

# The North Fork Merchant Herald

The Digital Version of the  
Newspaper From the Valley  
That Likes Bernie's  
Warm Mittens

**Digital Edition**  
**Volume 24 - Number 2**  
**February 1, 2021**

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## Paonia New Public Comment Policy Legally Okay Interim Building Inspector is the Old Building Inspector

By Thomas Wills

Paonia Town Council  
January 26, 2021

Present: (on Zoom) Mayor  
Mary Bachran, Bill Bear, Michelle  
Pattison, Dave Knudson, Tamie Meck,  
Karen Budinger, and Mick Johnson.  
Staff: Town Administrator/Clerk –  
Corinne Ferguson, Police Chief – Neil  
Ferguson, Public Works Director –  
Travis Loberg, and Finance Officer –  
Cindy Jones.

changes.

The new contract authorizes  
paying the contractor \$50 per inspection  
plus \$90 per each visit to the Town (the  
inspector lives in Delta), Plan Reviews  
and general consulting services will be  
paid at a rate of \$120 per hour.

### Attorney Weighs in On Public Comment Requirements

Town Attorney, Bo James  
Nerlin, provided a legal analysis of State  
Law regarding the ability of the public  
to comment during public meetings.



Recent History: Paonia Town Council meeting in 2014.  
Council then pictured from left: Eric Goold, Ross King,  
Mayor Neal Schwieterman, Town Clerk - Barbara Peterson,  
and Amber Kleinman.  
- Tom Wills photo

### Town Hires Old Building Inspection Company to Serve as Interim Inspector

A contract has been signed  
by the Town allowing Shums Coda  
Associates Inc. dba Colorado Code  
Consulting to serve as the Town  
"Interim" Building Inspector. CCC has  
served as the Town's regular inspection  
service for several years. Their previous  
contract expired at the end of 2020. The  
term of the interim contract runs from  
January 1, 2021 to March 31, 2021  
while the Town considers its options  
for a permanent building inspector.  
Costs and other issues related to CCC  
caused the Town to consider looking at

Nerlin noted that while the Colorado  
Open Meetings Law requires that most  
Town business done by the Council  
be conducted in public there is no  
requirement under the law to allow *any*  
public comments during meetings. The  
Town's own meeting policy, attached  
to the meeting agendas, previously  
allowed for comments being allowed  
from the public on each agenda item.

The issue came up during the  
first January meeting when Mayor  
Bachran announced that the public  
would be restricted to one comment per  
agenda item besides the usual general  
public comment period. The reason

Continued on page 18

## A COVID-Related Incident at the Hotchkiss Library

By Thomas Wills

According to Delta County  
Library District spokesperson, Tracy  
Ihnot, "On the afternoon of Tuesday,  
January 26, an individual entered  
Hotchkiss Library and refused to  
wear a mask. After several requests  
were made, library staff members  
asked the individual to leave the  
building. The individual refused to  
leave. At that time, and in accordance  
with the library district's current  
procedures, a library staff member  
called local law enforcement in to  
remove the individual. Upon arrival,  
law enforcement officers questioned,  
but ultimately refused to remove the  
individual from the library."

"The explanation given  
to library staff members by law  
enforcement was that the individual  
could not be removed from the library  
for not complying with the mask  
order because the library is a public  
space. Consequently, library staff  
members closed the Hotchkiss Library  
temporarily in order to remove the  
individual, sanitize the area, and  
consider alternatives to the current  
procedures, which rely on having the  
backing of law enforcement to remove  
individuals who do not comply with the  
executive order."

Ihnot added: "The health and  
safety of library patrons and staff is  
our top priority. During the pandemic,  
and in alignment with state and local  
orders, library staff and patrons are  
asked to comply with the library  
district's COVID guidelines, which  
include mandatory mask wearing while  
inside library buildings. This applies  
to everyone age 11 and older, per the  
statewide executive order. The library  
district provides complimentary masks  
at all library entrances and curbside  
pickup service for individuals who do  
not want to enter the buildings, or who  
cannot wear a mask."

The libraries were still closed  
the following day with notes of the  
doors saying that they were closed due  
to "a COVID-related incident."

According to Suzanne Watson  
of Paonia who was in the Hotchkiss  
library at the time of the incident a  
man in his twenties with dark short  
hair, wearing a hoodie pulled up over  
a ball cap, entered the library and  
was confronted by an employee who  
informed him that he would need a mask  
to enter. He refused and incorrectly  
claimed that according to State law he  
didn't need to wear a mask because it  
was public building. He was apparently

Continued on page 19

*From the O'Brien COVID-19 Report:*

## Thoughts and prayers to the friends and family to all those that passed away early due to COVID-19.

The O'Brien COVID-19 Report uses the raw daily COVID metrics from the State Dashboard and spreadsheets along with the Delta County Health Department (DCHD) Dashboard. The O'Brien COVID-19 Report provides additional metrics, trends, charts, and graphs beyond the DCHD Dashboard, delivered by email so that individuals can make better health care decisions.

The State and DCHD data are summarized into monthly statements, scaled to 100,000 population for comparison purposes, and additional metrics are calculated such as averages, high-watermarks, and 7-Day and 14-Day moving average graphs.

All calculated metrics are confirmed when possible against the State's metrics. Graphs are confirmed against the Harvard Brown School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University, the New York Times, and the Washington Post websites.

Delta County COVID-19 Monthly Metrics as of January 22, 2021 at 5:00 PM							
Metrics Taken Directly from the Delta County Health Department (DCHD) Dashboard							
	Total New Cases (from DCHD)	Daily Case Average	Possible School Cases (Age 0-17)	Possible School Cases (Age 18-24)	All Other Cases (Age 25-64)	High Risk Age Cases (65+)	Total Deaths
March through October Cases from the DCHD Dashboard	217	1.0	17	22	141	37	3
November Cases from the DCHD Dashboard	430	14.4	42	40	250	98	8
December Cases from the DCHD Dashboard	932	30.1	105	101	515	211	14
January Cases from the DCHD Dashboard (through 1/22/2021)	622	28.3	56	50	320	196	20
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2,201</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>1,226</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>45</b>

This ad paid for by Terry O'Brien as a public service on behalf of the people of Hotchkiss and Delta County.  
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# County Commissioners Adopt Land Use Code

By Thomas Wills

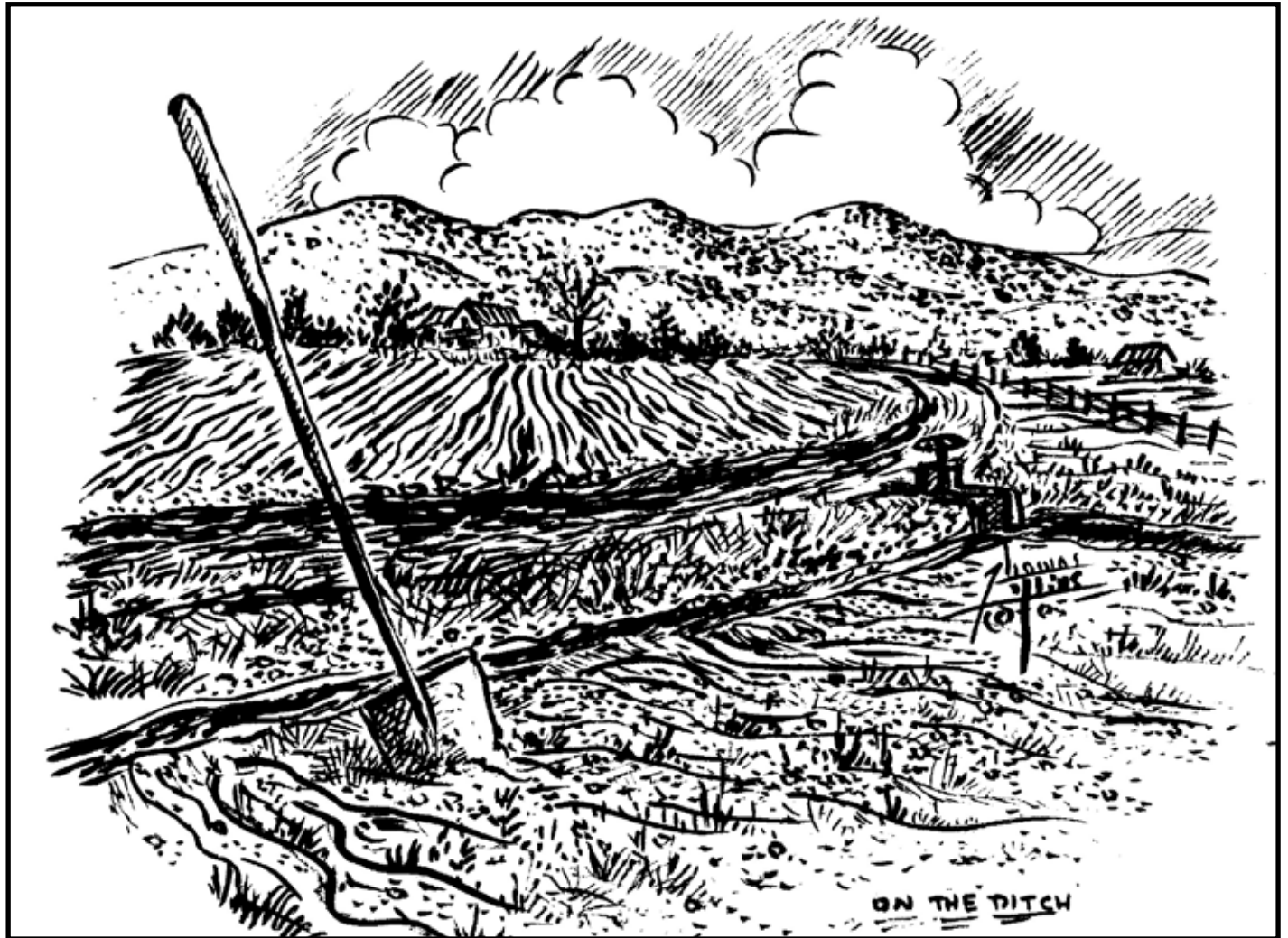
Blame it all on the Powell Mesa chickens.

On Monday January 4, the Delta County Commissioners adopted the 162-page Delta Land Use Code that includes Delta County's first attempt at lot size and use zoning as well as incorporating a version of the previous subdivision regulations. The resolution adopting the Code repealed existing commercial change of land use review regulations, subdivision regulations and other land use regulation and replaced them with the single new code document including zoning and zoning maps.

During the public comment period of the meeting there were objections to process of reviewing and adopting the code and specifically to the adoption of the zoning maps, which still show Urban Growth Areas (UGA) that vary significantly from the Growth Management Agreement maps the County and Towns jointly adopted in the past. In response the Commissioners Chairman, Mark Roeber, said that the document and maps were "a work in progress." The new code will go into effect on April 1, 2021 with no new subdivision/land use change applications being accepted until that date.

The new Land Use Code was the second step stemming from the county being made painfully aware of the drawbacks in the previous system when they were sued for not following their old 1996 county master plan's direction in regard to neighborhood compatibility after their 2011 approval of a two Mennonite layer chicken barns, one on Powell Mesa and another on east Redlands Mesa. Neighbors were concerned about dust and bacteria being emitted from the Powell Mesa barn. The east Redlands Mesa barn was never constructed.

After the County, opponents and the applicants spent a considerable amount of time and money on lawyers and losing in court, the Colorado Court of Appeals ultimately ruled that the Delta County Master Plan language



The new land use code, among other things, essentially zones most of the unincorporated county "agricultural" as a primary use. Defining "agricultural" is an issue. - Tom Wills drawing

did not act as regulation since it was "aspirational." The chicken barn was closed for a time but ultimately reopened.

The lesson learned was that the County needed a new more comprehensive and clearly written master plan, something that had been discussed but not acted on. Some chicken barn opponents saw the master plan process as political and a legally defensible cover for allowing the facilities in rural residential neighborhoods where they may or may not be compatible with existing uses. An outside consulting company, RPI of Durango, was hired and many public hearings were held, and comments received, over the course of a year and in 2018 the County Planning Commission adopted the Plan, which was then accepted by the Board of County Commissioners. The new plan included language that made it clear that the Plan itself could not be used as regulations, but was just a plan upon which regulation could be based. It was the foundation upon which land use

regulation was built.

The same Durango consultant, RPI, that wrote the Master Plan, was then hired to draft a new Delta County Land Use Code. The County had also previously hired former Colorado Department of Local Affairs planner, Elyse Ackerman Casselberry, as the County's economic development director and tasked her to lead the county through both processes with the consultants.

