands Rule*, that would put land health and conservation on equal footing with other public lands uses. Submit written comments through the Federal eRulemaking Portal: [https:// www.regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov).

**June-July 12: STATE**-- Gunnison Energy Iron Point Oil and Gas Development Plan application to add 6 horizontal natural gas wells of up to 2 and ¼ miles to an existing well pad north of Somerset. This

Plan is part of the NFMMDP, but a separate State permitting process. The hearing for this application is scheduled for July 12. The Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) is accepting comments up until the hearing date. However, we encourage you to submit your comments by June 25, to give the COGCC ample time to review and consider public comments. Submit your written comments through the COGCC eFiling Public Comment Portal at <https://cogcc.state.co.us/hearings.html#/overview>.

**June-July: COUNTY**—The Delta Board of County Commissioners will be submitted a draft revised Delta County Land Use Code for public review and comment. This will be reviewed by the Planning Commission. Keep an eye out for Planning Commission meetings and the public draft.

### Upcoming Public Comment Period Deadlines:

**June 16: FEDERAL**--35-well North Fork Mancos Master Development

# From **PIONEER DAYS** ...to Modern Ways!



COURTESY OF THE CRAWFORD PIONEER DAYS COMMITTEE  
CRAWFORD, COLORADO

## 44th ANNUAL CRAWFORD PIONEER DAYS

THURSDAY, FRIDAY, SATURDAY  
JUNE 8 • 9 • 10 • 2023

### Thursday, June 8<sup>th</sup>

6pm ..... **Old Fashioned Melodrama, Crawford Town Hall** (upstairs) in assembly hall. Title "Aunt Fanny's Last Laugh, or Where There's a Will, There's a Won't". Doors open at 6:00pm, show starts at 6:30pm. Advanced Ticket sales recommended. Dessert Theatre tickets are \$6.00 & can be obtained at Crawford Town Hall, Lazy J Coffee Shop, NF Boardwalk or by calling Katie at 970-201-3423. Or at the door till sold out.

### Friday, June 9<sup>th</sup>

9am-2pm ..... **Baking Contest Drop off** upstairs at Crawford Town Hall  
2:30-3pm ..... **Baking Contest Judging**  
4:30-6pm ..... **Spaghetti Dinner by the Crawford Fire Auxiliary**  
\$10 Adults; \$5 kids 8 & under  
5-5:30pm ..... **Introduction of Grand Marshal & King & Queen**  
5:30-5:55pm ..... **Baking Contest Winners announced**  
6-7:00pm ..... **Live Auction**

### Saturday, June 10<sup>th</sup>

**Check-In/ Start**      **5K Run at Crawford State Park** - Organized by North Fork Montessori at Crawford  
Staggered start times: 8:30, 8:45 and 9:00am. Starting point: Crawford St. Park Peninsula Day Use Area.  
Registration forms available at the race. No fee. T-Shirts Youth \$10, Adult \$15

6:00 - 10:30am ..... **Fire Department Pancake Breakfast**

6:00 - 9:00am ..... **Vendor Set-up in the Park** 9:30 till 4:00 p.m.... **Booths Open for Business**

10:00am ..... **Parade begins** - Theme: From Pioneer Days to Modern Ways

Following the Parade.... **Outhouse Races \$250 Prizes!**

Throughout the day ..... **Music in the Park Throughout the Day** by David and Tamara Hauze

11:30 am..... **Old Fashioned Melodrama** - By donation

12:00 pm ..... **Hay Bale Races** - Center of the Park **\$500 Prizes!**

1:30 pm..... **Old Fashioned Melodrama** - By donation

1:00 - 3:30pm ..... **Kids' Games** in the Park & **Watermelon Eating Contest**  
*Note: Watermelon Eating Contest begins at 3:00 pm.*

Dusk..... **Fireworks, Crawford State Park** —Put a donation in the boots!

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FOR MORE INFO CONTACT **Michelle Specht • 303-507-1075**

**www.crawfordpioneerdays.com**



**The North Fork Valley Chamber of Commerce wishes Crawford another successful Pioneer Days!**  
Visit [NorthFork.net](http://NorthFork.net) for information about Crawford and North Fork and Smith Fork Valleys. (This ad sponsored by Pioneer Days and the North Fork Chamber)

# Off Street Parking in Hotchkiss: Does a Big City Trend Fit a Small Town?

Report and analysis by Thomas Wills

Hotchkiss Mayor, Jim Wingfield, thinks that the Town's current code in regards to requiring off-street parking for new impactful business uses in C-2 zoning "doesn't fit Hotchkiss." He has stated that the Town is working on changes to the code and the issue will be brought to the planning commission before council consideration.

This statement came before and during public hearings regarding a proposed new, 40-seat, west Bridge Street restaurant that aimed at utilizing a relatively narrow 320 W. Bridge Street building and lot with no off-street parking to speak of once once made a place for a dumpster in the rear. In April the trustees voted to allow an unconditional variance for the restaurant provision of about 12 of the 13 required off-street spaces needed according to a code chart that set out specific off-street parking requirement for various uses in C-2 zoning. The chart mandates one off-street parking space for each three seats in a new restaurant. Other towns in the region have similar requirements.

The April Council decision essentially zeroed out the code requirement for off-street parking since there were no reasons (findings of fact) given showing why the proposal met any of the standard variance criteria. A variance is the granting of an exception to an ordinance, usually related to land use matters.

In the case of the new restaurant there was also the issue of the proposal being located immediately adjacent to the Coal Train Coffeehouse whose owners, Les and Shelly Ware, also own a large graveled parking lot. The Wares were concerned that restaurant patrons would park in their private lot, increasing maintenance costs and liability. The Wares were told that enforcement (signage, roping off after hours, complaining to police, towing, etc.) would be their responsibility and expense.

At the May 11 Hotchkiss Council meeting trustees were given an Internet article titled *Parking Reform as an Urban Game Changer* and were urged to read it. The article, and many like it, highlight a movement in larger cities with dense downtown populations to reexamine their off-street parking requirements (aka parking minimums) for new uses. The idea in those cities is that requiring some businesses, like a neighborhood restaurant, to provide off-street parking at a set level is sometimes excessive since, in such cities, car ownership is less common, bicycles and walking is more convenient, and public transit is readily available. With a plethora of parking lots it has been shown that there is already more than enough existing off-street parking.

So, the argument is that

parking minimums for some urban uses just create unneeded parking lots and drive up the cost of small business and especially housing. But, arguments for eliminating mandatory parking minimums in large cities do not seem to apply to very small towns like Hotchkiss, where the majority of area residents live outside of the town and densities more closely resemble a suburb rather than an urban core.

of Eleni's, the use was short lived and the moderate variance never had much impact on the area. Taco Hut, being on a corner seems to have few parking issues.

In a related fact, the Town has a two-hour parking limit ordinance on the books for the downtown area but has never enforced it in recent decades since, without parking meters, this, according to a former Town Marshal,

Up Paddle, provided enough off-street parking for themselves and customers.

A privately owned lot at the corner of East Bridge and Second that once was available for informal parking has now been purchased and is closed to parking pending possible construction of a new business.

**Planning History:** Back in 2000, when I was first elected to the Town Council, I had already spent a decade working as a volunteer in the Delta County planning process that led their first real Master Plan, which was adopted in 1996 and was just redone in 2017-18. After ten years of going to local planning meetings, attending workshops and training sessions, and covering the processes as a journalist first for the Valley Chronicle and later for the Hotchkiss Merchant Herald that became the North Fork Merchant Herald in 2000, I thought I had a pretty good grasp on rural/small town land use planning and I began pushing the Town of Hotchkiss to write a comprehensive masterplan. In 1999 I wrote and presented a change of use ordinance for

Hotchkiss and after review it was adopted in early 2000. It took until 2003, and the reappointment of a planning commission, to begin work on the master plan and until 2006 to complete and adopt the first version.

Then came implementation of the Plan. After readopting building codes, we began work on a zoning ordinance and accompanying land development regulations (LDRs). One of these regulations was a requirement for new businesses and residential uses to provide some off-street parking. In the C-1 and C2 business districts the idea was to have enough parking for both the people who worked and lived there and for the business customers.

During the master planning process people also told us that the core of the downtown business district needed to be protected and revitalized and new businesses should be encouraged to locate there. In



**Tourists find a place to park in downtown Hotchkiss**

*Roll Royces visit in 2013 Tom Wills - Herald photo*

People in the Valley commonly drive to most local destinations and a good portion of the local economy is based on tourism and visitors who arrive in vehicles.

The trend in Hotchkiss over the past few decades has been for new and increased commercial uses in the areas bordering the downtown core area. Most of those new uses, even those in the core area, have provided off-street parking to some level, whether required to or not. For example, when a Subway franchise was established in a C-1 building (where Third Bowl Ice Cream manufacturing is currently located) the new building owner purchased an adjoining structure, demolished it, and constructed a paved parking area. A new bank at east Bridge and Fourth included adequate off-street parking in their design as did the West Elk Clinic (in C-2 on Hotchkiss Avenue.) (Note: the West Elk Clinic was built on property that was previously used as parking for a local restaurant.) Prior to that, when the Duffy family first established the Coal Train Coffeehouse, Paradise on a Hanger retail store, and adjoining businesses, they established adequate off-street parking areas for all the uses. When the Huene medical building was constructed in the 300 block of West Bridge Street after demolishing an older home and utilizing a very large lot, the facility included adequate off-street parking.

Some other uses established since the 2009 adoption of zoning and off-street parking requirements received minor to moderate variances from off-street parking requirements. These include: Taco Hut and Eleni's Downtown (restaurant). In the case

would require additional signage and many hours of code enforcement.

In the meantime, available downtown parking in Hotchkiss continues to shrink. During a Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) rebuild of Bridge Street during 2022 at least two spaces of on-street parking per block of Bridge Street, and that many on immediate side streets, were lost due to crosswalks being set back from the corners.

A private lot on the SE corner of Oak and West Bridge, that previously saw informal evening parking, was purchased for the siting of a welcome new commercial building and business, which was constructed in 2022-23. The elimination of the lot also limited immediate off-street parking for several units in an adjacent commercial building. The first business, Western Slope Stand

**Continued on Page 10**



**From The North Fork Pool Park and Recreation District:  
WE APPRECIATE OUR OUTGOING  
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR AND  
BOARD MEMBER!**

*Lenore Cambria, District Administrator  
and Sara Sharer, Board Member (and recent President)  
both since 2015*

**Dear Lenore and Sara: Just to remind you: You have been part of enormous growth at the District! Here is just a short list of what we have accomplished with your leadership:**

- With the support of the voters, we increased our mill levy
- Added mountain bike trails, pumptrack, picnic areas, climbing boulder and logs with our partner The Nature Connection.
- The Crossroads Ballfield Complex was conceived, grants were written and the new million-dollar complex was completed!
- NFPFRD won the Starburst Award from Colorado Lottery for the Ballfields AND we won the 2019 Special District Association Collaboration Award (with The Nature Connection) AND we were the 2-time winner
- of Non-Profit of the year from the Crawford and Hotchkiss Chambers of Commerce
- Upgraded the Skate Park and resurfaced Tennis Courts in Paonia.
- Met and beat the challenges of COVID-19 and a muddy & expensive flash-flood
- Funded the community-led creation of Pickleball in Crawford
- Created a new part-time Program Coordinator position to offer even more programs and events

**Whew! We couldn't have done it without YOU!**

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# May Journal

**Correction:** The young man who was killed in Vietnam, the Valley's only casualty of that war, was **Victor Haglund** of Fruitland Mesa. His name was misspelled in the May Herald's HCHS column. He will be honored at a May 29 Memorial Day ceremony at the Hotchkiss Crawford Museum. Haglund was an only child and a sad loss to his parents and the community according to Elaine (George) Violet who grew up as a neighbor to the Haglunds.

Another month and for most people the main theme was spring and the joys of the season: the first flowers, harvesting the first rhubarb and early greens in local gardens, and just getting outside and painting a fixing stuff. And water. Lots of water.

On the government side it was reported that with property values going up dramatically, so would assessed valuations, followed by actual property tax bills in 2024.

With Town of Hotchkiss approving a new restaurant in C-2 zoning while granting a near-complete variance from the requirement for some off-street parking, this month I've been thinking about the requirements in both Hotchkiss and Paonia as well as other towns in the region. It is actually an interesting subject.

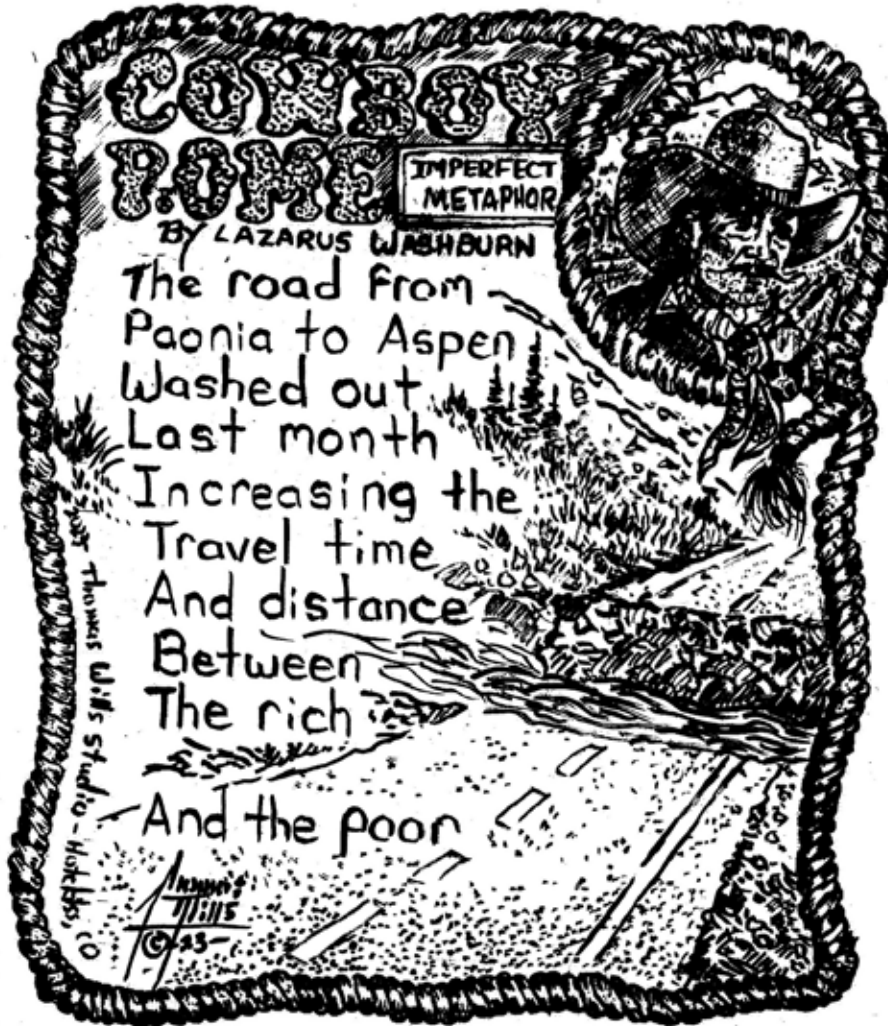
**April 25** – The May Herald went off to the printer this morning. It rained overnight and off and on most of the day.

**April 26** - A few more sprinkles with an occasional sunbeam. Actually, a pretty nice day by afternoon.

I attended the Hotchkiss Planning Commission meeting that had a couple of interesting reviews: one with a boundary adjustment that would allow enough flat space to build

## Another Month in the Valley

By Thomas Wills  
Publisher - Editor



a home on an odd non-conforming lot next to the Town Hall and railroad tracks, and the other was a variance to allow 13 cows on a twenty-acre Duke Hill property that we zoned R-1 back when I was a trustee and lead planner on the commission. Both things seemed okay to me but the "variance" should have been a Zoning Special Review and a separate minor variance.

