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THE SKAGWAY NEWS.

Vol. XLIX, No 15 | Skagway, Alaska | October 23, 2026

SDC invites flannel to a local fashion show

By Gretchen Wehmhoff

Skagway Development Corporation (SDC) hosted its Membership Drive and first-ever Fall Flannel Fashion Show on Oct. 17, bringing community members and local businesses together for an evening of networking, fun, and flannel fashion!

Local businesses helped dress the models, showcasing the inventory and creativity local shops offer. The event included a presentation highlighting the work SDC and SDC–Community Development Services (SDC-CDS) have done over the past year, along with anticipated projects and initiatives on the horizon.

"The event was about reconnecting with our community, sharing more about SDC's work, and introducing our new membership program," SDC Executive Director Eliza Russell said.

Russell highlighted a new membership-funded program - the Community Impact Fund (CIF).

"We're inviting residents, businesses and community supporters to become SDC members for 2027." said Russel.

Membership contributions go directly into the CIF. At the end of 2027, SDC members will have the opportunity to help decide how those funds are reinvested back into Skagway.

"We're envisioning small but meaningful community projects, whether that's adding downtown benches, flower boxes, supporting youth employment opportunities like hiring local youth to shovel snow for seniors, or other creative ideas that make Skagway a better place to live," Russell said.

Russel shared that the fashion show brought everyone together, celebrated local businesses, and reminded people that economic development doesn't always have to be about big projects. "Sometimes it's about building relationships, supporting one another, and creating opportunities for the community to get involved," she said.

The creativity brought awards.

First place went to Bobbin

*(see page 5 - **Flannel**)*





Top: Sam Brogdan, Jan Marie Pederson Tronrun and Jesse Baker represented local groups at the Skagway Development Center's Fall Flannel Fashion Show on Oct. 17.

Left: Madeline Lomvardias models the dress seamstress Haden Bricker created with repurposed flannel scraps, taking first place at the fashion show.

Assembly update

By Gretchen Wehmhoff

At the October 15 meeting, the group discussed Ordinance 2611, which would phase out temporary RV habitation permits. The ordinance sunsets at the end of the month. As of Nov. 1, there may not be any habitation in RVs parked on residents' property; the RVs themselves may remain if stored according to MOS rules.

Several community members spoke on the issue. Most were concerned about how the ordinance's sunset will affect current housing challenges for both seasonal workers and year-round residents. Adding to the conundrum were the status of the current RV parks, the transition of the Garden City RV Park to new housing, and the limits of time, costs, and labor needed to create more housing quickly.

Assemblymember Deb Potter suggested an amendment to the section restricting the use of RVs at resident RV pads for rentals, allowing RVs more than 20 years old and removing the stipulation that RVs must be no older than 20 years old. Someone suggested replacing that requirement with inspections.

In the end, while acknowl-

*(see page 5 - **RV**)*

Review your knowledge of Ranked Choice Voting *and* Make a plan to vote

How to mark your Ranked Choice ballot

Fill in only one oval per candidate, in each column. You do not have to rank all the candidates.

Your second choice is only counted if your first-choice candidate is eliminated.

Learn more about Ranked Choice Voting

State Representative District 1	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	5th Choice
Larry Doe (Registered Democrat)	○ 1	○ 2	● 3	○ 4	○ 5
Mac Allen (Registered Republican)	○ 1	● 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
Edna Mode (Undeclared)	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	● 4	○ 5
Tiffany Strait (Nonpartisan)	● 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
Write-In:	○ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5

Find the sample ballot for District 3, Skagway's District, HERE

Learn more about Ranked Choice Voting HERE

For the latest news and updates, follow us on Facebook.

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CLASSIFIED PAGE 7
LETTERS AND OPINION PAGE 4
FUN PAGE PAGE 6

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Letters to the editor should not exceed 250 words.

Submit letters and opinions to editor@skagwaynews.com. Letters may be edited for grammar and length.

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Meetings and Events

Saturday, Oct. 23 - 30 School: Red Ribbon Week

Saturday, Oct. 24

Rec Ctr: Senior Pumpkin Painting 11:30 a.m.

Rec Ctr: Spooky Skage Party, 7-9 p.m. - All Invited

Sunday, Oct. 25

Honor Fest - Haines

Monday, Oct. 26

Historic District Commision 5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, Oct. 27

First Day of Preschool (3 year old)

Library Book Club: 3 - 4 p.m.
"Rowing to Latitude: Journeys Along the Arctic's Edge"

Planning and Zoning Commision
-Special 5:30 p.m.

Planning and Zoning Commision -Regular
6:00 p.m.

Regular School Board Meeting

Wednesday, Oct. 28

Library: Story Time 11-11:30 a.m.

Recreation Board - Work Session 6:00 p.m.

School: HS Wrestling - Mountain City Classic

Thursday, Oct. 29

School: Early Dismissal - 2:15 p.m.

Clinic Board of Directors 7:00 p.m.

Monday, Nov. 2

School: Inservice - No school for students

Tuesday, Nov. 3

Election Day - Polls open 7 a.m. -8 p.m. City Hall

Wednesday, Nov.4

School: HS Wrestling - Ketchikan

Library: Story Time 11-11:30 a.m.

Ports and Harbor Advisory Board 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, Nov. 5

School: Early dismissal 2:15 p.m.

Finance Committee 5:00 p.m.

Borough Assembly 7:00 p.m.