Surprisingly to some, the idea of zoning, long an anathema in Delta County, was broached early on and drew little objection this time. In the end, the zones adopted were: A35 (Agricultural 35-acre minimum lot size), A20, A5, Rural Industrial/Commercial (RI/C) and Urban Growth Area (UGA). The lot size zoning has a loophole allowing very small lots to be created if they are "clustered." The regulation also fails to address oil and gas development and the county says they will come

up with local regulations later. The State's new oil and gas development regulations went into effect in January 2021.

As for those confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs), including 15,000 hen layer chicken barns, the new code requires a setback of at least 1,000 feet from a residential use for large or medium CAFOS and a full mile setback from public schools. The last would result in new CAFOs being about a mile from some towns and not allowed in UGA zones. The Powell Mesa chicken barn is now apparently non-conforming since one neighbor is about 900 feet away and there are closer residential uses on the barn property itself.

A couple more chicken barns have been built since the initial Chicken Wars in areas, south west Redlands Mesa and upper Fruitland Mesa, with fewer neighborhood conflicts.

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# JANUARY JOURNAL

*"United we stand. Divided we fall."*

A brand-new year. The new year seems both hopeful and daunting. Some things will change for the better and others possibly for the worse. Vaccines are arriving, but politically-motivated willful ignorance of facts seems something that will cause trouble over the coming year; more nationally than locally. On the other hand, Valley restaurants and social life may return to near normal by late 2021. Hang on.

The trend towards a spurt of new people moving to the Valley will probably continue, as those that are able to move to calmer, attractive rural areas like ours, will continue to be motivated to do so. This has already been bringing a range of challenges, including a shortage of housing, including affordable rentals.

Water, may or may not, be an issue this year since it is too soon to tell, although, so far, winter moisture has been unexceptional.

**December 29** – It began to rain in Hotchkiss last evening, and then some light snow, and then some mixed rain and snow. Then, everything froze solid. This morning there was a sheet of hard ice on the streets and sidewalks. By afternoon most of it had melted off in places where the sun could reach.

**December 30** – Sunny and cold with the roads once again clear. Business in the bookstore was steady but at a rate only one person, or two from a household at a time, and I didn't have to make anyone wait.

**January 1** – New Year's day was cold and sunny.

**January 3-4** – Sunny, but bitterly cold.

**January 5** – Overcast with a predicted chance of snow that did not arrive in the Valley.

**January 6** – Insurrection Day. I spent way too much time today watching manipulated suckers, playing dress-up, wandering around the U.S. Capitol taking selfies of themselves and playing childish games and vandalizing and stealing stuff while, somewhere in Moscow, a certain guy was laughing so hard his bodyguards probably wondered if he was going to be okay. Meanwhile the self-absorbed, fact challenged maniac that started it all finally had his Twitter account cut off.

Meanwhile, in Hotchkiss one longtime acquaintance, a major local business owner, who stopped by the store for a supply of books, had the grim view that we were witnessing the end of American democracy. Of trust in, and acceptance of free and fair elections.

# Another Month in the Valley

By Thomas Wills  
Publisher - Editor

But others noted the positive sign that a slim majority of voters in Georgia had elected a black pastor and a young Jewish businessman to the Senate, both a first for the state, over two candidates who had repeated untruths spread by the maniac.

January 7 - I learned via



Jardine, one of the bedrock guys of the community, as well as at the Methodist Church for many years, had passed away yesterday from COVID at St Mary's in Grand Junction. Prayers and condolences to Jeannie and family.

It was later learned that Rick



KVNF early this morning that the Senate had reconvened overnight and confirmed the electoral college vote of the new president-elect.

While most locals on social media expressed shock, or at least disapproval, at the events of yesterday some shared conspiracy theories and false information about those who illegally entered and vandalized the U.S. capitol building. Those casually reposting false information on Facebook included some who should know better.

**January 11** – Sad news for Hotchkiss when it was learned that Fred

Brodel, formerly of Farmer Frank's Shopping Center, had also died in Grand Junction today. Prayers and condolences to Candy and family.

**January 12** – Reported today: Gunnison Basin snowpack water content has dropped to 66% of normal (40 year median.) The North Fork specific drainage is well below that.

**January 13** – The second

impeachment of the President happened nationally while in the Valley it was overcast and a little warmer.

**January 14** – Sunny and cold across the Valley.

**January 15-18** – Cold but dry winter weather continued. In many places exposed soil, not in shaded snow-covered placed is becoming dusty.

**January 19** – Frigid and overcast in the morning with sun later in the day.

**January 20** – Inaguration Day in Washington D.C. with local reactions being mixed depending upon political leanings.

**January 22** – Overcast but dry with nighttime temperatures warming some. Mary Hockenbery reported what she saw were cranes flying overhead.

**January 23** – It rained in Hotchkiss overnight and snow on the nearby higher terrain.

## Business News and Other Rumours

### DELTA COUNTY HIRES COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES DIRECTOR

Delta, Colorado (January 7, 2021): Delta County Community Development and Natural Resources Position Filled

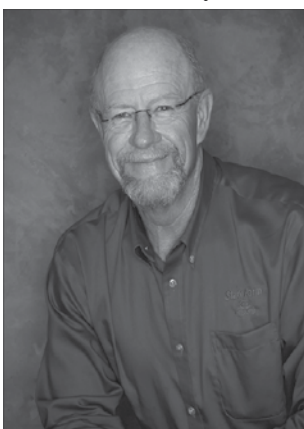
Delta County Board of Commissioners is pleased to announce that Carl Holm, AICP, has accepted the position of Community Development and Natural Resources Director, for Delta County. Mr. Holm has over 30 years of experience in community development and resource management; he currently owns property outside of Cedaredge. Carl comes to Delta County from Monterey, California where he serves as Resource Management Agency Director. Carl has significant and practical experience in principles and practices in community planning, land use policies, regulations, subdivision and transportation planning, parks and recreation as well as federal lands.

Carl is eager to begin working with constituents, staff, and agency representatives as the recently adopted land use code is implemented throughout Delta County. He will start with Delta County on January 27, 2021 and will be housed in the Planning and Community Development office located at 295 West 6<sup>th</sup> Street in Delta.

### Snowpack.

As of early January, the USDA's Snowtel snowpack/water content data reported that the Gunnison Basin as a whole was at 82% of normal (40-year median) but the two sites in the North Fork watershed, McClure Pass and Overland Reservoir were closer to 50%.

As of January 12, the Gunnison Basin had dropped to 66% of normal for that date. On January 19 the two sites in the North Fork were at 49% of normal. We are in need of some very heavy late snows.



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Continued on page 15

# Hotchkiss Adopts Seven Downtown “Principles” Sheep Dog Trials Will Return in May

By Thomas Wills

**Hotchkiss Town Council**  
January 14, 2021

*Present (on Zoom): Mayor Larry Wilkening, mayor-pro-tem -Mary Hockenbery, Patrick Webb, Jim Wingfield, Kris Hillman and John Marta. Absent: Patricia Medina,*

## Manufacturing Feasibility Study Update

Mayor Larry Wilkening gave a final update on the process that began as a light manufacturing/maker space feasibility study, but as the pandemic unfolded, morphed into a general downtown economic study along with a focus on what the future best use of the old public works building at West Bridge and Oaks Streets, might be. The consultants, non-profit Community Builders, that were funded by a \$28,000 Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) grant written by the Region 10 organization, spent the year having Zoom meetings with town official (Wilkening and Mary Hockenbery) and volunteers. At the end of the day the meetings, surveys results and other public input resulted in the writing of “Seven Principles of Hotchkiss.” They are:

1. Downtown needs to reflect the community and highlight the character of Hotchkiss.
2. Increase anchor businesses that attract residents and visitors alike.
3. Agriculture, outdoor recreation and art culture are major drivers in the community and should be expanded and incorporated more in downtown.
4. Expand availability and affordability of spaces to new and existing businesses.
5. Improve downtown by increasing walkability, activating underutilized buildings, signage, increasing public gathering spaces, and façade improvements.
6. Capture through traffic on Bridge Street by creating a welcoming downtown environment that offers services for travelers.
7. Make downtown Hotchkiss a destination for residents, visitors, and businesses by increasing nightlife activities, dining and drinking establishments, locally made goods, and workforce housing.

After some lengthy, but polite, discussion focused, not on the goal statements, but mostly on the future sale of the old public works building, the trustees voted unanimously to adopt the seven principles. Trustees John Marta and Jim Wingfield questioned how the Town could direct the future uses of the building after they sell it? Town Attorney Bo Nerlin explained that the building would be eventually sold via a “Request for Proposals” (RFP) that would set forth certain restrictions that would be placed on the deed of the building. Wilkening added that the Town might be flexible on price for a developer who proposed something that furthered some of the “principles.” The Town would like to see one or more

retail-type businesses on the site. Things that would generate sales taxes and draw business and visitors to Hotchkiss.

It might be a while before the building is placed on the market since a hazardous materials assessment needs to be done first along with any needed cleanup of soils or the structure. Funding is being sought for those actions. Once that is done the RFP will be presented and the Town will learn how much of a market there is for an old, not very attractive commercial building with restricted future uses.

A second project of having CU-Denver architecture students produce renderings of Hotchkiss downtown/highway corridor improvements will probably be completed by the end of the college school year before summer.

## Building Code Rate Structure Resolution

In having a re-do and approving a building permit fee based on 80% of national average costs, up from a 75% amount approved in November, the Hotchkiss Council had a rare split vote; 3 for the 80% and 2 against. Arguing for 75% were builder Jim Wingfield, and John Marta. Most municipalities in the region use the 80% figure.

Wingfield thought that the discount would encourage building in the town compared to other municipalities with higher fees. Marta worried that the Town would lose out to people building in the un-incorporated county where there are no building permits or codes. The others noted that the 5% difference was very small on the new home construction in the \$250,000 plus range; a few hundred dollars.

Trustee Patrick Webb initiated the re-examination of the fee structure at the December council meeting.

## Hotchkiss Sheep Camp Stockdog Trials Will Return in 2021

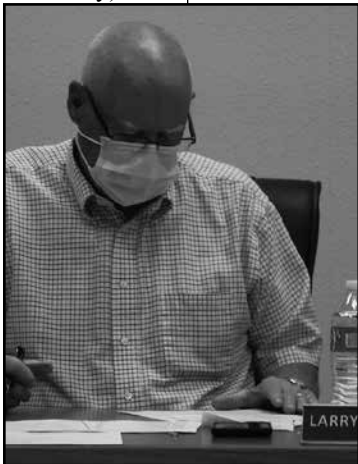
The trustees voted unanimously to donate a \$500 commercial sponsorship to the 18th annual Hotchkiss Sheepcamp Stockdog Trials. Event director Gordon Hebenstreit, told the council that the plan is for the event to happen one way or another this year. The date this year will be May 7-9 over Mother’s Day weekend.

## Other Discussion and Actions

The lease of the Town’s shares Fire Mountain Canal and Overland Reservoir Ditch Shares was discussed. The lease of the shares will be put out for bid. Previously for quite a few years the Kuntz Ranch on Redlands Mesa has leased the Overland shares and the Baker Ranch on Barrow Mesa the Fire Mountain shares. The Town holds the shares to bolster future domestic water needs.

The council approved the designation of the Delta County Independent as the place where legal notices will be posted and the door of Hotchkiss Town Hall as the place where agendas are posted at least 24 hours prior to meetings.

Mayor Wilkening wished a happy birthday to absent trustee, Pat Medina.



Mayor Larry Wilkening

# Library Book Local History

By Thomas Wills

With all the talk about raising money for the local libraries lately I was reminded of a method that was used by the now defunct Somerset library. I have over the years come across copies of old books from the Somerset library, which were current popular fiction at the time (the 1940’s) and were apparently purchased with funds raised by selling advertising. The advertisements were printed on book page sized sheets and were inserted with the aid of some judiciously placed glue into the newly acquired reading matter.

In one 1945 book the advertisements from the Hotchkiss area

included: The North Fork Creamery Association (Harry Hulteen , Manager), Sare Hardware., Barnie’s Grocery the phone number was 52... (Harold Gellatly, prop.), Taylor Funeral Home (Hotchkiss & Paonia), which also operated a 24 hour ambulance service, Red Triangle Service Station (Larry Bieber, owner), Doc’s Liquor Store, Arden-Sunfreze Creamery - Cheese Factory (William Rickman, manager), Modern Shoe Shop featuring “double wear shoes” (M.D. McCabe, Prop.), Bay Service, Taylor Furniture Store (Hotchkiss and Paonia), and the Hotchkiss Theater. The Hotchkiss Theatre building, where Creamery Park is now, was torn down in 2000

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# HOTCHKISS MUNICIPAL COURT

## Turn on Your Headlights After Dark

By Thomas Wills

January 14, 2020

Judge Lynn French presiding:

Let there be light. In something a little unusual, there were several cases on the January 14 Hotchkiss Municipal Court docket related to not having vehicle lights turned on at night. New officer, Kelsey Shumway, had four vehicle light-related cases.

