

The North Fork Merchant Herald

Digital Edition
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April 15, 2020

The Middle of the Month Digital Version of the Paper from the Valley That is Keeping its Distance

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The Merchant Herald Twice a Month?

Once upon a time the Merchant Herald had a website, but with a two-person staff and limited resources, it proved to be impractical, and too expensive to maintain and produce ever changing content for so we retreated back to old fashioned print-only. With the advent of very fast broadband service locally we started offering a companion pdf file version of the Herald that could be e-mailed and downloaded or just viewed in preview on G-Mail and some other e-mail application. The same exact content as the print version, but contained in a single pdf file. It even had a few extra pages. A simple solution to the digital age. A digital version of the paper that could be easily saved as a file so that anyone and everyone could have their own Herald newspaper archive to refer back to when needed. It slowly began to catch on.

So, this spring here came the COVID-19 crisis and the need for most people to work from home or just "hunker down". Many businesses and government offices closed temporarily, reducing the number of places for people to pick up a hard copy Herald although most of our street boxes were at places where people still needed to go: the post offices, gas stations, and grocery stores in the Valley. So it seemed a good idea to beef up and promote the digital version sent right to your email, and while we were at it we could produce a special edition Merchant Herald to be sent out at mid-month with more timely content than we can usually achieve in a monthly. And it would include all of our print advertisers offerings at no extra cost to them, making sure they are receiving full value for their advertising dollar during tight times. And it allowed me to play around with design and color. And it allows us to also offer digital-only advertising rates that are very reasonable since the digital subscriber list is still modest, but growing.

And if these extra digital issues are a success in April and May, it may become a permanent thing after the crisis ends. Maybe this is a good idea anytime. Tell us what you think. *Tom Wills - Editor and Publisher*



Hotchkiss Trustees Approve Creation of Tiny Lot for Non-Conforming Trailer New Trustee Doubts Facts of COVID Crisis

By Thomas Wills

Hotchkiss Town Council
April 9, 2020

The April 9 Hotchkiss Town Council was something of a surreal affair, held on-line via a Zoom conferencing application. Beside the Town council and staff, getting to attend the meeting required requesting a code from the Town, registering for the meeting and then attending with your computer or phone. Once on-line within the application some officials appeared on video in separate portions of a divided screen. Other were only present as disembodied voices.

Present were: Mayor Larry Wilkening (video from Town Hall), Mary Hockenbery (video from her home), Patrick Webb (voice from home), Sheila Maki (voice from

home), Esther Koontz (video from home), and John Marta (video from Town Hall office). Absent: Patricia Medina. Staff: Town attorney- Bo Nerlin (video from his Ridgway home), Deputy Clerk – Ginger Redden (at Town Hall), Marshal Dan Miller – (voice from home), and Public Works director – Mike Owens (video from home).

Old business (with old council):

The council reconsidered a proposal made by property owner, Don Foster, for a boundary adjustment on the line between two lots (120 and 140 West Main) located on the northwest corner of Main and First Streets, one (120 West Main) with a vacant commercial building and another (140 W. Main) that partially contains a non-conforming 1972 mobile home. The proposal was tabled last month

after it was revealed that the Town had failed to properly notify some neighbors of the proposal by mail as required by law.

In a strange turn of events the Trustees approved the boundary adjustment as proposed but then required Foster to return to submit variance requests to the Town for the non-conforming aspects of the property and proposal. In other words, the Town is requiring variances reviews for a proposal that has already been approved. According to standard land use review procedure, the variances should have been considered *prior* to the boundary adjustment itself since any approval would depend upon those variances either being approved, approved with conditions, or rejected. Later in the meeting, planning commission meetings were cancelled for the next couple months.

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NORTH FORK SENIOR CONNECTIONS: A COVID 19 Primer

(Submitted by Linda McCone – North Fork Senior Connections)

Covid-19: What we know and how you can respond

Covid-19 is the name given to the disease caused by a new Corona virus that first emerged in China and has now spread world-wide. The World Health Organization (WHO) and U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have called this outbreak a pandemic, or global disease outbreak. There is currently no vaccine to protect against this virus and no medicines that will cure the resulting illness.

Symptoms of the disease appear 2 to 14 days after exposure and include fever, cough and shortness of breath. Some people report body aches similar to symptoms of the flu. The virus spreads through person-to-person contact to someone with a confirmed infection for a prolonged period of time, and exposure to respiratory droplets on surfaces through touching surfaces and then your face, mouth, nose and eyes. For this reason, people at increased risk of infection are those who have been to areas of widespread community transmission and those who have been in close contact with someone who has Covid-19. The risk of Covid-19 is not associated with race, ethnicity or nationality in any way. Blaming others will not help fight the illness, seeking and sharing accurate information will.

Information from China and Washington State indicate that some people are at higher risk for serious illness or even death from this viral infection. This includes older adults and people with serious chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease. **The CDC recommends people in this group begin making preparations now, taking everyday precautions for social distancing (keeping space between yourself and others since people can transmit the disease without exhibiting symptoms), limiting close contact and washing your hands often. We should all be avoiding crowds and non-essential travel as much as possible to further reduce the risk of being exposed.**

As of 4/15/20, there are over 28,000 deaths attributed to the disease in the United States. *(The numbers are growing daily and health experts warn that it will be weeks before the pandemic in the U.S. peaks. - editor)*

President Trump has declared a national emergency and Governor Polis has declared a state emergency to allow for resources and some relaxation of rules to help fight the outbreak. The current lack of large numbers of cases (13 as of 4/15/20) in Delta County does not mean the virus is not here, only that tests to date have not been positive.

What you can do to prepare:

1. Make it a routine to frequently wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (the approximate time it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" twice.) Do this especially after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, or when arriving home after work, school, or errands. If you cough or sneeze, use a tissue and throw it away.

2. Use hand sanitizer (60% alcohol or more) only when you cannot wash your hands with soap and water, as a backup precaution. At the grocery store, use the provided wipes to clean the cart handle and child seat, and use another one when you

leave the store. Isopropyl alcohol on a paper towel works as well as wipes.

3. Avoid touching your face, nose, and eyes unless you just washed your hands.

4. In public, touch surfaces like elevator buttons, door handles, handrails with knuckles or elbows. Avoid shaking hands. If you must touch something, use your sleeve or a tissue to cover your hand or finger, then toss the tissue.

5. Every day, use household detergent and water to clean surfaces and objects you touch regularly (tables, countertops, light switches, doorknobs, and cabinet handles).

6. If you will soon need a refill on your prescriptions, contact your health care provider. If you have current health issues or are in high risk group, contact your health care provider for additional recommendations. Some insurance companies participate in programs that provide for "extended day supply" of medications and/or home delivery, both of which can be helpful during this period.

7. Stock up on the supplies you would need if you got sick such as over-the-counter meds (for fever, aches, coughs) and medical supplies (tissues, thermometer, lozenges).

8. Plan meals for a few weeks and stock up on food and supplies. Consider making a few meals and freezing them, such as a big pot of chili to share with a healthy neighbor or friend in exchange for some homemade lasagna. Cook ahead and you can use what is fresh. Unlike during a storm, you can expect to have a working freezer; use it.

9. Make a list of your emergency contacts - family, friends, doctors, pharmacy, and your designated medical agent - and prescription drugs you take. In an emergency, consider exchanging/

Continued on page 6

Many of the Valley's Essential Businesses are Open to Safely Serve You During This Challenging Time.

Please consider supporting them. Support closed businesses by purchasing gift certificates for later use. Buy a membership or make a donation to an idled nonprofits like: Paradise Theatre, Blue Sage Center, or Creamery Arts Center. **Thank You!**

Terry O'Brien

(On the ballot as Terrence Daniel O'Brien)

RETIRED CPA, PROCESS ENGINEER
FISCAL CONSERVATIVE, ENERGETIC



DCMH Hospital District Board of Directors Candidate, May 5, 2020 Election

DCMH Hospital's Financial Problems

(First six amounts are from DCMH financials)

• 2019 Loss from Operations	\$4,129,097
• Monthly Average Loss	\$344,091
• November 2019 Loss from Operations	\$531,243
• December 2019 Loss from Operations	\$1,638,378
• January 2020 Loss from Operations	\$414,656
• February 2020 Loss from Operations	\$639,315
• 2020 Projected Loss (using Nov., Jan., Feb.)	\$6,340,856
• 2019 Actual Loss and 2020 Projected Loss	\$10,469,953

I Have:

- **38-years of Health Care Finance and IT Experience.**
- **Personally read 20 years of DCMH Board Minutes.**
- **Personally reviewed 10 years of DCMH Financials and Audit Reports.**
- **Consulted with Aetna, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Hospitals and Pharmaceutical companies.**
- **And I am a Fifth-Generation Delta County Resident.**

Email DCMH.Voice@gmail.com with your concerns or questions.

PLEASE SUPPORT THE DCMH HOSPITAL AND CLINIC STAFFS, AND FIRST RESPONDERS: EMTS, FIRE FIGHTERS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT, AND MORE. DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS, THEY RISK THEIR LIVES CARING FOR, AND SAVING, OTHERS.

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COVID-19 AND THE VALLEY JOURNAL: It Will Be a While...

By Thomas Wills

During this period, the impacts of the shutdown, or severe slowdown, of many local businesses in the Valley and county and region where some residents of the Valley also work, are severe. This journal column tries to preserve a historical record of what has happened so far—day by day.

As this e-edition went to press Delta County announced that its number of confirmed COVID cases had doubled from six to thirteen and are expected to continue to grow.

March 23 – Delta County Commissioners approve a declaration of a disaster. 720 cases in State as of yesterday with 72 hospitalized. None confirmed in Delta County but 28 in Gunnison.

The Town of Paonia, via Mayor Charles Stewart, officially declares a disaster today, four days after Hotchkiss Mayor, Larry Wilkening, signed his declaration on March 19. Paonia Town Hall was closed to the public. Crawford mayor, Wanda Gofforth declared a disaster on March 10, the same day as the State declaration was issued.

Delta County's Elyse Casselberry and ENGAGE's Shawn Gardner and others are coordinating getting business aid info out with video conference calls, Facebook, e-mail and more. Economic development activities have morphed into economic survival ones.

March 24 – The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Delta County was reported, but only after the young woman had completely recovered. According to the press release from the County:

"The individual is a female in her 30s who was in close contact with someone who tested positive from another county in Colorado. She has fully recovered and is cooperating with Delta County Health Department in the ongoing investigation to identify people that she may have had close contact with during the past 14 days."

It was later noted by Delta Mayor, Ron Austin, in a shared social media post that the woman had not actually been diagnosed by a test but was, according to CDC guidelines, *presumed* to have had the virus due to her described symptoms following contact with the out-of-county person who did have a positive test.

Third Street Grill in Paonia and the Coal Train Coffeehouse in Hotchkiss both announced that they were closing for a few weeks. (Update: *Third Street*

Grill announced on April 7 that they would be reopening for curbside takeout on the April 15) Many food service businesses have been trying to keep going with takeout orders with seating closed by order of the State. Patricia Medina, owner of Pat's Bar and Grill in Hotchkiss reported that she was the lone worker in the restaurant at a certain time today due to slow business.

The Delta County Commissioners held an on-line meeting today discussing the concept land use plan via Zoom, a video conferencing app.

The Hotchkiss Town Council met at Town Hall for their last face to face meeting for what may be a couple months declaring a state of emergency until May 15 and approving a COVID-19 Disaster response plan. Hotchkiss Town Hall remains open to limited access. Paonia and Crawford Town Halls are both closed to the public.

The Paonia Council did some of the same at their lengthy meeting on the same evening, which according to the livestream looked to have only two or three in the audience. They were spread out a little better than in Hotchkiss. The Response Plan adopted by Paonia was identical to the one adopted by Hotchkiss.

March 25 – One barbershop in Hotchkiss is back open after the owner had a bout with the "flu" for several days last week, according to a note that has been on the door. He seems to have a steady stream of customers.

Hotchkiss announced that Town Hall would be closed to the public as of Monday, March 30, the last Town Hall in the Valley to take that step after Crawford and Paonia.

March 26 - The CDPHE and the State issued a stay-at-home order as of today but exempted many businesses and still allows a lot movement. A message from Terry Commander, head of the Ragged Mountain Fire Department at Somerset said they are forming a COVID response plan even there and are looking at putting together a food bank. 1,430 cases in Colorado with 24 deaths and 184 hospitalized as of yesterday.

March 27 – The State's COVID web site reports a second case in Delta County (but that was later denied by Delta County). The US total cases exceeded 85,000 with some 1,300 deaths. The US now has more cases than any other single country. The world death toll is about 24,300 as of today. Delta County is holding steady at one case, no hospitalizations and no deaths so far. Gunnison County has 66 cases as of 4 p.m. yesterday, Garfield County 16 and Montrose County up to 6. 1,734 cases in Colorado with 31 deaths and 239 hospitalized as of yesterday.

Pretty much all of the businesses in Hotchkiss that were open before the stay-at-home order are still open.

March 28 – Over 100,000 cases nationally and continuing to grow. Delta County public information officer, Darnell Place-Wise, sent out an e-mail denying that Delta County had a second confirmed COVID case as listed on the State COVID data website. They have asked for a correction.