**April 27** – Spring returns and distribution of the May Herald began.

**April 29** – The Crawford Friends of the Library held a used book sale in the community room at Town Hall. I didn't really need any more books but couldn't resist going.

**April 30 - May 1** – Two beautiful days across the Valley. I finally planted a bed of peas. The rhubarb is nearly ready for a first cutting.

**May 3** – It was reported that Highway 133 at Bear Creek above Bowie had washed out overnight and was closed. A big issue for Somerset residents and 200 plus miners at the West Elk Mine trying to get to and from work.

I received my new property

tax assessments and was still surprised at the huge leap.

**May 4** - A little rain overnight and in the morning.

**May 5** – I was gone on a long (for me) trip to Fruita for my first appointment with the rheumatology clinic there. Weaving my way through the mess (Redlands Parkway!!!) that are the west edges of Grand Junction reminded me how wonderful it is to live in the Valley, and why I don't wander outside very much.

**May 6** - The Town of Paonia encouraged everyone in town to have a yard sale. Next week Hotchkiss does the same during the dog trials.

**May 8** - A pretty nice sunny day in Hotchkiss. I harvested and cooked up a good batch of rhubarb using my solar oven.

**May 9** - Pretty warm. The North Fork was running at 4,500 cfs at Hotchkiss.

**May 10** - Warm but overcast with some light sprinkles.

**May 11** – Overcast and cooler. The Hotchkiss council meeting was a quick 45-minute one with Mayor pro-tem Patricia Medina ably chairing the meeting. The Town failed to properly review or accurately notice (or acknowledge a procedure problem despite being told) on an otherwise uncontroversial request to keep cattle on a large property on the west edge of town.

**May 12** – The first day of the 20<sup>th</sup> annual Hotchkiss Sheep Camp Stockdog Trials in Hotchkiss.

**May 15** - CDOT had a site visit at the Highway 133 washout. Delivery of a temporary bridge is scheduled for June 28.

**May 17** - Sunny off and on and fairly warm.

**May 20** - Deadline day. It rained overnight and bit during the day. Paonia had water problems today: "TOWN OF PAONIA WATER USERS!!! We have isolated the problem at the plant and the valve is unfrozen. It is NOT a repair just a temporary work around. Please continue to conserve water until it is fixed! We appreciate our community and everyone pulling together while we get this taken care of!"

Also DMEA electric power was cut off to some 600 customers near Paonia along 133 last evening when a power pole fell off into the rising river. The power outage apparently caused a valve to fail at the water plant.

**May 21** - Sunday. I accompanied a new neighbor E. to services at the Hotchkiss United Methodist Church, the first time I have been in a while.

### Business News and Other Rumours

There will be a "Rest in Peach" potluck-musical celebration in memory of **Jaime Alvarez Jacobson** on June 3 at the Paonia Town Park from 1-4 p.m. Gather in the bandstand

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# Hotchkiss Council Approves Cows on Duke Hill Procedure Confusion Continues

**Hotchkiss Town Council**  
May 11, 2023 - 6:30 p.m.

*Present: Mayor Pro-tem - Patricia Medina, Custer McLeod, Tricia McFarland, Sven Edstom (arrived 6:50), Patrick Webb, and John Marta.*  
*Absent: Mayor Jim Wingfield (health issue)*

The May Hotchkiss Town Council meeting took about 45 minutes with little discussion on items and no public comment where allowed. There were two public hearings:

### Boundary Adjustment Next to Town Hall Approved

The Trustees approved a boundary adjustment to an odd lot adjacent to Town Hall. The boundary adjustment's purpose is to add some flatter land to a somewhat sloping parcel B next to the Union Pacific railroad tracks at 221 Cedar Drive from Parcel A at 244 W Main Street making the lot more buildable. The proposal is to add some of Parcel A, with the newly rebuilt Wolfenbarger/Fontana house to Parcel B (behind the home along the railroad tracks) so that a better building site can be created for a new structure. Both lots are located directly east of the Hotchkiss Town Hall and Senior Center and the access to Parcel B is located between the railroad and the rear of Town Hall onto Cedar Drive. The lot is a pre-existing non-conforming lot since it does not have a frontage onto a public street as required by Town subdivision code.

The property is owned by Aspen White LLC. with Margaret Humecki of Wheatridge, CO the principal and Michael Humecki the representative and developer. The renovation/rebuild of the classic Fontana home has drawn a lot of admiration from the neighborhood and town.

### Thirteen Cows on Duke Hill

In a second review, the relatively new owners of the historic Duke House property at 410 Duke Hill Drive, the Elizabeth Ann Meiners family, requested a "variance" from the R-1 zoning, which requires a special review for livestock pasturing. The Meiners want to have up to 13 head of cattle on the 20-acre property, 13 acres of which are fenced pasture/hayground. The request was recommended to the Council for approval by the Planning Commission. Trustee Patrick Webb, an adjacent neighbor to the proposal, said he had no issue with the cattle, eight of which are already on the property. Webb made the motion to approve the request.

The review was mistakenly noticed as a variance rather than as the required special zoning review. The livestock grazing portion of the code allows one to keep cattle if one has at least 5 acres of livestock containment area and can then have one bovine per acre. The code also says that the subject property may have no more than one home and adjacent properties must also be agricultural in nature. There are two homes on the property but adjacent uses are both agricultural and residential. A variance was needed for the multiple

residences but was not specifically applied for and neither was the required Special Review. The procedure issues were not discussed or considered during the public hearing despite a written comment (from this reporter) being submitted.

The applicants note that the property has been used for agriculture for over 100 years since the home was built by the first Mayor of Hotchkiss, George Hiram Duke. It was included in the original 1900 incorporation of the town. They suggest that agricultural uses were thus grandfathered in at the time of the 2009 adoption of the Hotchkiss Zoning Ordinance. (Since livestock pasturing specifically is a use by review, according to code, that specific use had been abandoned.)

### Marijuana Business Point System Adopted

With little discussion the Trustees voted to adopt a point system work sheet similar to Cedaredge's to use in deciding which marijuana applications to approve if there is more than the allowed two to start with or to decide between applicants in the future. According to the Town Clerk no applications have been received as of May 10.

The Town's recently adopted regulations limiting marijuana businesses to two sites within the C-1 or C-2 zones with each site being able to have dual recreational and medical marijuana licenses. Sites are also limited due to the State requirement that cannabis businesses be 500 feet or more from an existing school or daycare facility.

### Other Actions and Discussion:

Police Chief Scott Green told the council that he would like to look into having resource officers at the schools. Currently the police stop by the schools daily for a walk-through.

Outgoing North Fork Pool Park and Recreation District director Lenore Cambria introduced her successor, Stephanie Bureau.

William McKee requested and was approved to purchase an out-of-town water tap for a property on Ash Lane. Every out-of-town tap request comes before the Town Council. McKee will also purchase an out-of-town sewer tap. The water tap will cost \$10,000 and the sewer tap \$5,100 according to the Town Clerk. A new home will be built on the site.

Pat Medina mentioned a handout included in the packet about the trend in larger cities to eliminate or modify off-street parking minimums since in some urban areas there are more parking available than cars using them since in cities many residents don't have cars and public transit is available. Small town have very different situations.

Mayor Wingfield has indicated that the Town is looking at eliminating off-street parking requirements for new business uses in C-2 zoning. In April the Town granted a proposed new West Hotchkiss restaurant a near complete variance to the current code parking requirement. (See story on page 3)

## The Creamery Arts Center

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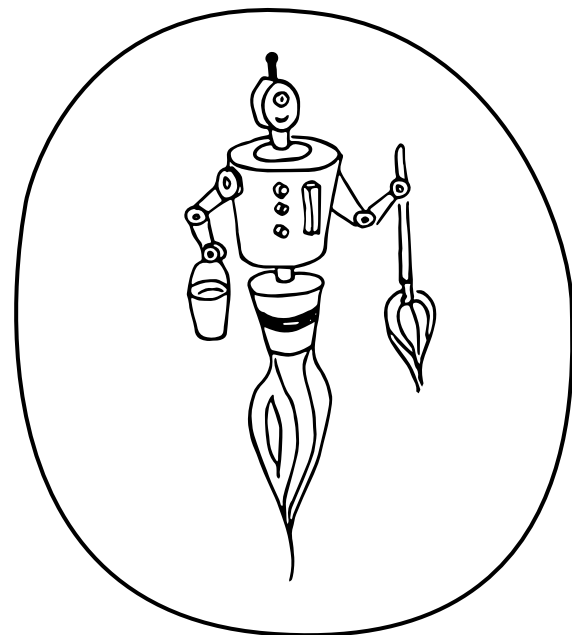
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Blue Sage Center, Laura Lee Yates - North Fork Senior Connections,  
Linda McCone -Paonia Seniors, Ben Katz- WSCC, Natasha Leger -CHC,  
Michael Cooper - Paradise Theatre and more. and others.

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# Paonia Activist Brunner Will Try Again to Force Forensic Audit of Town Finances

## Town Claps Back at Brunner's Accusations

By Thomas Wills

Former Paonia Trustee Bill Brunner seems to have endless determination and energy when it comes to setting the Town of Paonia's hair on fire. And he's been at it for decades.

Most recently Brunner submitted a citizens' initiative petition that forced the town to rewrite their attempt at clarifying Brunner's successful 2020 water tap moratorium ordinance. Brunner noted that the "clarification" left a loophole that would have allowed homeowners to add a second kitchen under the moratorium. This, Brunner claimed, would have resulted in under-the-radar secondary living units as well as violating the spirit of the moratorium by increasing residential water usage. Rather than face a special election on the issue, the Council negotiated with Brunner for new language in a replacement "clarification" ordinance.

Then, while that was being finalized, Brunner circulated and submitted a second initiative petition; one that would have forced the Town to conduct a forensic audit of its finances in the wake of the exit of the Town's finance officer and treasurer, and a costly retooling of the way accounting is conducted. That effort failed when the Town Attorney ruled that demanding a specific administrative action fell outside of the purview what a citizens' initiative can accomplish. Brunner is now attempting to accomplish the same thing from a different more oblique angle and, as of mid-May, was writing a new initiative ordinance that would set new Town policy on what and when a forensic audit of the Town would be triggered. Brunner tells the Herald:

*"I intend to re-write it as a legislative directive that if certain events have taken place (multiple unauthorized bank accounts; unauthorized accounting funds set up; off-ledger bookkeeping; budget not properly sent up the line; false, unauthorized or missing certificates of fund withdrawal or deposit filed with Local Affairs (DOLA-ed) (class 6 felony); etc.) (pretty much all in Klusmire's report) that there will be a forensic audit going back two years or until they either run out of records or find a point that comports with accounting standards generally acceptable in the United States. The auditor will, in addition to looking for fraud, look for waste and abuse: examine hiring practices, financial controls (or lack of), wasteful management practices, etc. If evidence of law breaking, criminal or civil, is found, the auditor will endeavor to ascertain who should have spotted it when and what did they do and is that a problem? Any evidence of actionable infractions, civil or criminal, will be submitted to the*

*DA or pursued in civil court."*

Interim Town Administrator Leslie Klusmire told the council at the last two meetings that there was no need for an expensive forensic audit and said that there is no evidence any Town money is missing and the problems are about *how* the accounting system was set up and not a concern about malfeasance.

In the meantime, despite current growth pressures and affordable housing concerns, it appears that it will be at least two years before the Paonia water tap moratorium can be lifted. Flow meters will be installed this summer at the Town's springs to collect data needed to provide proof of water quantity throughout the year.

In a separate e-mail to the Town on a related subject. Brunner also attacked the Town procedures regarding holding executive sessions to negotiate a separation agreement (presumably) with former Town finance officer and appointed treasurer, Cindy Jones.

At a May 15 Special Meeting noticed to hold an executive session on the separation agreement, Interim Town Administrator Klusmire took umbrage at Brunner's various efforts and spoke back publicly. She stated: *"Mr. Brunner continually shows an utter lack of understanding about municipal and State law and Labor law, that governs our appropriate and ethical behavior in government."* *"A second Brunner email (shared on the Herald Facebook page-ed.) accused the staff of crimes."* ... *"It's totally fallacious."* *"These lies keep getting repeated even though he has read and heard factual information."*

She strongly urged the Town to stand up for itself and take control of the narrative rather than let Brunner present the story. Mayor Mary Bachran then read a lengthy statement from the Town Attorney dressing down Brunner for a list of things he has either demanded of the Town or accused the Town and staff of doing wrong. The statement included accusing Brunner of spreading "baseless conspiracy theories."

Brunner responded to a Herald request for comment by saying that the May 15 discussion and attack on him had been improper under the Open Meetings Law since it was not included in the posted noticing of the meeting. Klusmire stated during the meeting, when that point was raised by Trustee Paige Smith, that the discussion was proper since Brunner had submitted a letter specifically about the May 15 executive session. The lengthy discussion among the Council went well beyond the specifics of the subject of the May 15 session.

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- Samosa .....\$7.99 (2)  
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- Shrimp Tempura\* .....\$10.99 (3)  
*Deep fried shrimp with tempura sauce*
- Thai Wing .....\$12.99(6)  
*Crispy chicken wing serve with sweet Thai chili sauce*
- Fried Avocado .....\$8.99 (4)
- Asparagus Bacon wrap Skewer ...\$6.99 (2)  
*Grill asparagus wrap with bacon and teriyaki sauce*
- Beef Salad(Medium spicy) .....\$12.99  
*Sliced beef sirloin tossed w/ mint leaves, roasted rice powder, shallot, cucumber, tomato cilantro, lime juice & a touch of chili. Served w/ a wedge of lettuce.*

### - SOUP -

- Tom Kha Soup .....\$7.99  
*Coconut milk, chicken, lemongrass, mushroom*
- Tom Yum Soup (Medium spicy) .....\$7.99  
*Tom Yum broth, chicken, lemongrass, mushroom, Thai chili, kaffir lime*
- Miso Soup\* .....\$7.99  
*Scorched, soft tofu, miso*

### - THAI DISH -

- Chicken/Tofu/Vegetable \$15.99, Beef, Pork \$17.99, Shrimp \$19.99
- Pad Thai\*  
*Rice noodle, egg, scallion, crushed peanut, bean sprout, tamarind sauce*
- Pad see Ew\*  
*Flat rice noodle, egg, broccoli, carrot, Thai soy sauce*
- Pad Kee Mao\* (Medium spicy)  
*Flat rice noodle, Thai basil, carrot, bell pepper, onion, Thai chili, spicy basil sauce*
- Thai Fried Rice\*  
*Stir-fried w/ egg, scallion, onion, carrot & green peas w/ a touch of our house fried rice sauce*
- Basil Fried Rice\* (Medium spicy)  
*Thai basil, bell pepper, Thai chili, onion, Thai basil sauce*
- Pineapple Fried rice\* (+\$2)\*  
*Stir-fried w/ egg, onion, carrots, green peas, tomato & pineapple topped w/ cashew nuts with curry powder*

### - CURRY -

- Chicken/Tofu/Vegetable \$15.99, Beef, Pork \$17.99, Shrimp \$19.99
- SEERVE WITH JASMINE RICE
- Panang Curry (Medium spicy)  
*Panang curry paste, coconut milk, bell pepper, kaffir lime serve with jasmine rice*
- Massaman Curry\*  
*Massaman curry, coconut milk, potato, avocado, cashew, serve with jasmine rice*

These items contain these ingredients: Eggs, wheat, Soy bean, Peanuts, Tree nuts, Fish and Shellfish