Friday, Nov 6

Volleyball Seeding Trouney - Skagway

Rec. Ctr - Senior Bingo 1 - 2 p.m.

Monday, Nov.9

Borough Assembly Committee of the the Whole
TBD

Tuesday, Nov. 10

DDF to Juneau

Dyea Community Advisory Board 5:30 p.m.

Clinic Special Committee 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, Nov 11 Veterans Day

Library: Story Time 11-11:30 a.m.

Thursday, Nov. 12

Rec. Ctr - Tech for Seniors: Smartphones
Skagway Library 1 p.m.

Friday, Nov. 13 - 15

Boyd Worley MS
Basketball Tournament

Haunted Houses

By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

All houses wherein men have lived and died
Are haunted houses. Through the open doors
The harmless phantoms on their errands glide,
With feet that make no sound upon the floors.

We meet them at the door-way, on the stair,
Along the passages they come and go,
Impalpable impressions on the air,
A sense of something moving to and fro.

There are more guests at table than the hosts
Invited; the illuminated hall
Is thronged with quiet, inoffensive ghosts,
As silent as the pictures on the wall.

The stranger at my fireside cannot see
The forms I see, nor hear the sounds I hear;
He but perceives what is; while unto me
All that has been is visible and clear.

We have no title-deeds to house or lands;
Owners and occupants of earlier dates
From graves forgotten stretch their dusty hands,
And hold in mortmain still their old estates.

The spirit-world around this world of sense
Floats like an atmosphere, and everywhere
Wafts through these earthly mists and vapours dense
A vital breath of more ethereal air.

Our little lives are kept in equipoise
By opposite attractions and desires;
The struggle of the instinct that enjoys,
And the more noble instinct that aspires.

These perturbations, this perpetual jar
Of earthly wants and aspirations high,
Come from the influence of an unseen star
An undiscovered planet in our sky.

And as the moon from some dark gate of cloud
Throws o'er the sea a floating bridge of light,
Across whose trembling planks our fancies crowd
Into the realm of mystery and night,—

So from the world of spirits there descends
A bridge of light, connecting it with this,
O'er whose unsteady floor, that sways and bends,
Wander our thoughts above the dark abyss.



Adobe Stock images

The Skagway News welcomes opinions pieces and letters to the editor. Opinion pieces should be no longer than 600 words and will be published based on space availability and relevance to current and local events.

Letters to the editor should not exceed 250 words.

Submit letters and opinions to editor@skagwaynews.com. Letters may be edited for grammar and length.

Things you should know

DOT&PF student essay contest: name the MV Tustumena's successor

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) opened a statewide essay contest for students to propose a name for the vessel that will replace the MV Tustumena. The contest is open to all Alaska students in grades 6 through 12.

Entries must be submitted by 5 p.m. Alaska time on Monday, November 23, 2026.

The Tustumena has served communities along the Kenai Peninsula, Kodiak Island, the Alaska Peninsula and the Aleutian Islands since 1964. DOT&PF awarded the construction contract for the replacement vessel on October 1, 2026.

"For more than six decades, the Tustumena has connected Alaska's coastal communities, carrying families, vehicles and essential goods," said Ryan Anderson, commissioner of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities. "This contest gives young Alaskans a chance to help name a vessel that will serve the next generation and continue that tradition of connection."

Under AS 19.65.020, Alaska Marine Highway System maritime vessels must be named for Alaska glaciers, and vessel names must be established by law. A selection committee will review the entries and select one winning essay. DOT&PF will submit the student's proposed name to the Alaska Legislature for consideration during the legislative session beginning in January 2027. The proposed name will become official only if enacted into law.

Students can explore Alaska glacier names through the Alaska State Library's glacier list.

Alaska has 745 named glaciers. Students can browse the Alaska State Library's list at library.alaska.gov/asp/alaska_glaciers.html

Complete contest rules and submission instructions are available at dot.alaska.gov/nameaferry.

Photo of the week!



Mo Thompson of Mo Mountain Mutts and her dog, Ekko, were ready to greet tricksters on Saturday for the Trick or Trunk event. This is one *"trunk"* that was really looking forward to "Tricks" for doggy treats! In this photo, Ekko demostrates the Trick stage.



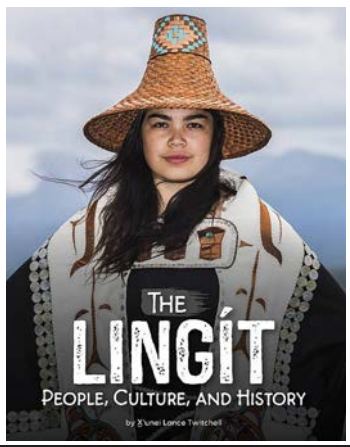
Photos provided by Mo Thompson

Be Bear Aware

The Skagway Police Department is warning residents that bear activity has been reported within Skagway city limits. They suggest everyone be alert, especially at night when bears are most active. Never leave trash or other bear attractants outside; securing them helps reduce bear activity and the risk that a bear may need to be dispatched. If you see a bear or signs of one, contact SPD at 907-983-2232

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Opinion & Letters

Rethinking Garden City - develop a realistic plan

By David Brena

Before redeveloping Garden City, Skagway should compare alternative housing sites, disclose the full public cost, and develop a realistic plan to replace the existing RV capacity.