Local restaurants and other businesses have fallen into a routine of providing takeout and curbside services. There seems to be something of a disconnect with schools, libraries, public meetings, Town Halls, sit down restaurant service and many "non-

essential" and personal services closed but most larger businesses open and a steady stream of traffic passing down the highway through downtown Hotchkiss. Car repair businesses are advertising that they do pickup and delivery of vehicles from homes. The Grand Junction Daily Sentinel reports that gun and ammo sales are doing quite well.

March 29 – For the second Sunday in a row the Hotchkiss, Paonia, and Crawford United Methodist Churches conducted services on-line via the meeting app Zoom. The First Baptist Church in Hotchkiss did a livestream on their website and Facebook.

March 30 – As of 4 p.m. there

Continued on page 7

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APRIL JOURNAL

Quotes from the Valley: "I am suspending any campaigning and laying down my signs. ... Who's mayor (between the two candidates) hardly matters in the big picture." Paonia Mayoral candidate, Bill Brunner, putting things in perspective, saying that he has begun a project of manufacturing medical face shields. The "establishment" candidate, Trustee and mayor pro-tem, Mary Bachran, been busy sewing face masks for many weeks.

At no time during the past few decades have we, in my opinion, been luckier to live here in the North Fork Valley where populations densities are low even in the towns—nothing like urban areas. Here we can always find a place to walk or hike where no one else is likely to cough on, or near, us.

As I write this my best guess is that the worst of the COVID storm may sweep past us (or be spread out over a longer period of time), with minimal actual causalities, thanks to most people taking precautions and hopefully maintaining a lot of them during the coming year. But, we sure as heck didn't need the massive economic hit on top of the coal mines closing as we struggled back from the 2008 financial collapse. And it was just one year ago that the Paonia Water Crisis happened and the final mop up was still happening in April. Before that the massive drought year-plus.

But, peering through the screen

Another Month in the Valley

By Thomas Wills
Publisher - Editor

at the outside world this is an amazing, wonderful place to live. Really.

March 24 – I made a tofu casserole today, which will serve as a dinner main entrée for the rest of the week, buttressed by salads of baby lambs' quarters, Egyptian onions, and Jerusalem artichokes from the very early garden.

I attended the Hotchkiss Town Council Special meeting and was the only member of the public present. The Trustees extended the declaration of emergency to May 15, authorized a move from in-person to on-line meetings, and adopted a COVID-19 Response Plan, a boilerplate document identical to the Plan adopted by the Paonia Town Council on the same evening. It seems less of a genuine plan than just a T to cross to qualify for help.

March 25 – Cloudy and windy. The day is as tumultuous as the times feel. A simple trip to the post office feels like a voyage through shark infested waters with myself and my fellow Hotchkissians being the sharks. Trying to maintain a good distance between us is a challenge, and impossible for the workers at the post office. Thanks to them for soldiering on the front lines.

The Paonia mayoral race is apparently tipping in favor of trustee/

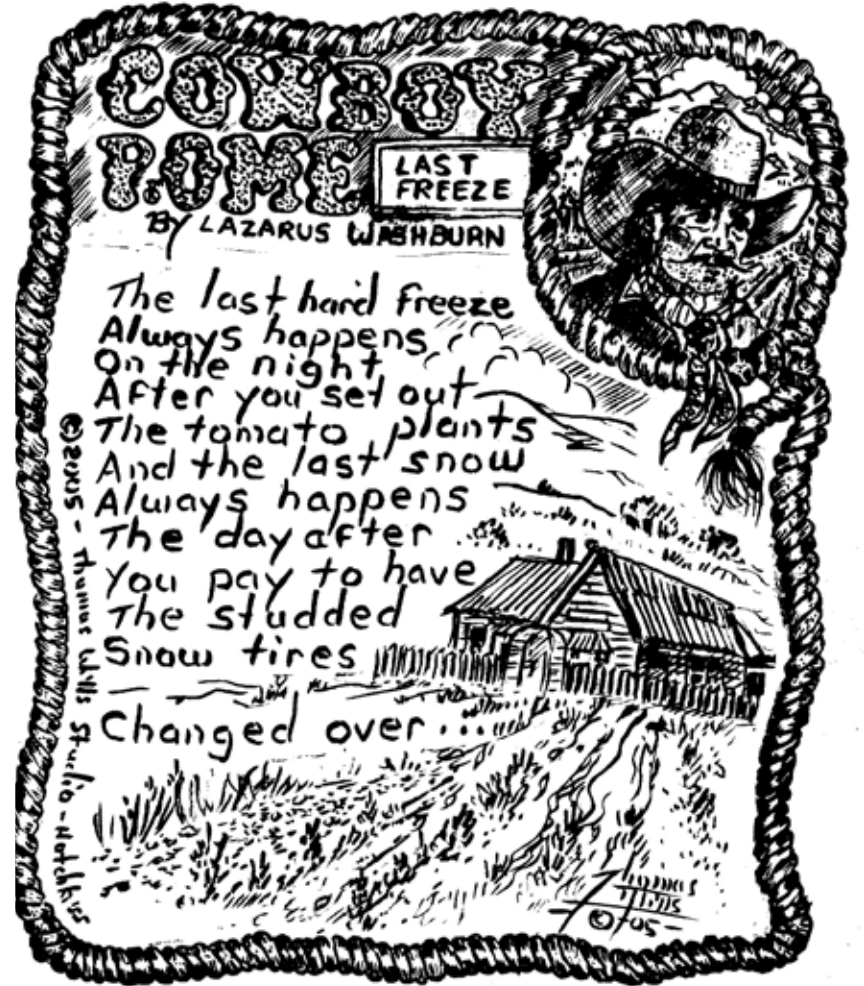


mayor pro-tem, Mary Bachran, who has several well-produced video endorsements appearing on Facebook while opponent, Bill Brunner, was once again attacked in a March 25 DCI letter by outgoing mayor, Charles Stewart. Brunner issued a general rebuttal of Stewart's allegations, which we posted on

April Herald at the Montrose printer and distributed today, armed with a bottle of bleach and soap water to disinfect our street box exteriors. The papers themselves are produced on a mostly automated system, untouched by germy hands.

But for the extra nervous, I spent a lot of time promoting our e-mailed pdf file edition. Just email to Hotchkiss@aol.com and ask to be put on our monthly electronic mailing list.

March 27 – Friday. A bit chillier with a winter storm moving in from the southwest. A few snowflakes were seen drifting around Hotchkiss in the morning and late in the day real snow began to fall, covering the ground in Hotchkiss.



our Facebook page. Brunner and Stewart have been going at it for pretty much the full time Stewart has been mayor, since 2016.

Ballots were mailed out to Paonia voters last week.

March 26 – A little better weather than yesterday. The Governor issued a very porous stay-at-home order, which apparently affected few businesses in Hotchkiss and the Valley that were not already closed. Nan picked up the

I spent my morning deep cleaning and disinfecting the Hotchkiss Methodist Church, which despite being closed to the public also hosts the Hotchkiss Food Bank. When you really think about all the stuff we normally touch without thinking about it; it is a pretty long list. Who normally scrubs down all surfaces on a light switch? My hands, and the church basement, now smell like bleach water.

There seems to be quite a bit of traffic on the highway through Hotchkiss, less than normal, but what seems like a lot.

March 28 – Saturday. The snow from last night looked to be half-melted in Hotchkiss even before sunrise, indicating that some rain also fell during the night. The day remained chilly, especially when the sun went behind a cloud. What snow there was in Hotchkiss had disappeared by the end of the day, but the mountains remained well mantled.

March 29 – Cold and rainy with some spots of sun here and there.

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New Hotchkiss Council

Continued from Page 1

Foster proposed moving the property line of 140 West Main 32.5 feet to the east so that the non-conforming trailer is on one lot and the old Wolfenbarger Garage commercial building is on another. The lot line was previously under the middle of the trailer. A town sewer main also passes underneath the center of the trailer. This change will result in both lots remaining non-conforming in different proportions and would also allow for the separate sale of the commercial building, and the lot with the old non-conforming trailer. The new lot with the trailer is a little over the third of the size of a conforming residential lot required in Town regulation: 2,463 sq. ft. vs 6,250 sq. ft. Even spaces within conforming trailer home parks are required to have a minimum of 4,500 sq. ft.

Foster said that he has a buyer for the garage building who wants to use it as a fiber arts workshop and retail space. Under present C2 zoning any commercial use of 120 W. Main would require at least a couple of off-street parking spaces or a variance from that requirement. The trailer is currently rented as a residence.

Former trustee (14 years) and longtime Town volunteer planner (2003-2018) Tom Wills (this reporter) submitted extensive written comments to the proposal asking that the Town follow the proper variance procedure when dealing with changes to non-conforming properties or uses. Wills summarized his objections at the meeting but the substance of his written comment was not introduced into the record or discussed in any detail. Only Trustees John Marta and Esther Koontz acknowledged the need to address the variances as separate matters but did not suggest starting the review of the proposal over. Koontz then made the oddly truncated motion required variance reviews *after* the fact of approval which all (*Hockenbery recused herself as a close neighbor*) voted for with no discussion of the legal challenges to such a requirement.

Mayor Larry Wilkening said, in addressing the Town Attorney, that, as he understood it, the approval of the boundary adjustment itself was a sort of de-facto approval of any variances needed to allow the existing non-conforming things to continue and the ones to be created. Nerlin gave a carefully non-committal type answer.

New Council:

The transition to the new council, following the April 7 election, began with Deputy Town Clerk - Ginger Redden swearing in re-elected incumbents John Marta and Patrick Webb along with new trustee Jim Wingfield. All bid a farewell to departing Trustee Sheila Maki after a two-year term.

The first order of business was to appoint several officials of the Town: Town Clerk and Finance Officer - Marlene Searle, Mayor pro-tem - Mary Hockenbery, Municipal Judge-Lynn French, and Bo Nerlin (and the law firm he belongs to) as Town Attorney.

The Trustees then delayed a decision of when to hold a Trustee's training session until the May meeting.

The Trustees approved Resolution 2020-03 to suspend Hotchkiss Planning Commission meetings, due to the local disaster declaration, until May 15, 2020 when it could be revisited.

Wingfield then immediately became controversial during the subject of considering a formal Resolution (2020-04) to extent the disaster declaration until May 15.

"I guess I'm not agreeing with everything that is kind of going on, in

numbers and everything," Wingfield said referring to the COVID-19 crisis in general. He questioned the need for the declaration of a local disaster.

Mayor Wilkening explained that in order to hold safer virtual meetings the declaration of a disaster was necessary (since otherwise it would violate the open meetings law). Attorney Bo Nerlin then added more clarification and reasons why the resolution was needed, including the orders issued by the State to close a number of local businesses.

Despite all of this Wingfield then said "I'm sorry but I don't agree with everything going on... I think the numbers are wrong. Lotta things wrong. I think we are hurting a lot of businesses in the town. I am totally against a lot of things going on. I don't feel we are getting the true facts on everything." Wingfield then voted no on the resolution although it had nothing to do with ordering businesses closed or people being ordered to stay at home, both actions taken by the State with direction from the Federal government and health experts.

The meeting then concluded with an executive session on the subject of matters related to negotiation regarding the construction process at the new Town shops on Barrow Mesa.

Hotchkiss Council Holds Last Face to Face Meeting for the Duration of Crisis Coronavirus

By Thomas Wills

Hotchkiss Town Council - Special Meeting

Present: Mayor - Larry Wilkening, mayor pro-tem/trustee - Mary Hockenbery, Patrick Webb, Patricia Medina, Sheila Maki and Esther Koontz. Absent - John Marta. Also present: Town Clerk - Marlene Searle. Deputy Town Clerk Ginger Redden, and Town Attorney, Bo Nerlin, attending remotely by speakerphone.

The timing was only coincidental, but the final face-to-face meeting of the Hotchkiss Town Council in March 24 happened on the same day that it was revealed that Delta County had its first confirmed case of COVID-19 while surrounding counties had multiple, even dozens (Gunnison and Pitkin), of cases. There was an air of seriousness, tempered by a few jokes, in the chambers where the council members and two from the staff, sat a few feet apart, some as close as three feet but others, including this reporter, further. Town Clerk Marlene Searle noted that surfaces in the room had all been wiped down with Lysol disinfectant prior to the meeting. No one coughed or sniffled during the meeting. Town Attorney, Bo Nerlin, presumably at home in Ridgway, provided advice via speakerphone. Trustee Pat Medina, owner of Pat's Bar and Grill, talked of the challenges to the local restaurant industry.

There were three items of business on the agenda:

1. To officially extend a **Declaration of Disaster** signed on March 19 by Mayor Larry Wilkening. The unilateral declaration only lasts for seven days. The Trustees unanimously approved an extension of the disaster declaration to May 15, 2020—the day after their regular May meeting. The declaration cited the Colorado Disaster Emergency Act (CRS 24-33.5-701 et seq.) as authorization. The declaration will make the Town qualify for

certain assistance and aid from the State.