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- Option for... Gluten, Free and Vegan
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*Basil sauce with ground chicken, basil leaves and bell pepper serve with fried egg*
- Ginger  
*Choice of meats with Fresh ginger stir-fried with garlic, onion, mushroom, celery and red & green bell peppers*
- Broccoli  
*Choice of meats with Stir-fried broccoli & carrots and mushrooms with garlic to a light brown sauce*
- Orange Chicken\*  
*Crispy chicken with sweet and sour orange sauce*
- Sesame Chicken\*  
*Crispy chicken with sesame sweet sauce*
- Cashew\*  
*Choice of meats with cashew nut stir-fried with garlic, onion, mushrooms, celery and red & green bell peppers and dried chili*

### - NOODLE -

- Thai Noodle soup\* (Medium spicy).....\$16.99  
*Hot and sour Tom yum soup with ground pork and peanut and rice noodle*
- Chashu Ramen\* .....\$17.99  
*Japanese style noodle soup with Chashu pork*
- Pho\* .....\$16.99  
*Clear noodle soup with chicken and rice noodle*
- Wonton Noodle soup\*.....\$16.99  
*Clear soup with shrimp and pork wontons, bell choy, chicken broth, crispy garlic and egg noodle*
- Khao Soi\* .....\$17.99  
*Northern style yellow curry with slow cook chicken (with bone), egg noodle, shallot, peanut, crispy noodle, cucumber, garlic chili paste*

\* These items may contain these ingredients: Eggs, Wheat, Soy bean, Peanuts, Tree nuts, Fish and Shellfish

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*salmon and cream cheese*
- Philadelphia Roll\* .....\$13.99  
*salmon, cucumber and cream cheese*
- Crunchy Roll .....\$15.99  
*Shrimp tempura, Cucumber, topped with Flake eel sauce and spicy mayo*
- Dragon Roll .....\$15.99  
*Shrimp tempura, Cucumber, topped with Avocado, scame seed and eel sauce*
- Rainbow Roll\* .....\$18.99  
*Imitation crab, Cucumber, eel, topped with Tuna, Salmon, Yellowtail and Avocado*

### - SPECIAL ROLL -

- Mango Crunch\* .....\$18.99  
*Imitation crab, Mango topped with Salmon, Tuna, Avocado, Crunch and mayo sauce*
- Hotchkiss Hot\* .....\$23.99  
*Imitation crab, Tuna, Salmon, Cucumber, topped with spicy tuna, jalapeno, sriracha and eel sauce*
- Scarlet Witch\* .....\$21.99  
*Shrimp Tempura, Spicy Tuna, topped with tuna, Imitation crab, Mayo, Eel sauce, Mayo and Sriracha sauce*
- Lava\* .....\$21.99  
*Imitation crab, Avocado, Cream Cheese, Topped with Smoke Salmon, Tuna and Spicy mayo*

\* These items are served raw or undercooked meats, seafood, shellfish may increase your risk of food borne illness.

## A High Water Year in the Valley: Sinkholes and High River Flows Temporary Hwy 133 Bridge May be Delivered June 28

By Thomas Willis

The month of May is usually when we see the highest runoff flows in the North Fork of the Gunnison River and its tributaries including the Muddy and Anthracite Creeks, but this year was exceptional with the high waters being compared to a couple of big years back in the early 1990's. Those were the years that convinced riverside landowners to form the North Fork River Improvement Association (NFRIA), which is now part of the Western Slope Conservation Center. This year might be a test of the river restoration work done over the past three decades. Projects included construction of new ditch company takeouts and restoring natural curving of the river, something that slows down the river.

According to USGS gauging data of the river at Leroux Creek the first 10 days of May showed flows just over 4,400 cubic feet per second with the maximum reached so far being 5,600 cfs. May 18 was 4,470 cfs, near the average for earlier in May. The peak should happen in early June.

May began with Bear Creek, just above Bowie, washing out Highway 133 when the creek flows overwhelmed the culvert under the road and it "failed" during the night. The highway was closed, which at first stranded some people trying to get back and forth from Paonia and the Somerset area. At first people parked

down the road below the washout and hiked over to be shuttled up-valley and back. Within a day or two a temporary, and guarded,

very-limited road and bridge was constructed so that residents and miners at the West Elk Mine above Somerset could get to home and work. Everyone else ended up having to drive around via Grand Junction, which takes about four hours. This had some unquantified effects on some Valley businesses that benefit from the through traffic from Montrose and Telluride south to Glenwood/Aspen/Roaring Fork Valley and I-70 to the north. One local farm with a retail shop reported that sales were down about fifty percent from the normal at this time. CDOT hoped to have temporary Bear Creek bridge open to general traffic by the end of June with the full road repair taking an additional month or more. According to CDOT, the temporary bridge structure is scheduled to be delivered on June 28.

In early May some locals, including some professional level photographers, began documenting the dramatic river flows and incidents

such as the Highway 133 washout. River flows went up and down during the first week of May and onward as



temperatures fluctuated, but remained mostly mild. Delta County coordinated with the towns in setting up places where people could get sandbags and the sand to fill them. Press releases encouraged everyone close to river and stream to be vigilant and cautioned that, after so many very dry years,

the river banks might crumble off. Parents were urged to keep their kids and livestock back from bluff edges.

Prior to the 1962 completion of the Paonia Dam and Reservoir, which had a dual purpose of irrigation water storage and flood control, there were a series flood years marked by historical accounts and photographs of damaged or destroyed bridges. One story relates that, during high spring runoff, a riverside farmer went to bed on one side of the river one night and awoke on the other side, with river having changed course during the night.

Drownings, and horses and wagons being swept away, were reported regularly in the early days before good bridges. The last big Valley flood came in about 1957 or 1958 at about the time when the Paonia Dam project was being approved for federal funding.



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# Paonia Clarification of Clarification of Water Tap Moratorium Ordinance Approved • MacInnis New Trustee

By Thomas Wills

**Paonia Town Council**  
May 9, 2023

## MacInnis New Trustee

The Council considered the three applicants for the vacancy created by the sudden resignation of Dave Weber on April 11 and chose a fresh face, Morgan MacInnis, who operates Espresso Paonia. MacInnis will serve until April of 2024 when there will be an election to fill the seat along with others.

Those who submitted letters of interest included former trustee Tamie Meck, whose resignation just before the 2022 municipal election created the vacancy that Weber filled by appointment. Also applying was Mary Jane Poulos, 66, a lifetime Paonia resident and retired social worker. The vote among the Trustees was taken by paper ballot after each candidate gave a short presentation.

## Clarifying the Clarification

In response to a citizen initiative petition from Bill Brunner, the Trustees approved new ordinance 2023-04 that replaces the old ordinance and better defines some definitions and other things in an early ordinance that was meant to clarify what Paonia water users could or could not do in relation to home improvements and things that could result in higher water use. The action made the citizen's petition moot since the old ordinance was repealed as requested.

In the end there was still a little confusion with Brunner not happy with a few points in the new ordinance and Trustee Dave Knutson and Brunner wondering how enforceable the moratorium points were with out-of-town users served by pipeline companies who are supplied with Town water. Delta County has no adopted building codes or building permits and thus lacks a way to track changes.

"I see these houses going up (out of town)," Knutson said. "And I wonder how they got a tap? How do they get domestic water into that place?"

The Town is under increasing pressure to do something about the tap moratorium itself which has been in place since January of 2020. In order to lift the moratorium, the Town needs longer-term water production data proving adequate resources, something that is planned to be collected by new meters installed at the Town's many springs. The meters should be ordered soon according to interim Town Administrator - Lesley Klusmire.

Beginning metered measurements following a very wet winter (2022-23) when spring flows should be higher than average will be interesting but the Town needs hard data as well on what the minimum spring flows are in very dry years.

## Forensic Audit Initiative Petition Rejected.

Interim Administrator Leslie Klusmire (via Zoom) reported that a citizens' initiative petition had been received that demanded that the Town institute a forensic audit or hold a public vote on doing it. Klusmire said that, after consultation with the Town Attorney, the petition was rejected as falling beyond the realm of what such citizens initiatives can cover under State law.

Klusmire said that there was no evidence of a need for such an audit, which is much more expensive than the regular annual audit that should begin soon. She had previously assured the council that there

is no indication that any Town funds are missing and that the problem was that the current accounting system did not allow the retrieval of data properly and was not in compliance with best practices. The Town has negotiated a separation agreement with the former Town finance officer and treasurer. (The agreement was approved by the Trustees on May 15 after an executive session.)

## Master Process Plan Kicks Off

It was reported that the process of writing a new Paonia Master Plan to replace/update the last one adopted in 1996 kicked off with a public meeting held on April 27. About 75 to 100 people attended but with only 60 people actually signing in. Of those only just over half lived within the Town limits. The meeting consisted mostly of "participatory activities" to gather input on vision, goals, policies and actions.

A second session is scheduled for Saturday, June 10 beginning at 10 a.m. Phoenix Rising, the consultants facilitating the writing of the plan expect a draft to go to the Planning Commission for revisions in September, taking public comment in October, and with a completed plan presented to the Council in January of 2024.

At the same time, a Paonia Housing Needs Assessment and Housing Action Plan process has begun and will be coordinating closely with the master plan work. Having a current housing needs assessment in place is a first step in identifying and possibly seeking funding for possible affordable housing projects or other options.

## Legacy Events Will Not Be Charged Park Fees for 2023

The Trustees, after extensive discussion and urging by Pickin' in the Park promoter Rob Miller, voted to not charge Town Park use fees this year to four identified "legacy" events including Pickin' in the Park. The other events are: Cherry Days, BMW Rally, and Mountain Harvest Festival. The vote applied only to this year's events.

## Other Actions and Discussion:

The meeting concluded with a long executive session to discuss a personnel matter. Upon coming back into regular session, the Trustees voted to allow the Town Administrator to produce a new organizational chart, job descriptions, and salary ranges for the employees that she supervises.

The search for a new Town Administrator continues and there was a discussion about whether or not to raise the salary pay range for the position in order to attract more, and higher quality candidates. No decision was made.

Jordan Redden, of the Public Works Department, was recognized as having achieved one of the highest scores in the state in his recent water and sewer system operator certification tests.

With the river runoff levels going up and down on a daily basis, Police Chief Matt Laminger reminded everyone to be cautious around the water. Crumbling banks as well as additional hazards in the water such as tree being swept into the stream are seen as causes for concern.

**Update:** At a May 15 special meeting trustee Dave Knutson asked that, due to comments made at the previous meeting, a consideration of removing Thomas Markle from the post of Mayor pro-tem be on the May 23 Council agenda. That was approved.

Markle denied that he had made any improper comments. The comments were apparently related to Town finances.

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## Paonia Initiative Effort Forced Removal of Loophole

By Bill Brunner - Paonia

### A THANK-YOU NOTE from a sponsor of the referendum that kept Paonia from enacting a loophole in the water moratorium.

Thanks for the support of more than 10% of Paonia voters who signed the referendum petition, we were able to engage the Town in meaningful dialogue about an ordinance "Clarifying" the moratorium. By using the constitutional right to the power of the referendum, we were able to close an egregious loophole.

By design or mistake, the new ordinance contained a provision that would have allowed any house on Paonia water to install additional kitchens within an existing "structure". Every house on the water system would have had the right to install the physical attributes of a duplex. Once the additional

features are built, for "owner use", many such units would appear on the market as income producing rentals. It is naive in the extreme to think it would be otherwise. This "Clarification" would have resulted in the back door fulfillment of what some have been campaigning for: The right to an ADU (additional dwelling unit) on every lot in Town - despite the Moratorium!

The moratorium will be lifted when a competent assessment of our water system verifies the carrying capacity and shows it can support additional use. At that point, if the people of Paonia want ADU's, so be it. In the mean-time the moratorium is an appropriate tool to keep special interests from making the situation worse.

Mayor Pro-tem Thomas Markle gets special thanks for stepping forward and taking over chairmanship of the negotiation with the non-partisan goal of achieving the best outcome. His contribution was indispensable.

**Welcome Visitors to the Valley!  
Sorry About the road inconveniences  
Thanks for getting around it anyway.**

## Hotchkiss Parking: Continued from page 3

implementing the Plan, one action taken was to *not* require new businesses in the C-1 core (Oak to 3<sup>rd</sup>.) to provide new off-street parking. Instead, the Town committed to providing off-street parking options by purchasing a parking lot on Hotchkiss Avenue behind the Creamery Arts Center and Creamery Park. The Town also began talks with the Hotchkiss Elks Lodge (a block away to the east on the opposite side of Bridge Street) to allow public parking in their lot during the day. The Elks currently generously allow public parking “at your own risk” in their lot.

But, the Town and Chamber of Commerce did not follow through with a long-term sustained effort to get downtown employees to utilize the lots and the Town did not establish a formal agreement with the Elks. While downtown employees generally do not park on Bridge Street itself, they do

line the connecting streets during the day,, especially First Street to the north and onto Main Street at Memorial Hall and the library.

The Town has also not moved forward on the recommendation in the 2015 Hotchkiss Community Downtown Core and Highways Corridors Improvement Plan to: “improve the parking lot on Hotchkiss Avenue and install better signage in order to maximize its use during special events and as additional retail uses are added to the downtown area.”

In the Hotchkiss Prosperity Plan, commissioned by the Town in 2019, 37% of the respondents to a survey said that expanded or improved parking downtown was a priority.

In 2023, as Hotchkiss enters a growth phase similar to the 1990s through early 2000s it has yet to move towards updating thier master plan.

## Crawford News: Pioneer Days and Lucky Horseshoe Opening

By Thomas Wills and Nathan Sponseller

The big news in Crawford for June is Pioneer Days happening June 8-10, which brings folks from all over to the Valley’s smallest, but most scenic, incorporated town. All of the long-time favorite events: parade, outhouse races, booths in the park, haybale race, and fireworks will be happening make this one of the best small town local-local celebrations around. Grand Marshal of the Parade is Pat Polson and the King and Queen are musicians David and Tamara Hauze (who will be performing a lot on Saturday). Schedule on page 2 of the Herald and more info at: [crawfordpioneerdays.com](http://crawfordpioneerdays.com)

And Crawford/Pioneer Days news from Nathan and Lara at the Stone House Inn: “The must-see Pioneer Days parade kicks off at 10am, but for early risers, you might want to start the day off right at Lazy J Coffee. Lazy J has become the community meeting place and is very popular for their coffee drinks, pastries and light breakfast fare. Between coffee time and the parade, why not check out the expanded walking trails at Crawford State Park. A major new pedestrian bridge is slated for completion at the beginning of June, so be one of the first to enjoy this new amenity! After a day of pursuing booths at the town park, visiting with friends, listening to free live music and taking in the melodrama, why not sit down for a good meal at The North Fork Boardwalk? Evenings are when locals get together at the Boardwalk for good food, drink and entertainment. June has built a following for routinely tasty meals and Friday night Karaoke is on everyone’s calendar... as is Sunday evening’s open mic night. And of course, end your day at the annual Pioneer Days fireworks (or at the Boardwalk after the fireworks)!

And: “Just in time for Pioneer Days, Crawford will feature a new shop downtown. The Lucky Horseshoe will be opening on June 7th after a long renovation of the former Crawford Realty building. The Lucky Horseshoe is a project of Nathan Sponseller and

Lara Noel - owners of the Stone House Inn. With Lara’s 20+ years working for the National Parks and Nathan’s 27 years working with the Hotchkiss Chamber, providing a staffed visitor center seemed like a natural fit. The Lucky Horseshoe will be much more than a visitor center, though. The shop will feature antiques and collectibles, locally made items, gifts, finer local and regional foods, fair trade items, vinyl records, decorative items, snacks, cold drinks and even nostalgic candies. The Horseshoe will even have a small patio under the old craggy apricot tree for folks to enjoy food and drink and catch up with friends. The shop’s hours will be Wednesday - Saturday 10-7 and Sunday 9-3. Just look for the yellow building (nest to the Inn) with the horseshoe and clover sign.”