Skagway needs affordable housing. But eliminating an established RV park, committing millions of public funds, and permanently converting scarce municipal land are consequential decisions that warrant scrutiny. The question is whether Garden City is the best use of these public resources.

Garden City faces a land-use tradeoff because an RV park requires a single large, contiguous, utility-served property, whereas affordable housing can be distributed throughout town on smaller parcels as single-family homes, duplexes, townhomes, or multifamily buildings. No comparable replacement RV site has been identified within the current service area.

Possible municipal sites for affordable housing include the former Fire Hall and Clinic sites, the City Shop, the vacant lot south of TEMSCO's hangar, and the former paintball area. Some currently support municipal operations or storage and would need to be relocated before housing development could proceed. Consolidating Public Works facilities near the transfer station could free several sites, but the municipality should weigh relocation costs when comparing these housing alternatives.

Previous Assemblies considered relocating Garden City RV Park to five acres near the transfer station and redeveloping Garden City for housing. By 2022, utility-extension estimates had reached $10 million, while municipal storage and shop needs competed for the replacement site. That property is now used for storage, and no comparable replacement has been identified. Without a viable RV relocation plan, the Assembly should reconsider redevelopment before making an irreversible land-use decision.

Proposition 1 authorized up to $6.5 million in general obligation bonds for Garden City infrastructure. With projected interest of $6.33 million over 30 years, total debt service would reach $12.83 million, before the cost of constructing a single home.

Under the original 24-lot concept, projected principal and interest would average about $535,000 per lot over 30 years. Although the debt would be borne by the municipality rather than by individual lots, the calculation illustrates the substantial public investment involved.

Two recent Skagway residential lot sales, at $120,000 and $140,000, averaged $130,000 per lot. Applying that average to the original 24-lot concept would yield approximately $3.12 million in gross proceeds, or $3.38 million less than the authorized bond principal. Although not a formal valuation of Garden City, the comparison raises an important question: How much public subsidy will be required, and what affordable housing will taxpayers receive in return?

Public subsidies may be justified if they produce lasting affordable housing. Before committing public funds or land, however, the municipality should disclose the anticipated subsidy per home, set income and occupancy requirements, adopt enforceable resale or rental restrictions, and specify how it will maintain affordability over time.

The project remains at 35% engineering design, with no competitive construction bids. Although voters authorized bond financing, decisions on borrowing, land disposition, and replacement RV accommodations remain unresolved. Before proceeding, the municipality should compare Garden City with alternative housing sites using total costs, housing capacity, construction schedules, infrastructure needs, and operational impacts. The analysis should also assess whether municipal crews could economically perform portions of the infrastructure work.

Garden City provides economic benefits and seasonal accommodations. RV visitors purchase fuel, groceries, meals, and other goods and services from local businesses. Before redevelopment, the municipality should assess visitor spending, seasonal housing capacity, net operating revenues, and the cost of establishing and operating a comparable RV park elsewhere.

Creating residential lots does not guarantee affordable homes. Before authorizing construction or disposing of Garden City, the Assembly should demonstrate that redevelopment offers better value than alternative housing sites, set enforceable affordability requirements, and identify a viable replacement for the RV park. Skagway can expand affordable housing without prematurely sacrificing scarce, utility-served municipal land.

About the Author

David Brena is a real estate broker and developer with graduate degrees in finance and legal studies. He completed Harvard University's Advanced Management Development Program and has 30 years of experience as an MAI-designated real estate appraiser.

From yes, yes, yes to no, no, no

By Chuck Legge

By now we have all seen the ad urging us to vote YES, YES, YES for Proposition 2. A folksy, guitar-plucking singer tells us that simple is better and ranked choice voting is just too complicated. Yuup partners, that's right. Ranked choice is just too confusin' for us poor, bumfuzzled, voters. So the strategy is to convince us to do something by telling us we're stupid. Too stupid to actually take a look at the ballot measure ourselves. Good luck with that, folksy guitar-plucker.

Now I'm not going to try and convince those of you who are against ranked choice that it's a good system. I won't point out that it dampens the extremes at both ends of the political spectrum and tends to be a more accurate representation of the electorate. Or that it gives independent voters a chance to vote for their chosen favorites and not be locked out of closed primaries. Or that you don't have to rank your preferences and can vote for only one candidate if you choose to. Or that the authors of this measure are calling you stupid and they are here to help out the poor, benighted Alaska voter. I'm not going to do that. What I am going to do is ask you to take a real look at this ballot measure and see what it's really about.

Even a quick glance shows this ballot measure is about much more than ranked choice. Sure, ranked choice is in there, but there is also some other stuff that the voters might not be on board with. Do a search on Ballotpedia, and you get a pretty good breakdown of what this proposition is all about. This is what Ballotpedia has to say about Prop 2:

"A **"yes"** vote supports: eliminating the top-four primaries and ranked-choice voting general elections in Alaska, establishing a party primary system, and **eliminating campaign finance provisions that require persons and entities that contribute more than $2,000 that were themselves derived from donations, contributions, dues, or gifts to disclose the *true sources* (as defined in law) of the political contributions**. A **"no"** vote opposes eliminating the campaign finance provisions, top-four primaries, and ranked-choice voting general elections in Alaska, thus keeping top-four primaries, ranked-choice voting general elections, and campaign finance provisions approved by voters in 2020."