Lucy May Blosser of Hotchkiss pled guilty to operating a vehicle with improper/unsafe tires and not having lights on after sunset. A charge of failure to present proof of insurance was dismissed. Blosser was assessed fines and fees totaling \$94.

Tara Ashley Gabriel Fry of Hotchkiss pled guilty to not having her vehicle lights lit after dark. A charge of driving an uninsured motor vehicle was dismissed. Fry was assessed a \$22 fine and \$50 in court costs.



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

Zachary Lawrence Krueger of Delta failed to appear on a charge of having unlit headlights and improper, defective, or no taillights on a vehicle. Information was sent in to the State that will result in suspension of driving privileges until the Hotchkiss case is taken care of.

Another case listed on the docket, but with the fine paid before court, listed improper, defective, or no taillights on a vehicle.

Craig Mathew Blevins of Hotchkiss pled not guilty to a charge of assault and was scheduled for a pre-trial conference on February 11. A jury trial was mentioned.

Jodi Lorene Newton of Morrison, CO. failed to pay a fine or appear in court on a speeding charge and the information was sent in to the State.

Cesar Abel Ibarra of Thornton, CO. failed to appear on a speeding charge and the information was sent in to the State.

# HOTCHKISS MARSHAL'S REPORT

## A Quiet Month of a Quiet Year

By Thomas Wills (using monthly report and additional information from Marshal Dan Miller.)

Marshal Dan Miller's report for December 2020 noted 131 logged incidents for the month. As is normal for the highway town of Hotchkiss, a good percentage (50) were related to vehicles: 28 traffic contacts, 14 VIN inspections, 2 traffic accidents, 8 parking issues and 6 abandoned vehicles. The last two items are unusual.

At the top of the incident list were several more serious things: an aggravated assault (family) item involving a weapon, an aggravated assault/strong arm item, a third-degree assault/harassment, one burglary, one violation of a court-ordered protective order, two disorderly conduct/harassment items, and an incident of criminal mischief on private property.

One fugitive from justice arrest was made, five items of suspicious persons or circumstances, and one item of trespassing. Thirteen medical assists were made (officers usually respond with/before the ambulance on calls), 11 assists to other agencies, and



five assists to citizens.

The Delta County Sheriff's Office reported that on December 26 they assisted the Hotchkiss Marshal's department in the arrest of Daniel Winter, 41 and on January 3 with the apprehension of a suspect in a previous assault.

There were two animal "problems" (dogs usually) and four responses to alarms going off.

In a year-end report for the 2020-year, Marshal Miller reported 1264 logged incidents, a fairly low total compared to previous years. Of that number 526 items were traffic or vehicle related. In statistics the department had a low clearance rate on criminal items including assaults and thefts. Examples: items worth \$6,450 (including motor vehicles) were stolen and nothing of value was recovered. Of 35 assaults of various types, only three were marked as "cleared."

All in all, it was a quiet year for law enforcement in Hotchkiss with the pandemic affecting much of the period. The department hired only its second and third female officers in the history of the town: Deputies Julia Thompson and Kelsey Shumway.

# HOTCHKISS BOOKMAN:

## Yes, We Have Garden Porn!

By Tom Wills - Wills' Gallery and Books  
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There have been many challenges in the bookstore over the past pandemic year but not receiving enough new stock has not been one of them. Donations of very salable books used to be a fairly rare occurrence, but not this year. With the library booksales not accepting donations lots of local books are ending up here and this has included a lot of quality items. Our stock is the best it has ever been.

Included in recent acquisitions are: some very good science fiction, a

good amount of history (including hard to get Western and Regional items) and contemporary literature. Almost every category is bulging at the seams.

And besides all of the welcome donations and trade-ins, I have even purchased some exceptional books including, most recently, an entire collection of Buddhist-related books from an estate.

And as plant starting season arrives the farming and gardening section is definitely ready for your late winter growing inspiration. There are lots and lots of information packed volumes along with some godd old garden porn, pretty picture books to inspire you for the coming season.

# Valley Museums Store Local History During Historic Times

By Thomas Wills

*"One thing we learn from history is that we learn nothing from history."*

We are living in historic times, locally as well as nationally. Or rather, we are *always* living in historic times, but some periods are more eventful than others. Like now.

The quote above, although cynical, has on many occasions proven to be perceptive, but misses something. History's lessons cannot teach us anything if we don't have access to, and are adequately educated on the details of past history on all levels, including local history.

Which brings us to the local historical societies and musuems in Paonia and Hotchkiss. These institutions are important as storehouses of local information about Valley history along

with artifacts of the past. Resources include: newspapers, obituary files, historic photographs, historic documents, family histories, and objects of local/general historical significance. Paonia's museum complex includes the entire, relocated Bowie School, while in Hotchkiss a nineteenth century log cabin is attached to the museum.

Both intitutions have faced challenges during the pandemic and could use your support at this time.

Memberships and financial donations for the Hotchkiss Crawford Historical Society can be sent to: P.O. Box 724 - Hotchkiss, CO 81419 Board president, Karen Lacey, may be contacted for information at (970) 872-2586.

The North Fork Historical Society and Museum would be happy to receive financial donations and memberships at P.O. Box 1239 Paonia, CO 81428 (970) 527-3470.



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# Paonia Pot Regs Pushed to February

## Building Code to be Updated

Paonia Town Council  
January 12, 2021

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

The agenda for the first meeting of the year for the Paonia Town Council looked a little anemic but the packet of information shared with the council and public was very substantial.

At the meeting one issue was the frequency of times one member of the public can comment on one agenda issue. A couple of locals have tended to comment multiple times on single issues in the past, extending the length of meetings. Mayor Mary Bachran decided to limit the public to one comment per item plus they can also comment for several minutes during constituent time. The public can also request to be on the agenda for other issues. Discussion of the issue will continue... That's Paonia.

It was noted that some homeowners were not keeping up with clearing snow and ice from sidewalks abutting their properties. More aggressive enforcement, including possible tickets and summonses to municipal court, may take place for folk who don't heed warnings.

Then there was the packet. Town Administrator/Clerk, Corrinne Ferguson reported:

**Building Department and Code.** That she is in discussion with other municipalities in Delta County to form "one building department to serve the communities in Delta County." She also noted that Paonia was the only community that has not yet updated their building codes to the current 2018 versions as recommended by the State. A process of doing that stalled out in Paonia in March when Colorado Code Consultants delivers a customized version to the Town. Ferguson said she would supply the update code to the Council for review in January so that action could be taken soon to complete possible approval of the update. (Note: Delta County, despite having just adopted a new land use code has not adopted building codes or permits for construction in the unincorporated county.)

She reported that Colorado

## Despite Pandemic, Hotchkiss Moves Ahead With Economic Enhancement

The pandemic of 2020-21 has slowed the planning process but has not deterred community leaders from continuing to pursue the goal of re-building a sustainable economy in Hotchkiss. As the result of several years of business sector meetings collaborating with local government Leveraging existing assets was deemed critical.

In moving forward, a State grant facilitated by the Region 10 organization, funded a consulting company, RPI, to lead the community through the writing of a Hotchkiss Prosperity Plan completed in 2019. This was followed by a downtown business workshop facilitated by the non-profit - Community Builders.

Community Builders was then hired with funding from another State/Region 10 grant to do a feasibility study focused on light industrial/maker space uses in downtown Hotchkiss. This focus changed somewhat due to the pandemic to

Code Consulting has agreed to an interim contract and continues to serve the Town. The Town, in their 2021 budget, is aiming for the Building Department to be more self-sustaining.

**Master Plan.** Ferguson reported that the in-progress draft Master Plan, composed of five sections, was being prepared for review by the Board and the Planning Commission during January. They will proceed with a section or two at a time beginning with sections 1 and 2. (Note: State Statute tasks planning commissions with the writing and legally adoption of Master Plans but without Council ratification such plans may not be properly implemented.) The main work on the Paonia Plan has been done by administrative assistant, Evan Bolt, in collaboration with Ferguson and the Planning Commission.

**Pot Regulation.** "The Marijuana working group have received the materials for review. The finalized review draft will come back to the Board in February," Ferguson wrote.

**Trees.** A Colorado State Forestry review and inventory review of the Town's trees should be in the Town's hands by the end of the month.

Some new tables and seating will be installed in the area of the Town Hall in March, thanks to some COVID-related grant funding.

A county-wide housing needs assessment may not be happening and Ferguson is looking at options for a local study. Anecdotally, local rental housing is both very expensive and limited.

The Town is looking at enhancing security measures at the water and sewer plants in response to vandalism/tampering that resulted in natural gas service being interrupted to the City of Aspen last month.

**Police Report:** Police Chief Neil Ferguson reported 48 logged incidents between December 15 and December 30. The Department now has six total full-time officers.


**Dark Skies Lighting Code.** A draft code change to address excessive nighttime lighting was presented in the packet for review along with numerous comments, most in support of the restrictions. Some comments noted current streetlights such as one changed to LEDs at Second and Minnesota that was deemed by a neighbor as "way too bright."

exploring how the sale of the old public works building could be leveraged to benefit downtown economic revitalization. A list of seven economic "principles" was also drafted and adopted by the Town Council. (See Hotchkiss- Page 5).

Concurrently, students from the CU-Denver architecture program were engaged, with the Town sharing the costs, to provide renderings of what downtown Hotchkiss could look like if improvements suggested by the community were made.

According to a press release from the Town that appears in its entirety on page 17 of the February 1 e-edition of the Herald:


"The town is excited to move forward in this process and begin to rejuvenate downtown. For more information about the Community Downtown Guiding Principles or the Public Works Building Community Vision go to: townofhotchkiss.colorado.gov."



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Dr. Scholle is looking forward to serving the communities of Delta and the North Fork Valley.

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Originally from Oklahoma, Dr. Scholle attended medical school at Ross University of Medicine in Dominica, a small island in the Caribbean. As a new physician he began his residency training in General Surgery in Baltimore, Maryland where he learned his passion for rural medicine. After starting his first practice in the remote location of Salmon, Idaho, Dr. Scholle experienced the full scope of rural healthcare.

## Hotchkiss Memorial Hall Could Use Your Support

By Thomas Wills

For the first time in over 70 years the annual Memorial Hall Congress has been canceled. According to a letter sent out to the community, the move was a precaution due to the COVID-19 pandemic. And Memorial Hall could use your help.

Memorial Hall, the large masonry building located on the southeast corner of First and Main in Hotchkiss, housing the Hotchkiss Library as well event and meeting space for the community. The Hotchkiss United Methodist Peace Circle operates the Warehouse Thrift Shop in the basement. The building, dedicated to the memory of WWII veterans who died in service, was completed in 1952 after being under construction for nearly five years. The original impetus and early leadership came from local teacher, Kathleen Wheeler, along with banker Harry Addams and others. The facility is unique in that it is owned not by government, but instead by "every civic and social organization" in the North Fork area that pays a nominal five-dollar membership.

Normally, the upkeep of the hall including cleaning, utilities, insurance, maintenance and improvements is paid for by rental of ballroom (large space with stage and hardwood floor), Kathleen Wheeler Room (meeting room w/adjoining kitchen), Harry Addams

Room, as well as the basement to the Peace Circle, along with donations from the community. During most of 2021, due to pandemic restrictions, the Hall was closed to rentals and even now sees limited rentals of the upstairs rooms. Thus, income for the Hall is down considerably while many expenses continue. Memorial Hall Board Secretary, Nancy Stevens, reported in the letter that Hall revenues for 2020 were down almost \$10,000 compared to 2019.

Once major project that is underway is the replacement of the heating system boilers. The new boilers have been purchased with the help of members and supporters and will be installed early this year. Improvements in 2020 were limited due to the drop in finances, but the board did need repair work on the damaged front steps as well as the inside concrete steps to the basement.

Memorial Hall Board is asking for community financial donations. Checks may be mailed to Hotchkiss Memorial Hall, P.O. Box 911, Hotchkiss, CO 81419. Hotchkiss Memorial Hall is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation and donations are tax deductible.

The 2020-2021 Board of Memorial Hall consists of: Paul Schmucker, Dave Whittlesey, Bob Sussman, Eric Holembeak, Nancy Stevens, Billie Marta and Linda Dysart.