**Town Government:** According to the Town of Crawford website the Town’s card operated water standpipe where out-of-town users can obtain water has some limitation that are not applicable to the Hotchkiss or Paonia stand pipes. One, the water is only available to users with “Crawford (area?) addresses.” Two: Users are limited to only 5,000 gallons (\$75 - \$15.00 per thousand) per month, which would preclude extensive use by commercial water haulers. The water is for indoor domestic use only, although there is no way beyond an honor system to enforce that stipulation.

In case of a water supply challenge to the Town the standpipe will be shut down.

The May 10 Town Council Agenda contained only one action item, a request from the Town Clerk/financial officer to move longer term money to a venue that pays a higher interest rate. Apparently, according to a posted schedule, the Council is now meeting on the second Wednesday evening of each month at 7 p.m. The April 12 meeting was cancelled (and thus the March minutes have not been approved and posted yet) and the only specific action item on the March 8 agenda was a resolution to exempt the Town from doing a 2023 audit.

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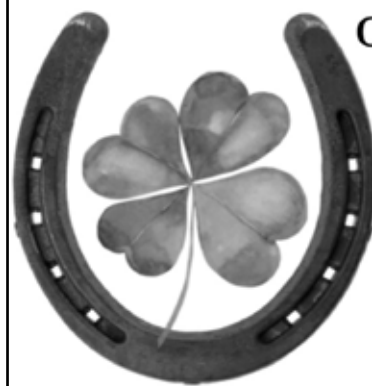
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## Local Lavender Farms Invite You for a Tour on June 25

Join local Valley lavender growers for the 12th Colorado Annual Lavender Festival! Sunday, June 25th!

Stanton Farms near Paonia will offer free self-guided tours in the lavender fields and a distillation demo at 1:30PM in the shade. Also, on this self-guided Sunday tour are fellow North Fork Valley lavender growers — Balcony Botanicals on Stucker Mesa, Connor Orchards (Rogers Mesa) and Elevation Mountain Grown Herbal Tea Farm (Hanson Mesa) in Hotchkiss. Double check their socials and website for their schedules.

Lavender farms will host live demos, tours and more. Include a stop

at one of the many Farm Stands and Wineries in the North Fork Valley.

The local tours are part of the larger, regional Colorado Lavender Festival June 23-25 that is timed annually to coincide with the height of the blooming of lavender plants. Lavender is a relatively new cash crop for Valley farmers and one that can generate a variety of revenue streams including value-added products as well as generating agritourism. The lavender is something that seems to add nicely to the Provence-like ambiance of the North Fork along with the organic farms, outdoor dinners, and numerous wineries.

## Libraries Bring Comedy, Magic, and Juggling Show to Town

Submitted by Tracy Innot - Delta County Libraries

The kick-off to the 2023 Summer Reading Program “All Together Now” is a much-anticipated show expected to entertain the entire family.

Performer Ann Lincoln’s **W o r k Together Comedy, Magic and Juggling Show** is making two stops in Delta County on June 7.

“We are thrilled that Ann is able to stop in Paonia and Delta during her 2023 summer tour,” says library

manager Adriana Chavira. “It is sure to be a great start to a summer of fun activities, programs and reading at the libraries.”

Based out of Denver, Lincoln (pictured above) is a full-time professional entertainer with over 30

years of experience. Every summer, she travels across Colorado and beyond, performing a new and original theme show specifically designed for libraries.

The show includes plenty of audience participation, both on-stage and off, as well as many of the things Lincoln is famous for;

comedy, juggling, circus skills, and magic with live birds and bunnies.

Lincoln’s show is scheduled in Paonia and Delta on Wednesday, June 7. The first show is at Paonia Town Park

starting at 1:00pm and the second show is at the Delta Lions Club Pavilion starting at 4:00pm. Both shows are free and open to the public.

For more information about the 2023 Summer Reading Program please visit [www.deltalibraries.org](http://www.deltalibraries.org).



## Local Foods From Local Growers

This summer should be amazing for local foods and the farm to table, or garden to table, movement in the North Fork Valley. The double average snowpack will have given us a break from

the last 20 years of steadily increasing drought, which should mean a longer water season on local ditches that have been challenged over the last few years. This spring everything is green, green, and green.

Farmers markets in Paonia and Hotchkiss are underway and local CSA offerings will soon begin offering more variety.

R h u b a r b ,

asparagus, and spring greens are abundant and the promise of a good 2023 fruit crop looks rosy. Celebrate the place we live. EAT LOCAL.

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# THE LEARNING COUNCIL: Pride Flag (Windssock) Prompts Positive Changes in Delta

## Restorative justice work in Delta after Pride flag discrimination

*Mandated training and a small conversation bring together a coalition of allies to support queer community members.*

By Luna Anna Archey/Delta County Coalition Advocating for Radically Equitable Spaces

“A MISTAKE IS A MISTAKE when you don’t fix it.” said Angeles Mendez, president of the Migrant Rural Coalition (MRC), at a community conversation event in Delta, Colorado, on April 26th. The event was part of restorative justice efforts around an act of discrimination that the MRC and The Learning Council (TLC) faced by a lessee of the City of Delta.

In 2021, The Learning Council served pizzas and hosted an art table at the Mexican Heritage Days Celebration at Delta’s Fort Uncompahgre Interpretive Center. The event, much of which was organized by the Migrant Rural Coalition, featured a variety of food and craft vendors, and a day full of performances from local artists.

At the event, TLC displayed

**...when his parents moved to Delta, it was a “Sundown Town” for Latinx residents. “After dark, you couldn’t pass the tracks if you were brown,” he said. “That’s what we were brought up with.”**

a Pride Flag, part of their usual display to indicate a safe space and to increase visibility for rural LGBTQ+ folks. During the event, there were no comments or complaints about the flag. In emails directly after the event, Christine Miller, the director of the Fort, which was operated by the nonprofit Interpretive Association of Western Colorado (IAWC), praised TLC’s involvement, and said she was excited to collaborate the following year. However, in preparation for 2022’s event, Miller abruptly disinvited TLC from participating. In conversations with Mendez, the IAWC said the ban was directly due to the display of the flag, stating that they didn’t agree with it and didn’t think that it should be a part of the event because it didn’t

reflect the values of the Fort. The Fort was run by the IAWC on land leased from the City of Delta.

“It even escalated to the director saying ‘You are not doing a good job putting on Mexican Heritage Days.’ That really upset me, because I am Mexican!” Mendez said.

Delta City Manager Elyse Casselberry said the city was quick to respond when they found out about the discrimination. “Three different council members came to me and said ‘We have a problem. We need to talk about this.’”

When Miller stood by the belief that her actions were not intended to be harmful, and was resistant to moving forward with restorative justice requested by MRC and TLC, the city terminated IAWC’s lease to the Fort. “We as a city were not going to tolerate discriminatory behavior on city properties,” Casselberry said.


As this was playing out over months of city “We as a city were not going to tolerate discriminatory behavior on city properties,” Casselberry said.

meetings, the MRC and TLC moved forward to make their own Mexican Heritage Days Celebration. That 2022 event, hosted in Olathe, Colorado, featured the Montrose band Clave Cinco and many of the same performers and vendors as the Delta event.


**DURING THE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION,** Xavier Saenz, CEO and founder of Delta Pride, reminded attendees that when his parents moved to Delta, it was a “Sundown Town” for Latinx residents. “After dark, you couldn’t pass the tracks if you were brown,” he said. “That’s what we were brought up with.” That racist history isn’t far removed, and Saenz sees the same harmful patterns repeated in how queer kids are treated in the county. In the past two months, Saenz has spoken with three kids that quit school because teachers and other students refused to respect their chosen names and pronouns. “For a child who is still trying to understand who they are to be told ‘You are not what you think you are,’ that is causing self-harm and possible suicide,” said Saenz, who calls himself a “Suicide Survivor of Delta schools.”

Also a lifetime Delta resident,

**Continued on page 18**



**2023 SUMMER READING PROGRAM**  
Children's Program Schedule



**Work Together Comedy, Magic, & Juggling Show**  
Join us for some family-friendly fun with performer Ann Lincoln to kick off the 2023 Summer Reading Program! Anything can happen when the audience participates to create some awesome entertainment.  
Paonia Town Park Wednesday, June 7 @ 1pm  
Delta Lions Club Pavilion Wednesday, June 7 @ 4pm

**Student Art!** On display at Crawford, Hotchkiss and Paonia Libraries all summer!

**Activity Kits**

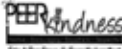




**JUNE**  
**Friendship Charms**  
Kits include supplies to make two beaded charms; one to keep and one to give away!

**JULY**  
**Community Rocks**  
Kits include supplies to paint a rock to place out in the community!

**Family Hike to Eagle Rock Shelter**  
Complete the Junior Ranger Program and earn a badge on a guided hike to Eagle Rock Shelter with Colorado Canyons Association! For ages 6 and up.  
Saturday, June 17 @ 8am  
Registration is required. Register online at [deltalibraries.org](http://deltalibraries.org)!

**Kindness is My Superpower**  
Hear a wonderful story about kindness and make your very own superhero cape! Presented by Peer Kindness.  
Cedaredge Library Tuesday, July 25 @ 10:30am  
Crawford Library Tuesday, July 25 @ 2pm  
Hotchkiss Library Wednesday, July 26 @ 2pm  
Delta Library Thursday, July 27 @ 10:30am  
Paonia Library Thursday, July 27 @ 2pm

**Change the World Writing Contest**  
Write a story about what you would do to make the world a better place if you were in charge. Winning entries will be published in the August issue of the High Country Spotlight! Submissions must be made online at [deltalibraries.org](http://deltalibraries.org) by Friday, June 30, 2023.

## Eat Local This summer food season should be Amazing!



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**Recycle Your Greeting Cards!**  
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# Paradise Found:

## A Monthly Paradise Theatre Arts & Events Column

By Executive Artistic Director  
Michael Cooper

### June is Pride Month and Paonia, and the Paradise, is Participating

At the end of every episode of her Emmy-award winning reality TV series, *RuPaul's Drag Race*, wise mother of modern drag, Mama Ru declares: "If you can't love yourself, how in the hell you gonna love somebody else? Can I get an amen?"

June is LGBTQIA+ Heritage Month and we are coloring the town with love, love, love! All are welcome at the Paradise Theatre as we celebrate Paonia Pride with a rich assortment of community collaborations, original programming, and late-night events.

We kick things off with our Senior Film Series (the second Thursday of every month) on June 8<sup>th</sup> at 10am with a FREE screening of *Grumpy Old Men*, featuring iconic performances by Walter Matthau, Jack Lemmon, and the one and only Ann-Margaret.

Would these Grumpy Old Men approve of our weird, wondrous, and risqué evening for adults *Cirque Eccentric: After Dark?* Enter the night... and find out for yourself! The circus comes to town on Saturday, June 10<sup>th</sup> at 9pm (doors open at 8:30pm). Curated by Paonia's Queen of performance art, Gale Force, and featuring a diverse assortment of burlesque, circus, and drag acts from near and far, *After Dark* has so many surprises in store for North Fork Valley

audiences. With freshly spun cotton candy, mouthwatering craft cocktails, and eye-popping, heart-pounding performances, this immersive event is sure to push buttons and boundaries.

The following week, on Tuesday, June 13<sup>th</sup> at 8pm, go "beyond" as we welcome New York City Queer comedy royalty to our stage. Writer/producer/and podcast creators Mike Kelton and Tracy Soren join renowned medium Asa Hoffman in the first production of our 2023 Goode Family Live Theatre Season: *Spirits Calling: Cocktails. Comedy. Psychic Connections*. Exploring what it means to be psychic, Asa and Mike will take questions from the audience and reach across the veil to contact those on the other side (all the while sharing a few martinis!). This FREE event is sponsored by Wisheart Springs Inn.

Our popular Celebrate Heritage Month Film Series (co-presented by KVNF and The Learning Council, with donations benefiting DC Cares) continues Thursday, June 15<sup>th</sup> at 7pm with the landmark documentary film, *Paris Is Burning*, profiling trans and queer stories from the ballroom culture of the early 1980s. Next, we'll boogie into Pride weekend (June 16-18) with more glittering performances, a pink unicorn, DJ Dance party, Sunday tea, and community open house. Full slate of programming to be announced soon – keep an eye on our website for more details.

The Paradise is alive and bustling with events as we head into summer. And this is only the beginning. With your continued love and support, everything is possible.

*Can I get an amen?*



# North Fork Senior Connections

## Service Saturday Helpers Came From All Ages

### Too Old? Too Young? Too Busy?

by Laura Lee Yates for North Fork Senior Connections

Someday, if the Fates allow, you, too, will become an elder, when those little household tasks become more challenging, whether it's climbing a ladder to clean your home's gutters, keeping the rampant spring vegetation under control, or gearing up the swamp cooler for a long hot summer. Be glad you live in the North Fork Valley, where volunteers of all ages make the journey a little easier.

In earlier years North Fork Senior Connections organized spring and fall Service Saturdays to prepare older residents for the change in seasons. Now it's called Days of Service, with the wonderful students from the Paonia Experiential Leadership Academy and a few adults supplying the people-power for Friday—this year on May 5. The following morning, residents

flowerbeds. Too young? One volunteer hasn't started school yet, but already he's learned the satisfaction that comes from helping those in need. Too busy? Somehow Paonia Town Trustee Paige Smith (pictured below) found the time to rake leaves and wash windows for elder community members. This year, new volunteer Shaun Farris joined the swamp cooler squad to keep older adults from sweltering in the summer heat to come. Computer whiz and North Fork Senior Connections Board member Brad Thacker headed up a small team of those comfortable on ladders who cleared gutters, preparing for the summer monsoons. Meanwhile, others had baked snacks to fuel the more able-bodied.

This year Crawford will have a Service Saturday of its own, scheduled



for June 17, and there are plans afoot for aiding folks on the mesas above Hotchkiss. You can still make a difference in the lives of community elders—volunteer now!

*North Fork Senior Connections is a 501(c)3 non-profit with the goal of finding local solutions to enable senior neighbors to age in place. People interested in becoming members or volunteers are encouraged to call (970) 527-3482 or visit our website: <https://nfseniorconnections.helpfulvillage.com/>*

of all ages came together on Saturday, May 6.

Maybe you think you're too old to help others—but we had volunteers in their 80s like local architect and realtor Bob McHugh pruning bushes and preparing

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**Local Economics 101**

It's easy to say "Shop Local" but harder to do it with all of the temptations of the Internet and out-of-Valley big box stores, but we at the Herald, and local businesses, thank you for considering them first.

Local businesses provide local jobs and pay and collect local taxes that funds infrastructure and services in your community. And every dollar you spend locally has the potential of circulating up to seven times within the local economy.

# Blue Sage Center for the Arts:

(Submitted)

## Sage Alley Music, Hazel Miller, Paonia Players, and a Modern Cheyenne Artist

“June suns, you cannot store them.”  
— A.E. Housman

Greetings to our community. We hope that these long and ever warming days find you well! Thank you for reading and seeing what **The Blue Sage** has in store for you for the month of **June**. We are pleased to invite you this month to stop in and check out the amazing art in our gallery, and of course are hoping you might want to join us in enjoying some tunes together.

First and foremost, **HAPPY HOURS!!** Every **Friday from 5-7** join us out back in **Sage Alley** for awesome music! We will have the bar open and of course great music performed live. It's such a cool shady space back there and getting better all the time! (Thank you by the way to those who have donated to help make a permanent structure in Sage Alley! Off-site construction is underway!) Our **INCREDIBLE Friday Happy Hour June Line-up** is as follows: **6/2- John Hutchison; 6/9- Bell Creek Band; 6/16- Dean Bonzani; 6/23- The River Arkansas & 6/30- ISO.** We sure are grateful to have so much talent grace our stage. Please consider bringing cash to these events both for the bar and to tip musicians.