2. Resolution 2020-02 - **Emergency and Virtual Meetings Due to Coronavirus (COVID-19) Disaster Declaration.** This action, possible only after the disaster declaration, suspended public meetings of the Hotchkiss Town Council and allowed "virtual" meetings to be held. The April and May regular meeting along with any necessary special meetings will be held via an electronic conferencing application, possibly ZOOM, which has been the choice of some other local entities. That application allows citizens to virtually attend the meeting via their computer, smart phone, or by calling in. Information on how to accomplish that will be posted on the Town website (www.townofhotchkiss.com) and Town of Hotchkiss on Facebook. The Herald will share such information on North Fork Merchant Herald on Facebook and also Hotchkiss, Colorado Message Board on Facebook.

3. The Trustees adopted the **Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response Plan.** The five-page plan is divided into four sections: Continuity of Town Operations, Phasing of Response, Communications Plan, and a Quarantine Plan.

It was noted that the Town goal

during this crisis is to protect the health, safety and welfare of the employees and community while continuing to deliver reliable, high quality public services including critical and essential operations. This would include water, sewer, and trash services, continued criminal policing, following first responder protocols, and assist as needed with quarantine operations. Street maintenance and emergency repairs would be done as needed as would routine items such as utility billing and collections and payroll.

The Town Council will be tasked with policy formulations and decision-making as well as communication with the public.

Non-critical and support functions will continue when safe and feasible. The Town Hall remained open as of March 24 but the public is asked to not enter Town Hall if the purpose can be achieved by phone, email, or other means. The Town Hall may be closed to the public at some point. The Town asks that utility customers use the drop box located to left of the west office entrance.

There is a plan for promoting heightened awareness among Town employees and the public regarding ways to slow the spread of the virus, focusing

Continued on page 9



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HOTCHKISS MUNICIPAL COURT

Hotchkiss Court Convenes with In-Person Session

By Thomas Wills

Hotchkiss Municipal Court
April 9, 2020

Judge Lynn French presiding:

The April Hotchkiss Municipal Court was a unique affair in that it went ahead as an in-person event despite the pandemic. According to Marshal Dan Miller, Judge Lynn French decided to do it the regular way, but limit the people allowed in the courtroom (Council Chambers room) to only those who were directly involved in cases. This meant that the press (the Herald) and friends and spectators were asked to stay home and the results of the session were then shared with the press by way of e-mail.

Terry M. Bonine, 56, of Willow Drive in Hotchkiss failed to appear, or to call and ask for an extension, for a trial on a charge of having a vicious dog, one that got loose and bit Sgt. Chad Lloyd. A \$500 cash bond was issued along with an order that Bonine show cause why

she should not be held in contempt of court. She was ordered to appear at the next court on May 14 at 2 p.m.

A show cause appearance scheduled for Alana May Dagnan, concerning why she did not clear junk from her yard within the time frame ordered, was continued until the May 14 court.

Devin Stock of Paonia pled guilty to a charge of improper passing and saw a failure to present insurance proof charge dismissed. He was assessed a total of \$161 including a fine and \$50 in court costs. Considering general economics at the moment, he was given until July 30 to pay.

Jacob Anthony Longnecker of Louisiana failed to pay a speeding ticket or appear in court to contest it and an outstanding judgement/warrant (OJW) was issued, which will result in suspension of driving privileges until the matter is taken care of. Most states cooperate in enforcing judgements from other states.



Judge Lynn French
Town of Hotchkiss Municipal
Judge since 1979

Senior Connections COVID-19 Primer

Continued from page 2

sharing your list with neighbors, family, or friends.

10. If you live with someone, make a sick room so the ill one can be separated. Check on and family and friends who might be alone. Encourage them to begin their preparations and then compare notes.

Contact information for our local and state health departments:

Delta County Health Dept –
(970) 874-2172 deltacounty.com/688/Coronavirus-19

Colorado Dept of Health – (1-877-462-2911 COHELP@RMPDC.org

If you or someone you are caring for becomes symptomatic (developing a cough, fever, or shortness of breath) recommendations include:

1. People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 are urged to isolate at home during their illness. You should restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care. Do not go to work, school, or public areas. Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.

2. As much as possible, stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home. Also, you should use a separate bathroom, if available.

3. You should restrict contact with pets and other animals while you are sick with COVID-19, just like you would around other people. Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, it is still recommended that people who are sick limit contact with animals until more

information is known.

4. If you have a medical appointment or medical emergency, notify the healthcare provider or dispatcher that you have or may have COVID-19. This will allow steps to be taken to keep other people from getting infected or exposed.

5. If you could be contagious, you should wear a facemask when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) or pets and before you enter a healthcare provider's office.

6. Patients with confirmed COVID-19 should remain under home isolation precautions until the risk of secondary transmission to others is thought to be low. The decision to discontinue home isolation precautions should be made in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments.

Members of North Fork Senior Connections can request assistance from NFSC volunteers for help to make such preparations, for rides to medical appointments or the store, to run errands or check in with you by phone. **Please request our services by placing a call (970-527-3482) or sending us email (nfseniorconnections@gmail.com).** As always, we are here to help.

Information in this article is from:
CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
Colorado Department of Health: <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/2019-novel-coronavirus>

HOTCHKISS MARSHAL'S

REPORT

Female Deputy to Join Department in May

By Thomas Wills

Hotchkiss Marshal's Report
March and April, 2020

Hotchkiss Marshal Dan Miller reports that the department is serving the community as it has in the past with one change being that no VIN (vehicle identification number) inspections are being performed due to the DMV being closed.

The Department received a complaint about one non-essential business not shutting down as ordered. An officer had a talk with the business owner and it is hoped that he will comply.

Miller also reports that future Deputy Julia Thompson's progress at the police academy at Delta had been slowed somewhat by the COVID crisis, during which she spent time in Hotchkiss learning office/paperwork procedures, but the academy has now resumed classes with greatly reduced sizes. Thompson is expected to graduate and join the Hotchkiss Marshal's Department as its fourth officer sometime between mid and late May. The Department provided a scholarship for Thompson in return for her commitment to serve Hotchkiss law enforcement over the next five years. Hotchkiss, like many

small-town departments, has had relatively rapid turnover for officers.

Thompson will be (*as far as a cursory historical search revealed*) only the Town's second female deputy, the other serving only a short time in the early 2000's. That officer, Ingrid Conkel, successfully sued the town for sex discrimination in 2002 as the result of her dismissal by then Marshal Michael "Mick" Baxter, during a controversial period that ultimately also resulted in the resignation of then Mayor Gary Goad, who testified on the side of Conkel.

There were 82 logged incidents for the month of March. Traffic contacts were down to 22 as traffic volumes went down. Eight VIN inspections were done before they were stopped, and there were two traffic accidents investigated. Then there was the usual mix of minor thefts: one stolen car valued at \$2,000, one theft from a yard, and a "swindle." One allegation of child abuse was looked into. There were four instances of types of harassment and one "resisting an officer" item. There were three dog issues, one loud adult party, and one domestic violence call. Two items related to trespassing, and there were four medical assists.

The Department performed 42 home and business security checks.



A planter's moon over the Hotchkiss First Baptist Church on April 7, 2020, the day of the Municipal Election.

Photo by Tom Wills

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Bachran First Female Mayor of Paonia Council Becomes a Teeny Bit More “Progressive”

By Thomas Wills

(Correction: There was a typo in the Paonia Mayoral Debate article in the April Herald. Mary Bachran was first elected as trustee in 2018 not 2010.)

The Town of Paonia has now broken the gender barrier with the election of its first female mayor, Mary Bachran, a two-year Trustee incumbent, who handily defeated challenger Bill Brunner by about a 2 to 1 margin—355 to 198. Turnout was reasonably high in the mail-in-only vote with 553 votes cast compared 516 in the 2018 election.

Bachran and Brunner both ran active campaigns with Bachran's being the more extensive and visible, including signage and a heavy presence on local social media where a series of well-produced videos featured progressive people in the community endorsing Bachran as well as at least one featuring Bachran herself. Bachran also had a catchy slogan: “I’m Backing Bachran!”

Brunner relied mostly on some print advertising, visibility from the water tap moratorium vote which he instituted, and a long history in the community. Both candidates were having meet-and-greets before the COVID-19 crisis slammed the door on face-to-face politicking. Brunner then sent out an email late in the campaign declaring that the COVID-19 campaign over-shadowed everything and that in the big picture it didn't matter (given a choice between the two candidates) who was Mayor of Paonia. He wrote that he was now busy making face shields for healthcare workers and not doing any more active campaigning. Bachran, a retired mental health professional, had already been making homemade cloth face masks for several weeks.

In mayoral and candidate debates there didn't appear to be sharp disagreement between the candidates although there was

a clear difference in personal style, with Brunner being much more rough edged and critical of what he sees as past missteps by the Town. Bachran seemed more future oriented and was praised as being very collaborative. Brunner, who as a former trustee had been something of an outlier, and was the leader of the successful effort in January 2020 to place a moratorium on water tap sales until it could be proven that the Town has adequate resources to serve all of the presently committed taps.

Late in the campaign, a few days after ballots were received, the Delta County Independent made the unusual move of publishing a lengthy “guest column” from then Mayor Charles Stewart that was titled “Don't Vote for Bill Brunner” in which Stewart listed what he saw as times that Brunner had made incorrect or misleading statements. Directly below was another letter from community leader, Elaine Brett, endorsing Bachran. Brunner requested that in the interest of fairness that the DCI print his rebuttal of Stewart's claims the following week but was refused by the DCI editor. They did print a letter from a well-known local man and friend to whom Brunner had donated a kidney.

It is generally unusual for there to be a contested mayor's race in Paonia. Stewart ran unopposed in 2016.

While Crawford elected a mayor this cycle, first term (2016-2020) mayor Wanda Gofforth had no challengers, and since there was just enough trustee candidates to fill the seats, there was no election. Gofforth is the second female mayor in the history of the Town, following a term served by Susie Steckel (2012-2016), the first. Crawford is the only Valley Town to opt out of having term limits for Town Council members.

In Hotchkiss, Mayor Larry Wilkening is now two years into his first term. Hotchkiss still awaits its first female mayor.

Valley Pandemic Impacts Continued from page 3

had been 2,627 cases in the state, 51 deaths and Delta County was still holding at one. Sort of like an anvil dangling over your head by a thin wire. You know it's there and that it will drop sooner or later.

National news is reporting that the federal government was looking at a best-case scenario of between 100,000 and 200,000 deaths nationally. Without aggressive action like stay-at-home orders it was estimated that deaths would have totaled about 2 million in the U.S. The federal government extended the date for social distancing and other precautions out to April 30.

March 31 – Delta County Health Department head, Karen O'Brien, reported on a KVNF call-in show that the hospital can come up with about 80 total beds, up from the current 49 beds if needed. They are also looking at alternative sites if the existing beds are overwhelmed. While Delta County remains an anomaly with only one case, Montrose County reports 14 COVID cases while Mesa County has 16 as of today.

It has been observed that six-foot social distancing seems to be only followed by some. In the space of several minutes near the center of Hotchkiss' downtown a lack of observance was seen four times including by a roof crew working on a business and by staff and visitors at the Hotchkiss Post Office and outside the hardware store.

Governor Polis noted last evening in a press briefing, that the selective stay-at-home mandate seems to have slowed the increase in confirmed COVID cases statewide, from the numbers doubling every other day to doubling every five days or so.

April 1 – As of 4 p.m. yesterday the State case number was 2,966 with 509 hospitalized and 69 deaths. Delta County still was listed on the State site as having only one case although Gunnison County has 82 cases.

Today the State extended school closures until April 30, which probably means for the remainder of the school year. In the meantime the School District has begun instating a distance learning model focused on learning from home via the Internet and other ways.

While waiting for what will probably be an inevitable sharp uptick in the local number of COVID cases, Delta County and a good number of volunteers from across the county, the Delta County Volunteer Coalition, are busy preparing and stepping up to fill needs such as shopping and delivering groceries to high at-risk people. Many women are busy sewing face masks and others are manufacturing face

shields and gathering donation of items that will be needed by nursing homes, medical workers and first responders.

There is a vigorous debate on local social media about whether people should wear masks in public. Experts are concerned that homemade or improperly worn masks *could* make people feel safe and act foolishly (getting too close to others) while other experts say that if worn “*in addition*” to following all other recommended actions, masks could add another level of protection especially in areas where social distancing is difficult, like in grocery stores.

The Creamery Arts Center in Hotchkiss who had previously posted that they would be closed through today now put up signs that they were “closed until further notice.”

April 2 – Beginning today, and extending through tomorrow, there is a *Stuff the Bus* donation collection event held at Hotchkiss City Market and Wal-Mart in Delta coordinated by Delta County Volunteer Coalition. According to a press release: “*The purpose of the event is to secure hard-to-come-by new and unopened items that people or businesses may have, that they can donate. There is a significant shortage of these items, which will go directly to local Delta County Nursing Homes, and First Responders. Needed items: Baby Formula, N95 Face Masks, Nitrile & Vinyl Gloves -- NO latex please, Safety goggles or glasses, Bleach, Isopropyl Alcohol, Hydrogen Peroxide, New or Used CLEAN Face Shields, Tyvek Painter Coveralls (NOT MESH), Disinfectant Spray, Disinfectant Wipes, Hand Sanitizer, Shoe Covers, Surgical Gowns.*”

If you have items on the list to donate contact Delta Call Center at 970-874-2172 for information.