There it is in black and white. A yes vote means the end of ranked choice, but it also gives political parties more juice. They can hold closed primaries, something the GOP in Alaska used to do prior to ranked choice, and freeze other voters, primarily independents, out of the process. A yes vote also does away with the $2000 limit on campaign contributions, which would allow candidates to accept unlimited funds, and they wouldn't be obligated to tell us where the money came from. This is what these people are selling, and I'm betting Alaskans are bright enough not to buy it.

While writing this column, I was interrupted by a call from a very good friend. We'll call him Barny. Barney has an impeccable sense of timing. Our conversations tend to bounce around, and this time we landed on Proposition 2. Barney is very much against ranked choice voting. No matter how much I proselytize, he's just not going to join the congregation. He wants nothing to do with it, no way, no how. So he was a firm YES, YES, YES on Prop 2, but, unfortunately for folksy guitar-plucker, he looked a little closer at the ballot measure and came to find out it's not just about ranked choice. It's about letting dark money back into Alaska politics. Somebody snuck in a thing that would overturn our campaign finance laws. Barney blames it on the Democrats.

The upshot is that I'd like to congratulate the authors of Proposition 2. You have managed to do what I, with my obvious powers of persuasion, failed to do. You have managed to take someone who was 100% going to vote for your measure and turn them into a NO, NO, NO vote. No amount of guitar plucking will hide what you are really up to. Good job, you folksy little guitar pluckers. Good job.

RV ordinance tops discussion at Oct 15 meeting

(from Front page)

edging the Planning and Zoning Committee's work, the members voted 4 to 2 not to introduce the ordinance for a first reading.

The group approved tariff amendments setting vessel impact fees at $18 for municipal and $14 for private facilities for 2028, and $21 for municipal and $17 for private facilities for 2029. This aligns with the Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan and matches Ketchikan's fees. Discussion on the Dias addressed the options of inflation-proofing the tariffs and whether or not the changes should go beyond 2029.

The municipality received a $500,000 Operation Stone Garden grant for equipment and law-enforcement overtime over three fiscal years.

The Assembly approved a $1,419,871.42 check run, a $148,873 well generator quote, wastewater engineering services capped at $96,847, and comments on two transportation plans.

Mayor Orion Hanson reiterated his frustration and his attempts to communicate with AMHS regarding having the mainline ferry proceed to Skagway when it goes to Haines. Now, it calls Skagway twice a month. AMHS's answers ranged from tidal conflicts to staffing. Borough Manager Emily Deach will forward written communication.

The Skagway Borough Assembly entered budget work sessions last week. Their next regular meeting is

Flannel brings the show together

(from Front page)

Around, represented by local seamstress Haden Bricker, who transformed repurposed flannel scraps into a "beautiful, one-of-a-kind dress - bringing sustainability and creativity to the runway!"

Second place went to The Kitchen Sink Thrift Shop, represented by Jan Marie Pederson Tronrud and Jessie Baker.

Russell added, "A special thank-you to STC for bringing the 'Consent Is Sacred' message to the runway, helping raise awareness and spark important conversations during Domestic Violence Awareness Month."

"We appreciated the opportunity to incorporate such a meaningful message into a fun community event," she said.

"We're really excited to see this membership program grow and hope it gives more residents and businesses a voice in shaping Skagway's future. Ultimately, we want people to feel connected to the work we're doing and recognize that everyone has a role to play in building a strong, vibrant community," said Russell.

Anyone interested in learning more about SDC, the programs, or becoming a member can visit: https://www.skagwaydevelopment.org/become-an-sdc-investor



Photo provided by Skagway Development Center.

Jan Marie Pederson Tronrud, Sam Bagdon, Jesse Baker, Eliza Russell and Alanna Bagdon pose in their flannel attire at SDC's Fall Flannel Fashion Show on Oct. 17.



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As an SDC member, you'll receive promotion and visibility through SDC programs and events, access to business resources, referrals, and technical assistance, networking opportunities with local businesses and community leaders, and eligibility to participate in programs such as Made in Skagway.