Raise your hand if you've had the privilege of ever seeing **Hazel Miller and the Collective** perform. Anybody? If you have, then we know we will definitely be seeing you at **Azura Cellars and Gallery on June 24th at 7** for an encore performance. They are SO much fun and put on a phenomenal show! If you haven't had the pleasure of knowing Hazel Miller's work, read on to learn a bit more info about her. From her website: “*Colorado-based music icon Hazel Miller has a reputation for “Bringing it” whether the event is a club setting, concert, festival, or non-profit fundraiser. Hazel has toured North America, Europe, the Far East, the Middle East, and Central America. Her powerful voice stands out*

*and her beautiful spirit shines through to the delight of her loyal fans. One of the tightest and most versatile bands on the scene, with Hazel Miller and The Collective, you get original jazz, blues, R&B, and popular music, each song with the band's own flavor! Guaranteed to rock the house! Count on an exciting evening that you won't forget.”* Thank you to Azura for hosting this one! We are so excited to spread our blankets, open a bottle of wine, and enjoy your breathtaking views. Come join us! Tickets for this show can be found on our website, **bluesage.org**. You can always stop in to buy tickets too!

**Paonia Players** will be hosting a **Musical Theatre Choir Intensive** from **June 19 thru the 23 from 10 to 2** at the Blue Sage. The workshop is for students ages 8 to 15. Students can register through the Blue Sage Website or by calling 970-527-724. Scholarships are available. To find out more give us a call.

Then, in our **gallery** this month we are hosting Cheyenne artist and descendant of the Sand Creek Massacre survivors, **George Levi**. Learn more about his story and the story of his peoples through his exhibit. George will also be giving an artist talk and running a workshop on ledge art at some point in June, so stay tuned for those exact dates.

Lastly, we have some exciting news to announce! The Blue Sage Center for the Arts is one of ten venues around Colorado selected so far to host Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street in collaboration with Colorado Humanities touring exhibit, “*Crossroads- Change in Rural America.*” This exhibit tours Colorado August 2023 through December 2024, and is designed for small-town museums, libraries, and cultural organizations to serve as a community meeting place to explore how rural communities have changed and are changing. The program's goal, is to “raise people's understanding of their own history, to highlight the joys and changes of living in a rural area, and to discuss how change has impacted their community.” The Blue Sage will be hosting this exhibit from June 17th until July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Keep your ear out for more info as this unfolds, and please also reach out if you may be interested in volunteering.

Thank you so much for your support, and we hope that you thoroughly enjoy these lovely and fleeting June days. There's no storing them, but we can definitely appreciate them to their fullest. We hope to see you through our gallery doors soon or perhaps one of these warm nights for some live music!



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# Creamery Arts Center Creamery Kicks Off Capital Campaign + Free Range Comedy

By Thomas Wills

In May the Creamery Arts Center announced that it was kicking off a capital campaign to fund a range of needed improvements and sustaining actions at the facility. The fundraising is being done through an on-line platform called GiveButter.com/support-the-creamery. During the first week of the effort over \$1,000 was raised. Join in and contribute to Hotchkiss' arts anchor.

A live music offering this month will be the pairing of well known local musicians Paul Frazier and Ellen Stapenhorst on Saturday June 10 at 7 p.m.

Summer break Kids' Pottery and Art Classes will begin on June 14. Call Suki Strong for more information on the Creamery at 970-872-4848..

A new, exciting, and very entertaining monthly event happening on the last Tuesday of the month is Free Range Comedy, a presentation of improvised funny business from a local

talented troupe. The June performance will be on June 27 beginning at 7 pm. .

The June gallery show will feature the work of local potters and coming up in July will be the annual Delta Fine Arts judged show.

Creamery director and host of the Wednesday night open mic sessions, Rich Powell, reports that that the events have been very successful lately. He notes that over thirty people attend regularly including a dozen or more performers. Come and enjoy an evening of neighbors sharing talents.

Also in June, after debuting May 27, the **Saturday Farmers and Artisans Market** will return in Creamery Park. The contact for that event is Ann Ziemer of Immunity Farms.

And, of course, the Creamery is the place to get your Third Bowl Ice Cream cone. Take an ice cream break on the patio as the Valley summer finally emerges.

Creamery hours are 11-6 Wed.-Friday and 10-3 on Saturdays.

More info at [www.creameryartscenter.org](http://www.creameryartscenter.org)



## The Paradise Theatre

**Color the town. Love is Love. All Are Welcome Here. Celebrate Paonia Pride - only at the Paradise Theatre!**

**Thursday, June 8 @ 10am**

**FREE Senior Film Series: Grumpy Old Men**

**Saturday, June 10 @ 8:30pm doors / 9:00pm show**

**Cirque Eccentric: After Dark**

**Weird. Wondrous. Risqué. Adults Only!**

**\$35 - tickets available online**

**Tuesday, June 13 @ 8pm**

**Spirits Calling: Cocktails. Comedy. Psychic Connections.**

**Feat. Medium Asa Hoffman and Comedian Mike Kelton**

**Are you psychic? Do you want to connect to the other side? Join us!**

**Sponsored by Wisehart Springs Inn • FREE!**

**Thursday, June 15 @ 7pm**

**Celebrate LGBTQIA+ Heritage Month**

**Paris Is Burning - Documentary profiling NYC ballroom culture in the 1980s**

**Co-produced with KVN and The Learning Council**

**By suggested donation, with proceeds benefiting DC Cares**

**Friday, June 16 - Sunday June 18**

**Queer performances. Drag Queens. DJ Dance Party. Sunday Tea.**

**Come on. Vogue!**

**We've got all kinds of fabulous surprises in store - full programming TBA!**

**Monday, June 19 @ 7pm**

**Cult Classic Horror Night + Trivia w/Disposable Cinema**

**The House On Haunted Hill • \$12**

**Saturday, June 24 @ 7pm**

**FREE Community Retro Film Series**

**A League of Their Own**

**Sponsored by Indigo Autumn!**

**To purchase tickets and more info,**

**please visit**

**[paradisepaonia.com](http://paradisepaonia.com)**



# Hotchkiss Crawford Historical Society/Museum :

## June : Local Authors Honored Victor M. Haglund Jr. 1947-1969

By Thomas Wills

May was the month where the Historical Society celebrated the incorporation of the Town of Hotchkiss in May 1900, just a few months after the passing of namesake Enos Throop Hotchkiss. Architect Bob McHugh gave a well-appreciated presentation about the early years of the town.

HCHS also joined in on the celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Hotchkiss Sheep Camp Stock Dog Trials held May 12-14 on the historic Hotchkiss homestead and Centennial Ranch lands near the downtown. The museum had an open house and outdoor yard sale of donated items from supporters.

The society will have a booth in the park and will be

selling local and regional new history books from the museum bookstore at Crawford Pioneer Days on Saturday, June 10.

There is a new exhibit dedicated to the history of Needlerock. The display includes a pair of boots loaned by Bill Housewart that were worn by an early climber of the formation. A group that included son, Ira Housewart, summited and placed a flag atop Needlerock in 2022.

### Local Authors Honored

The HCHS reminds everyone that “In June, the Society is focusing on “A Local Authors Kind of Place” consistent with the pursuit of understanding what’s meant by the theme, “A Sense of Place”. In lieu of a program featuring the works of local authors and local history, Mary Jacobs and her Museum Bookstore team will be offering a selection of books for purchase at the annual Crawford Pioneer Days festivities on Saturday June 10 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Many books that deal with North Fork and Smith Fork people and events are always available at the Museum as well, and folks are encouraged to settle in with a good book to fill the dog days of summer!”

### Victor M. Haglund Jr.

Correction: The young man who was killed in Vietnam, reportedly the Valley’s only casualty of that war, was Victor M. Haglund, 22, of Fruitland Mesa. His name was misspelled in the May HCHS column in the Herald. He will be honored at a May 29 Memorial Day ceremony at the Hotchkiss Crawford Museum. Haglund was an only child and a sad loss to his parents and the community according to Elaine (George) Violet

who grew up as a neighbor to the Haglunds.

Victor, born May 13, 1947, died of drowning in Vietnam - Quang Ngai province, in November of 1969. He was a Private First Class infantryman in the US Army. He had been in country about three months at the time of his death. He is interred in the Garden of Memories cemetery at Crawford. Plot E-South-13.



His parents Victor Milford Haglund Sr. (89) and Addie E. Haglund (90) passed away in 1989 and 1996 respectively and are also at the Garden of Memories.

Diann Pipher Ritschard recalls: “Victor lived with us (Pipher family) on Crystal Creek during the summers when he was in high school. He worked

in our sawmill, as we all did. He was always smiling, always happy. Except when he rolled Dad’s old Army 4x4 coming off Black Mesa. The truck would hardly steer at all. We loved him. Some of us believe he stayed at our log house for many years after his untimely death in Vietnam.”

Donald Briggs of Crawford recalls Victor Jr. as a friend of his older brother.

Another woman remembers Victor’s kindness when they rode the school bus together.

Since Crawford High School closed in 1962, Victor attended Hotchkiss High School.

## Mini- Editorial: Valley of Many Ponto of View

Opinion by Thomas Wills - Editor

I attended the Hotchkiss United Methodist Church for the first time in a while on May 21 and, after being charmed by the low key, non-partisan message, I thought about how divided we have become as a Nation, State, County, and community. I also thought about how, although we seem to be pressured to adopt

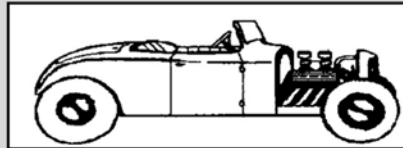
the general platform of Party A or Party B, most people, in my experience, don’t fit neatly into the dogma of either just like most Christians don’t check every box for their chosen denomination.

Blind partisanship is silly since most of us hold a wide variety of views on a wide range of subjects and if we become too partisan and intolerant we imprison a part of our rational selves. Let’s not do that.

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# North Fork Chamber of Commerce 2023 Membership at Healthy Level Zoey Duncan Wins Scholarship

By Thomas Wills

The Hotchkiss Community Chamber of Commerce, now also doing business as the North Fork Valley Chamber of Commerce, reports that two new board members have been added to the Chamber as of the April 20 meeting. They are Alex Liggett Lammers of Lammers Insurance and her husband, James Lammers of Region 10. Director Leigh Ann Hoyt was previously appointed to replace out-going Director Lenore Cambria but the Chamber is still seeking one additional board member from both Paonia and Crawford, one of which will replace Hoyt who serves as Chamber Administrator and Membership Director. Chamber Treasurer Terry O'Brien also serves as unpaid volunteer Executive Director. Other Directors are Kim Shay – President, and Ann Ziemers – Secretary.

O'Brien reports that Chamber membership is about 80% of the 2022 membership, a healthy level for this time in the year. 15 new members have joined the re-named, re-visioned Chamber in 2023.

The Chamber has announced that North Fork High School senior Zoey Duncan was the winner of the \$10,000 Colorado Grand scholarship for 2023. The scholarship is one part of several benefits the Valley and Chamber received for hosting the Colorado Grand vintage sports car rally lunch stop at the Delta County Fairgrounds in Hotchkiss in September of 2023 as they have done many years for several decades. The Grand also offers grant opportunities to local

non-profits as well as contributing to Chamber coffers.

It was also reported that the Chamber has now posted a comprehensive list of North Fork Valley events for 2023 on their northforkvalley.net website, which also features visitors' information and useful links. O'Brien and the Chamber also produces a weekly e-mail news blast each Thursday with current event information and other news and things shared by Chamber members.

The Chamber held a ribbon cutting ceremony for Atlas Rentals in Hotchkiss during their Grand Opening on May 12. Atlas Rentals was formerly North Fork Rentals and Hotchkiss Rentals and is now under new ownership. Atlas celebrated their grand opening by offering food and refreshment over Mother's Day weekend.

At the April 20 meeting the Chamber approved a donation of up to \$500 to support the Delta County Fair in August. Sponsorships of \$400 were also approved in advance for Paonia Cherry Days and Paonia Mountain Harvest Festival.

It was announced that the informal merchant meetings would start up again after a hiatus in the outdoor space by Gambles/Ace.

At their May 18 meeting, the Chamber board considered a range of topics including a proposal to establish and encourage a series of Business After Hours events to highlight Chamber members, the status of Chamber communications with members and the public, and a presentation on liability insurance for the Chamber.

## THE HOTCHKISS BOOKMAN Another Imperfect Summer Begins

By Tom Wills - Wills' Gallery and Used Books - 229 West Bridge St. - Hotchkiss - 970-872-2664

One of these summers those of us who depend a lot on people travelling through to stop for a moment may have a perfect season. It has happened very rarely over the last three decades. Last year it was CDOT tearing up the street in downtown Hotchkiss. This year the season begins with Highway 133, our route to and from the Roaring Fork and Interstate 70, getting washed out during the beginning of the snowmelt runoff season.

The closure affected a lot of businesses in the North Fork, including the bookstore, along with the good number of people who live in the Valley but travel to the Roaring Fork and Aspen areas. Adding two hours to the trip has been kind of a big deal and what has been steady, casual through traffic has slowed to a trickle. Other businesses in the Valley, including some farms that offer early season things and experience say they

are seeing a hit of up to a negative 50% off, a reminder of how vital all of those visitors and tourists are to a good segment of the North Fork economy.

Meanwhile in the bookstore, new books continue to flow in at a good rate averaging over a good sized boxful a day. Thanks to everyone who donates books as a way to support the shop as well as the newspaper. Two businesses I wouldn't suggest anyone enter with an expectation of making a lot of money.

The bookstore stock, of about 17,000 volumes, is really good right now although we could use more in the way of very current fiction. Exceptional areas include the Western and Regional History section as well as Farming and Gardening.

Another thing you'll notice if you stop by is that there is a lot more of my art on the walls, from pretty large piece to very small, miniature ones.

Favorite reading lately includes: Louise Penny, Richard Russo, and a funny, debut sci-fi book by Hank Green - *An Absolutely Remarkable Thing*.



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## Health Challenged Should Still Mask Up in Public Spaces

More infectious COVID variants are present. The CDC and State and local health departments recommend that get your vaccine shot, and that you wear a good mask (N95 or KN95 are best) in indoor public spaces if you are infected, health challenged, or otherwise vulnerable. Good masks, worn properly work dramatically in protecting from,, and slowing the spread of COVID, flus and more. Stay safe with precautions.



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# Changes at the North Fork Pool, Park and Recreation District

*Hotchkiss, Colorado –  
(Press Release)*

As the North Fork Pool, Park and Recreation District bids farewell to two key players, we look back on a series of accomplishments providing our communities with recreational opportunities. Sara Sharer, our Board President, was appointed to fill a Board seat in September of 2015. She was subsequently elected to two full terms and was term-limited in 2023. NFPPRD Board members serve on a volunteer basis. Sara’s contributions to the decade of growth in the District were very impactful and she will be missed.

Our District Administrator, Lenore Cambria, was hired in June 2015 and is retiring this year. The District’s Board and leadership with District Administrator, Lenore Cambria, and in collaboration with local and state partnerships, have impressive accomplishments to celebrate. Across the District we’ve worked to create spaces to recreate: completing a long-dreamt-of million-dollar ballfield complex in partnership with Hotchkiss Homeplate; building almost 5 miles of bike trails, a bicycle pump-track and skills course in partnership with the Nature Connection; resurfacing the tennis courts in Apple Valley, adding lines for Pickleball as well, providing new nets for tennis and nets and equipment for Pickleball; upgrading and maintaining the skatepark in collaboration with the Town of Paonia; and providing pickleball equipment for the Town of Crawford in partnership with Crawford pickleball players.