A “medical screening” tent has been set up at the entrance to the DCMH emergency department. This is in addition to restricted, screened access to the hospital in general.

Paonia became the first of the Valley Towns to hold a virtual meeting via Zoom, an application that allows on line participation by both computer cameras/microphones and by phone.

April 3 - Delta County reported that there are now three more confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the county, bringing to total to four. None of the cases require hospitalization. The effort to continue to prepare for greater numbers of infections continued along with encouraging community action. The *Stuff the Bus* event continued today.

Continued on page 8

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COVID Journal

March 23 - April 13

Continued from page 7

Delta County Memorial Hospital reported that they had created an 8 bed COVID unit with some ability to expand. So far, they have had no critical COVID patients. They also announced that they

were “temporarily reducing hours at the DCMH West Elk Walk-In Clinic in Paonia. It will be open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.”

Governor Jared Polis joined with the CDC in finally recommending that everyone wear non-medical masks in public spaces where other people are present and can't be fully avoided, such as grocery stores. It was agreed that it would help reduce the spread of the virus from those that were infected but had no symptoms as well as providing an additional measure of protection to wearer if all other precautions were also observed.

In Hotchkiss it was reported that the 2020 Hotchkiss Sheepcamp

small minority according to a Herald quick survey today in Paonia and Hotchkiss, and a more comprehensive, Hotchkiss-centric one reported by DCMHD board candidate, and Hotchkiss resident, Terry O'Brien. In his survey of Hotchkiss businesses, only the Stop and Save convenience store got a passing grade and a “well done.”

Gunnison County numbers are high with 93 today but there are also other numbers, people self-reporting with possible COVID symptoms but not being tested, which is at several hundred. Anecdotally, one Valley resident with many friends in Crested Butte says that “half the town has it.”

April 7 – Municipal Election Day in Hotchkiss and Paonia, which luckily among with most elections across the state to mail-in, and this year to mail-in only. The numbers as of 4 p.m. 5,429 cases in the state, 1,079 hospitalizations and 179 deaths. Delta -5, Gunnison – 95, Mesa -27 and Montrose - 35. Gunnison County has also declared itself closed to tourists and other visitors and threatens to jail or fine violators.

Note: The North Fork Valley region includes portions of Montrose (east and south of Crawford) and Gunnison (up-valley north of Bowie) Counties.

April 8 – Delta County reported the first

death of a “resident” from COVID-19 today. The death was of the man, previously reported on April 6 as testing positive, in his 70's living in an assisted care facility in another county. The County also reported the sixth confirmed case of a resident of the county, a man in his sixties who had close contact with a person who was previously confirmed case.

So far, with the DCM Hospital preparing energetically, including establishing an 8 bed COVID unit in addition to 6 ICU beds, no in-county cases have been serious enough to require hospitalization. So far.

Number in Colorado today: 5,655 cases confirmed, 1162 hospitalizations, and 193 deaths to date. Counties: Delta – 6, Gunnison 93, Montrose -35, and Mesa – 32.

A social thing of going outside at 8 p.m. and howling at the moon that has caught on in Paonia has spread to Hotchkiss, feeling somewhat eerie, but also joyful to some.

April 9 – Judge Lynn French limited the attendees at the Hotchkiss Municipal Court this afternoon to staff and those with a case before the court.

This evening's Hotchkiss Town Council meeting was held on-line via a Zoom seminar application that required anyone attending to pre-register. New Hotchkiss Trustee Jim Wingfield refused to vote in favor of a resolution extending the declaration of a local emergency to May 15 saying he didn't like what was going on and didn't accept “the numbers” as factual. There are conspiracy theories floating about on certain media claiming that total numbers of COVID-19 deaths, now at over 20,000 nationally, are inflated and also some debate about the

Stockdog Trials had been cancelled as had similar events all across the country.

April 4 – As of 4 p.m. there were 4,565 cases in the state including 875 hospitalizations and 126 deaths. In nearby counties, Gunnison is the worst hit with 90 cases and one death, with Crested Butte reported to be an epicenter there as have other ski resort towns. Montrose County now has 31 cases and one death.

Several Valley locals complained on Facebook that postal carriers were leaving packages at mailboxes at the roadside. One man reported a package, containing medical equipment, being stolen.

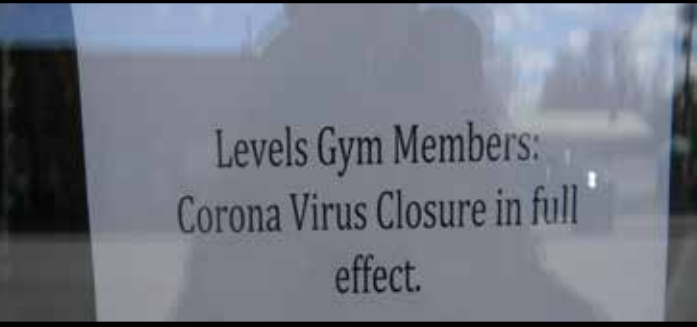
Sue, from Somerset reported that social distancing hasn't been a problem in the Valley highest small town, with the hundred or so residents keeping to themselves. The unincorporated town has no active businesses unless you count the post office.

Crawford Pioneer Days, scheduled for June, announced that the event was cancelled due to virus concerns.

April 5 – Case numbers from the State as of 4 p.m. today: 4950 cases, 924 hospitalizations and 140 deaths. So, the rate of rise may be slowing a little in the urban areas. Regionally, Gunnison County reported 90 cases, Montrose is up to 31 and Mesa County has 22. Delta County holding at four cases with none in the hospital.

April 6 – Delta County reported their fifth confirmed case of COVID-19 in a resident, except in this case the “resident” was not in residence and was instead living “outside of the county” according to a press release. So, that other shoe has yet to drop.

More people are wearing masks in public spaces in the Valley but it is still a





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Continued on next page

Hotchkiss Extends Disaster Declaration

Continued from Page 5

on sanitation and hygiene. Employees are not to travel to other areas for meetings/conferences etc. where COVID-19 is expanding, which would be pretty much the rest of the State. Staff should limit internal meetings, stay at a distance when possible, and avoid close, in-person contact with the public. High risk employees should work from home if possible and sick employees should self-quarantine at home with no sick leave being required to be used.

The Town will comply with State and Federal direction.

With the first COVID -19 case in the County the agenda actions have already moved the Town into their Plans Tier III response level.

Tier IV would be doubling down on Tier II and III precautions along with possible establishment of an incident command set up in coordination with the County and State authorities.

Broad, clear communications, including with the public, will be maintained.

The Quarantine "Plan" was one sentence: "In the event of a need for quarantine, the Town will follow the directions of State and County Health officials who will provide specific information relative to quarantine processes and procedures."

COVID from Page 8

health cost of an economic shutdown versus the big picture health impacts of the actual illness.

April 10 - Numbers for Colorado as of 4 p.m.: 6,510-cases, 1,312 hospitalizations, and 250 deaths, County case numbers: Delta - 6, Gunnison -101, Montrose - 38, Pitkin-47, and Mesa 34.

April 12 - Easter Sunday and all churches in the Valley are empty except for some that are livestreaming from their sanctuaries.

Colorado Data: 7,303 cases, 1,417 hospitalizations, 290 deaths. Delta - 6, Gunnison -101, Montrose - 57, Pitkin-49, and Mesa 35 and Garfield - 55.

April 13 - Delta County reported a 7th confirmed COVID case, a female in her 30's who is self-isolating at home.

The 8 p.m "howling" continued in Paonia in Hotchkiss.

April 14 - The other shoe drops or maybe just a sock as five more cases were reported in Delta County, some from a group of adolescents who were hanging out together.

Press Release: Delta County Health Department is reporting 5 additional cases in Delta County, for a total of 12. Eighth Case: Male, adolescent, who is a close contact with the seventh case and is self-isolating at home. Ninth Case: Female, 30s, who is a close contact with the seventh case and is self-isolating at home. Tenth Case: Male, adolescent, who is a close contact with the seventh case and is self-isolating at home. Eleventh Case: Male, adolescent, who is a close contact with the seventh case and is self-isolating at home. Twelfth Case: Female, 20s, who is self-isolating .

Total of 3 individuals that have recovered and 1 death(resident out of county).

To date, 168 tests have been administered at Delta County Memorial Hospital. The results are 162 negative, 2 positive, and 4 pending; one positive is currently hospitalized.

April 15 - Thirteenth case - A woman in her 40's isolating at home.

Mask wearing is becoming wider spread despite misinformation.



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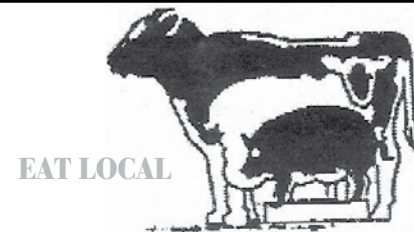
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Paonia Council Recommends the Wearing of Masks

By Thomas Wills

Paonia Town Council
April 14, 2020

Via Zoom on-line phone application
Mayor Charles Stewart, Trustees: Mayor pro-tem – Mary Bachran, Bill Bear, Carolyn Diehl, Michelle Pattison, Dave Knutson and Karen Budinger. Staff: Town Administrator/ Clerk – Corrine Ferguson and assistant – Amanda Mojarro, Police Chief – Neil Ferguson, Public Works Director – Travis Loberg, Finance Officer – Cindy Jones and Town Attorney - Bo James Nerlin.

For the last meeting of the old board headed by out-going mayor Charles Stewart, the Paonia Town Council returned to using the Zoom app for their virtual meetings after trying Go To Meeting previously. After going through an agenda that included accepting a bid to refinance the Town's sewer financing and controversial measures that gave a choice between either adopting an enforceable law that required all to wear face coverings in public spaces where social distancing is difficult or just adopting a measure that "encouraged" the same the Trustees adopted a resolution that "encouraged."

It was somewhat different, and would have been improper in normal times, in having an old sitting council consider "new" business (the masking measures) at a meeting held a full week after a new council and mayor was elected. The new council will be headed by Mayor Mary Bachran and adds new trustees Tamie Meck and Mick Johnson. Incumbents Bill Bear, Dave Knutson (previously appointed) and Michelle Pattison (previously appointed) were also elected. Mayor Stewart and Trustees Carolyn Diehl (appointed) and Karen Budinger will be leaving.

Normally the old council simply wraps up old business and then hands over the reins to the new council at the same meeting, as happened in Hotchkiss on April 9. The Paonia meeting was just the old council from beginning to end with no swearing in of the new mayor and council members. That will apparently happen at a subsequent meeting. But, under a declaration of a local disaster, many things that would have been improper previously, if not illegal, are allowed including the holding of the virtual meetings themselves.

One item that truly was "old", the Trustees accepted a bid from a company that arranged refinancing of the Town's remaining debt on construction of the sewer plant. The refinancing via new municipal bonds nearly sliced the interest rate by half down to 2.5%, saving the Town and the Sewer Fund considerable money.

There were a few questions on the municipal bonding matter

including why, if the bonds were only to refinance Sewer Fund debt, was the Water Fund revenues also listed as collateral in making sure the bonds were paid off? The answer was an unsatisfying version of, "because that is the way it is done."

Bid for Sewer Line Repair in River Approved

A second item of old business was awarding a sewer line river crossing repair project to Roop Excavating for the amount of \$31,600. The project was for: "Repair (covering and re-armoring) to exposed sewer pipe within the river near Samuel Wade bridge (Third Street). Five bids were solicited for the project, three bids were received." After discussion and Public Works Committee review – the Public Works Committee and Staff recommended acceptance of the Roop bid. All were in favor.

Resolution to Recommend the Wearing of Face Coverings Approved

The idea of the Town

weighing in on encouraging or enforcing the wearing of face coverings in public spaces proved to be somewhat controversial with 11 people, the majority from outside the town, calling in to mostly protest any legal mandate. But once it was clear that the Trustees were leaning heavily in favor of a Resolution that simple recommended that people in Paonia wear masks where needed most did not object. Some admitted that they already wore masks but that they did not want to be made to legally do so as has been done in some other towns and cities. Others pointed out that there is a range inefficiency in masks depending upon the materials used and how they are constructed. At least one person opined falsely that non-medical grade masks had zero effectiveness. Most experts, including the CDC, now agree that wearing even a very simple mask in combination with all other basic recommendations can reduce the spread and contraction of the virus.

The vote to approve the resolution was 5 to 1, the one being departing appointed trustee Carolyn Diehl who put forth something of a low key conservative rant in disagreeing with formulating and considering the resolution and rejected ordinance, which she saw as unnecessary and a waste of time when the council could have "encouraged" mask wearing without spending the money and time on the two formal measures. Mayor Stewart explained that resolutions were one way the Councils functioned in trying to inspire citizen actions on matters.

Diehl was ninth among the ten trustee candidates in the April 7 election.

Paonians appear to be supportive of wearing masks to protect themselves and others, but don't want the government to "make" them do it.