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☐ Nonprofit Member — $100/year
Designed for nonprofit organizations seeking access to resources, networking opportunities, and increased visibility for their programs and services.
☐ Business Member — $200/year
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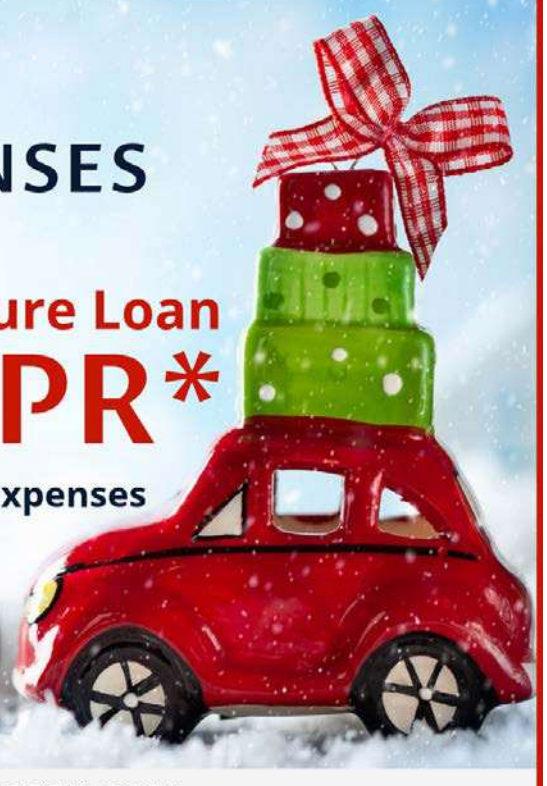
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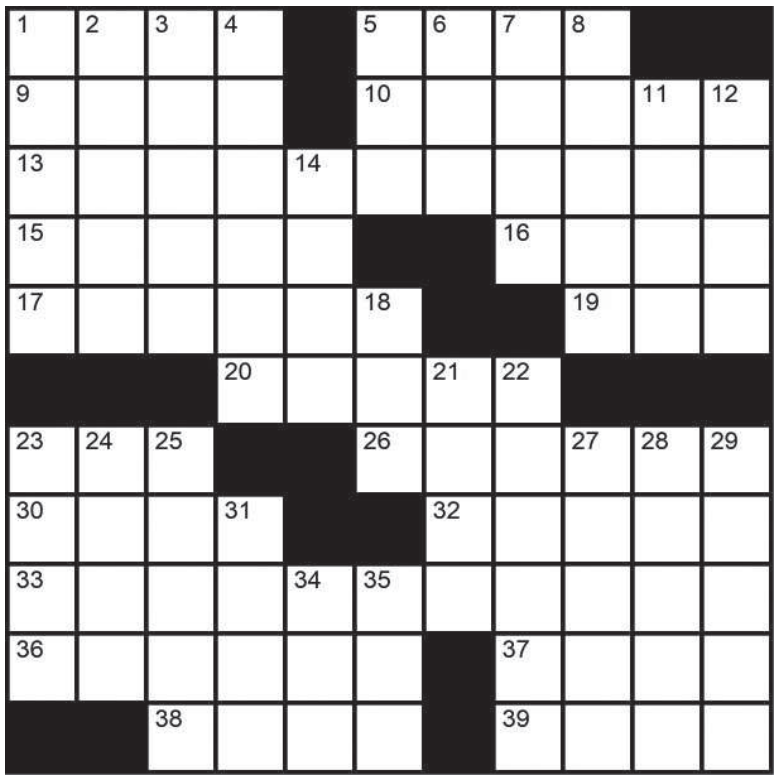
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1 Feeling of hunger
5 "Four Weddings --- Funeral"
9 Operatic solo
10 Director of "Amadeus"
13 Unfortunate
15 Mournful ring
16 Great ideas
17 In peril
19 Fink
20 Coats
23 Going
26 Old capital on the Vistula
30 One way to hydrate in hospital
32 The first Mrs. Trump
33 A shared characteristic, if common
36 Inactive state
37 Diamond team
38 Kind of year
39 Where holes are started

Down
1 Arctic garment
2 --- you forgetting something?
3 It hangs near Chad
4 Vampire repellent
5 Toward the stern
6 A negative
7 Street
8 Fossil resin
11 Egyptian dancing-girl
12 Digs of twigs
14 "Born Free" lioness
18 Fearsome initials
21 Emerald Isle
22 Learned one
23 Chances
24 Erode
25 Last edition
27 --- Holmes, a Tom Cruise ex
28 One- --- (basketball defense strategy)
29 Merchandise
31 Sit for a portrait
34 "Mamma" follower
35 Web-connection co.



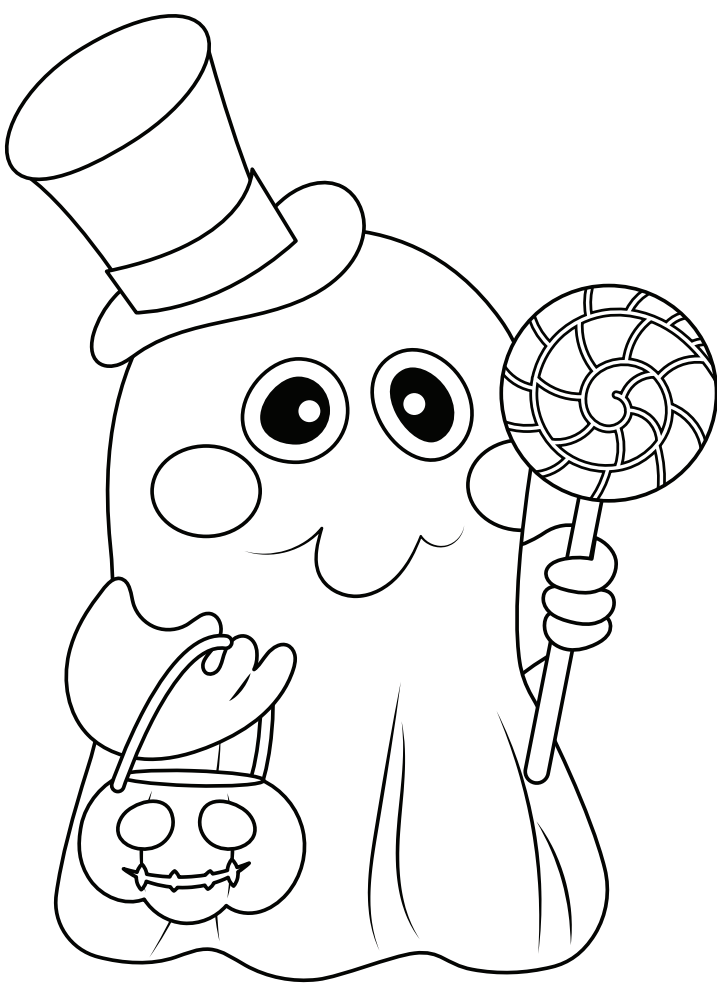
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Find 10 differences.