On the Program side, we hired a Program Coordinator, Max Heepke, who stepped up to take over the Youth Soccer program from decades-long Board Members/volunteers Esther Koontz and Elaine Wood. The Hotchkiss Youth Soccer Association requested this transition and has been very helpful in making it smooth. With the addition of this position, the NFPPRD will be able to create and manage events and programs with community partners.

Thanks to you, the voters, the Mill-Levy was increased and NFPPRD weathered the COVID-19 Pandemic providing as many services as possible to keep you all outdoors and healthy. As a Board, our intention is to keep the good times rolling and at the same time maintain our beautiful, but sometimes aging facilities, such as our crown jewel, the North Fork Pool.

Looking back at her time as District Administrator, Lenore Cambria reflected: “I have been very fortunate to work with such a progressive Board of Directors who made it possible to expand our facilities. Without their vision and willingness to say yes to our constituents, we couldn’t have accomplished as much as we did. I fully expect that our Board will continue with that philosophy and drive”. The Board now consists of: Rebecca Ela, Board President; Sven Edstrom, Vice President; Michelle Pagone, Secretary; Daniel Ihnot, Treasurer; and Scott

Shishim, Board Member.

### The Future

As the NFPPRD moves forward, we welcome a new District Administrator, Stephanie Bureau, who comes to us with years of management experience, passion for our outdoor recreation goals, a team-building philosophy, and a great smile! We also welcome our new Board member from Paonia, SK Bikes owner Scott Shishim. Additionally, we are working with a new 10-year Action Plan with a focus on maintaining and maximizing use of existing NFPPRD outdoor spaces, studying the feasibility of expanding our borders and facilities, upgrading the pool facility, keeping our partnerships strong and collaborative to facilitate recreation opportunities, expanding district staff to foster recreation programming and access for all community members,

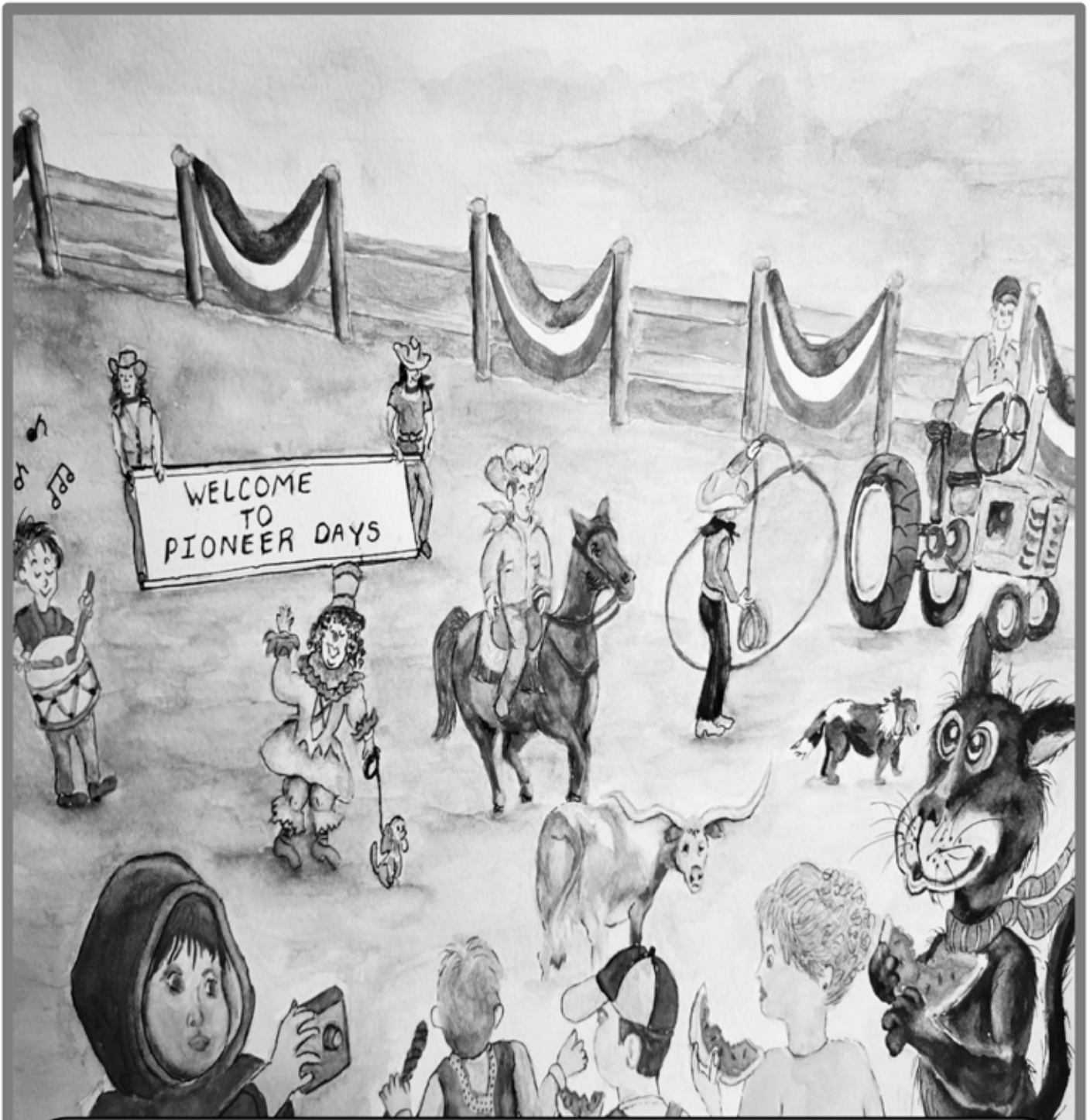
and getting the word out about what the NFPPRD offers.

From our outgoing team members:

“Now that NFPPRD path forward has renewed focus, it seems fitting that the organization is also entering a new chapter. We say goodbye to our 8-year-tenure District Administrator, Lenore Cambria, and welcome incoming Administrator Stephanie Bureau. My term on the board is up and new Board member Scott Shishim will join Sven Edstrom, Becky Ela, Michelle Pagone and Dan Ihnot to continue this important work. It has been a privilege to serve this outstanding organization with an active, inspiring Board and talented staff who are all committed to getting outside and enjoying life. Get out and play!” --Sara Sharer

“I have really enjoyed my relationships, partnerships, and collaborations with various people, entities and organizations throughout my tenure as District Administrator. Thanks to all of you who have made our facilities so wonderful! Special thanks to our Board and staff including Chris Straub, Max Heepke, Mary Smith, Niki Richardson, Glenda Young, and the many Lifeguards and Water Safety Instructors over the years. I wish the Rec District the very best in the future. I know all involved have great intentions and their hearts in the right place”.  
--Lenore Cambria

For more information about current activities, summer pool schedule, and other Rec District updates, please visit <https://www.northforkrecreation.com>.



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**The Learning Council  
Struggles for Local  
Inclusiveness  
Continued from page 12**

Tracy Gallegos, Mesa County school district director of equity and inclusion and former president of the MRC, feels a sense of urgency as a parent and educator. “I am very concerned about our young people. It has to be a priority in this community to influence people in positions of power to make a safer community,” he implored during Wednesday’s community conversation. “Our kids need it.”

A small symbol of support can go a long way. “Expression equals resilience. Pride is a tool used to shed shame built over decades of isolation and false narratives,” said [Manny Cisneros](#), LGBTQ+ engagement coordinator with a Grand Junction program (Karis Inc.) that provides support to unhoused youth. LGBTQ+ youth are far more likely to attempt suicide than their straight peers. During the conversation, Cisneros shared a new report from the Trevor Project that found a single accepting adult in a young person’s life can make them 40% less likely to attempt suicide. “Just ONE trustworthy adult!” he said, “The flag is a literal symbol of trustworthiness.”

Delta citizens haven’t had a great track record of supporting their queer neighbors. A recent string of letters and an [op-ed](#) in The Delta County Independent have made discriminatory statements about including LGBTQ+ history in the school district’s curriculum, and have repeated slanderous language about the queer community. Letter writers have called LGBTQ+ people “[perverts](#),” “[deviants](#)” and part of a “fringe society.” This is despite the Independent’s own editorial policy of not allowing letters that attack other citizens.

**TO MAKE ALL DELTA COUNTY** residents feel safe, further restorative justice was needed. Wednesday’s community conversation was a hopeful step. Noticeably absent was the IAWC, who is no longer associated with the Fort or the City of Delta. Regardless of their refusal to participate, Casselberry moved forward with the effort.

Casselberry mandated a Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) training for all City of Delta staff. The training was offered before the community conversation and facilitated by Milagros Barsallo Rubio and [Celesté Martinez](#). About 120 people attended, including representatives from the Migrant Rural Coalition and The Learning Council. Andi Tillman, founder and director of Loving Beyond Understanding, Inc. and Gertie Breffle, a local therapist, facilitated the community

conversation that followed.

The training fits in the city council’s 2021-2022 strategic plan. The council’s [goal](#) included starting a Diversity Committee to better serve residents and to celebrate the diversity of their employees and community. “Just like we do training on safety,

**TLC’s rainbow windsock — it was never even a flag after all — whipped in the breeze. That small windsock, and the controversy around it, fast-tracked the city’s diversity goals.**

on cybersecurity, [we need to be] understanding the diversity of our community and making sure we’re providing services that meet the needs of all our community members.” Casselberry said. “There’s a lot of

pride in the work that we do, but there’s always room for improvement. We can’t figure out how we can improve if we’re not talking about it.”

Casselberry’s next step is providing city communications in Spanish. The city also collaborated with the MRC to organize a Cinco de Mayo celebration in Delta.

**IN LATE SEPTEMBER 2021** when Mexican Heritage Days was held, the wind blew strong across the adobes. Participants held down their canvas tents and wrapped up signs before they could blow away, but the band Los Integrantes Del Norte played on, dancers circled the floor, and TLC’s rainbow windsock — it was never even a flag after all — whipped in the breeze. That small windsock, and the controversy around

it, fast-tracked the city’s diversity goals. “See how powerful that little symbol is?” Tillman exclaimed as the conversation wound up at Bill Heddles Rec. Center this Wednesday.

The community conversation, which, unlike the JEDI training, was not mandatory, was a smaller scene of a dozen attendees sitting together in a circle. It was less an outreach event and more a “meeting of the minds” as one participant said. Cisneros suggested holding conversations on a regular basis. He said it’s important for people to know it’s there, “Even if two people show up.” Alicia Michelsen, director of The Learning Council agreed, saying “There is still another step to take with getting the conversation out further, but this is where it starts.”

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**Another Month - Continued from Page 4**

area. Jacobson was a well known Paonia peach-grower.

**The Hotchkiss Shortstop** inside convenience store has remained closed offering pump card-only sales during April and May after the sad passing of manager, Omar Merlos, whose family owns the property. At the end of April the pumps were all blocked and the handle's bagged awaiting some sort of next chapter for the business. The pumps were back in service as of May 11 and the store has been open off and on. The Stop and Save gas station/convenience store in Hotchkiss has some long lines at times.

We hear that the **building that is being extensively remodeled on the west side of the 100 block of Grand Ave. in Paonia** will become a wine bar along with other cool uses. Stay tuned.

At the moment **Downtown parking** is probably more of an issue in Paonia than it is in Hotchkiss but does present an example for its fellow Valley small town that is now discussing the subject. Large cities are

actually reducing/rethinking off-street parking minimum requirements for new business since resident car use is much less and public transit easier than here.

**The Memorial Hall re-roofing project** was completed during early to mid-May. The roof was stripped right down to the deck and redone in new asphalt shingles.

There looks to be work happening at the building next door to the **Coal Train Coffeehouse** in Hotchkiss where the **new American restaurant (steaks, sliders etc.)** is going in.

But, there doesn't seem to be activity yet across the street from my bookstore in Hotchkiss at the old public works building where a **winery/cidery and new apartments** are proposed.

**The Hotchkiss Creamery Saturday Market** began on May 27 and will be happening each Saturday through the summer next to the Creamery Arts Center.

**North Fork Realty Realty**

**Have Property Assessment Sticker Shock? You're Not Alone.**

By Mike Jackson – westerncoloradorealty.com Offices in Hotchkiss and Paonia

Did you hear it? It was like a sonic boom across the valley, throughout the county, and across the state. Had it been an actual explosion, I wouldn't be here to write about it, nor you to read. What was it? It was the sound of people opening their new property assessments and having their heads explode, sending out shockwaves that even penetrated the gold dome of the state capitol. In a way, it shouldn't have come as a surprise to anyone because it's been evident to all that real estate values shot up over the past couple of years. I have fielded a number of calls from shocked homeowners asking my opinion of their new valuation and, with a couple of exceptions, the numbers are still below what the property could be expected to actually sell for.



After looking at some of the new assessed amounts, I think the huge jump in values is partly because most places were previously under-valued. There's a new sheriff in town, well... a new assessor actually, Jolene George, who took the

lead from her long-time predecessor, Debbie Griffith, at the beginning of this year. The resulting double-whammy has pushed up total residential valuation in the county to \$3,364,106,646 from \$2,340,953,709, a 30% jump. If you feel like there's no way that your home is worth what the county says it is, you have until June 8th to register an appeal with the assessor's office. Meanwhile there will be a measure on the November ballot that, if passed, will provide some relief - but not for everyone. While it's nice to see the value of our homes increase, there's a painful flipside to it also.

Now that it's *finally* stopped snowing, we're seeing a real uptick in home sales around the North Fork following a very slow start to the year although having Hwy 133 closed has led to a number of canceled visits by would-be buyers.

**C o u n t y w i d e** residential property sales volume through April was \$41.5 million, just half the volume for the same period last year, but prices are holding firm. Despite mortgage rates over 6% and sagging sales volume, so far prices have held steady. Sure, some places are selling at a steep discount from the original asking price, but many of those prices were set based on expectations from "the boom times". The current market calls for a more sober, realistic approach to pricing.

The supply / demand ratio continues to support a seller's market, but the financial realities of affordability for buyers will likely keep appreciation in check this year.

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**4 BDRM, 4 BA, 3500 SQ FT HOME** w/ just under 1 acre of land. Lamborn Mesa w/ all encompassing views. Fireplaces in living rm and master bdrm create an inviting environment. Master bdrm and bath on the upper floor. 2 car attached garage (20X22) and sep.garage/shop with an unfinished apartment above (28X30), water and electricity to the building. #801843 \$685,000 Bob Pennetta 234-2232

**TWO HOMES ON ADJACENT LOTS** on quiet street in Paonia. 880 sq ft, 2 bdrm straw-bale home built in 2019. Principles of sacred geometry and therapeutic architecture have been combined w/natural materials to create a gem of a home. 2nd 2 bdrm home has been remodeled w/ refinished wood floors, newer windows, updated electrical and heating systems. #803269 \$699,000 Mike Jackson 234-4427

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Let's have a conversation about the challenges and opportunities to keep the North Fork Valley's air, water and foodsheds from irreparable harm. A bit of history first and how to pave the new road ahead. New residents encouraged to come to meet Citizens for a Healthy Community representatives and neighbors. Everybody welcome. Use outside entrance.

*Light refreshments will be served.*



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## WESTERN SLOPE CONSERVATION CENTER Can A River Get Heartburn ??

By Ralph D'Alessandro  
for Western Slope Conservation Center

This is the last of a series of monthly articles discussing the parameters analyzed by the Western Slope Conservation Center's North Fork Volunteer Water Monitoring project in the waters of the Gunnison River, the North Fork of the Gunnison River and its tributaries.

The team of volunteers collect water samples at 9 sites and conducts laboratory analyses for alkalinity. But what is alkalinity and why is it an important characteristic of our rivers and their tributaries? Much like a person who has heartburn or indigestion, which is a chemical imbalance of too much acid in the digestive system, rivers and tributaries can experience a similar issue if the water chemistry becomes too acidic. This can be harmful to riparian vegetation, fish

and aquatic life in general. So, to prevent this from occurring, alkalinity is monitored in our waters to ensure it remains in an optimum range. Whereas a person can take an antacid, such as a bicarbonate, for heartburn, rivers need alkalinity of a certain level to prevent "river heartburn."