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# Flavors of the Valley

## Valley-entine's Suggestion: Molten Chocolate Cake with Creme Anglaise and Local Flavors

By Colleen Hansen

February is upon us, calving has commenced, sleeping seeds snug in their earthen beds are beginning to stir, increasing day length portends rebirth and love is in the air: the prospect of getting twitterpated, by someone or by life itself, looms near. Getting excited yet? Well, I am. It is time again to challenge the cynic and the modern commercialization of February's declared love and affection celebration, Valentine's

outside, sturdy enough to support embellishments, and a hot, gooey, rich, flowing chocolate center. Keep it simple or top with vanilla ice cream or whipped cream. Add more flavor, texture and color with fruit or a sauce. This dessert usually is an attention grabber with a secret: it is REALLY easy to make. Whether your dinner is complicated or simple, this showy finale is sure to please and get points for the baker!

With the foundational element chosen, I still had two or three more to select. How about combining French and creamy and thereby increasing my efficiency factor? Can you say "creme anglaise"? Literally translated, English cream or a light custard used as whipped cream would be used for topping or incorporated into desserts: chocolate or fruity, fresh, baked or frozen. Just reciting the words compelled me to find out how to make



Molten Chocolate cake for your Valentine. Photo by Colleen Hansen

Day, to reclaim the authenticity of the season, perhaps seed some alternative thoughts for the day, and definitely share this year's dessert du jour.

I love cooking, one could say I have a passion for it: creating with ingredients, imagining flavor, color, and textural combinations and aromas, envisioning and bringing a particular feeling and focus to my culinary endeavors. That being said, my best results occur when I allow myself to let the process direct me, to be inspired in the action of being in the kitchen, gathering ingredients, considering what wants to unfold, using all my senses. In this way, something new can emerge every time even if I am cooking or baking something I could "make in my sleep".

With romance, love and appreciation in mind, chocolate (seductive), French (the language of love), red (passion) and creamy (usually white in color perhaps signifying new life) immediately presented themselves for consideration, but in what form could I combine and present them? Molten chocolate cake, a go-to winner that is simple yet "sexy and indulgent" for completing a Valentine's meal. You get a cakey

whatever it was. Why settle for ice cream or whipped cream when I could easily make a smooth, slightly sweet, rich and fragrant creamy topping to contrast in both color and temperature with the hot, chocolate cake? I couldn't come up with any valid reason either! Creme Anglaise uses the same basic ingredients as ice cream: egg yolks (from the home flock), raw milk and cream (yes, local), a little sugar and whole vanilla bean. The resultant pourable custard, pale yellow with tiny dark seeds scraped from the bean, provides an element of sophistication and uniqueness to the developing confectionary montage.

And what would a Valentine's dessert be without a hearty splash of red? After I dig through the freezer for the remaining pitted sour cherries from last summer's harvest and make a quick cherry sauce, I also discover fresh raspberries in the fridge, and decide to use a touch of Austin Farms homemade apricot preserves mixed with a splash of water to give those raspberries a glisteny sheen. Since "variety is the spice of life", I choose both. There's nothing like combining fruit and chocolate: luscious and seductive, sweet or tart to contrast the bitter, heavenly and earthy.

Continued on Page 9



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## Valentines

Continued From Page 8

Yet another opportunity for the inner artist to express lies in the presentation. This is where all the individual preparation comes together to showcase the final product and really highlight the beauty of your creation. So, cakes hot out of the oven, I inverted them onto a white platter (a classic blank palette), spooned on the creme anglaise, topped one with warm cherry sauce, the other with the shiny, fresh raspberries, then lightly sprinkled chocolate shavings over all. Also adding fresh flowers to the plate for framing and color provides a certain je



ne sais quoi!

Definitely this is a rich offering, but in preparing each separate element, I tend to decrease the suggested amount of sweetener. One of my tenets for desserts is to let the flavors distinguish themselves without overwhelming them with excess sweetness. As in any baking or cooking, balance of flavors is key. A little sugar goes a long way for my taste buds; guess I'm just naturally sweet!

If you haven't yet surmised, I have fun in the kitchen, get my creative on and produce magic, usually, at least often. Years ago, I distilled a truism for my being, something about love in the kitchen, my happy place. Therefore, for me, food creations usually are an expression of my love and passion for life. We each have our own, and by sharing, we can inspire each other. I sure hope that my passion has infused someone out there with new ideas or perhaps provided "permission" to express creative passion more freely and generously. There are as many ways to express love as there are individuals.

However, you choose to celebrate, keep love and appreciation in your thoughts and intentions as you go about your day on February 14th, or better yet, all the days preceding, and notice how your attitude and the attitude of people around you changes. And if you make a meal, also notice that perhaps the food tastes better and is more nourishing in some invisible yet palpable way. May we all generate, and be surrounded by, love wherever we go and whatever we do.

I dedicate this column to my 92-year-old dad, a former professional journalist and son of a Los Angeles Herald Express editor, who resides on the edge of life (non-COVID related) in an ICU room in Los Angeles, California. A lover of life, nature, adventure and definitely chocolate; thanks for your love, Daddio!

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# Marla's Valley: The Goat Who Got His Tongue Stuck to the Gate and Other Small Troubles in a World of Larger Ones.

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

February has arrived as it always does, ready to put some sugar in our already holidayed-out bodies. Once again, the days are getting longer, looking forward to spring, and dark enough to remind us that winter is definitely still here waiting for snow to help our coming summer.

I really do enjoy the month of LOVE! I know it puts unwanted pressure on some that have cooler hearts and other's think it's corny but who needs a dark cloud ruining what can be a sweet time to consider that there's many ways to show that you care—when all you have to do is be kind. Yes, love in the time of COVID has its limitations for sure but there are still flowers, homemade Valentines, chocolate, jewelry and my favorite, cookies from **Blue Sky Bakery** at **Farm Runners** in Hotchkiss. They are mighty difficult to share but it can be done if you get enough of them.

It's been more than cold up here on the Mesa, colder than in town and lots colder than it is in Hotchkiss. I'm telling you this as a preamble as to how my goat got her tongue stuck on her pen gate. The blame is on the lasagna noodles if there was/is to be blame. The weather and the noodles were a bad combo. There always seem to be the wrong amount of those big wide ruffle pasta strips when I make lasagna. I keep them in the fridge for a while forever thinking that I could use them for something. Nothing can be made from them because no matter what, they look like lasagna. On day five, I feed them to the goat—one by one and by hand. This gives me some quality time to hold our bond. Yes, I know she's only interested in the noodle but I pretend she's purring at me. I soaked the noodles in some vegetable broth to make them extra delicious and nutritious and, in turn, this made them not only tasty but also damp. Damp to wet if I'm to be precise in the re-telling of this, yet another barnyard drama. I was feeding the giant pasta strips through the gate and it was 12 degrees out. One of the noodles stuck to the gate and the goat went for it like white on rice. Actually, like tongue on noodle on metal post. What a calamity. What bleating to break all the hearts for miles around. I ran inside for a pan of warm water and the windows were shaking with the most



**Marla takes a horseback phone call regarding her delinquent Fruitland Mesa water bill.** Photo By Friends of Marla

horrifying gut-wrenching screams. Out I ran with the warm water and tossed it on the obvious problem and voila! Instant release! Now the best thing about a goat is that they never hold on to trauma. This goat was asking for the noodles again immediately after she was thought to be dying. This time I decided to open the gate and feed the rest out of a bowl, and this I shall do for any further treats until the weather is above freezing.

Feeling a bit out of sorts writing of the minutia in life while all around

me in this world many suffer the troubled times of politics and pandemic. How blessed are we, shouldering big troubles such as a missing puzzle piece, a flat tire, mismatched socks, lack of a good haircut, another invasion of snow fleas, (those guys I once loved and actually sought out with my spy glass), or a clever and resourceful mouse in one's house? How lucky are we to view our sunrises and sunsets with astonishment over and over again, never tiring of the landscape? Yes, I know that real trouble

exists within our lives, medical, emotional, familial, financial and whatever else looms in the dark out there but that said, the majority of the North Fork Valley residents will give and receive help from neighbors if they are in trouble. Thank-you Farm Runners, Cindie Sorensen, Isaiah Bristow and everyone who has contributed to food banks, food boxes and other supplies during these last several stressful months.

I'm grateful and full of love for every family member, friend, fan, and even some of my secret foes, for my riding horse, and the Cowgirls I ride with, (the dogs gave me the look that reminds me that I love them, too.) Ok, with all the honking and beeping going on around me, I love them all, I do. Let this month be the time to remember all who bring the love to you and you to them. Recognition of the good in our lives.

How many of you can say you love your insurance agent? Mine is Kevin Parks and I can say I love him. This is a shout-out to the guy who recently spent over an hour and a half on the phone with me while I negotiated the tough terrain of the Medicare and Social Security mumble jumble. If Kevin doesn't have the answers, he finds them. If I have questions any time on my old vehicles, my tiny home, my precious life, all I have to do is call and if he's busy, I get a timely call back. I have his cell phone number. Maybe some can get less costly rates? Maybe. I don't care because the sound of Kevin's voice is worth having him in charge of my tiny empire. If you are new to the area, Kevin has his State Farm offices local. He's been here forever. I recommend him. He's my Valentine to you.

Crawford Country and beyond extends a sad farewell to Dick Hansen and sends condolences to Susan and all the family. He will be missed. Also, the passing of former Crawford resident Aron Ciegieski long before his time has us holding his mother, Hendrika, in our thoughts.

Ok, there's a word limit and so I say, move forward in love, keep your heart open but also protected from those who don't show it honor and respect. Heads up all ya'all!

*(Postscript: Marla shared over the phone some sweet memories of Rick Brodel, who passed away on January 11. Rick lingers in our hearts.)*

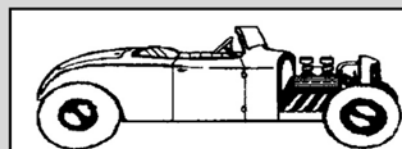
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# You Had to Go Downtown to Make a Long-Distance Call: Hotchkiss/Crawford Phones in the Early Days

By Thomas Wills

At the stroke of midnight, on October 4, 1958, the history of phone service in the North Fork took a big step into the future. No, it wasn't fiber optics or touch tone phones, it was direct dial phone service. After that date, locals were able to call anywhere in the whole wide world by just twirling a rotary dial on their home phone. This might not seem all that amazing today, but prior to October of 1958, if you wanted to make a long-distance phone call you couldn't make it from your crank type home phone. You were required to drive into the phone office in Hotchkiss or Crawford and have the operator place the call for you from there. Making a local call involved ringing the operator (by rapidly cranking your phone) and then asking to be connected to the person you wanted to reach. Imagine...

"Hello Agnes, can I get John Smith."

"You certainly may\*\*\*\*\* just one moment..." time passes and then... "I'm sorry but John doesn't seem to be home right now. He's probably out in the fields. How are the grandkids doing?" And so on.

After 1958 everyone had to have a phone book or a written list of numbers they needed to call.

In the early days in Hotchkiss the phone exchange, where the operators sat and manually plugged-in calls, was located in the upper story of the present Weekender Sports building. The second story has since been removed. In 1958 the building's street level portion was occupied by John's Hardware. Later the phone exchange was moved to the small brick building located just south of the Church of God (Church of Art in 2021) on North. 1st. Street.

### Crawford Phone Office

The first phone exchange in Crawford was in a Mrs. Barton's private home. Later it was moved to the Oliver Lewis building on East Main Street. The building is the current home of Julie Yeager's Progressive Realty. Miss Eliza Ayer is credited with being the first operator in Crawford.

The Crawford office was heated with a wood burning stove with the operators having the responsibility of cutting their own firewood and kindling. They also carried their drinking water by hand from the Clipper Ditch located three blocks to the south of the

office.

In 1920 the going wage for operators was 12 cents an hour. One early full-time operator recalled, in a 1958 article in the Hotchkiss Herald, that she was once paid \$21.50 per month.

Other long-time operators at Crawford and Hotchkiss include: Agnes VanEngen, Florence Patterson, Thelma Gofforth, Kitty DenBeste, Mrs. Walter Maher, Mrs. Howard DenBeste, Nellie and Ella Dodge and others. Nellie Dodge appears to have been one of the last operators at the Hotchkiss office.

The other part of the early phone system was the linemen who went out in all kinds of weather to keep the lines up and working. Grant Miller was one early lineman. He worked for the Delta County Cooperative Telephone Company (DCTC) for 32 years. His career encompassed the days of traveling on horseback to fix phone lines to having a modern truck in the fifties. Other linemen and workers include: Frank H. Drexel, Wendell Stone, and Ralph and Arthur Crim.