color me





SKAGWAY WORSHIP DIRECTORY

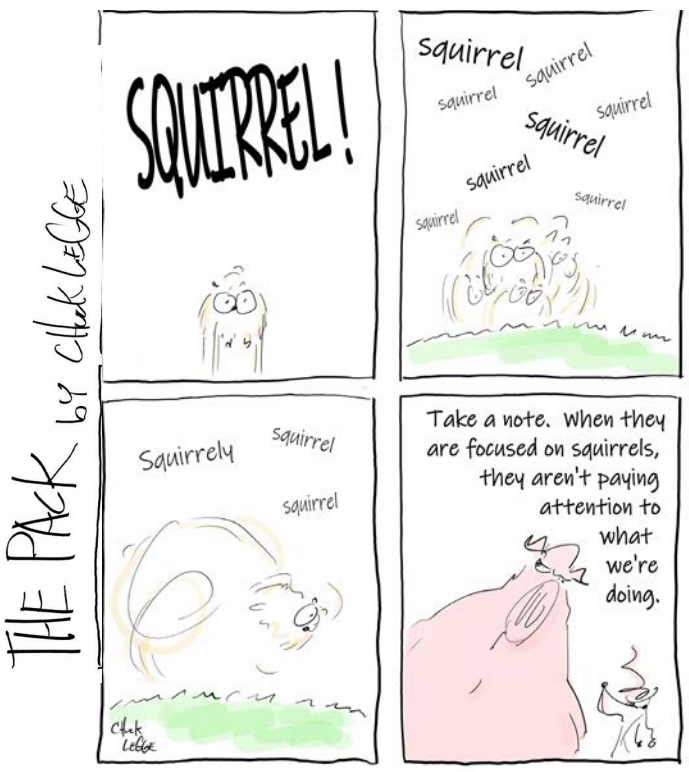
Assembly of God Church
8th & State • 907-983-2350
Sun. Worship.....11 a.m.
Wed. Bible Devotions & Prayer
7 p.m.
Email skagwayag@outlook.com

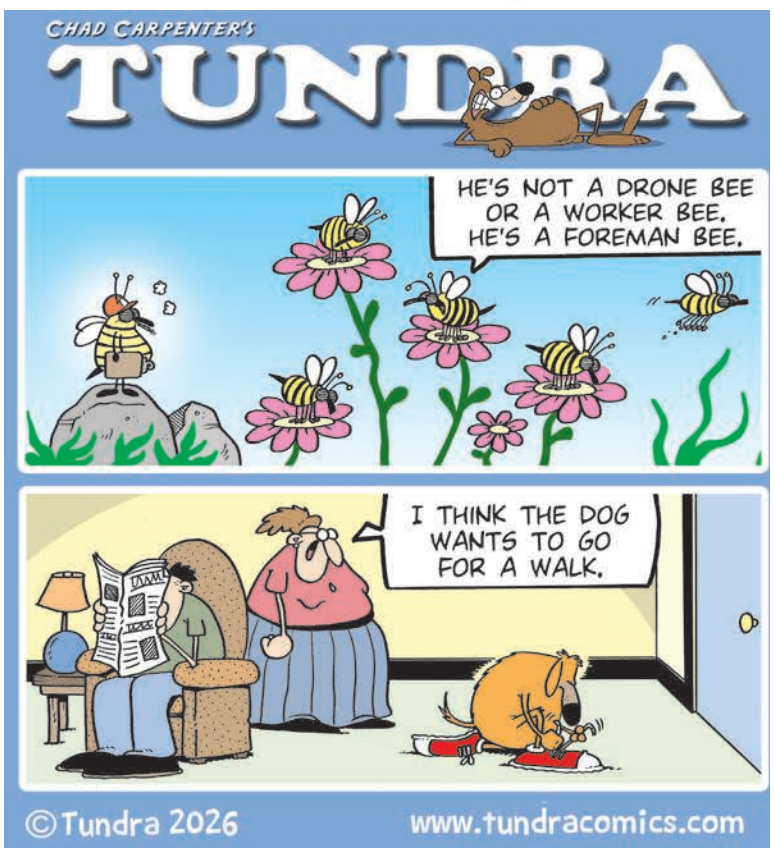
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
11th & State • 983-2518
Sun. Sacrament Meeting...10 a.m.