CLIMATE SCIENCE 101: COVID -19 is a Bump in the Road

Mini-Editorial by Thomas Wills

Remember in the "before-times" a couple months ago, when some people, usually those with a big stake in the continuation of the fossil fuel industry, claimed that a rapid transition to renewable energy would cost too much, trillions even, and collapse the economy. Others pointed to the science and said two main things: transition to renewables was not a *choice*, and while we were doing it we could build a new, stronger, more sustainable economy that was healthier for everyone. You can giggle now.

Flash forward those few months to the present where we are spending trillions to prop up an economy based in large part on the use of fossil fuels and somehow we *can* afford it. The alternative we are told is that up to two-million people, those who are elderly, diabetic, or immune compromised, could die from COVID 19 in U.S. alone. We as a country have agreed that we are willing, at sometimes great personal price, to risk another Great Recession or Depression in order to save the most health challenged among us. God bless America. But...

Just a few months ago a large segment of the population was not willing to sacrifice trading their Escalade in for an electric car, install solar panels if they could, eat less meat, or just figure ways to cut back on energy use as the grid system gradually got switched over. Or even attempt to understand the science that proves an energy transition necessary.

This despite being clearly told that continuing to use fossil fuels at the rate we currently are, and knowing better for at least three decades, (1992 Rio World Climate Conference), than many millions will die as a result as seas rise, as diseases proliferate, as food crises due to drought are more common, climate driven heavy weather destroys and kills, and governments destabilize, and war break out in the poorest countries.

But, you say, although that are some deaths and misery now from climate change, most of it will happen in the future 20, 30, 40 years away—many closer to end of the century. And the first to go will be black, brown, and yellow people in poor countries. People you don't know and don't particularly care about. Driving your Hummer and eating a feedlotted beef steak three times a week is worth more than you want to spend or give up.

Maybe the COVID-19 crisis with teach us to value human life, all human life, if not nature and the planet. This current crisis will pass. With a vaccine it will become a memory within a year or two. But climate change impacts caused by the burning of fossil fuels and our thoughtless civilization will go on for centuries. Will this current crisis teach us to care even a little?

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Most of all, stay safe and healthy.

Paonia Zooms into the Future with Extensive Discussion of Quorum Question

By Thomas Wills

Paonia Town Council Special Meetings

April 2 and April 6, 2020 Special meetings held online/phone via Zoom application.

Mayor pro-tem – Mary Bachran.
Trustees: Bill Bear, Carolyn Diehl, Michelle Pattison, Dave Knutson and Karen Budinger. Absent – Mayor Charles Stewart. Staff: Town Administrator/ Clerk – Corrine Ferguson and assistant – Amanda Mojarro. Town Attorney - Bo James Nerlin.

Issue Background: For statutory municipalities, the Colorado State Statutes offer two choices: (1) the mayor may be like any other trustee during meetings making and seconding motions and having a vote on all issues or: (2) they may only vote in case of a tie in which case they “shall” also have the power to veto ordinances that involve the spending of money. It would then take a two-thirds (2/3) majority of all the trustees (not just those present) to overcome the veto. With 6 trustees, that would mean 4 trustees would be needed to override.

And—whichever way a Town chooses to go it needs to be enshrined in the Town code and the veto power needs to be spelled out if the non-voting mayor option is chosen. An ordinance the Paonia Council was considering on April 2 and 6 added that specific veto power, as required by law, to the way the Town had always done things—having a mayor who only votes in the case of a tie and cannot make or second motions. And—State Statute limits any changes to the parts of Town code regarding such powers and limitations of the mayor to be done within a sixty-day window preceding a mayoral election. New mayor, new rules.

In the case of Paonia, the new ordinance simply brings the Town into compliance with what the State law says you must allow for a non-voting mayor.

Now comes the tricky part. Should the non-voting mayor count as part of the Council quorum, the minimum present to conduct business? That was the question discussed at the April 2 and April 6 meetings. The choice of having the mayor count as part of the quorum or not is optional in the State law.

Arguments for: Having the mayor count as part of the quorum, despite not having a vote except to break a tie, would allow the Town to conduct business (beyond scheduling a new meeting) despite the absence of three trustees. The mayor

and the three remaining trustees would constitute a quorum.

Arguments against: Having a non-voting mayor count towards a quorum would mean that measures addressed during a meeting could be approved by as few as two trustees with a 2-1 vote with no chance of a tie. (Other specific measures such as the Town assuming debt would require more trustees to be present.)

The Meetings:

The April 2 meeting was the first one for the Council held via the Zoom on-line application. Council members and the public could virtually attend via either computer or phone with those using computer cameras/microphones appearing on screen.

Mayor Charles Stewart chose not to attend saying that he was worried that his business computer might be hacked via the application. There have been cases of hackers crashing Zoom meetings and posting inappropriate things.

With attendees attending via cameras from their homes added some human-interest points like when Mary Bachran’s dog decided to go on a barking jag in another room and she had to pause and go tend to it. Trustee Bill Bear seemed unclear on how close he needed to be to his camera and ended up really close as did Dave Knutson. Town attorney, Bo Nerlin, started out with the top of his head out of frame. It was a learning curve for virtual meetings meeting.

The debate on the issue “should the mayor count as part of a quorum” issue was also a little awkward and confusing/confused due to the new format despite mayor-pro-tem Bachran’s valiant efforts to click the right icons. Trustee Carolyn Diehl was using an Apple computer and it apparently didn’t sync well since she never appeared on-screen although she could be heard and posted comments. Michelle Pattison’s feed was unclear at times.

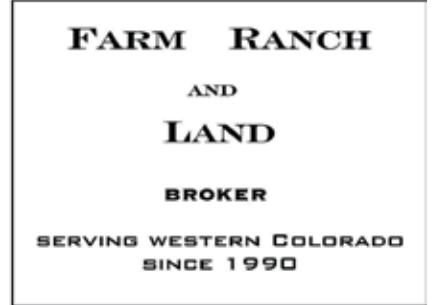
After a disjointed back and forth conversation and some input from the lone member of the public commenting, Suzanne Watson, attending by phone, the Trustees decided that since the Ordinance (2020-03) presented that evening for consideration, had no provision either declaring that the mayor be counted in determining a quorum, or saying that he would not, a special meeting on the following Monday, April 6, one day before the election, would be required.

At that meeting the Trustees considered two dueling ordinances: each added the veto power, but one had the Mayor counting as part of a quorum and the other stating that he did not count.



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The Blue Sage believes in the arts: even—or maybe *especially*—during the Covid-19 crisis. We’ve cancelled events and closed our doors to the public to do our part in stopping the spread of the virus, but we’re still hard at work trying to devise creative ways to keep us all connected, stimulated, and sane. Please keep your eye on our website at bluesage.org for upcoming programs that comply with “social distancing” recommendations yet provide some relief for those with school-age youngsters and stir-crazy shut-ins.

Though we won’t be premiering a new gallery of art works for your viewing pleasure in the upcoming month, we’re looking ahead to future shows. **Artists:** we need your help! Please participate in our 3rd annual fundraiser called “6x6 Square.” This popular exhibit is scheduled to open June 26th, just in time for the Cherry Days Festival—and this year, the opening reception will be directly before the opening of StoryFest Writing Symposium keynote with Craig Childs.

We are seeking artists from near and far willing to draw, paint, collage, photograph etc., on a provided 6x6 cradled panel. Please call us at 970/527-7243 to register and arrange for a time to pick up your square. Each piece will be available for sale for \$50 and 100% of the sales will be donated to help continue the legacy of the Blue Sage Center for the Arts. For twenty years the Blue Sage has been offering a variety of classes, live music, talks, and gallery exhibits. *We’re here for you!*



An art lover views some of the past entries in the 6 X6 Blue Sage Fundraiser Art Show. Spending a bit more time making art these days? Make a piece or two for the Blue Sage.

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Paid for by Kim Shay

Paonia and Hotchkiss Trustee Votes Add New Faces

By Thomas Wills

The biggest surprise in the 2020 Paonia Municipal Election was not the election of the Town's first female mayor, Mary Bachran, who seemed an easy favorite, but rather the defeat by 21 votes of incumbent Karen Budinger, who had been very engaged, thoughtful, and effective in her first term. The winners of the five open Trustee seats were (in order of votes): Tamie Meck -338, Dave Knutson -336, Michele Pattison -327, Mick Johnson - 253, and incumbent Bill Bear - 246. Budinger was in sixth place at 225 votes. Then there was a significant vote numbers gap to the remaining four candidates including Carolyn Diehl who had been appointed to replace Chelsea Bookout, just a couple months before the election. Knutson and Pattison were both also appointed incumbents.

Top vote getter, Tamie Meck, is a former Paonia-area reporter for the Delta County Independent who has lived in town for five years and in the Paonia area for eighteen years. Runner-up Dave Knutson is the former HR director for Chaco Sandals, co-founded North Fork Senior Connections (previously known as A Little Help) and has lived in the community for 17 years. Michele Pattison has an MBA, co-owns The Local Nomad hostel and has lived in Paonia for three years. Mick Johnson, retired, has a BA in business administration and has lived in Paonia three years. Incumbent, William "Bill" Bear, is retired from the local coal industry and has lived in Paonia and the area for his whole life.

Then, there is the fact that new Mayor Mary Bachran was elected to a four-year term in 2018, and since she was in the middle of her term, her seat now becomes vacant and open for appointment by the new council, probably sometime in May.

Issues for new Council: Paonia has lot of issues including economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. Economics – should the town seek new revenue streams to help with too tight budgets, such as legalizing retail marijuana? Space to Create – should the Town donate the use of the old sewer pond property? And what about affordable housing in general,

especially for seniors? Water – regardless of an engineering study results, should the Town look to building raw water storage in the near term or look for cheaper stop-gap solutions for times of drought?

In Hotchkiss two incumbents: John Marta – 139, and Patrick Webb-105, were reelected as was Jim Wingfield-121. Terry O'Brien received 68 votes.

Marta, 81, well known as a community volunteer, is retired from the coal industry, trucking and other businesses, and is a native of the area. Webb is a retired collectible rug importer/dealer who first came to the Valley in the 1970's ran a Paonia bookstore and helped to found KVNF before leaving in the mid 1980's and then returning to Hotchkiss in 2011. Wingfield is a Hotchkiss native, working in construction, who lived in Paonia for many years and served two terms on the Town Council there.

Issues for new Council: Hotchkiss has been engaged in efforts to boost the local economy, something that has been recently delayed/challenged by the COVID-19 crisis. One decision facing the new council will be how to deal with the sale of the old Public Works building as the new structure on Barrow Mesa nears completion. The Town has also been challenged over the past couple years in understanding and following proper land use development procedures. This is particularly important as Delta County is poised to adopt zoning/new land use regulations that will directly affect the Town. And like Paonia, the question remains as to how the Town can facilitate the development of affordable housing, particularly for seniors.

In Crawford there was no elections, but incumbent Mayor Wanda Gofforth, and the three candidates for three trustee seats will be sworn in: incumbent John Paton (gunsmith and retired law enforcement officer), pastor Jeff Peed, and former trustee Gill Saunders (retired restaurateur), who lost the 2016 mayor's race to Gofforth by only two votes.

Issues for new Council. In Crawford the issues include a lack of retail businesses and sales tax revenues, which result in continuing tight budgets. Another ongoing issue is the debate over how the Town can enforce its Town-specific ordinances when they do not have a municipal court.

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NORTH FORK REAL ESTATE REALTY Property Buying and Selling Different in the New Now-times

By Mike Jackson
WesternColoradoRealty.com
Offices in Hotchkiss and Paonia

To quote Dickens, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness..."

However, this tale of two cities is actually about the same place, one then and one now. Everything is changing so fast in this now-infected country, and world, (but not yet county) that I'm finding it difficult to get perspective on where we are at any given moment, let alone where we're heading. Having missed doing a column last month, I was expecting to write enthusiastically about the local real estate market heading into spring on the heels of a strong first-quarter, but it's all different now. Even the concept of "now" has changed when, by the time this is published, it's likely that the local state of affairs will have morphed again. Before CORVID-19 was declared a global pandemic, I was thinking that, unlike the financial melt-down of 2008, this isn't a "real estate" problem. Travel, hospitality, entertainment, food service, and healthcare are at the nexus of this, but real estate isn't - at least not in a broad economic sense. Way back, in early March, it seemed like sales volume was probably going to drop but that prices wouldn't really be affected. Today I'm not as sure.



buying or selling homes don't mix well. Contracts and loans currently in process appear to have a good chance of closing; so far, the title companies and mortgage loan originators are still open for business with sanitary precautions in place and the

option to close transactions via Fed/Ex or by e-mail. Beyond that, the uncertainties begin to multiply. For example, retirees have been a key demographic of purchasers recently, and one can only wonder how many retirements have just been postponed as a consequence of the stock market's precipitous decline. Sales among "locals" account for the largest share of transactions, and most of

those are tied to local employment - how long will restaurants and public venues remain closed with employees furloughed. What effect will the corona crisis have on our agricultural economy? Will these financial pressures lead to foreclosures like during the great recession? That's what the feds are wondering too, and why they're talking about mailing out checks to help people cover their bills. Safe to say, it's going to get worse before it gets back to normal.