**Update:** This article first appeared in the January 15 digital edition of the Herald and a reader, Ed Ramey, shared the following: "In the early 50s the Hotchkiss Hotel had a "Bell " telephone booth in the lobby. My mother, Lucille Lane, managed the hotel and would answer the phone. This was the only way the outside world could contact people in Hotchkiss. A party would call for a resident in town and my mother would take call-back message and let them know that there would be a message charge. I would then drive to their place and give them the call back message. I was paid 25-50 cents for in town messages and \$1.00 for out of town calls. I remember in 1958 my mother called me to let me know that they now had connected to the new phone system. *Ed Ramey*

### Recent Times:

In recent times the biggest change has been the sale, in the 1990's, of DCTC to TDS, a national corporation which owns phone systems all over the United States. Many other improvements have been made including the elimination of party lines, getting touch tone service, and making most of the Grand Valley a free local call, which also made it possible for the North Fork to have an economical connection to the Internet beginning in the late 1990s when dial-up service was standard.



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# VALLEY ARTS AND CULTURE

## Blue Sage Center for the Arts: Stories, Humor, and Health

(Submitted)

Winter can be a time to hibernate but it can also be a time to delve into new past times and enjoy new adventures and the Blue Sage Center for the Arts has several events planned to help you do just that.

A new program we are really excited about "Stories from the North Fork" is a collaboration with the North Fork Senior Connection where community members connect via zoom and share their stories of life in the North Fork Valley. This program will happen on Wednesdays at 4 pm starting February 10th. A zoom link will be available on both the Blue Sage and the North Fork Senior Connections websites. A link will also be available on the Blue Sage Facebook page and will be sent out in an email blast. The Zoom meeting will start off with a person's pre-recorded story after which the meeting will open up to community input, insights and conversation. Pipe up if you want, or stay silent and just enjoy the exchange.

The North Fork Senior Connection and the Blue Sage are available to help teach how to access zoom. There are also computers available and hotspots (a device that brings an internet connection to you anywhere). Don't be left out. Call today so you can meet with your neighbors safely on line. Plan to join in this fun community engagement. If you have a story you would like to share please contact Linda at [northforkseniorconnections@gmail.com](mailto:northforkseniorconnections@gmail.com) /970- 725-3482 or Debra at the Blue Sage [director@bluesage.org](mailto:director@bluesage.org) /970-527-7243. This program will also be part of the Smithsonian Exhibit: Crossroads in Rural America.

Two other events during February both focus on relieving the stress we are all finding in our lives right now.

Only during this time would we be able to present a nationally acclaimed PH.D from the East Coast. The Blue Sage will be hosting a presentation on Our Body, Stress and COVID with Stephen Porges PH D. on Saturday, February 13 at 5 pm. Dr. Stephen Porges is distinguished University Scientist at Indiana University where he is the founding director of the Traumatic Stress Research Consortium. He will talk about how our bodies react to stress, how we can recognize the changes in our body from stress and how to alleviate these

harmful responses to stress. He developed Polyvagal Theory and first presented the Theory in 1994. Over the next 10 years it was gradually adopted by a new wave of leading trauma therapists. For these new-thinking therapists, and the generation of clinicians who followed, PVT opened up the 'black box' that is our nervous system and connected, for the first time, our sense of safety with behavior and communication patterns.

In the past few years, the Polyvagal perspective has spread to the broader wellness and healthcare communities. This program was made possible by the Nextfifty Initiative. The Speaker Series is free to those over 60 and we ask others to support our efforts by making a donation on our website:

[bluesage.org](http://bluesage.org).

**Get ready to laugh.** On Friday, Feb 26th at 6 pm we will be hosting comedian Nancy Norton. Nancy inspires people to have a better life through laughter. "The Power of Humor" Norton delivers a high energy, and hilarious show. She consistently receives 5 Star Reviews from clubs and corporate clients. She tours nationally and has been a regular headliner at Comedy Works in Denver. A zoom link will be available on our website, and on our Facebook page. Thanks to NextFifty Initiative this event is being offered free to those over 60. We ask others to please support our community programs by making a donation on our website: [buesage.org](http://buesage.org).

Our Speaker Series with, and for, older adults received funding from the NextFifty Initiative. This award will help us keep doing what we love: supporting members of our community. Although the Series is developed for older adults anyone can participate and will enjoy the program where we will host historical speakers and psychologist to musicians and comedians.

For more information please contact us at the Blue Sage at [info@bluesage.org](mailto:info@bluesage.org) or 970-527-7243. We would like to thank everyone who continues to support us.

The Blue Sage Gallery and Gift Shop is open so remember us when you are looking for that special gift for Valentine's Day.

**SAVE THE DATE** – A rare, once in a lifetime opportunity has been given the Blue Sage from Midori Partners in Performance. Midori will be holding a Masterclass with students on March 13 from 1:30 to 2:40 pm. Any student interested in participating needs to contact the Blue Sage by Friday, Feb 26<sup>th</sup>.

Founded in 2003, Partners in Performance, PiP, co-presents chamber music concerts throughout the United States with the goal of stimulating interest in classical music, specifically in smaller communities. Concerts by Midori, pianist Jonathan Biss, and musicians from PiP's Young Artist program aim to elevate local interest in chamber music, while attracting new audiences and new donors to the presenting organizations.

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## BLUE SAGE/ NORTH FORK SENIOR CONNECTIONS Stories From the North Fork

*Beginning Wednesday,  
February 10<sup>th</sup>, 4 pm*

What brought you and your family to the North Fork Valley?

How were you able to find your place in a small community?

What would you miss the most if you were to leave?

There is a lot to love about living in this little valley on the Western Slope of Colorado, but too often we occupy separate communities within the larger one and don't know the deeper story about our neighbors. Who are we and what brought us here? What do we have in common? What values do we share?

As a part of a new Smithsonian exhibit coming to the Blue Sage Center for the Creative Arts in 2022, "Crossroad: Change in Rural America", North Fork Senior Connections and the Blue Sage are initiating a project to share our stories among community members. The discussion following an interview with a community member gives us the opportunity to share our own story and find those things we have in common. Enlarging our circles of acquaintances enriches our lives and a thriving community needs all kinds of people.

Beginning on **February 10<sup>th</sup> at 4 pm** and continuing on successive Wednesdays throughout the winter months, join us via Zoom for an hour-long conversation about life in the North Fork Valley. Learn about neighbors and what life was like here in the past and share your

own memories in a short interview or as a part of the conversation. The Zoom link to the weekly programs will be available at our Facebook pages or websites (see below).

The Blue Sage will be using some of these interviews for its venture to bring these stories to life through the arts, transforming them into works of fiction or creative non-fiction, songs or illustrative photos and paintings. CU Boulder's Playback Theater will add their interpretation of some of the stories when the exhibit comes together in 2022.

North Fork Senior Connections will help with the process of connecting online in these Zoom events. Call us at (970) 527-3482 or send us an email at [nfseniorconnections@gmail.com](mailto:nfseniorconnections@gmail.com) to request assistance in accessing the programs and for more information about sharing your own story.

Join us on February 10<sup>th</sup> and be a part of the celebration of the richness of life in the North Fork Valley.

Blue Sage Creative Center for the Arts  
(970) 527-7243

Website: <https://bluesage.org/>  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/bluesagecenter/>

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# COVID-19 in the Valley Journal: Vaccinations, Deaths, More Caution

By Thomas Wills

## Vaccine Status as of Last Week of January

*As of the last week of January the Health Department was vaccinating about 200 people per week - health care workers and those over 70 by appointment.*

(Posted by DCHD January 16) Delta County Health Department is currently vaccinating: Phase 1A & 1B. We are NOT vaccinating anyone under 70 at this time. The state health department has reviewed the federal/CDC recommendations and has not yet changed the vaccination schedule below.

All available COVID-19 Vaccination appointments are full (through about mid-February). The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment is revising its vaccine distribution plan to address the demand and more information will be available soon. Please continue to check this (Delta County) page for more information.

The county is developing an interest form for scheduling future vaccinations that will be available soon. Please check the website to fill out the form. The Call Center number for vaccination and other COVID information is 970-874-2172.

January 2021 appeared to be mostly grim with a glimmer of good news.

**Good News:** The number of cases may have peaked after a holiday-driven surge and vaccinations of the most at risk and vulnerable are proceeding in the county at about 200 people per week. This rate should speed up in the coming weeks.

Free testing has become broadly available, a key in slowing virus spread and response.

**Bad News:** Death numbers in January were the highest so far and poor masking compliance by the public in Delta County continues. Delta County continues to have the worst numbers (scaled for population) of any in the six-county region on three (deaths, January cases, and positivity rate) of five metrics according to comparative charts, (using official data) compiled by Terry O'Brien. Meanwhile, a new, more infectious, strain of the virus is spreading, including in Colorado.

The CDC, and other authorities, including the local health department, urge continued caution measures including: social distancing, mask wearing in public spaces, frequent handwashing after touching surfaces touched by others, and generally limiting public contact and groups of people.

December 2020 wrapped up with several hundred health-related workers in Delta County receiving shots of the vaccines. High risk people like those in nursing homes and above age 70 were next.

From now on out the scenario is a sort of race, with health care workers and those most at risk of serious symptoms being vaccinated as doses become available, while a new, more infectious, strain of the virus may be spreading among the general population. This narrative may result in more cases before general vaccination can happen, but possibly fewer deaths and hospitalizations since the most vulnerable are being vaccinated first.

In the meantime, a concurrent

pandemic of COVID-related misinformation about things like the seriousness of the crisis, efficacy of masking, and anti-vaccine propaganda, continues to be spread locally via social media and mouth to mouth.

In what is old news, according to the new Town of Hotchkiss website and minutes from a November 20 meeting of the Council, Mayor Larry Wilkening's wife Sherry, as well as Marshal Dan Miller and his wife all tested positive for COVID. All Town Staff were then tested, but came up negative.

**December 28** – Personnel from the Delta County Health Department that deal with the elderly and patients received their first shots of the Moderna vaccine.

**December 29** – It was reported nationally that Colorado had the first confirmed U.S. case of the newest mutant strain of the virus that just appeared in Great Britain. The case was in a man in his 20s living near Denver who had no travel history. The new mutation is much more infectious than the original but is apparently no more deadly once you get it, but may result in a spike of new cases, hospitalizations and deaths.

Only 7 new cases were reported today but as COVID awareness data activist, Terry O'Brien (The O'Brien Report) noted, testing had also declined sharply, possibly due to the holidays. Two more deaths were reported today for a total of 25 with 14 of the total number occurring in December.

O'Brien, who provides a running big picture data charts/commentary on the local/regional progression of the pandemic, noted today that from March through October of 2020 Delta County had the best (lowest) numbers of any in the six-county region. That changed dramatically in November and as of December, our numbers, when scaled for population, are the worst in five of six metrics and the sixth, deaths, is close to moving to the top.

**December 31** – Local churches continue to address pandemic caution in various ways: the three United Methodist Churches in the Valley are closed to meetings and services are being done via Zoom and YouTube; Masses are being held at the two Catholic churches in Paonia (Sacred Heart) and Hotchkiss (St. Margaret Mary) including a special one in Paonia today and in Hotchkiss tomorrow; First Baptist in Hotchkiss continues to hold cautious services with masking/distancing as do many other Valley churches.

The new British, more infectious, mutation of the virus that was first reported near Denver, is now reported in California and assumed to be, or soon to be, widespread.

**January 4** – 25 new cases. During my once-every-three-weeks shopping trip to City Market in Hotchkiss today at mid-afternoon, I was disappointed to note that masking compliance was poor (about 60% masked) despite signage and an employee near the entrance offering free masks and constant reminders over the PA system that masks were required. In other words, there was encouragement, but no actual enforcement. This also appears to be the case with many local, higher traffic businesses.

**January 5** – 41 new cases were reported today as well as two additional deaths (28 total). Vaccinations began for those over 70 but the available appointments for available vaccine

filled up very quickly after the first announcement. It was later reported by the county that over-70 appointments were booked-up through February 19.

**January 6** – Only 11 new cases but one new death as well (29 cumulative). Hospitalizations remain at a current nine.

**January 7** – 27 new cases, in-progress hospitalizations stood at five but deaths were now at a cumulative 31 with two additional ones. About 1,400 COVID tests are being performed in the county each week with 2,408 reported for the past two weeks on today's Delta County Dashboard.

**January 8** – 87 new cases were reported while hospitalizations dropped to three with no new deaths. Delta County reported that they had received 1,000 total doses of vaccine so far.

The O'Brien Report noted that Delta County now has the worst metrics in the six-county region when scaled for population (per 100,000 persons) for comparison.

**January 10** – 11 new cases due it being the weekend. It was reported that Fred Jardine of Hotchkiss had passed away from COVID today at St. Mary's Hospital in Grand Junction.

**January 11** – Four new deaths over the weekend brought the cumulative total up to 35.

**January 12** – 32 new cases, 321, current active cases, 35 cumulative deaths and 2 current hospitalizations.

The O'Brien Report noted that in March – October, 2020 Delta County had three deaths, then 8 more in November, 14 in December and 10 more in January through today. Not a good trend direction.