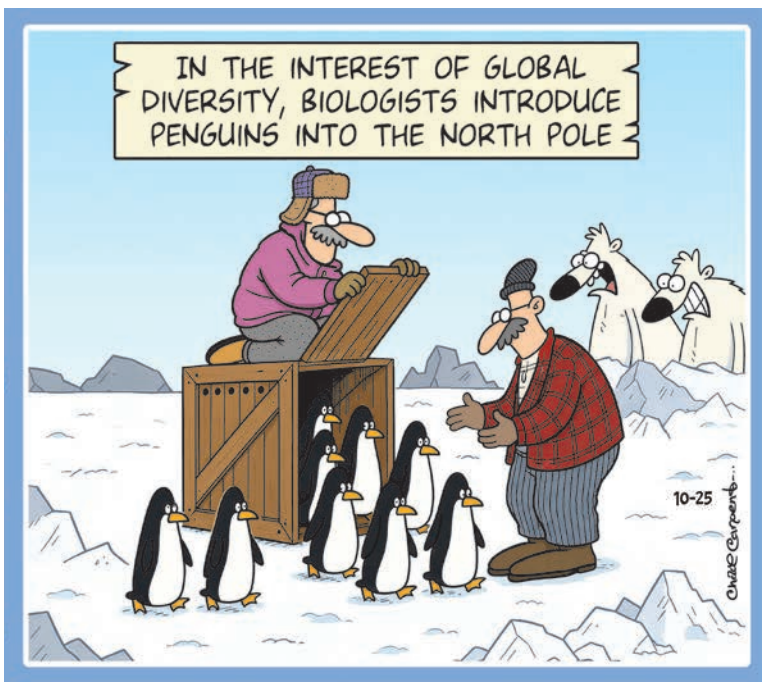
St. Therese Catholic Church
9th & State • 983-2271
Sun. Mass.....4 p.m. and 7 p.m.
Mass Mon. & Tues.....12:10 p.m.
(when a priest is available)

First Presbyterian Church
5th & Main • 983-2260
Sunday Worship 11 a.m.
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Women's Prayer 10 a.m Tues.
Bible Study time varies.
Please inquire.
Online access available to all events.

THE FUNNIES







BROADWAY BULLETIN BOARD

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Library Hours:
Mon. - Thurs. 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Fri. 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Weekends 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.
Call 983-2665 or email
library@skagway.org

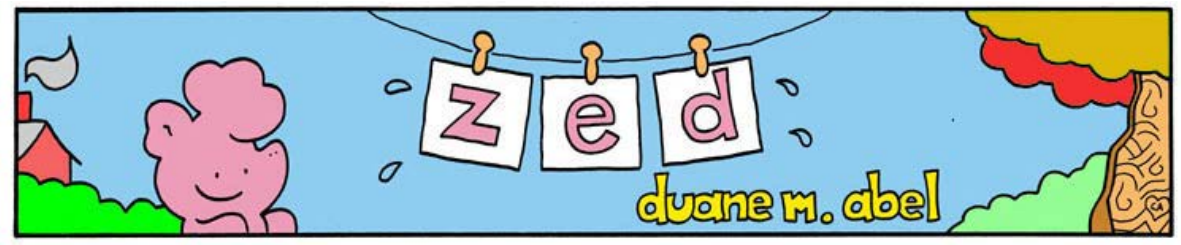
Dahl Clinic Winter Hours:
Mon. - Fri. 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Closed Sat. and Sun.
907-983-2255
For after-hours emergencies, dial 911.

Solid Waste Facility Hours
T, Th, Sa, Su. 1 - 3 p.m.
Skagway Museum
907-983-2420
Border stations:
7 a.m. - 11 p.m.
Call each station for specifics.
Ferry Terminal Hours
M-F 7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

RECREATION CENTER
Skagway Recreation Center • 12th & Main • 983-2679



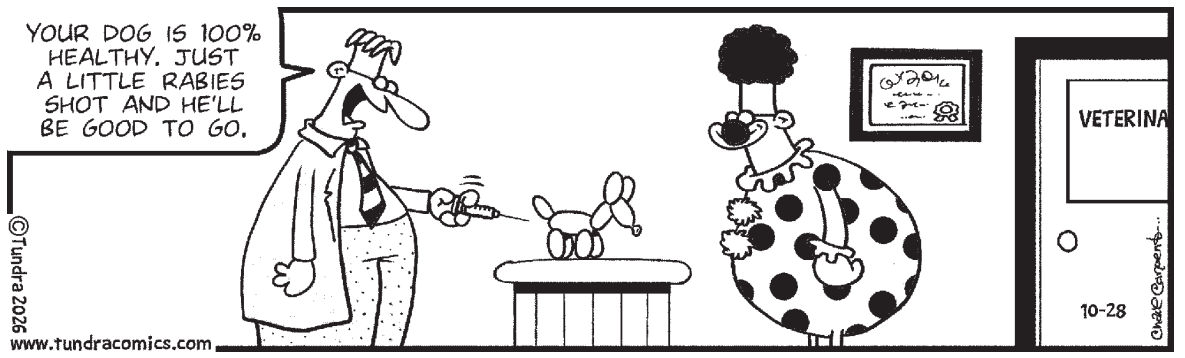
THE FUNNIES



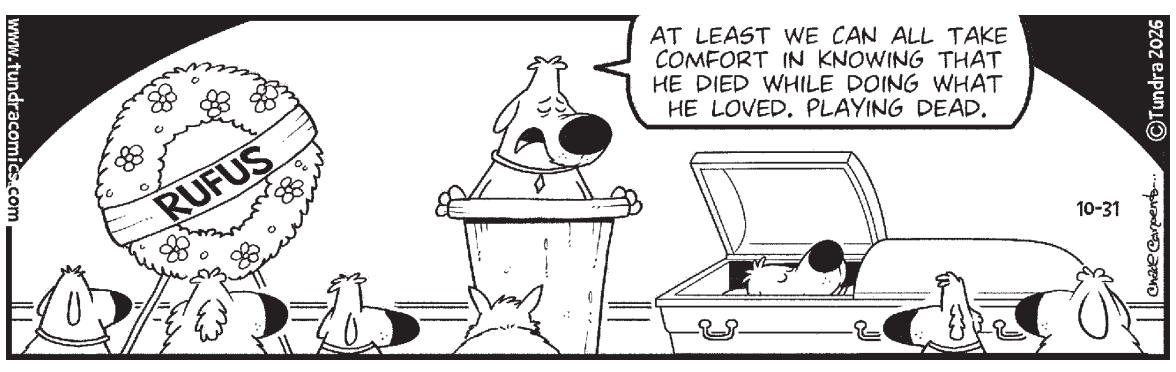




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SERVICES

FOOD BANK DONATIONS WELCOME. Donations may be sent to the Food Bank, PO Box 200, Skagway, AK 99840. The local Food Bank helps those in need with groceries. If you need assistance, or know anyone who needs assistance, at any time of year, call any pastor.