I'm just a country Realtor, not a soothsayer, and regardless of what the future holds, I think we're all fortunate to live here in the North Fork Valley where neighbors are glad to support each other - even when they call to see if you can spare a roll of toilet paper.

"Social Distancing" and people

KVNF Demonstrates Its Value During Crisis

By Thomas Wills

North Fork Valley Public Radio, aka KVNF, based in Paonia for 41 years since 1979, has proven to be a strong communications resource during the first month of the COVID-19 pandemic in our area. The station and its news department: Jodi Peterson, Eric Goold and Cori Stanton, have produced a steady stream of news, interviews and updates on the virus issue locally, while continuing to broadcast NPR news, giving a national and global perspective on the issue, in the mornings and evenings. A COVID-era community resource page has also appeared on their website - KVNF.org.

And they even managed to have a modified Spring Fundraising Drive, raising just over \$40,000 of a \$65,000 goal, which wasn't bad considering that this time the staff shouldered most of effort since having the usual large numbers of volunteers wandering in and out of the Grand Avenue studios was not a safe option.

Staff such as iconic morning news guy, Eric Goold, could be heard frequently tempering their fundraising pleas with something like: "We know that this can be an economically challenging time so we really appreciate you giving what you can to keep us on the air..."

And just in time for the pandemic, KVNF hired a new station manager, this time from within the local community, Ashley Crest, who for many years has been known for her family's cut flower business, has now grown into the job of station manager, previously being

the station's Business Coordination and Event Manager. Crest replaces Jon Howard who retired last fall.

As much of Paonia and the Valley stays at home the presence of KVNF on the air each day offers something of a sense of connection to the normal and the "old times" before a trip to the grocery store seemed like a venture into dangerous territory. Flipping on the radio in the early morning and hearing Goold's distinctive voice reciting the weather for the day and week is making many feel less isolated. Or Jeff Reynolds, a KVNF constant presence since the beginning, reading the community calendar or hosting a show.


During this time KVNF sound a little different with more "automated" programming and less casual DJ chatter between songs since most DJ's and program hosts are at home. But the staff is flexing some creative muscles, doing things like having the hosts of the gardening show "As the Worm Turns", Lance Swigart and Jill Spears, conduct the program by phone.

As KVNF reminds everyone of their key value to the Valley and region during this time the community is asked, in addition to supporting other community efforts, not to forget local media like KVNF. Become a member of KVNF or just donate whatever you can. Donation may be made online at KVNF.org or by mailing a check to KVNF P.O. Box 1350 - Paonia, Colorado 81428

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Another Month in the Valley

Continued from page 4

On the plus side, all of the rain is helping to green things up nicely.

March 30 – More rain in the morning clearing and warmer by the end of the day. I made another pot of soy milk and made soy yogurt from part of it. And cooked up a batch of navy beans with rice and quinoa. Pretty good with homemade bread.

March 31 – The sun returns to the Valley. It is a gorgeous day with temperatures in the 60's. I did some laundry, made a tofu lasagna casserole and baked sourdough bread. The bookstore has now been closed for a full week but it seems way longer.

April 1 – Another great day with some gusty winds late in the day. I planted one small bed of snow peas, besides writing and painting.

April 2 – Mixed spring weather with rain, a little sun, a drop in temperatures to pretty chilly, and some more gusty winds.

This evening Paonia Town Council held their first "figure out how this works" Zoom meeting that people could attend online or by phone. The whole meeting was an attempt to understand what it means if the Mayor (who doesn't vote) and doesn't count towards the quorum (the minimal number of council members present to conduct business) means. The Council has a new ordinance that clarifies the powers of the Mayor to officially reflect in the law the way it has always been done except that no Paonia mayor (to my knowledge) has tried to use the power to veto ordinances involving spending.

April 3 – Back to warm spring weather. I made soy milk in my solar oven and it worked much better than the gas stove. You don't have to watch it every minute.

Three more cases of COVID-19, none serious so far, were confirmed for Delta County. Governor Polis and the CDC recommend that we all wear protective masks in public.

April 4 - Thanks go out to my Church of Art neighbors, Mary Hockenbery and hubby Toufic, who safely shared some fingerling seed potatoes and had previously given me some lettuce starts. Mary has been sewing face masks as well.

Mostly a pretty nice spring day.

April 5 – Sunday. It's starting to take some effort to remember what day it is. Sunny and nice.

April 6 – The Paonia Town Council held a follow-up to their April 2 on-line Zoom meeting to give final approval to an update to the Town code acknowledging that a mayor who only votes to break a tie also by law has veto power over measures that spend money.

New game: (Thanks to Terry O'Brien for the idea.) Who is taking the masks/distancing guidelines seriously? Noon – Hotchkiss PO. Six people in the retail lobby, poor social distancing despite signs and only one visitor with a mask. The worker behind the counter didn't have one. I had mine on as I checked my mail and didn't get near anyone.

In Paonia (on a quick run to stock papers in downtown Herald boxes) it seemed that people were a little more mask/social distancing-conscious than in Hotchkiss, but a number of people at Don's Market and downtown seemed less than closely concerned. Historical note: regular gas at the Paonia Stop and Save was \$1.69; a new low in recent years.

Guy in front of The Diner on a bike noting to a friend (three feet from him) my blue dust mask: "I wish I had one of those but they would cost a fortune." No bandana at the ready or anything.

Delta County reported a fifth COVID case, which really doesn't count

since the 70-year-old man, while a county "resident," was living elsewhere when contracting it.

April 7 – Another lovely day in the Valley.

Municipal elections day in the Valley for the Towns of Hotchkiss and Paonia. Status quo maintained for now in Hotchkiss. Some shuffling and the first female mayor in Paonia, Mary Bachran. Paonia is an inch or two more progressive than before the election, but did lose an excellent trustee in Karen Budinger, who came in sixth of five open trustee spots. Maybe she can fill Bachran's now empty Trustee seat. Or Bill Brunner, just to keep everyone on their toes.

April 8 - The warmest day in the Valley yet this spring.

April 9 – The Hotchkiss Municipal took place in person but was closed to the public and press, with only those directly involved and staff allowed to attend. The Hotchkiss Town Council, held via the Internet app Zoom, featured the addition of a new trustee, Jim Wingfield, replacing Sheila Maki, Wingfield surprised some, including me, by declaring himself as having doubts about the seriousness of the COVID-19 crisis. He voted against a resolution extending a local disaster declaration allowing the town access to different kinds of aid for businesses and citizens.

Before the (virtual) swearing in of the new board the trustees made yet one more awkward land use change review decision, approving a boundary adjustment that allowed the old Wolfenbarger Garage building (First and Main) to be sold separately from a 1972 trailer by creating a newly configured lot not much larger than the trailer itself. Okay...

April 10 – A quiet Good Friday. I disinfected/cleaned the Hotchkiss Methodist Church using a new routine of spraying with a bleach, soap and water solution and then not wiping right away. Moving on with the spraying and then returning to the first place, including the underside of doorknobs etc., a couple minutes later after the solution has a chance to break down virus coatings and kill germs. While services and meetings have been canceled at the church the community food bank still operates two days a week and authorized people still go in and out for various reasons.

At my Main Street cottage, I went outside at 8 p.m. with my camera in record/movie mode and listened and made a record of people, and local dogs, doing the new "howling" thing. Some people can howl quite realistically.

April 11 – Another very nice day. Saturday... Oh, yeah. I remember now. Pats Bar and Grill has a sign (made by the Pack Shack) offering mixed alcoholic drinks to go. Quarantine cocktails.

The bookstore has been closed three weeks as of today. Thanks to people who have been leaving the occasional box of books on my front step. Dropped off on their way to the grocery store I assume.

April 12 – Easter Sunday, the day of resurrection and rebirth. It rained overnight across the valley speeding up the rebirth of green things across the Valley. Hayfields and gardens. The rhubarb is looking pretty nice and the one bed of peas is about an inch high. I planted some summer squash in germination containers.

April 13 - A 7th confirmed case of COVID in Delta County was reported, which extrapolates to at least 70 cases out there that have never been tested or documented.

Continued on page 17

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NEW "DRIED-IN" LOG HOME
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There are two versions of the Herald
This "print" version and the special, free, expanded, digital pdf, e-mailed version featuring extra pages and a monthly "Story from Anthracite", extra news, and more.
We will also e-mail a special edition at mid-month during this crisis period.
Want to see what you are missing?
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WATER IS LIFE.

*Time for
Climate Action.*

WATER IS LIFE.

*Time For
A County Climate Plan.*

WATER IS LIFE.

*Demand
Climate Action.*



Citizens for a
Healthy
Community

As we respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, let's not forget that Climate Change is the overarching crisis of our time. More than ever, we are going to be asked to think and act more socially, environmentally and responsibly. COVID-19 is testing all of our conventional thinking and revealing the weaknesses that put us at risk.

North Fork Valley Postings

Note: These dates are placeholders only. Most meetings are either cancelled or have very limited public access due to the crisis.

Hotchkiss Area

April 27 - Hotchkiss Planning Commission - usually 6:30 p.m. Meeting canceled for April.

May 14 - Hotchkiss Town Council - 6:30 p.m. Agenda: TBA www.townofhotchkiss.com (Meetings are virtual during the crisis.)

May 14 - Hotchkiss Municipal Court - 2 p.m. Town Hall. Closed to public during crisis)

May 11 - Hotchkiss Crawford Historical Society regular meeting - 1 p.m. at the museum. (No in-person meeting UFN). Museum closed.

May 18 - North Fork Pool Park and Recreation District Board. The board meets on the third Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the District office at the North Fork Pool.

May 18 - Memorial Hall Board of Directors. 7 p.m. (third Monday).

May 27 - Hotchkiss Planning Commission - usually 6:30 p.m. Agenda: TBA.

May 27 - Hotchkiss Community Chamber of Commerce Board meeting. 8:00 a.m. Memorial Hall - Addams Room - Memorial Hall.

Ongoing Items:

Hotchkiss Merchants Informal Meetings: first Wednesday of the month at 8 a.m. at the Coal Train Coffeehouse and third Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. at Tuckers or Pat's, Kim Shay sends out a mass email a few days beforehand. If you are not on the email list, contact Kim: gamblesacehardware@gmail.com (Cancelled until further notice)

Hours: Delta County Trash Transfer Station near Hotchkiss hours: Tuesday - Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

North Fork Annex Clerk & Recorder Office Hours 8:30 am - 12:30 pm, and 1:30 - 4:30 pm Monday through Friday. (Annex offices closed to public - do business online or by phone if possible.)

Hotchkiss Alcoholics Annon. Mondays 8 p.m. at St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church and Thursdays at 7 p.m. at Hotchkiss Methodist Church. (No Meetings until further notice.)

Hotchkiss (and Crawford) Lions Club meets on the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month at 7:30 a.m. Call Nancy for more information and rotating location. 303-204-8662 (Meetings deferred)

Hotchkiss Senior Meals - \$3.50 donation at the Hotchkiss Senior Center at Town Hall - Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at noon. (Meals delivered only)

Hotchkiss Crawford Museum at 2nd and Hotchkiss Ave. Seasonal Winter hours: Open Saturdays 1-4 p.m. until May. Rotating displays. Extensive local/regional history bookstore. (No in-person meetings.)

Internet Links:

Hotchkiss Chamber of Commerce

www.hotchkisschamber.com

Town of Hotchkiss

www.TownofHotchkiss.com

Paonia Area

May 12 - Paonia Town Council - 6:30 p.m. Town Hall. Agenda: TB. Sometimes work session at 5:30 p.m. Call 527-4101 for confirmation and agenda or www.townofpaonia.com. (Virtual or livestreamed meetings only UFN)

May 26 - Paonia Town Council -6:30 p.m. Sometimes work session at 5:30 p.m. Call 527-4101 for confirmation and agenda or www.townofpaonia.com. (Virtual or livestreamed meetings only UFN)

Ongoing:

Valley Organic Lunch Program for Seniors (VOLPS) at Old River Road Trading Post -15495 Black Bridge Road..Two Selected Fridays each month. (Check Facebook page) Educational talks or music. 12:30 p.m. meal. \$15 suggested free will donation. (Meals pickup or delivered only)

Paonia Senior (60 and over) Meals - Monday, Wednesday, Friday - \$3.50 free will donation - begins at noon. Paonia Senior Center. Open 11-1. (Meals delivered only)

Paonia/North Fork Rotary meets on Thursdays, 12 noon to 1 p.m. at the Paonia Town Hall. (Suspended UFN)

Internet Links:

News and Community Resources

kvnf.org

Paonia Chamber of Commerce

www.paoniachamber.com

Town of Paonia

www.TownofPaonia.com

Crawford Area

May 6 - Crawford Town Council regular meeting 7 p.m. - Town Hall. Agenda: TBA. (Meetings are virtual or limited during the crisis.)

May 11 - Crawford Country Chamber of Commerce board meeting Second Monday of the month - 5:30 p.m. at Crawford Town Hall. (No in-person meetings UFN)

May 20 - Crawford Town Council - If needed. 7:00 p.m. - Crawford Town Hall Agenda: TBA (Meetings are virtual or limited during the crisis.)