**January 13** – 46 new cases but Delta hospitalizations and in-county deaths holding steady.

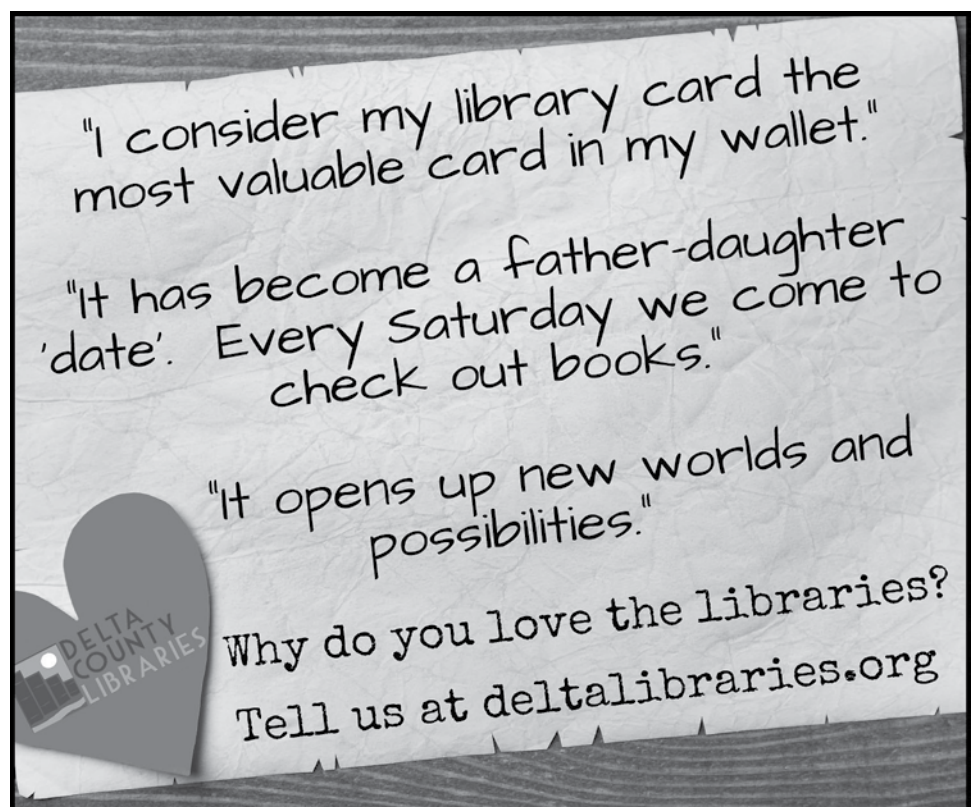
**January 14** – Only 17 new cases, but three new deaths reported (38 cumulative since 3/20) and COVID hospitalizations at DCMH rose to 4. All the new deaths were of persons over age 70.

**January 15** – 32 new cases, 4 current COVID hospitalization at the Delta Hospital, and no new deaths.

**January 18** – 22 new cases reported over the weekend. 4 hospitalizations at Delta.

**January 22** – Three new deaths reported (45 cumulative) and only 13 new cases reported.

*Note: These sources for information are Delta County Public Information Officer – Darnell Place-Wise, Delta County Memorial Hospital District, the Delta County COVID-19 Dashboard, the State COVID-19 website, and the (Terry) O'Brien Report- supplemental Delta County/Regional dashboard data charts, analysis, commentary, and related correspondence. CDC for national information and guidance.*





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## Local Groups Protest BLM Resource Management Plan

### A Better Way Forward: Communities Join Together to Keep the North Fork Fruitful and Thriving

By Emma Gregory – Western Slope Conservation Center

Amongst the sprawling mountains, deep valleys, and idyllic farmlands of the North Fork Valley, a plan is afoot. Residents of the Valley might remember the long and arduous journey the community took during the drafting of the Bureau of Land Management's most recently released Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Uncompahgre Field Office. Despite years of collaboration and substantial public input, which culminated in the community-developed North Fork Alternative Plan, the final RMP released in April 2020 pivoted to a brand-new Alternative. This final plan opens up nearly the entirety of the North Fork Valley to oil and gas development, thus heavily favoring the interests of extractive industries over those of local communities. Last month, the state of Colorado became the third group to file a lawsuit against the BLM to overturn this RMP, which falls woefully short of protecting the climate, environment, public health, critical resources, and sustainable economic future for the region.

Historically, the North Fork Valley has been a mining and agricultural region whose economy has been closely tied to the boom and bust cycles of the coal industry. In recent years, though, the Valley has successfully diversified its economy with agro-tourism, family farms and ranches, renewable energy, outdoor recreation, and other local businesses. Dubbed the 'farm to table

capital of Colorado,' the Valley has the highest concentration of organic farms in the state. It is also home to abundant outdoor recreation opportunities and a growing tourism industry as a result of the beauty and pristine nature of its surrounding public lands. However, the most recent RMP, increasing water scarcity, and the economic impacts from the COVID-19 global pandemic are creating a great deal of uncertainty for the local communities of the North Fork Valley.

In response, the Western Slope Conservation Center, Colorado Farm and Food Alliance, Valley Organic Growers Association, The Wilderness Society, Wilderness Workshop, and Conservation Colorado, have launched the Keep the North Fork Fruitful campaign. Its goal? To lift community voices together and develop solutions that embrace sustainable economic opportunities and protect everything we all love about the Valley! The project seeks to foster a just transition away from extractive industries, protect the natural environment of the North Fork Valley, and preserve our heritage and way of life. By building a broad coalition of community members, businesses, and organizations, the campaign sees this moment in time as the chance to come together and chart out a unified vision for a sustainable future in the Valley. Add your voice to this movement today by visiting [KeeptheNorthFork.org](http://KeeptheNorthFork.org) to learn more and sign the petition.

## NORTH FORK REAL ESTATE REALTY Lending Careful in a Tight Market

By Mike Jackson  
WesternColoradoRealty.com  
Offices in Hotchkiss and Paonia

Those of you who have read this column over the years (15 and counting) may know that February is my least favorite month (too cold and gray) and this year it also represents the one-year anniversary of Covid-19 popping up. As the virus began to spread, causing the stock market to plummet, I remember thinking "Oh no, here we go again." Concerned that the ripple effect would also derail the local real estate market, much like the financial meltdown of 2008 did, we braced for impact... *pause for dramatic effect*, but as you probably already know, quite the opposite occurred - the market took off!

Fueled by record low interest rates, urban refugees whom the boss said could work from home, and ready-to-retire-and-get-out-of-the-city boomers, the COVID rush of 2020 pushed prices and sales volume to new highs throughout the intermountain west. So, where does that leave us?

In the North Fork, the inventory of homes for sale is as depleted as the City Market toilet paper aisle was last March. As of the third week in January, excluding single-wide mobile homes, tiny houses, mountain cabins, and yet-to-be-built new homes, there are only twelve homes available to purchase under \$400,000 - while eighteen in the same category are currently under-contract. And, with the median local home price now hovering around \$300,000, it's become harder for folks to afford the home they really want. As far as I can tell, this is the new normal.

The dream of homeownership has long been an American value - one which is buoyed by a Federally supported financing system. The 30-year fixed rate loan is an anomaly among nations and is as important to our housing industry as the sun is to solar power.

Some 70% of all home loans are backed by the government-sponsored enterprises (GSE) Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac. Let's back up a bit. If home financing were left to the banking system,

loans would be more expensive, of shorter duration, and more susceptible to interest rate fluctuations. Such was the case for home loans before the Great Depression, when in 1938, the Federal National Mortgage Association was created as part of the New Deal. Then, in 1968, the entity was transformed into a stock issuing public company for the purpose of expanding the secondary mortgage market to provide liquidity through the issuance of mortgage backed securities. These securities, which carry little risk due to implicit government backing, have long been investment favorites of pension funds and insurance companies.

Fast forward to the real estate boom of the mid-2000's when lenders pushed the envelope of prudence by making subprime loans (poor credit risk) and no-doc loans (uncertain income to repay). The result was a collapsing house of cards that ended with these GSE's being taken into conservatorship by the feds-- where they remain today. The Trump administration made

changes allowing the GSE's to pocket more of their profits, bolstering their capital reserves, in an effort to move them beyond conservatorship but were, in the end, stymied by the economic disruption brought by the COVID pandemic. Losses to the GSE's due to Covid related foreclosures and forbearance are estimated to surpass \$7 billion.

To get insight into how this is affecting local lenders, I called Chris Ledesma at Cornerstone Home Lending in Delta. She said that the documentation process is more rigorous than ever, particularly for the self-employed, of which Delta County has many. Before funding a loan, the underwriters want to see that borrowers are still within the required debt-to-income ratios. They're asking for current financial statements and bank account records right up to closing. Ultimately, a system born of the Great Depression that has survived the inflation spike of the 80's, the financial melt-down of 2008, and now the pandemic, is proving to be as resilient as the American spirit itself!



## Love Your Libraries in February

(Submitted)

February is National Library Lovers Month and here in Delta County there is likely a lot of love to go around.

All five libraries are vital hubs in each community they serve. People rely on the libraries to acquire books and movies, learn new skills, access public computers and internet, participate in programs, chat with friendly librarians, and more.

The libraries also provide a "virtual" hub through their online library where patrons can access a variety of resources, including downloadable books, movie streaming, continuing education courses, music, genealogy resources, and much more.

In 2020, the online library services became even more essential to the community due to library closures in the spring and limited hours due to COVID restrictions. While physical materials checked out less in 2020 usage of download resource, OverDrive, increased by 17% in 2020.

Another popular online resource is Universal Class, which provides hundreds of high-quality online courses in a wide-variety of topics. In 2020, library patrons in Delta County took advantage of the opportunity to take a class from home or on the go.

Patrons who want to show their library love for Delta County Libraries in February can do so in a number of ways. Library Lovers Month is a great time to reconnect with your library, say "hi" to your librarians, browse the shelves, get a library card if you don't already have one, and check out an item.

Another way to participate is to

express your love in words. Contact the libraries directly, or visit Delta County Libraries' website or social media pages. Finally, there is also the opportunity to support the libraries through a donation. Visit the website to make an online donation or stop by one of the libraries and do it in person. Info: [www.deltalibraries.org](http://www.deltalibraries.org).

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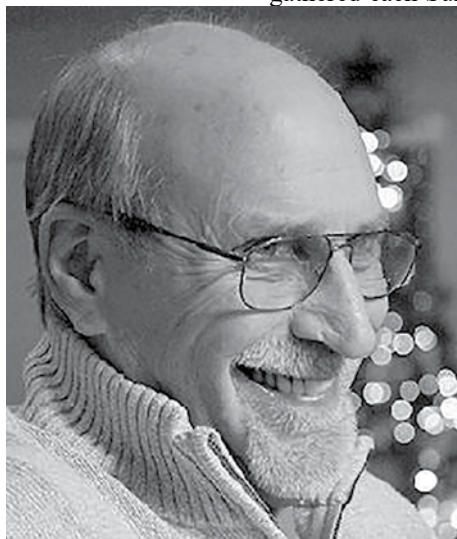
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# Another Month in the Valley

Continued from page 4

**Crawford News:** From the Crawford Colorado Message Board on Facebook, January 19. "This is the SECOND night that someone's big black dog has come on to my property ( on I Street) and got into the trashcans! I went out to tell it to shoo and it growled at me! Took off with a whole bag of trash! No ma'am no ham no turkey! To whoever's animal this is, please keep it in your damn yard or house! Sorry for no pictures."



**History Note:** "The sign on the Paonia Chamber of Commerce window in the early '70's said, "HIPPIES STAY OUT!"

A long-time local woman (on Facebook) remembering 50 years ago. An older man then noted

that about that same time the editor of the Paonian newspaper advocated for "tarring and feathering" the young newcomers who gathered each Sunday at the Paonia Town Park to play volleyball.

One project I am immersed in is writing a narrative history of the North Fork including the 1960's and 70's when a wave of young back-to-the-land young people arrived in our Valley. Were you one of them? Have you written about those times or are you willing to write or talk about how things were? Photos? Call or

e-mail me. Tom Wills 872-2664 or Elazarus.wills@gmail.com

### Rick Brodel 1946 - 2021

On January 11, 2021, Rick Brodel, well known for decades as one of the family of proprietors at the former Farmer Franks Shopping Center, passed away in Grand Junction. The very model of a friendly, successful, local businessman, Rick touched the hearts of many. He is survived by wife Candy and family.

WesternColoradoRealty.com welcomes new agent Kelley Collins McClain.