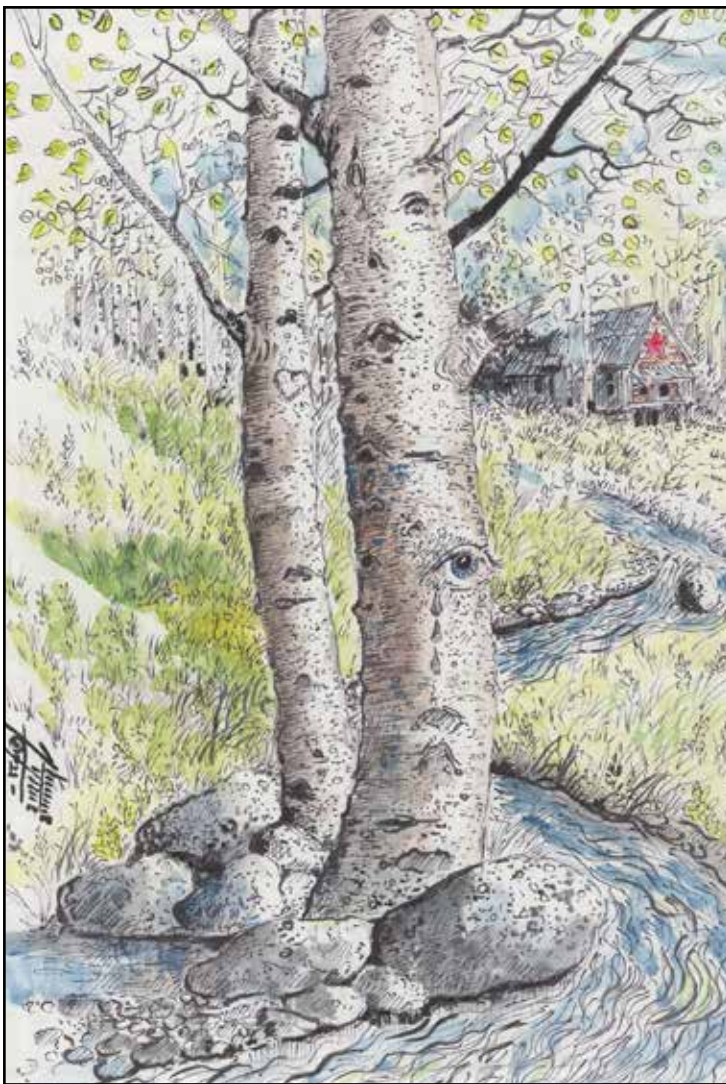
What is alkalinity? Alkalinity refers to the capability of water to neutralize acids. This capacity is caused by the water's content of carbonate [CO<sub>3</sub>(<sup>2-</sup>)], bicarbonate

[HCO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup>], hydroxide [OH<sup>-</sup>] and occasionally borate [any compound containing or supplying B<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>], silicate [ex. a salt containing the anion SiO<sub>4</sub>(<sup>2-</sup>)] and phosphate [ex. a salt or ester containing PO<sub>4</sub>(<sup>3-</sup>)]. This is really an expression of buffering capacity. A buffer is a solution to which an acid can be added without changing the concentration of available hydrogen ions [H<sup>+</sup>] (that is, without changing the pH) appreciably. It essentially absorbs the excess H<sup>+</sup> ions and protects the water body from fluctuations in pH, which is a measure of how acidic or basic a substance or solution is. pH is measured on a scale of 0 to 14 with a pH of 7.0 being neutral. Below 7.0 is acidic and above 7.0 is basic or alkaline

The alkalinity of natural water is influenced by the soil and bedrock through which it passes. The main

sources for natural alkalinity are rocks which contain carbonate, bicarbonate, and hydroxide compounds. Borates, silicates, and phosphates also may contribute to alkalinity. Limestone is rich in carbonates, so waters flowing through limestone regions or bedrock containing carbonates generally have high alkalinity - hence good buffering capacity. Conversely, areas rich in granites and some conglomerates and sandstones may have low alkalinity and, therefore, poor buffering capacity. Alkalinity will vary seasonally, impacted by precipitation, being lower in periods of runoff due to dilution and higher in periods of low flow. It also mitigates metals toxicity by carbonate and bicarbonate by taking metals out of solution and making them unavailable for fish.

How does alkalinity affect aquatic life? Alkalinity is important for fish and aquatic life because it



protects or buffers against rapid pH changes. Living organisms, especially aquatic life, function best in a pH range of 6.0 to 9.0. The North Fork and its tributaries are consistently within this optimal range. Alkalinity is a measure of how much acid can be added to a liquid without causing a large change in pH. Higher alkalinity levels in surface waters will buffer acid rain and other acid wastes and prevent pH changes that are harmful to aquatic life.

Acid shock may occur in the spring when naturally acidic snows melt, or from large rainfall events, natural discharges of tannic waters, and when other wet or dry discharges enter a stream. If increasing amounts of acids are added to a body of water, the water's buffering capacity is consumed. If additional buffering material can

## Nonprofit Summit on Western Slope Aims to Address Local Challenges and Provide Support

(Press Release - Community Resource Center)

Rifle, CO – In the aftermath of a year where roughly 50 million Americans quit their jobs, the challenges faced by nonprofits, often with tighter budgets, less staff, and increased workloads, have only compounded. Nonprofits across the Western Slope are not immune to these challenges and need support to develop effective solutions.

Along with leaders from the Western Slope, the Community Resource Center will be hosting an in-person event on July 19 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Colorado Mountain College Rifle Campus in western Garfield County called "New Challenges, Stronger Organizations". Community Resource Center (CRC) is a capacity building nonprofit organization that convenes nonprofits across the state of Colorado and runs the Rural Action Network™, a program that fosters regional collaboration and organizes Regional Leadership Committees (RLCs), which host events for nonprofit professionals to help strengthen organizations and tackle unique regional issues.

The event will provide

nonprofits across the region a space to discuss important trends in the Western Slope nonprofit sector, hear from and connect with nonprofit and foundation leaders addressing these challenges, and learn about tools and skills to support their critical missions. Sessions will be led by nonprofit leaders, foundation representatives, and CRC staff. Workshop topics will include approaches to staff retention, resource development, resource sharing, and collaboration.

"We will provide the tools and resources that nonprofit staff can use in real-time," says Jeff Corn, Chair of the Western Slope RLC, and Eagle County Public Health and Environment employee. "Attendees will walk out of this event with new and valuable approaches to today's challenges in the Colorado nonprofit sector."

Performance artist Merrily Talbott will bring her talents to the day by involving attendees in interactive exercises designed to enhance focus and encourage participation. Meals and snacks are provided to all who register for the event.

For more information, click here, or contact Lisa Duran at [lisa.duran@crcamerica.org](mailto:lisa.duran@crcamerica.org).

be obtained from surrounding soils and rocks, the alkalinity level may eventually be restored. However, a temporary loss of buffering capacity can permit pH levels to drop to those harmful to life in the water.

The pH of water does not decrease evenly as acid contamination proceeds. The natural buffering materials in water slow the decline of pH to around 6.0. This gradual decline is followed by a rapid pH drop as the bicarbonate buffering capacity is used up. At a pH of 5.5, only very weak buffering materials remain and pH drops further with additional acid. Sensitive species and immature animals are affected first. As food species disappear, even larger, acid resistant animals are affected.

For the protection of aquatic life, the buffering capacity should be at least 20 milligrams per liter (20 mg/L). If alkalinity is naturally low, (less than 20 mg/L) there can be no greater than a 25% reduction in alkalinity if the aquatic life is to be protected.

pH is another of the parameters that the North Fork Volunteering Monitoring Project measures each time it collects its water samples. pH is really a measure of the relative amount of free hydrogen ions [H<sup>+</sup>] and hydroxyl ions [OH<sup>-</sup>] in the water. Water that has more free hydrogen ions is acidic, whereas water that has more free hydroxyl ions is basic. Since pH can be affected by chemicals in the water, pH is an important indicator of water that is changing chemically. pH is reported in "logarithmic units". Each number represents a 10-fold change in the acidity/basicness of the

water. For example, water with a pH of 5 is ten times more acidic than water having a pH of 6.

pH is an important monitoring parameter because the pH of water determines the solubility (amount that can be dissolved in the water) and biological availability (amount that can be utilized by aquatic life) of chemical constituents such as nutrients (phosphorus, nitrogen, and carbon) and heavy metals (lead, copper, cadmium, etc.). For example, in addition to affecting how much and what form of phosphorus is most abundant in the water, pH also determines whether aquatic life can use it. In the case of heavy metals, the degree to which they are soluble determines their toxicity. Metals tend to be more toxic at lower pH because they are more soluble.

Some examples of substances that are acidic with their pHs are battery acid (1.0), lemon juice (2.0), and vinegar (3.0). In waters between pH 3 and 4 adult fish die and in waters between pH 4 and 5 fish reproduction is negatively affected. Acid rain encompasses pH between about 1 to about 5. Normal rainfall has a pH of about 5.6—slightly acidic due to carbon dioxide gas from the atmosphere. You can see that acid rain can be very acidic, and it can affect the environment in a negative way. For reference, on the other side of neutral pH, baking soda has a pH of about 8.5 and sea water about 9.0. Milk of magnesia has a pH of about 10.5, ammonia about 11 and lye about 12.

Other monitoring parameters will be discussed in future articles.



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# Hotchkiss Handling of Simple “Lot Split” Apparently Violates Subdivision Regulations

By Thomas Wills

**Hotchkiss Planning Commission**  
May 24, 2023

*Present: Chair - Roger Christian, Jeff Rodarte, Mayor Jim Wingfield, John Marta and Sean Cantrell.*

The Hotchkiss Planning Commission, continuing a recent trend of having a meeting on most months, had a public hearing on May 24 for consideration of a plan for a “lot split” of an R-1 zoned field just east of Willow Heights and upper Cedar Drive. The commission recommended approval of the subdivision as presented.

The nine-acre parcel, owned by Karl and Heather Derrah of Hotchkiss, was created by subdivision in 2019, by previous owner, Dan Bolton, under a possible improper use of the “no impact” process. Previously to that the land had been used each summer for temporary grazing of local sheep. In January of 2022 the Town denied allowing cattle grazing of up to 30 cattle on the unfenced parcel. By right they could have had 9 cattle with proper containment. Reducing the parcel to two proposed separate 4.5-acre parcels would make the two new lots fall below the 5-acre minimum threshold for permanently pasturing certain livestock.

The Derrahs plan to build a new home on the southern parcel and sell the upper parcel. Access to the two parcels would be from Cedar Drive (lower) and from Clara Vista (upper) via an easement/right of way.

The owners and residents of the land to the west asked why the terms “right of way” and “nonexclusive easement” were being interchangeably used. They noted that have different legal meanings.

“We’re not lawyers,” Mayor Jim Wingfield said, referred the neighbors to a letter from Town Attorney Bo Nerlin, where the “nonexclusive easement” term was used. Wingfield repeatedly said that the issue of the status of the access was separate from the subdividing of the land. According to Town code that is not the case. The Towns subdivision regulation require any new lot to have a minimum 50-foot frontage onto a dedicated public street. So, the access needs to meet that requirement.

## Analysis: Town Fails to Follow Subdivision Regulations

The land proposed for subdivision was subdivided in May 2019 under the No Impact Subdivision process, which precludes further subdivision unless treated as a major subdivision (*see code citation below*). The proposal should have been treated as at least a minor subdivision with a sketch plan and a final plat with public hearing review of both steps.

One major question that should have been dealt with before or during the process is clarifying the issue of the

right or way/easement and its need to be a *dedicated* public street so that the upper lot can have the required frontage onto such a street. There is also a separate issue of upper Cedar Street being a sort of odd “private drive” as Mayor Wingfield termed it during the hearing. That is something the Town should clean up and formalize as a non-conforming dedicated public street.

There is no such thing as a “lot split” in the subdivision regulation only: Major, minor, boundary adjustments, and no-impact subdivisions. This is apparently, due to the expedited process, a proposal to do an no-impact subdivision on top of previous one although that conflicts both with the code as well as the definition of a no-impact subdivision. If the proposal is being done under the no-impact process then it should have been public noticed as such.

If the Town, representing its citizens, wishes to not follow the Town’s code then variance procedures need to be taken and the code changed.

**From Hotchkiss Subdivision regulations (in definitions): “NO IMPACT SUBDIVISION** - The split of a single parcel of land into two parcels, upon which no development is approved, the use thereof remains unchanged, except for the split into two parcels every other aspect of the land is unchanged, no new town services such as water, sewer or collection of refuse and garbage are requested by the owner of the land or determined by the Town Council to be required and no new, different or additional municipal services are approved. **An approval of a no impact subdivision of a parcel of land shall be subject to the following minimum conditions:**

1. Both parcels must have means of access and utilities service capability by easement or other appropriate documentation, acceptable to the Town Council and satisfying the Town specifications; and

**2. Said parcels may not be further subdivided except through the procedures for a major subdivision.”**

## From Hotchkiss Subdivision Regulations 12:06-2:

“Each lot or lots for a single-family residence shall contain a minimum of 6,250 square feet **and shall have a minimum of 50 feet of linear frontage on a dedicated public street.** For multiple family townhouse planned unit developments the Town Board may waive the required 50 foot frontage on a public street, allowing 50 feet for the first unit and 25 feet for each additional unit, and may consider what minimum lot(s) square footage is appropriate for the particular situation.”

# Third Try at Getting New Paonia Administration Nearing Finish

By Thomas Wills

**Paonia Town Council**  
May 23, 2023

Paonia residents will soon see if the third time is indeed the charm as the Town Council approaches a possible announcement of Town Administrator finalists in the third attempt at going through the advertising and hiring process.

The lengthy meeting began with a now near-traditional bit of procedural chaos. At the May 15 special meeting it was voted to place on the May 23 agenda a discussion of the position of Mayor pro-tem and whether or not Thomas Markle should remain at that position given Markle’s comments as perceived by Trustee Dave Knutson. The item did not appear on the agenda despite to vote to place it there.

The Town Attorney then took the blame for leaving the item off but Markle claimed that Knutson had asked that the item be deleted and protested that one trustee should not be overruling a previous board decision. Then, after a statement from Knutson walking back his May 15 statement somewhat, the council voted to not place the item on the May 23 agenda even as a discussion item. Okay...

## Interim Town Administrator’s Contract Extended

The trustees voted to approve an extension of Interim Town Administrator Leslie Klusmire’s contract to July 31, 2023. Other changes to the contract include allowing Klusmire to work remotely from her San Luis Valley home at her discretion unless the Council determines otherwise. She will also attend meetings virtually via Zoom.

Klusmire has been acting as an independent contractor since November of 2022 when she stepped in to replace Administrator/Town Clerk Corinne Ferguson who resigned before her own contract expired. The Council had decided not to renew Ferguson’s Administrator contract. Ferguson and her family have moved to Arizona.

The Council is in its third try in six months at finding a permanent Town Administrator and are conducting interviews and determining finalists in the latest process. A decision could be made by late June or early July.

The Trustees also considered the temporary appointment of Klusmire as the Town Treasurer replacing Cindy Jones who had also been Finance Officer. A separation agreement between Jones and the Town was approved on May 15. (*See related story on next page*)

## Water Moratorium Report

Engineer Doug Schwenke of RESPEC (formerly JDS Hydro) reported

## Other Items and Discussion

ITA Klusmire noted that the

Town had been paying more of the Town employees’/families health insurance than had been authorized and that need corrected.