EMPLOYMENT

Lynn Canal Broadcasting (KHNS FM)is looking for a leader who is passionate about independent radio, enjoys small town living and has the vision to guide our organization in a changing media landscape. The full description is on our website. https://khns.org/job-opportunities/ . The first reviews due by 11-30 26, job open until filled.



The 14-story Begich Towers building in Whittier is seen on July 17, 2025. The building is home to most of the town's residents. (Photo by Yereth Rosen/Alaska Beacon)



A sign, seen Aug. 5, 2024, explains the history of the Buckner Building in Whittier. The building was erected by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers but used for only a few years before being abandoned. (Photo by Yereth Rosen/Alaska Beacon)

Whittier honored for supporting the World War II effort in Alaska

By Yereth Rosen
Alaska Beacon

The Prince William Sound town of Whittier is sometimes called the "strangest town in Alaska" because nearly all of its roughly 250 residents dwell in a single high-rise building. Now it has another claim to fame: It is designated by the National Park Service as one of the nation's American World War II Heritage Cities.

The designation, announced last week, is part of the Park Service's American World War II Heritage City Program, created in 2019 as part of the John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act. Under the program, one city in each state or territory can receive the designation.

Whittier was one of 10 cities honored last week. Among the others were Charlotte Amalie, U.S. Virgin Islands; Pendleton, Oregon, and Honolulu, Hawaii.

"These designations highlight the enduring legacy of service, sacrifice, innovation, and industrial achievement that helped establish the United States as the "Arsenal of Democracy" and continue to shape our national story," Jessica Bowron, the National Park Service's acting director, said in a statement. "The 2026 designations reinforce the role communities played across the country, from manufacturing critical military equipment to hosting strategic training facilities, and their ongoing work to preserve and interpret this history for future generations."

Whittier's World War II designation stems from its service as a supply and support center for the war effort in Alaska. To put Whittier into use, the Army blasted a tunnel through Maynard Mountain and laid a rail spur connecting the site with the Alaska Railroad. The rail link to the port town was completed in 1943.

Aside from its handy location as a transportation hub — a function the city continues to serve — Whittier had another attribute that attracted the military. Shrouded by tall mountains and near-constant cloud cover, it was well-hidden from enemy eyes.

Whittier's military service continued for a while after the war. The sprawling Buckner Building, completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1953, was considered a city unto itself, with accommodations for 1,000 soldiers and amenities like a theater, bowling alley and hospital. The Corps also completed the 14-story Hodge Building in 1957. It was converted to civilian use and later named for the late U.S. Rep. Nick Begich, D-Alaska, who died in a 1972 plane crash.

The Begich Towers building remains in use as the home of most residents, but the Buckner Building was shut down after only a few years. Local and state officials are trying to figure out what to do with the Buckner building, which has historic status but is also in extreme disrepair and riddled with asbestos and other dangers.

Whittier's history extends far earlier than its military era.

The same location that made it strategic to the Army also made it important to Indigenous travelers prior to European contact.

A short hike over Portage Pass connected the Prince William Sound homeland of the Alutiiq people and the Cook Inlet region homeland of the Dena'ina people. Portage Pass' role as a trade link continued after European contact, with explorers and miners also making the quick trek. In the past, travelers crossed a portion of Portage Glacier, but the glacier has since receded dramatically.



Now part of the Chugach National Forest, Portage Pass remains a popular hiking destination. The modern recreation trail runs about 2 miles from the Whittier trailhead to Portage Lake, still linking the Alutiiq and Dena'ina homelands.

Whittier's new designation adds to others in Alaska that honor the state's role in World War II.

Best-known is the National Park Service's Aleutian Islands World War II Heritage Area. Based in Unalaska, it commemorates the war history in the Aleutians, which includes the 1942 Battle of Attu, the Dutch Harbor bombing and the trauma endured by the Indigenous Unangan people.



A truck emerges from the Anton Anderson Memorial Tunnel on the Whittier side on July 16, 2025, as vehicles are lined up in lanes on the right in preparation to leave Whittier through the tunnel. The tunnel has only one lane, and traffic goes through in shifts. It also accommodates train traffic. The tunnel was built by the Army during World War II as a rail link enabling Whittier to serve as a supply and



LEFT: A small recreational vessel sails on Oct. 1, 2026, through the Whittier harbor, where the USS Ted Stevens towers over the docked boats. The new U.S.> Navy warship is named after the late U.S. Sen. Ted Stevens, a World War II veteran. Whittier was the site of the USS Ted Stevens commissioning on Oct. 3, 2026. (Photo by Yereth Rosen/Alaska Beacon)