## OTHER VOICES:

### We Are All Relative Newcomers and Need to Collaborate

Opinion by Kate Linehan – Hotchkiss area

Upon reading a recent opinion piece titled "Brotherhood of Local Coal Miner's Helped Keep the Valley Agricultural." (December 2020 Herald – Ed.) I felt moved to share another perspective.

The piece focused on our valley's coal mining history and the need to respect coal miners, especially because many people are still powering homes and buildings with coal.

But what struck me was the author's short-term view of time. While it is true that white settlers in the late 1800's established the mining and agricultural tradition in our valley, it is also true that the native peoples who had been living here gracefully

so few elders whose lineage reaches back much further to teach us the deeper human and natural history of this special place.

I respect the men and women who risk their lives to mine coal, and I respect the woman working on the front lines to protect the irreplaceable wild lands in our back yard. Both statements are true for me: While I don't live in a home tied to the electrical grid, I do frequent businesses and homes that are tied to it. And these mountains have forever embedded their wild and magical beauty in my heart, just as I am sure they have for many who mine coal, graze cattle or grow food here among other occupations.

Instead of digging a trench to defend against perceived "newcomers", as the author has done, wouldn't it be nice to build a bridge that encourages



for many thousands of years were forcefully removed or killed to make way for this tradition.

So, who exactly are the 'newcomers', bucking for a new way in our valley today? I was born 37 years ago, about 60 miles from Paonia as the crow flies and have spent the majority of my life in that radius. It seems logical to me that on a broader spectrum of time, if you and/or your family arrived here in the last 150 years, you are a 'newcomer'. And I am saddened that our community has

all of us to engage in respectful conversation about our collective future? Our economy and culture is changing and that is a good thing. Every day I see men and women on the front lines of building a future that will necessarily be less coal based and more focused on regeneration, one that acknowledges the irreplaceable importance of wild land and clean water and air.

With mutual respect, we can forge a future that is forward-looking while not forgetting the past.

1907  
CRAWFORD, COLORADO

Family or friends coming to visit?  
StoneHouseInn.net (970) 589-2903

**WE NEED VOLUNTEERS AND MEMBERS**

# North Fork Senior Connections

*Finding Solutions to Help Seniors Age in Place*

**Bringing N.F.Valley elders and volunteers together!**  
Call (970) 527-3482 or e-mail: nfseniorconnections@gmail.com  
www.https://nfseniorconnections.helpfulvillage.com

PAONIA  
134 Grand Ave.  
970-527-6223

WesternColoradoRealty.com

HOTCHKISS  
116 W. Bridge St.  
970-872-2230

Mike Jackson

Bob Pennetta

Dave Mitchell

Myles Roberts

Joe Young

Jocelyn Wiggins

**Welcome New Agent Kelley Collins McClain!**

**BEAUTIFUL AND SPACIOUS HOME**  
on the highly desired Rogers Mesa, near Hotchkiss, that has been completely remodeled and updated with tons of charm! Open floor plan. Well maintained property. Great livestock set-up, nice barn, corals, storage shed/shop, & an equipment shed - on 9.37 acres.  
#777739 \$449,000 Myles Roberts 234-3391

**MODERN AND EFFICIENT**  
3bd/3ba home on acreage. Of 261 acres, about 100 acres in Corn, Wheat, and seed grade Triticale. Years have been spent enriching the soil and perfecting the irrigation delivery system. In past years the property grew hay and the unirrigated acres were used for winter calving ground for the owner's cattle.  
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**A GREAT FARM/RANCHING OPPORTUNITY**  
265 acre piece of farm ground. 4 bd/4 ba 3029sq. ft. main home. Good productive farm ground with 100+ acres in corn, 64 acres in pinto beans, some winter wheat, 4 irrigation take outs off. There's 1994 doublewide in good condition and a 1978 singlewide for extended family or farm help to live on premises.  
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**BEAUTIFUL DNTOWN DELTA HOUSE**  
Recently remodeled kitchen with stainless steel appliances. Master bedroom has a spacious walk-in closet and 3/4 bath. Two bedrooms and a full bath are also located on the main floor. Large finished basement with 1/2 bath and 3 non-conforming bedrooms. fenced backyard and a screened porch.  
#776675 \$319,000 Joe Young 787-0734

**LIVE ON THE SMITH FORK OF THE GUNNISON RIVER IN CRAWFORD.**  
Great 35 acres with every type of wildlife you could imagine in the Western Rockies. 5 irrigated acres to raise a little hay. Wooded hillsides, a little waterfall and a pond to soak your feet in. #771437 \$265,000 Bob Pennetta 234-2232

**2 BEDROOM AND 1 BATHROOM IN HOTCHKISS.**  
Recently renovated. Beautiful hickory cabinets, and porcelain tile flooring in the kitchen. Laminate flooring throughout the rest of the home. Quiet neighborhood with great views of the valley. There are 2 shed spaces. Plenty of room outdoors for any gardening or rv parking.  
#775434 \$129,900 Jocelyn Wiggins 765-5251

# Happy Valentine's Day North Fork Valley

Every \$ Spent Locally Keeps  
Our Beloved Community Strong

Buy Local  
Eat Local  
Drink Local





# Despite Pandemic, Hotchkiss Moves Ahead With Economic Enhancement Plans

(Press Release - Town of Hotchkiss)

HOTCHKISS, CO - Over 9,000 vehicles pass through the small town of Hotchkiss on an average day and a group of local business and community leaders have been working with Trustee, Mary Hockenbery and Mayor, Larry Wilkening seeking a way to use that traffic to help enhance the economy of the town. Grassroots discussions began as coffee shop conversations in 2018 and grew into bi-monthly meetings of the Downtown Business Group which consists of many local business owners, chamber of commerce members, non-profit directors and local politicians.

With the help and funding provided by Region 10, a steering committee from this group enlisted the help of RPI Consulting to develop an economic development strategy for the town of Hotchkiss. In 2019 the Hotchkiss Prosperity Plan was completed and after many meetings, community surveys and informational seminars, one of the key priorities identified in that plan was downtown revitalization.

Over the past two years many commercial buildings in downtown Hotchkiss have sold with new owners coming from throughout the state. The pandemic of 2020 slowed the planning process but did not deter community leaders from continuing to pursue the goal of building a sustainable economy in Hotchkiss. Leveraging existing assets was deemed critical.

With input from many members of the community, the steering committee has proposed, and the Hotchkiss Town Council has adopted, several guiding principles that capture the hopes for the future of downtown Hotchkiss. The projects that define what a successful downtown will look like to the community in the future will:

- Reflect the community and highlight the character of Hotchkiss.
- Increase anchor businesses that attract residents and visitors alike.
- Agriculture, outdoor recreation, and art culture are major drivers in the community and should be expanded and incorporated more in downtown.
- Expand the availability and affordability of spaces to new and existing businesses.
- Improve downtown by increasing walkability, activating underutilized buildings, providing signage, increasing public gathering spaces, and enabling façade improvements.
- Capture through traffic on Bridge Street by creating a welcoming downtown environment that offers services for travelers.
- Make downtown Hotchkiss a destination for residents, visitors, and businesses by increasing nightlife activities, dining and drinking

establishments, locally made goods, and workforce housing.

These principles will be used as a framework for action and guide decision-making for downtown Hotchkiss. It is hoped that any future proposed downtown improvement project will advance as many of these guiding principles as possible.

Fortunately, the Town of Hotchkiss holds one of the greatest assets, the old Public Works building. Due to its location, existing ownership by the Town and the opportunity to transform a vacant but viable building into a vibrant space, the Public Works Building is an ideal catalytic project for downtown. Located on the northwest corner of Bridge Street and Oak Drive, the Public Works Building is the center of downtown and within easy walking distance of many businesses and anchors. Taking the opportunity to replace the old shop with something that will serve the community well for years to come, the town is working with the community, Region 10, the Department of Local Affairs and Community Builders to identify a repurposing concept that would support and rejuvenate the downtown business core.

Focusing on the public works building and using the guiding principles that were established, a Public Works Building Community Vision was created. The preferred use that rose to the top is a flexible commercial space

that can accommodate multiple vendors including eateries, retail, maker and/or light manufacturing uses. It is important to note that while the preferred use is flexible commercial space, it is critical that the vendor(s) are open to the public to create a destination and gathering place for patrons and the community. In addition to the opportunity of improving the building itself, there are several vacant buildings in the immediate vicinity that offer tremendous potential for downtown. A successful reuse of the Public Works Building may serve as a direct catalyst for further adaptive reuse on adjacent underutilized properties.

Going forward, as the Town considers selling the Public Works Building, they are determined to ensure that the future use and design of the building furthers as many of the guiding principles as possible. Developing and issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the purchase and reuse of the building is an option and will be explored further in 2021. Considering the previous use of the building, immediate next steps include working with the Colorado Brownfields Partnership to ensure any environmental remediation needs are identified. The town is excited to move forward in this process and begin to rejuvenate downtown. For more information about the Community Downtown Guiding Principles or the Public Works Building Community Vision go to: [townofhotchkiss.colorado.gov](http://townofhotchkiss.colorado.gov).

## The Basic Physics and Mathematics of Epidemics

By Thomas Wills

On local social media the debate about COVID and the recommended precautions needed to slow the spread go something like this:

**Pro:** Over 430,000 people have died of COVID in the U.S. in ten months and about 3,000 more die every day. We should take all the precautions recommended by the health science experts to slow the spread while we are waiting for all to get vaccinated.

**Con:** Masking and that stuff is all about fear and I'm not going to be ruled by fear. Only the fearful wear masks. Even if you get COVID, for most people it's no worse than a bad case of the flu.

**Pro:** What about the 430,000

people that have died. Isn't being dead worse than having the flu?

**Con:** All of those were people with something else wrong with them. So, you could say they wouldn't have died if they hadn't had the other stuff.

**Pro:** Like cancer survivors, people with emphysema, diabetes, depressed immune systems, or severe asthma?

**Con:** Well, yeah. But I'm not gonna wear a mask cause I'm not afraid of getting it.

**Pro:** Because you assume your COVID case would be mild because you don't have pre-existing conditions?

**Con:** Right.

What the "Con" argument focuses on is personal risk, and what it ignores is

community risk. And mathematics and physics. According to experts in epidemics success in quelling an epidemic like COVID-19 before it kills large numbers of people has to do to slowing an exponential increase in cases, which could kill not only the elderly and those with vulnerable conditions but also many more that die of other things that were not properly treated while the health care system was under stress or being overwhelmed.

Slowing spread involves the frequently mentioned actions of: wearing masks in public spaces, avoiding groups of people, washing hands frequently (and not touching the face) after touching public surfaces. Doing these things are not a guarantee that one will not contract COVID but do lower the probability (risk)

of contraction and spread. And as the probability figure declines, so does the number of cases, and so does the number of hospitalizations and deaths and the resulting impacts on the economy.

The point of wearing a mask and the rest, is not that someone, like a healthy 30-year-old, has a high chance of dying of COVID (although some have) but that the healthy person can contract the virus *more easily*, perhaps without knowing it, and pass it on to another one or two people who in turn pass it on, exponentially increasing the risk for the whole community. Eventually one of those contacts is vulnerable person who dies of it. Something that might have been avoided if the stubborn original person had taken more precautions. *Amen.*

### Delta and Surrounding Counties Metric Rankings - Highest Metrics (Worse) to Lowest (Best)

Delta County Data from the DCHD Dashboard as of 1/29/2021 4:30 PM

O'Brien Report Graphic

Scaling is to 100,000 Population

Email [tobrien@disc.com](mailto:tobrien@disc.com) to receive email updates on Delta County COVID-19 Information

Two-Week Cumulative Incidence (SCALED)		Seven-Day Cumulative Incidence (SCALED)		Two-Week Average Positivity		January Cases (SCALED)		Cumulative Deaths (SCALED)	
From Delta and State Dashboard		Verified with Harvard Brown's 7-Day Map		From Delta and State Dashboard		From Delta and State Dashboard		From Delta and State Dashboard	
County/Unit	Metric	County/Unit	Metric	County/Unit	Metric	County/Unit	Metric	County/Unit	Metric
Gunnison	1,114.6	Gunnison	65.3	Gunnison	11.70%	Delta	2,342	Delta	170.0
Mesa	826.2	Ouray	63.7	Delta	10.60%	Montrose	2,016	Mesa	109.1
Delta	805.2	Mesa	52.7	Montrose	10.00%	Gunnison	1,978	Montrose	105.2
6 Cnty Total	792.1	Montrose	52.4	Mesa	6.80%	Mesa	1,869	6 Cnty Total	100.8
Montrose	769.3	6 Cnty Total	51.1	Garfield	6.60%	6 Cnty Total	1,859	Colorado	79.5
Ouray	567.5	Delta	50.0	Ouray	5.20%	Garfield	1,509	Ouray	60.8
Garfield	505.3	Garfield	41.6	Colorado 7d	5.16%	Ouray	1,013	Garfield	63.2
Colorado	391.1	Colorado	26.0	6 Cnty Total	N/A	Colorado	975	Gunnison	34.3

## 32 Colorado Groups Support Biden's Expected Pledge to Halt New Fossil Fuel Leasing, Permitting on Public Lands

(Press Release)

DENVER— As President Biden prepares to announce a ban on new oil and gas leasing and permitting on public lands and oceans, 32 climate, conservation, religious and business groups in Colorado today announced support for the move in a letter to the president.