There a way long discussion of whether or not the Town should adjust their liquor laws so that NIDO could serve adult beverages at the sidewalk tables. Molehill converted to mountain of opinion. Mayor Bachran noted that, during special events, the Town frequently allows alcohol onto public property, so it wouldn’t be a sea change for Paonia.

ITA Klusmire noted that commercial height and setback requirement seem to be absent from the Town Code. She will write an ordinance to rectify that.

The meeting included yet another hour-long executive session to discuss the process of choosing a new Administrator from the latest batch of candidates.

**Update:** It was noted by Police Chief Matt Laminger on May 9 that Thomas Seeley is the Town’s newest officer having just graduated from the Delta Police Academy and beginning supervised training in Paonia.

## Mosquito Season May be Buzzing This Summer

### Hotchkiss Trustee Wants to Urge Residents to Personal Action

By Thomas Wills

Hotchkiss Town Council member Patrick Webb is passionate about mosquito control, or rather about how mosquito control is done in Hotchkiss. He would like the residents of Hotchkiss and the immediate area to become better educated on how they can personally reduce the seasonal mosquito population and hopefully reduce the need for occasional pesticide spraying by the North Fork Mosquito Abatement District (NFMAD). He has concerns about pesticide application affecting bees and other pollinator insects.

Webb says that the Town has budgeted for purchase of organic larvicides for free distribution to Hotchkiss residents who have a need for it on their properties. One sticking point is setting up a manned distribution of the product this summer. The Town is short of staff or too busy with other things to dedicate large blocks of time to explaining and handing out product and use information and NFMAD has similar issues. It may be possible to have a local downtown business provide the service and that option is being explored. Larvicides for private use may be purchased at local hardware stores as well.

Currently NFMAD has begun their extensive seasonal larvicide program that involves treating ponds, boggy areas, and areas that are prone to off and on water inundation such as municipal storm drains. The main larvicide used is an organic product called BTI that consists of a bacterium that is fatal to the larva of mosquito when ingested. It is non-toxic to humans. The BTI product is usually made of the bacterium added to ground corncobs so that the product will float on top of standing water. They also use Altazoid briquettes (or sand grains) that release a mosquito specific growth hormone over a longer period or as a wet-dry product that can be applied in anticipation of flooding. The District has also applied a garlic oil-based barrier spray Terminix – All Clear.

According to the NFMAD website: “NFMAD uses a variety of larvicides and pupicides that are target-specific, killing the juvenile mosquito before it emerges as a flying and biting adult. The District uses larval and pupal products that increase in aggressiveness if trap counts do not drop, along with all other methods of observation and testing. If thresholds are reached, or there is a W. Nile positive in the trap pool, adulticides will be used in a targeted, focused manner, using calibrated and droplet-tested equipment.”

Besides larvaciding (and pupaciding) over a 50 square mile

area between Hotchkiss and Bowie NFMAD does constant trapping and testing of mosquitos looking for indications that West Nile Virus (WNV) may be present in the insects. The trapping also monitors the number of mosquitos present in areas, particularly in population centers. If WNV is present or the number of mosquitos is above a certain threshold NFMAD notifies the public and then fogs the specific area with a pesticide that is a synthetic pyrethrum that is much more environmentally friendly than organo-phosphates like malathion. The larvicide efforts are redoubled in that specific area to discover and treat where the mosquitos have bred and the area is closely monitored.

One issue for Hotchkiss is that the NFMAD boundary begins on the west, south and north edges of Town and mosquitos don't stop at borderlines. The major mosquito producing areas are just outside of the edges of town, the old sewer plant property being an example. Prevailing winds can bring mosquitoes is from the untreated Rogers Mesa and river areas to west and from farmlands above and to the east of Town so even if zero mosquitos were being bred in town mosquitos would still be present.

The current NFMAD board after the May 2023 election consists of: Calvin Campbell (President), Glenn Austin (Treasurer), Levi Henritz, Ce'rra Carsten, and Zach Hotchkiss (Secretary) Staff: Robyn Reinhard (Accountant) and Mike Clawson, (Operations Manager). With turnover on the board and the exit of longtime leader, Rain Klepper, the District is discussing turning the RAMP testing (mosquito trap samples for WNV) over to the Delta County Health Department. Longtime board member Dee Dee Durrance of Hotchkiss also exited at the fall of 2022. At one point (October 2022) the board had only two members: Calvin Campbell and Glenn Austin.

According to the 2023 budget posted on-line, the District plans to spend \$152,000 during the 2023 season for labor, product, and other expenses. This is a thin amount of funding for 50 square miles of District area in a wet year so far.

With mosquitoes being extra active in the Valley this wet year residents are urged to take precautions due to possible West Nile Virus infection. This includes eliminating or treating stagnant standing water and wearing covering clothing and a good mosquito repellent if you need to be outside at dusk when mosquitoes are most active. More information at [nfmad.org](http://nfmad.org) and at [cdc.gov/fight-the-bite.org](http://cdc.gov/fight-the-bite.org)

## Paonia and Finance Director/ Treasurer Sign Final Employment Severance Agreement

By Thomas Wills

As of May 11, 2023 the matter of parting of ways between former Finance Director and Treasurer, Cindy Jones, is complete with the signing of a comprehensive separation agreement between the Town and Jones. Besides a final financial payment to Jones, the Town and Jones agreed not to talk dirt about each other.

According to the separation agreement, which was obtained from the Town, the Town will pay Jones: “the gross sum of Forty Thousand Dollars and No Cents (\$40,000), which accounts for all unused sick leave and PTO for which Claimant is entitled to a payment under Town policy, approximately three months premiums for COBRA health insurance at the level of insurance previously in place for Claimant, and additional consideration for Claimant's Release under this Agreement, the sufficiency of which consideration is hereby acknowledged by Claimant. The net amount of this settlement payment will be less based upon deductions and withholdings.”

The Town agreed to allow Jones to resign her two positions and only provide Jones' future employers with only the dates of her employment with the Town, that the separation occurred by mutual agreement, and not reveal to them or the media other details.

Since most of the details of why Jones was placed on paid administrative leave were discussed in executive session,

the mayor and council members cannot legally reveal details. Some general details were revealed publicly. Written and oral reports from Interim Town Administrator, Leslie Klusmire, revealed a dissatisfaction with how the accounting for the Town was being done on a technical basis but no malfeasance on the part of Jones has ever been alleged by the Town.

Jones had been employed by the Town for the past eleven years, having taken the finance director position following the firing and criminal embezzlement conviction of former Finance Director, Kristin Chesnik, who stole several hundred thousand dollars from Town coffers. More recently she was also appointed Treasurer.

Both the separation agreement and Jones' resignation letter were obtained from the Town under an open records request by citizen activist, and former Trustee, Bill Brunner who shared them with the Herald and who continues to push for the Town to conduct a full forensic audit of its finances. Klusmire has stated that such an audit is not needed or warranted since there is no evidence of financial malfeasance.

The Town Council on May 23 appointed the Town Administrator the Town Treasurer in order to avoid the conflict with having a supervised employee being the appointed Treasurer.

The exit of Jones also completes a near complete turnover of the staff that worked under former Town Administrator/ Clerk Corinne Ferguson who resigned under fire in the fall of 2022.

## Gunnison Energy Proposes Six Wells Near Delta/Gunnison County Border

By Thomas Wills

According to local environmental groups, Gunnison Energy LLC., owned by William I. “Bill” Koch, has submitted a permit application to the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) for the development of 6 wells at the Iron Point Unit of the North Fork Mancos Master Development, near the boundary of Delta and Gunnison Counties. A sister company of Koch's, Oxbow, previously operated the now permanently closed Elk Creek coal mine at Somerset.

According to Citizens for a Healthy Community (CHC), “The hearing for this application is scheduled for July 12. The Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) is accepting comments up until the hearing date. However, we encourage you to submit your comments by June 25, to give the COGCC ample time to review and consider public comments. Submit your written comments through the COGCC eFiling Public Comment Portal at <https://cogcc.state.co.us/hearings.html#overview>.”

This GEI proposal involves both federal mineral rights and private land and would create 6 new wells at existing Iron Point natural gas field. The

Federal review of the same proposal has been paused by a court order according to the Western Slope Conservation Center (WSSCC). According to the COGCC website three previous wells have been approved by the State at the Iron Point site.

The WSSCC states via a newsletter: “In order for the application to be approved, Gunnison Energy must demonstrate that the project will be protective of public health, safety, welfare, the environment and wildlife. The burden of proof is on the applicant.”

The 6 new wells would be added to an existing lower wellpad that is located 281 feet from Cottonwood Creek, something that is of water contamination concern. During development, some 6,648 large truck trips are estimated. About 6.6 million gallons of water will be used during the process. The drill area is also near known unstable landslide areas.

The Delta County Commissioners have also submitted a letter of comment to the COGCC.

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# Valley Fiction: High Water in Anthracite

Sort of fiction by Lazarus Washburn Jr. – Singing Angel Ranch – Anthracite, Colorado

Edited by Thomas Wills

**The West Elk Bugle – The Weekly Voice of the Rio POCO Valley and West Elk County**  
May 10, 2023  
**Albert Street Bridge Washed Out Flooding at Paradise Acres Catastrophic**

By LaPorte Freeman-Smoot – Editor

After a number of ups and down in larger-than-normal stream flows in the Rio POCO River, a quick rise due to higher temperatures was blamed in part to severe damage to, and the closing of, the Albert Street Bridge. Sometime Tuesday night rising water toppled a half dozen large cottonwood trees, just upstream from the town, into the river. According to County Commissioner Amon Buford Jr. they were then swept away, roots and all until one jammed between two piers on the bridge followed the other trees. Other flood debris quickly piled up there as well causing the fast water to undercut the bank and supporting structure on the north side of the bridge, causing a partial collapse. Water also began flowing over the top of the road deck. Water, due to the debris dam, rose into fields north of First Street and east of the far end of Cross Street. Residents of the half dozen homes in Cross Street estates, with the help of the county and a quickly contracted bulldozer began building a protective berm while other men and equipment attempted to remove the fallen trees and debris dam. Some headway has been made but this had not been accomplished as of the Bugle's press deadline.

"It's a hell of a deal," Buford told the Bugle. "One side of the town got cut off from the other." Albert Street, including the bridge, is official a county road and is maintained by West Elk County and not the Town.

In another, equally dramatic event, residents of the Paradise Acres trailer park located on low ground, below the bluffs on the west edge of Anthracite, were evacuated to a temporary shelter set up in the gymnasium of Anthracite High School.

Dear Tom and North Fork Folks,

Things are thawing out fast in the mountains around Anthracite, including up at the ranch. The Rio POCO hasn't been so *poco* during the merry month of May and it doesn't look to be hitting its peak until mid-June.

The deep snow up at the Singing Angel is going down fast with the drain age ditches beside the roads running full and sometimes down the road itself. Washouts have been happening everyday somewhere. I have remounted the heavy snowplow blade on the ranch truck and have

used it few times to push gravel and sand into eroded gashes in the roads. I use the front-end loader and heavier grading blade for things inside or near the ranch.

Normally small Angel Creek, that goes through the bottom of the ranch valley, has overflowed its banks and has, on some warmer day, come within about 75 feet of my old ranch house and closer than that to some of the sheds.

Down in Anthracite it was a pretty big deal when the river took out part of the main bridge and very nearly got the other one just upstream on the main county road. This made

it so people in Anthracite who wanted to get to Mountain Grocery, Kelty's Texaco, one church, or any of the other stuff on the north side of the river had to drive down a farm field road to the county road and all the way back around.

The county road guys made a deal with the farmer and have begun doing some widening, grading, and filling in of the rougher spots.

Water, too much of it all at once was the main topic of discussion at the community coffee table at the Chicken Abortionist Café in Anthracite.

"So much for your climate change, drought forever, crap," one rancher, wearing a Trump hat, told Phaedra Elkspirit who, as you know, has been the head of the Friends of the Rio POCO environmental group since the 1990s. "Droughts come and go."

"But the laws of physics don't," Phaedra said around a mouth full of sauteed spring greens and tofu veggie breakfast stir fry. "A couple more years and we'll be right back in it. A lot of parts of the world still are."

"Says you," the rancher said. "Whatever." Phaedra shrugged and swallowed. "I'll remind you in a couple years when you are only getting one cutting of hay."

A bunch of people from the trailer park, quite a few of which were not regular customers of the Abortionist, had filled up most of the front tables and booths and a couple drifted back to the coffee table. They sat eating breakfast specials (a platter of hash browns topped with two fried eggs, all smothered with hamburger-sausage gravy) and looked glum and a little lost. Out of their comfort zones. They had spent the night sleeping on gym mats at the high school.

Their landlord, the owner of the Paradise Acres trailer park, County Commissioner Junior Buford, had been making the rounds of tables patting shoulders and personally pouring out fresh coffee. After returning the empty pot to the waitresses' station, he sat down next to Melanie and I. He looked over at a young couple.

"Dudn't look that good," he said to them. "We're trying to move some of the trailers away from the low ground but water got into most of them." He shrugged. "I got flood insurance from the government, but you know the government."

"River's going to get a lot higher before it goes down," I said and immediately regretted it as Melanie poked me with an elbow. I was thinking that the high water wouldn't probably peak until about the first week of June but didn't share that.

The young couple both commuted back and forth to work in Crested Butte. They said they had called friends in Montrose and Grand Junction looking for a place to stay and maybe new jobs.

"The season's over in the Butte anyway," the young man said. "We'll be okay. I do wonder about how the old people are going to make out. Not a lot of housing around." At least half of the twenty or so trailers in Paradise Acres were occupied by single elderly people, more women than men.

"We'll figure something out," Junior said. "We got people on it talking to the State and Feds."

Mayor Zima Hydryk (owner of the Abortionist – ed), who used to live in the trailer park, was going from table to table of refugees listening to them and smiling. Hugs were exchanged. Eventually she made it to the community table.

"Well... Once we get past this, I know what issue the Town needs to be looking hard at," she said, looking hard at Junior.

"Yeah, what?" Junior asked. "Affordable housing," Zima

leaned a hip against the jukebox.

"Or people that make more money," someone said. The girl from the trailer park was looking up at the tin ceiling.

"Anyway. I'm going to get the Council on it," Zima said.

"Tiny houses," Phaedra said. "And not just converted prefab garden sheds."

The conversation went in that direction for a while until a guy from the fire department came in and announced that the blockage against the bridge piers had been cleared.

"We craned out one big tree and the whole thing just cut loose," he said. "If any of you guys live on the river downstream you might want to check to see if we just caused you more problems." Two ranchers got up and headed for the door.

Melanie and I walked over to the river bluffs, a block west from the café, and got there just in time to see, below in Paradise Acres, one older eight by forty single-wide, the kind with the slanted boat end on the front, slide out into the muddy river current. It seemed to be floating pretty well but tipping a little to the side. A good-sized Pride flag fluttered from a wall mount above the main door.

"That's something you don't see every day," I said.

*Lazarus A. Washburn Jr. is the fictional manager of the fictional Singing Angel Ranch in the fictional West Elk County, located roughly halfway between Paonia and Crested Butte, where people have always made things up as they go along. His Anthracite stories/letters and Cowboy Pomes (as edited by the semi-fictional Thomas Wills of Hotchkiss) have been appearing in local and regional publications since 1994.*

**"So much for your climate change, drought forever, crap," one rancher, wearing a Trump hat, told Phaedra Elkspirit who, as you know, has been the head of the Friends of the Rio POCO environmental group since the 1990s. "Droughts come and go."**

## The Chicken Abortionist

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**Eatery**

**Breakfast**  
**Served All Day**  
**To Go or Dine In**  
**Delivery in town.**

**Lunch and Dinner**  
**Specials Daily**

**SAFE INSIDE SEATING**  
**New Open Air, Socially Distanced**  
**Patio in Rear.**