Valleywide

2020 Coming Events

(Cancelled) 17th Annual

Hotchkiss Sheep Camp Stockdog Trials - May 8-10 (Mother's Day weekend. Ute Trails Car Show, Community-wide yard sales.

(Probably will be Cancelled)

May 30 - North Fork Community Fair and Local Solutions Expo - Paonia Town Park

(Cancelled) 42nd Annual

Crawford Pioneer Days June 4th- 7th Paonia Cherry Days - July 2-5 Delta County Fair Week - August 2-9

Hotchkiss Traveling Shaman Camp-August 21-23 - Delta County Fairgrounds - www.shamanscamp.com
Paonia Mountain Harvest Festival September 24-27

November 21 - Hotchkiss Holiday Craft Fairs Saturday. Hotchkiss Chamber, NFAA, and Hotchkiss Seniors. Chamber Fair contact Tom - 872-2664

Another Month in the Valley Continued from page 15

April 13 - The chilly cold front temperatures continued with a freeze occurring overnight.

April 14 - A little colder overnight that yesterday with a coating of ice on a water barrel in my Hotchkiss garden.

The Paonia Council held their first on-line meeting after the election. Some controversy was generated by measures that would require people in Paonia to wear protective cloth masks in public spaces. The Trustees ultimately approved a resolution that gently "recommended" that everyone in Paonia wear masks in denser public spaces like the grocery store.

April 15 - The cold front is still lingering over the Valley today giving us one last frosty French kiss of winter.

A little warmer during the day and evening.

Business News and Other Rumours

It may not be on the top of your to-do list but please make sure and send in your 2020 Census paper. I mailed mine despite having to dry it out first since the census person left it on the gate to my picket fence and it took two days, and a couple rainstorms, for me to notice it since I usually go out the back. Small town.

Of course, the major business news is that a whole sector of local businesses in the Valley have closed and the rest, except the grocery stores, have been severely impacted with greatly reduced business activity.

These are dark times for local businesses having to close for the duration of the crisis or suffering greatly reduced cash flows. My other business, **Wills' Gallery and Used Books**, closed as of March 21, since I saw the writing on the wall as well as the impossibility of maintaining safe social distancing in such a snug environment as a crowded bookstore. But I am much more fortunate than many other impacted businesses since I own my store building and my home and have no mortgages. And my stock won't spoil.

For other businesses there is a lot of information on help for various businesses in a range of sectors. Check with Delta County and your local chamber of commerce.

The First Baptist Church in Hotchkiss did a project of resideing and insulating the old vintage 1904 section of the structure. To my knowledge all of the churches in the Valley, including First Baptist, have ceased having in-person services and hosting meetings. Many have switched to live streaming or having services via Zoom type apps.

Don's Market in Paonia, and **City Market** in Hotchkiss, as an additional effort to avoid contamination, have asked customers not to bring their own cloth bags into the store. This is a State recommendation. On April 4 Don's posted on Facebook that there were not requiring staff or customers to

wear masks in the store despite State and CDC recommendation that they do so. A notice on the door asked customer to social distance by 6 feet.

Earth Friendly Farm Supply, a business essential to many local organic farmers and home growers, is limiting the number of customers allowed in the store to only two at a time to maintain proper social distancing and encouraging people to call ahead so that things can be ready for pick-up outside. EFFF is located near Midway in the old Farmer Frank's complex. Wear your masks if you got 'em.

And speaking of organic growers, **ZenZen Organic's owner, Cindy Sorensen**, announced via an on-line video that the Paonia area grower, known for its hemp and CBD products, will not be growing hemp this year but is switching to vegetables. Why? Sorensen says she anticipates a shortage of grocery store produce due to a lack of temporary farm workers not being allowed in from Mexico by the federal government. Plus, she says they have adequate CBD product from last season's crop.

Both the **Hotchkiss Sheepcamp Stockdog Trials** in May and **Crawford Pioneer Days** in June have been cancelled due to COVID concerns.

According to community leader Kim Shay, the **Community Builders light industrial/makerspace feasibility study** in Hotchkiss will be delayed until later in the year.

Clarification: they are not meeting in person at the moment but the new Delta County economic development organization is named: **ONE Delta County - An economic alliance.**

Valley growth may be spurred by pandemic? Speaking of economic development, the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that living in large cities definitely has some serious health drawbacks besides bad air and a high murder rate. I am thinking that over the next couple of years there may be a surge of migration by those that can from urban areas like New York to rural places like the North Fork. Something to think about as we negotiate a summer that will be light on tourism and public gatherings.

Shadescapes in Hotchkiss is providing special fabric to sewing people in the valley to produce medical grade facemasks for health care workers, and first responders.

Paonia Ironworks is producing face shields (eye protection) for health care workers.

ANOTHER STORY FROM ANTHRACITE:

Three Women of Anthracite During the Time of the Virus

Sort of Fiction

By Lazarus A. Washburn Jr.

Edited by Thomas Wills

Pastor Amanda

Pastor Amanda Water of the Anthracite United Baptist Church did her best writing while she was walking. It just seemed to percolate up with motion and fresh air. To capture it when it came, on her saunters she carried both a small notebook and pen, and a tiny mp3 recorder/player that she wore on a leather lanyard around her neck.

"Corona virus. Co-ron-a... A corona is a halo or a crown and corona viruses have little spikes sticking up like a cartoon crown," Amanda said to some cows and still wobbly spring calves standing on the pasture side of the roadside fence. The babies peered at her through the lower expanse of ancient, tarnished hogwire festooned with the remnants of last year's bindweed. It was a semi-sunny Monday morning in late March and she had been walking east on First Street, following it off the terminus of the alligator-cracked asphalt, out of the small town, and into a countryside of orchards and hayfields.

"So, this particular corona virus, a special, *novel* one may have started in China in animals, maybe the odd little pangolin, and then crossed over to humans." A month-and-half-old calf danced along the fence looking interested. "But where did it come from before that?" The calf stopped to nibble a bright green bunch of new grass.

"Did God create the virus along with the COVID-19 that you get from this new virus? Did Jesus? Did an angel with too much time on her hands? Did Satan?" She began to walk faster as the idea blossomed and a mother cow and calf followed her, she on the gravel road and they in the field until they came to the barrier of a cross fence. *Cross fence?*

"Why would God create, or allow to be created, a new contagious disease that primarily kills old people in nursing homes and people already sick with something else?" she said to the sky, which was mostly cobalt blue with a few wispy clouds and jet contrails above. *A cross* of them in fact. Was everything a sign today? Probably not. She punched *pause* on the recorder. Though the sky was mostly clear now, there was a line of darkness approaching from the southwest. That was definitely a sign—maybe another mile and then turn back towards town. The storm would arrive in the Valley by early afternoon.

This seemed a little dark, not something leading into a positive sermon on persevering through adversity. Her usual *métier*. *Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of darkness, I shall fear no evil...* Unless I have a suppressed immune system like old Mrs. Richardson and few others. Then I'd hide and get a neighbor kid to leave groceries on the porch. A check under a flowerpot.

Bringing up the question of why God allowed suffering, and

why much of that suffering seemed to target the least among us first? Not a good thing to spring on a mostly older congregation when you had no answer other than maybe it was a mystery. Perhaps God saw modern medicine as a sort of new Tower of Babel. People getting too big for their yoga pants.

Pastor Amanda had turned thirty-three on December 21, the Winter Solstice. It was date and an age that had all sorts of historical and theological reverberations that she was fully aware of. Starting with the fact that Jesus was thirty-three, and only two years into his very unsuccessful travelling ministry, when he turned and headed towards Jerusalem for Passover. Where the big crowds were. Where trouble waited. About this very time of



year. She took a honey granola bar out of the pocket of her jacket, opened the foil wrapper and chewed slowly. She wondered, given her current struggles, what sort of doubts she would have by the time she was sixty-three. Some young lambs were cavorting in a field on her left; feeling the full joy of being alive in the spring where promises were everywhere.

"I was out in the country, down by the river where it was beautiful, and I saw all the baby animals," Amanda said into the recorder. "Happy to be alive. Joyful. Grateful and celebrating although I as a cynical human knew what eventually happens to cute calves and innocent lambs."

Pause. "Dark, dark, dark," she said, swallowing the last of the granola bar. Remembering the story of lambs and Passover. The reference to their ritual sacrifice in that Jodie Foster serial killer movie.

Her cell phone rang. She slid it out of its belt sheath saw it was her Aunt Marie-Ava that everyone one pronounced Marie-a-va, all as one word.

"Hi Auntie!"

"A-man-duh." Spaced out just like that.

"Yes, Auntie." Amanda held the phone several inches from her right ear.

"A-man-duh. There are like ten f***ing cases in the f***ing city already," Marie-Ava announced at great volume. Then she said the f-word a half dozen more times for emphasis. "I don't know what to think. I don't need this sh*t." The *city* was San Francisco.

"I'm sure you don't, Auntie. Are you ill?"

CPA for an insurance company who ironically read tarot cards professionally on the side, and Marie-Ava was an old hippie who shared a huge house with a dozen others of the same vintage and persuasion, two of which were her alternating lovers.

"Jesus," Amanda said imagining a houseful of quarantined septuagenarian hippies high on pot, mushrooms, acid and God knows what.

"Don't get all f***ing fundamentalist on me," Marie-Ava said.

"I'm a Methodist," Amanda said. "You know that." Just a few feet away a mother cow blasted a loud demand of a brown and white child-calf who was wandering too far.

"What the holy hell was that?"

"A sacred cow," Amanda said.

Phaedra

"There is no such thing as magic," said Phaedra Elkspirit to her friend and new housemate, Ruth "Rue" Theadey, both of them being believers of a sort, Reiki Masters, tarot card readers and makers of crystal and copper amulets. "There is only stuff that science hasn't figured out yet."

Right," Rue said and shuffled her deck of Lakota Medicine Cards. She had just been laid off from her two part-time jobs, one as a night waitress at the Chicken Abortionist Café and the other taking early shift as bartender at the Dead Frog Lounge, both of which were *mostly* closed due to the orders from Governor Polis. "If you say so."

"I do." Phaedra said and took another nibble of a chocolate mint and pot brownie the two women had been sharing. "Say that. Frequently even." Time passed.

"I know," Rue agreed. "You do." She washed down her last fingernail size piece with a swallow of heavy, sweet wine. It was a local product from Spirit Mundt's Flying Bison Winery and Distilling, made from grapes, peaches and CBD extract. It tasted okay if you were stoned. Pretty good even. She had taken a new job that very day helping bottle the concoction that Mundt had been aging in a dozen cedar barrels over the winter. He had insisted that Rue take home a jar of the stuff to share with Phaedra who wrote a food and spirits column for the West Elk Bugle under a non de plume: Raven Lark-Smythe.

"What do you think," Rue asked, raising her peanut butter jar glass up to evening light. The sun was dipping behind the mountains to the west that separated the Rio POCO from the North Fork.

"There is no such thing as magic," Phaedra said solemnly, tugging at one long grey braid.

"The wine. The *wine*."

"Oh. Well—it does contain alcohol. Quite a bit of it. That's a plus. Especially in these times."

"Medicinal," Rue said. "Mundt wants to know what he should call it."

"I'll bet he does."

Continued on next page

Anthracite: Three Women During the Virus

Continued from page 18

The reiki business in Anthracite and Crested Butte had dried up over the last two weeks, being part of the personal services sector along with regular massage therapists, beauty parlors and the town's only men's barber. Rue, being fast on her feet and good at reading the cards, had seen bad times coming a couple weeks before anybody else, and had, at the end of March, moved out of her six hundred dollar a month three room apartment over the Anthracite Moon Laundromat, and in with Phaedra in her small house on Cross Street. Just in time for the stay at home order.

Phaedra, being equally quick to economically pivot, had set up an unofficial delivery service for the brownies along with products from the Bongs Away Dispensary. The deliveries were made either via her vintage single-speed bicycle or on foot if close-by. Bongs Away's owners, Jim and Edna, had closed the retail store. Phaedra also did some deliveries of groceries around town from the Grubstop Market. A take-out meal or two from the Chicken Abortionist Café. Sometimes to the same people.

The deliveries, a little freelance writing and editing work, her less than large, monthly social security (she was 67 and a half) checks, and now Rue's four hundred dollar rent, actually put her a little ahead in cash flow than since being fired from her West Elk Bugle job by LaPorte Freeman Smoot.

She looked at her watch. Almost time to do a couple of dinner deliveries complete with quarantine cocktails and brownies. She suspected that several of the town's elderly were enjoying the new normal of home delivery and people being more concerned about them than they had been *before*.

LaPorte

LaPorte Freeman-Smoot and Bald Bob Ardmak were sitting at the kitchen table in their bathrobes and nothing else, feel spiffy-clean from the shower they had just shared and a little sleepy and loose from what had gone on before the shower. Something that had made one necessary in the middle of the day.