Biden promised during the campaign that he would ban new leasing and permitting activities.

The groups' letter warns that federal fossil fuel expansion will worsen climate-related damage in Colorado, including floods and wildfires, more severe heatwaves and droughts, and increasing food and water insecurity — including in the Colorado River Basin.

"It is causing the collapse of ecosystems and hastening the extinction crisis," the letter said. "Colorado's ski industry has declared that climate change is its 'greatest threat' and that 'government must act'...Parts of western Colorado have already seen warming of 2°C; further warming threatens organic agriculture in the region."

The letter said a leasing ban aligns with the state of Colorado's climate goals. Its legislature has declared that "we must work together to reduce statewide greenhouse gas pollution in order to limit the increase in the global average temperature to one and one-half degrees Celsius." Potential greenhouse gas pollution from oil, gas and coal in the world's currently operating fields and mines, even without any new leasing or permitting, would take the world beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius.

In addition to helping safeguard Colorado's climate, ending new leasing and permitting would protect many of the state's most treasured public lands and vulnerable communities. Oil and gas infrastructure is omnipresent in parts of Colorado, threatening public health, schools, neighborhoods, low-income communities and communities of color.

Groups signing today's letter are 350 Colorado; Be the Change, Colorado; Call to Action Colorado; CatholicNetwork; Center for Biological Diversity; Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition; Citizens for a Healthy Community; Clean Energy Action; Colorado Businesses for a Livable Climate; Colorado Coalition for a Livable Climate; Colorado Latino Forum; Colorado Rising; Colorado Sierra Club; Community for Sustainable Energy; Estes Valley Clean Energy Coalition; Fort Collins Sustainability Group; Great Old Broads for Wilderness; High Country Conservation Advocates; Mothers Out Front; National Parks Conservation Association; Physicians for Social Responsibility Colorado, RapidShift Network, San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council; Seven Generation, LLC; The Climate Mobilization - Colorado; The Wilderness Society; Unite North Metro

Denver; Western Environmental Law Center; Wild Connections; WildEarth Guardians; Wilderness Workshop; and Wind & Solar Denver.

### Statements From Colorado Groups

"Colorado and the planet can't afford the greenhouse gas pollution that would come with new fossil fuel extraction on public lands," said Taylor McKinnon, a senior campaigner at the Center for Biological Diversity. "Aligning our nation's public-land policies with its climate goals is long overdue. Halting new leases is a good first step to keeping fossil fuels in the ground."

"We need to phase out oil and gas production entirely in Colorado and throughout the U.S. over the coming decade," said Kevin Cross of the Colorado Coalition for a Livable Climate. "The leasing ban on public lands that we expect President Biden to impose is a good place to start. We can't frack our way out of the climate crisis."

"The North Fork Valley in Southwest Colorado is in the middle of a climate hotspot warming faster

the previous administration," said Erik Schlenker-Goodrich, executive director of the Western Environmental Law Center. "A moratorium also provides all stakeholders the opportunity to make their case regarding the future of the public lands oil and gas program that is aligned with the urgency demanded by the climate crisis."

"Colorado can't follow through on bold climate action if the federal government is simply going to rubber-stamp more fossil fuel extraction from the state's public lands," said Jeremy Nichols, climate and energy program director for WildEarth Guardians. "A halt to selling public lands for fracking is a critical step forward for comprehensive climate action and justice in Colorado."

### Background

Fossil fuel production on public lands causes about a quarter of U.S. greenhouse gas pollution. Peer-reviewed science estimates that a nationwide federal fossil fuel leasing ban would reduce carbon emissions



Local opinion expressed in a Hotchkiss parade in 2012.

than the global average and has been calling for no new oil and gas leasing of our surrounding public lands and watershed for over a decade," said Natasha Léger, executive director at Citizens for a Healthy Community. "53,000 no-leasing public comments were submitted to the Bureau of Land Management in 2016 and ignored when the BLM approved the Uncompahgre Resource Management Plan in April 2020 to open up 95% of BLM lands and minerals to oil and gas leasing. A ban on new fossil fuel leasing and permitting on public lands is critical to our hard-fought efforts to preserve vital local ecosystems necessary for a resilient and livable future."

"Imposing a moratorium on new public lands oil and gas leases and permits is a sensible step to provide the Biden administration with the opportunity to repair the immense damage to public lands, wildlife and public-health safeguards caused by

by 280 million tons per year, ranking it among the most ambitious federal climate-policy proposals in recent years.

Federal fossil fuels that have not been leased to industry contain up to 450 billion tons of potential climate pollution; those already leased to industry contain up to 43 billion tons. Pollution from already-leased fossil fuels on federal lands, if fully developed, would exhaust the U.S. carbon budget for keeping the world below a 1.5 degree Celsius temperature increase.

Existing laws give presidents the authority to end new federal fossil fuel leasing. Hundreds of organizations have petitioned the federal government to end new onshore and offshore leasing. More than 500 groups have called on Biden to enact his commitment to "banning new oil and gas leasing on public lands and waters."

### Paonia - Continued from Page 1

was to try to shorten meetings a little. Two local citizens, former trustee - Suzanne Watson, and Thomas Markle (husband of trustee Michelle Pattison) had recently tended to interject repeatedly into agenda item discussions.

At the January 26 meeting both Watson and Markle asked questions and made comments during agenda items and Bachran allowed Watson a follow-up comment on one agenda item. There were no other comments/question from the public.

Under the previous mayor Watson had once been ejected from a meeting for making too many comments on the same subject. Bachran is much more good-humored and flexible.

### Included in the Town Administrator's report:

The **Parks Master Plan** process is moving forward with a new website: paoniainmotion.com - going on-line to share information on the project.

A **tree inventory and assessment** were expected to be submitted to the Town by the Colorado Forest Service by the end of January. (Note: in a related report, Tamie Meck, related that the revitalized Paonia Tree Board had been busy. Besides planning for future events, they are recommending that the Town require commercial tree trimmers operating within the town meet certain standards of competence.

A finalized review draft of proposed **marijuana dispensary regulations** will come before the Council at the February 23 regular meeting. Adoption could come in March depending upon how much discussion ensues.

It was reported that terms for the non-ex-officio members of the **Paonia Advisory Water Committee** were set at a meeting of the Committee. They will expire: on August 2024- Phil Ceriani, August 2023 - Thomas Markle, and Mike Drake - August 2022. The committee's purpose is to allow regular, broad input from all users on the water system, both in-town and out.

**Shovel or Pay.** Ferguson noted that she was working with Chief Ferguson (her husband) regarding instituting a requirement through Municipal Court for the Town to be reimbursed for the costs of removing snow and ice from sidewalks where a citation has been issued for abutting property owners' failure to clear the right of way.

Sections 1 and 2 of the in-progress **Paonia Master Plan** have been provided to the Council and Planning Commission for

Continued on Page 19

## Paonia - Continued from Page 18

Review prior to a planned joint meeting.

### Other Items, Discussion and Actions

**Solar Panels.** Atop the Paonia Town Hall is a bank of photo voltaic solar panels, a project that happened several years ago due to advocacy by former Town Trustee - Lucien Pevac. Each month the Town receives a report on the performance of the panels. For December 2021 the panels produced 469 kilo watt hours (KWH) of electricity and 8.34 Mega-Watt Hours of electricity during 2020. Peak power produced at any one time during the December days was between 3.47 KW and 3.91 KW. The Town's panels offset 715 pounds of CO2 that would have been released by conventional electricity.

**Water Plants.** As the Town continues figuring out if, and how, they can have enough domestic water to serve existing and committed to, but inactive, taps a listing of 2020 volumes reported at the Town's two water treatment plants seems relatively healthy with some concern at the height of summer. The two-million-gallon tank related plant produced a total of 64,134,560 gallons during 2020 and spilled 17,318,691 in excess water arriving at the plant. The lowest spillage month was August 2020 with 95,520 spilled or an average of less than what one household would use. That was about when water restrictions went into effect.

The town's voters approved a moratorium of the sale of water taps in January 2020 that can be lifted once the Town has an engineer with significant water experience sign off that the town has adequate resources.

**Riverbank Subdivision.** The redesigned Riverbank Neighborhood subdivision will come before the Planning Commission at their February meeting.

**Titles.** Attorney Nerlin said that, after a review, he recommends that any Council member who signs a letter for some issue or organization should not use their Town title unless approved by the council since it might lead some to believe that the Town itself was endorsing the issue or organization.

Trustee Dave Knudson asked that the council have a discussion about holding more work session formatted meetings to allow for more open discussion.

**Town Administrator Corinne Ferguson's contract** was extended until the end of 2022 after the council expressed great confidence in her performance so far. Her base pay was agreed to be \$6,413.34 per month.

## North Fork Artists for Climate Action?

*A proposal by Thomas Wills*

Besides being a writer/journalist and used bookstore owner, I am an artist, a painter, and have been for about a half-century. I am also deeply concerned about human-caused climate change.

In 2016, inspired by my then new business partner's (Nan) repurposing of old greeting cards, calendars, and other printed materials into new creative configurations, I began making my own cards using the covers from unsalable hardback books as a base. Previously I had discovered that the inside of covers with mounted high-quality paper were ideal for acrylic watercolor or pen and ink artwork. All of the cover drawings for the Herald are done on old book cover panels.

I then learned some basic book binding skills, resulting in rebound BookCards that feel like a very thin hardback. Much more substantial, and having a feel of permanence that normal greeting cards lack. With further inspiration from growing up with a librarian as a mother, I added a "pocket" inside the card that echoed the library books of my childhood that featured a checkout card with the due date in such a pocket. My pockets contain a separate small card made from the heavy flyleaf of the de-covered book.

Then, I hand-painted each card, outside, inside and on the subcard, with local and regional landscape scenes, including my favorite subject, aspen trees. And, a portion of the paint used is donated, left-over acrylic housepaint.

The point of BookCards is that commercial greeting cards are manufactured (usually thousands of miles from the end user) using new energy and resources, contribute to global warming, and are rapidly disposed of. I strive to make BookCards, low carbon input objects of art that can be reused many times or at least will endure for many years. Not many people will throw an original piece of art in the trash.

Since 2016 several hundred

BookCards have been sold and hopefully most are still residing on a mantle or wall.

### A Challenge

While I am doing my one, modest little low-carbon/recycling art project, others in the Valley are also doing creative things to conserve energy and resources. One Paonia company, Elizabethan, repurposes used clothing into new apparel, and

seem to be an opportunity to establish a creative narrative that artists could help with. *Artists Highlight Colorado Coal Mining Valley's Transition to Low Carbon Economy.* Yes?

### A Short Overview of the Climate Crisis:

In 1957-58, about the same time as I was born, two American scientists names Roger Reville and Charles David Keeling revealed the

dark side of something that had been known since the 1820's; carbon dioxide absorbs heat energy. It was later realized that humans were adding carbon (as CO2) that had been stored in the form of fossil hydrocarbons, back into the active Earth system, oceans and atmosphere.

By 1958 the rate of this activity was dramatically increasing exponentially driven by development and human population increases. Reville showed that the CO2 was *not* being naturally buffered enough by things like ocean absorption and Keeling began precise measurements of how much excess CO2 was accumulating in the atmosphere, trapping reradiated solar energy. It was also realized that

human were also doing a wide range of things that were making the problem worse like deforestation, methane generation, and releasing other types of greenhouse gasses.

Humans were causing a warming of the Earth in a matter of decades that in happening previously, before human civilization, had taken many thousands of years, and in some cases—millions. The rate of warming was so fast that many parts of nature would eventually be unable to adapt/evolve to new conditions and human civilization might be overwhelmed.

By 1988 the science had become so clear that the International Panel on Climate Change was formed by the United Nations to do periodic assessments of climate science with virtually all of the countries of the world agreeing that there was a critical problem. Thirty years of scientific study later it was agreed that the world needed to transition quickly to non-carbon fuel sources: 80% by 2050 is the most commonly mentioned goal.

Some scientists think that this is not nearly enough.