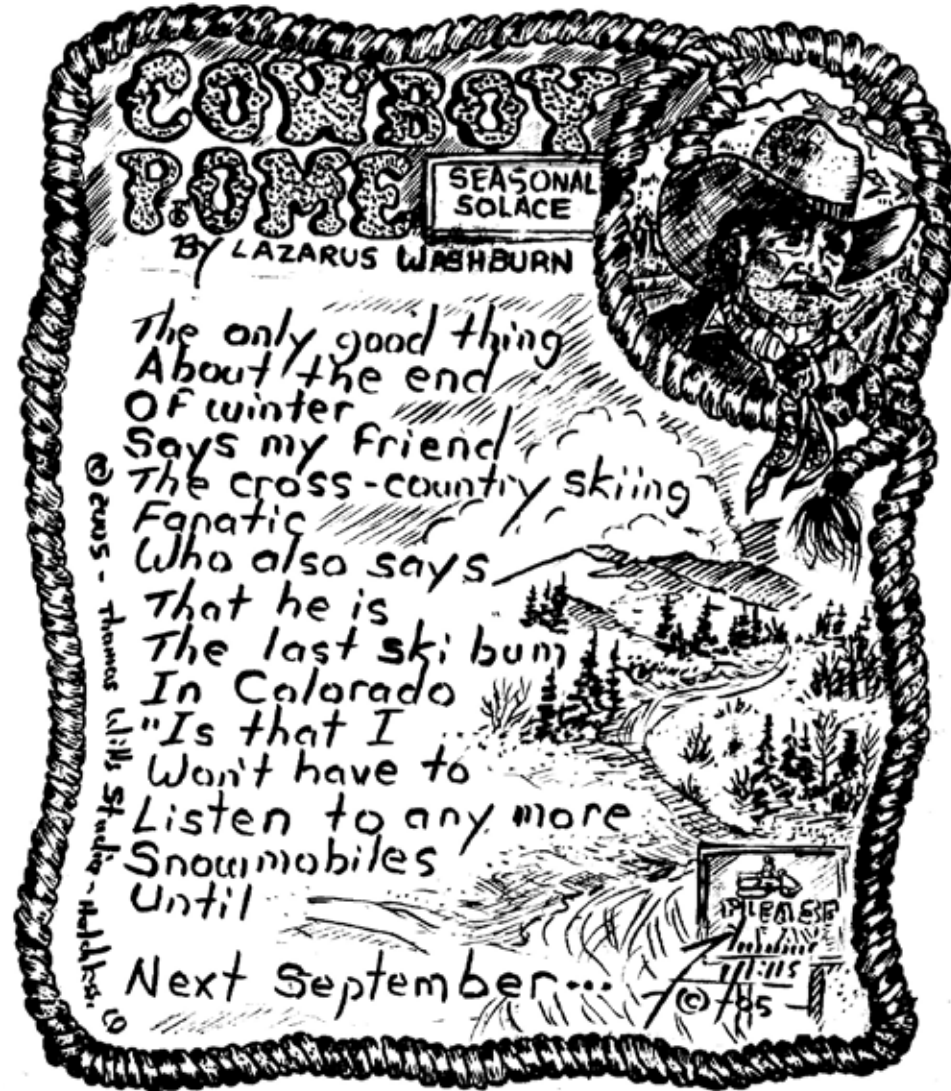
"How long do you figure this is gonna go on?" Bob asked. He drank some coffee. It was spiked with a little rum.

"I don't know," LaPorte said and giggled, something that even she found out of character. "Are you worn out already?"

Bob coughed and she looked at him sharply but then realized that he had just inhaled a little coffee. She loved that he was so easily embarrassed. "Umm..." he said. "I was thinking about—you know—the whole stay at home thing." His long, damp, white-blond hair hung down his back with hardly any curl to it at all. To LaPorte it reminded her of a girl's hair. Fine, with a kind of luster to it. Her own short, silver hair was, thick, coarse and spiky. Not soft.

"You seem to be staying busy," LaPorte said.

Bob was still feeding cattle every morning even as things greened up. Checking on them in the evenings.



Moving them around from paddock to paddock and spending a few hours here and there dragging a flat, weighted harrow behind a tractor braking up and spreading a winter's worth of cow patties. Fixing fence. It was easy, solitary work. The rest of the day were spent carpentering on LaPorte's old Victorian in town where she had taken to working from her home office more than the West Elk Bugle one in the top of the museum building two doors to the west.

She liked being at home with Bob banging and scraping away in another part of the house. If he did get too noisy, she did sometimes walk down to the Bugle office and the closed-down museum. But most of the time Bob was either painting or sanding something, and the real high-volume things, like power sawing, he did out in the back yard with the doors to house closed.

LaPorte, with the help of her one reporter, Lisa Redbird, who worked from home, had gotten out three weekly editions of the West Elk Bugle since the shutdown of a lot of businesses in down had begun in mid-March. Ad revenues were down and she was on the phone a lot more nudging people to figure out how to do things differently and then advertise in the Bugle about it. Sometimes she threw in a free story like the one about how one massage therapist was now pruning and spraying fruit trees in people's yard around town. A former, now-resurrected, skill he had picked up somewhere.

Most people were bitching a little, or a lot, but were getting by. Or at least treading water. There had been a couple confirmed cases of COVID-19 including one in a ninety-year old woman who ended up in the hospital in Grand Junction, but nothing like what was happening in Crested Butte. It hadn't hit the small nursing home yet. The ski area in Butte was shut down and the workers who drove there from Anthracite every day were all staying

home, but the timing was such that they would have been laid off anyway by late March.

Anthracite was a quiet place as LaPorte and Bob walked around in the evenings, waving to the

occasional person across the street strolling with their dog. But it had always been quiet she thought, except for the Dead Frog Lounge on Friday or Saturday nights, and the Chicken Abortionist at breakfast time. Dances at the art co-op. And a few other places like the school, which was now closed. Generally quiet, except what it was not. She wrote something about that for the paper.

That Sunday, She and Bob, on the couch in their robes with a laptop plugged into the smart TV in the living room, watched Pastor Amanda Water deliver her sermon on Zoom. A cat kept walking in front of her computer camera.

"She seems kinda young," Bob said, an observation he had made before. "But I really liked the part where she talks about seeing the cows and calves."

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

Want to catch up on past stories that have appeared in the past few digital Heralds? Just ask and we'll email those to you.

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Feds Approve Drilling Plan for North Fork Valley That Conservation Center Says Endangers Valley Communities

BLM alleged to favor oil and gas interests during COVID pandemic

Press Release – Ben Katz –
Public Lands Program Director
-Western Slope Conservation
Center

Paonia, CO (April 10, 2020) -- Today, the Bureau of Land Management released its Uncompahgre Field Office Resource Management Plan despite concerns and formal protests from stakeholders in the North Fork Valley and beyond. While Colorado's governor and the public are focused on a major health crisis in the state, the BLM released a plan that could open up 95% of the public lands in the area to oil and gas development, threatening local farmers and businesses in the region.

Community leaders say [the plan](#) fails to protect public health, provide ecological well-being, or promote a sustainable rural economy on Colorado's Western Slope. These leaders say that at a time when small businesses are shutting their doors and communities of the rural Western Slope are telling visitors to stay away, the Trump Administration should not be barreling forward with land use planning that harms our community and environment.

The final plan, which the BLM began revising in 2010, is meant to guide all activities and development in the Uncompahgre Field Office planning area for the next two decades. Today we see the final plan opens the entirety of the North Fork Valley to oil and gas leasing and development while removing or limiting critical protections to safeguard the local community's air, water, wilderness, and wildlife. Despite making minor changes at the request of Governor Polis, the plan is dramatically out of step with the protections local residents have requested for a decade.

The most disappointing aspect of the final plan is that it undermines years of collaboration and local engagement, completely disregarding a community crafted plan for the North Fork Valley. In 2014, a diverse group of North Fork stakeholders, including agricultural, tourism, realty, business, and conservation organizations, came together and developed a "community alternative" – essentially a locally grown vision and set of guidelines – for oil and gas management in the area. Called the North Fork Alternative Plan, the balanced proposal would allow for the consideration of regulated energy development on up to 25 percent of the area's federal lands with additional protections for lands important to hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation activities. The agency's final plan ignores this community proposal, and in turn, dismisses the community's own vision for a sustainable future and diverse economy.

Recently released documents by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) through the Freedom of Information Act show beyond a doubt the final plan is the result of political maneuvering by the Trump administration to impose its "energy dominance" agenda on Colorado. The [internal documents](#) acquired by PEER reveal that Trump administration officials at the national BLM office overruled local agency staff and ignored local public input in order to "align the preferred alternative with administration priorities" such as deregulation of the oil

and gas industry. Ironically, this decision comes at a time when the BLM is relocating its headquarters from Washington, DC to Grand Junction ostensibly to allegedly "[delegate more responsibility to the field](#)," according to acting BLM Director William Perry Pendley.

The following are quotes from several organizations and stakeholders, many Valley-local, who have been working for decades to advance conservation efforts in Colorado and have been participating in the BLM UFO RMP revision process:



"An administration that supports a resilient local economy wouldn't move forward with a plan that clearly disrespects the best interests of the North Fork community, yet this is exactly what's happening. This plan is a triple threat: it ignores a decade's worth of community input, it undermines our economic future, and it endangers the very public lands and waters that our local farms, ranches, vineyards, and recreation businesses depend on. As Colorado's Western Slope residents and the rest of the country battle with a national emergency, the BLM is charging ahead to open lands that aren't essential for the country's oil and gas resources. Kicking our small businesses and communities while they're down is just plain shameful." - Patrick Dooling, Executive Director, Western Slope Conservation Center

"It's disgraceful that Secretary Bernhardt and BLM Acting Director William Perry Pendley are using the COVID-19 pandemic as cover for their continued efforts to sell out our public lands. Coloradans are rightfully focused on the health and safety of our loved ones during this trying time, yet the BLM is jeopardizing the livelihoods of farmers and business owners who depend on this region's beautiful land and pristine water. Opening 95% of the lands in this area to potential development shows that the administration puts drilling above all else, no matter the cost to air, water or people's way of life, or even our health." - Jim Ramey, Colorado State Director, The Wilderness Society

"The Trump administration dropping this broadly opposed plan now, in the midst of a pandemic, only adds insult to the deep injury many North Fork farms and businesses are already suffering. We came together as a community and presented a plan to the BLM, which it has ignored in releasing this mess. We worked in good faith and that was betrayed, but we're not done standing up for our farms and families." - Pete Kolbenschlager, Executive Director, Colorado Farm & Food Alliance

"I grow food in the farm-to-table capital of

Colorado, the Lower Gunnison watershed. Over the past nearly ten years I've worked to identify to the BLM what I need them to consider as they make their land-use decisions for the lands around and upstream of me. For my farm, and the nearly 100 other Valley Organic Growers Association (VOGA) producers in this valley, this means clean air, clean water, and an understanding that our reputation for clean delicious food is easily destroyed. I am disappointed that the BLM has ignored the agricultural community of the North Fork in its RMP, and has failed to listen to and consider the

organic farming. We are stronger now and people are moving here to embrace this way of living, not to be surrounded by industrial oil and gas development. Despite that, the energy-dominance agenda the BLM has in mind is at odds with our vision of the future. Furthermore, the Trump Administration says they are here to help small businesses, yet seem to put another nail in our coffin at this unprecedented time. The BLM needs to re-engage with the community and develop a plan to protect the public lands in the North Fork Valley that support our diverse economy." - Chelsea Bookout, co-owner, Remedy Juice and Cafe

"Right now, we have the opportunity to bolster a sustainable and long term recreation industry in the Lower Gunnison watershed. We have the wildlands, the community, and the ambition needed to develop and maintain a strong recreation sector of the local economy. Turning the valley into a short term oil and gas haven is not compatible with this local vision. The BLM must listen to the communities who will be most affected by this decision." - Sven Edstrom, Chair, Delta Area Mountain Bikers


"President Trump has failed to take charge in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, instead leaving it to the Governors to figure it out. But as the documents acquired by PEER show, when it comes to oil and gas development and the UFO RMP, his administration is quick to overrule local wishes. The Bureau of Land Management must go back to the drawing board and consider the vision of local communities, and their own experts, in this planning process." - Chandra Rosenthal, Rocky Mountain Director, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility

"The BLM's Uncompahgre plan is a terrible disservice to conservation and support of local economies transitioning to sustainable recreation and agriculture. Secretary Bernhardt and acting BLM director William Perry Pendley have overwritten the locally-developed earlier plan to strip out conservation protections for wildlands and to grease the skids for their friends in the oil and gas and mining industries. Our public lands and local communities like Naturita and Hotchkiss will suffer the impacts." - Scott Braden, Director, Colorado Wildlands Project

input we've worked hard to give them." - Mark Waltermire, owner, Thistle Whistle Farms

"The North Fork Valley has felt the impacts of oil and gas development on our local economy before and has successfully diversified its economy away from fossil fuel development. The real estate markets were thriving prior to COVID-19 and are holding steady with buyers continuing to close on properties they completed contracts on prior to the statewide lockdown. With this impending plan, the BLM is sending our community backwards, setting us up to be at the whims of the oil and gas industry development and threatening the local economy. At a time when we can't even show homes or hold open houses due to COVID-19, the release of this plan feels like salt in the wound." - Patti Kaech, Broker/Owner, Colorado Premier Partners Realty

"When the coal mines began to close, everyone said the sky was falling. Yet, we worked hard to build and diversify our local economy based on local business, renewable energy, sustainable outdoor recreation, and



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