

[illegible]

Donations Accepted Edition No. 366

Thursday, August 6, 2020

Mike A'Dair
Reporter
mike@willitsweekly.com

The first option was to remain with the county's existing permitting system, augmented with certain protocols offered by the state, which are supposed to meet state California Environmental Quality Act requirements for an as yet unknown number of Mendocino County's cannabis growers.

At the end of the day, the board decided to go in both directions at once.

Read the rest of
Cannabis
Over on Page 11

Ree Slocum
Reporter
willitsweekly@gmail.com

WELL coordinator, Willits City Council member, and former mayor, Madge Strong, along with help from other WELL members, organized the “Local Food Security Forum” held in a Zoom meeting on July 19.

Read more of **Food**
Over on Page 4



Summer's sunniest faces shine bright in August

As sunflowers get older and heavier, however, as the

Once mature, seeds can be harvested, roasted, salted and enjoyed – as long as the birds don't beat you to it!

– *Maureen Moore*



Education, masks and hand sanitizers available for local businesses through the Mendocino County Chambers of Commerce

The effect of the program, as it is designed, will be to help ensure the economic survival of the county's merchants and local governments, protect the health of customers, employees, tourists, and

"Mask Up originated," explained Moorhead, "when we had a meeting with the county and the sheriff. We were looking at our merchants and saying: 'No one wants enforcement. No one wants citations. So, let's set up an educational program.'"

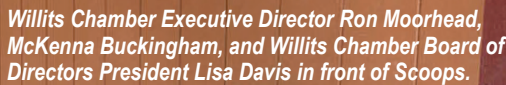


Photo by Mathew Caine

Forrest Glyer
Reporter
willitsweekly@gmail.com

The city then did not waste time in beginning its public information campaign, as Mayor Gerry Gonzalez sent out a letter to frequent voters in the City of Willits explaining just how dire the budget situation had become, and how much the tax revenue from the now-titled "Measure K" is needed. (see the letter on Page 2).

"The reality is without

Read the rest of
Measure K
Over on Page 10

Mike A'Dair
Reporter
mike@willitsweekly.com

Looking at disease statistics along racial lines, 210 of the 356 positive cases are among people of Hispanic descent; 53 among white; 19 among American Indians; 2 are Black; one is Asian; 65 decline to report their ethnicity; and 6 are classified as "other."

Looking at the disease as broken up into age cohorts: 11 cases have been among people between the ages of 0 and 5; 17 cases between

Read the rest of
Update
Over on Page 10

What do YOU think?

Opinions, thoughts and thank you letters from our readers

Thank you to Post Office workers

To the Editor:

I would like to give a big shout-out to our local United States Postal Service personnel. During this difficult and dangerous time the mail carriers have consistently gotten mail to my mailbox six days a week. Personal letters, business mailings and periodicals. It's all there.

They are not alone. The people who work behind the counter, and behind the scenes are there, on the job, when I need stamps, to send a package or ask questions.

Thank you, all of you USPS employees. Where else can you get a personal item delivered practically into the hands of your friends and family for less than a dollar?

If you, like me, are a big fan of the USPS, be aware that our national postal service (USPS) is being threatened by the withholding of needed funding. If you wish to protest this threat, I suggest that you send a letter (what else?) to our congressman Jared Huffman and let him know that you support and depend upon the USPS.

Write him at Jared Huffman, 1527 Longworth House Office Building, Washington DC 20515.

Sally Rohlicek, Willits.

Sherwood Firewise online meeting August 13

To the Editor:

We are in the middle of fire season. We need to have clear knowledge of evacuation options before we are threatened with wildfires. Sherwood Firewise is hosting a meeting on Thursday, August 13 from 6 to 8 pm on Zoom or a call-in number featuring presentations from Mendocino County Sheriff Matthew Kendall, Supervisor John Haschak and the

new Emergency Services Coordinator Brett Blaser, for the Office of Emergency Services.

Subjects discussed include current evacuation notification methods and procedures and how to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic requirements. You can email your questions before the meeting to info@sherwoodfirewise.org or send a comment during the meeting.

Learn about what each individual, their household, neighborhood and community can do to prepare for emergencies, including evacuations. New supplies and procedures are needed to be added to existing evacuation checklists and "Go Bags" such as washable facial coverings and hand sanitizers as well as consideration for safe locations to evacuate to where social distancing can be maintained.

Updates will be provided on Sherwood Firewise vegetation management and emergency access routes improvement projects.

The Zoom meeting online offers viewing of presenter materials but the meeting can also be attended by telephone only for those that want to join with audio only.

To join using the Zoom platform:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85625036304?pwd=dWVpYXpnSktwRkQkbWxkdRRZd06T3E5dz09

Meeting ID: 856 2503 6304 / Password: 918795

To join by telephone:

Audio only or for audio while viewing meeting on computer without mic or speaker. Call 669-900-6833. Meeting ID: 856 2503 6304 / Password: 918795

There is no doubt that fire season is stressful. This stress can be better managed and our community is safer if each of us becomes better informed and prepared to deal with emergencies.

Doreen Blumenfeld, for Sherwood Firewise

Mayor's letter on Measure K

Dear fellow Willits citizen:

As mayor of Willits, I wanted to communicate with you about a major fiscal challenge we currently face. I have learned that being honest and forthright about our city finances is the most important thing I can do.

For the last few years, we have been cutting and cutting our budget, but cannot continue to cut without dramatically affecting services. To put things very clearly, despite our best efforts, our city does not have enough revenue to continue to provide police protection and other vital city services your local government provides, including park maintenance, local street repair, having a local pool and community center, planning and more.

You hear a lot in the news about small businesses needing to close given the struggling economy

and health crisis. Like these small businesses, our small city is struggling, too.

The reality is, without additional revenue, our city is on the verge of closure. We have cut all we can, and based on current projections, our operating reserve will be depleted soon.

What does this mean?

Unless we secure emergency revenue our city would close. This would mean:

- We won't have our own police department. Police services will be provided by an already stretched county sheriff's department out of Ukiah;
- All neighborhood road and street repair, including the maintenance of Main Street will stop, and will be left to the county;
- Community facilities will be closed,

including the Willits City Pool and Willits Community Center; parks and playgrounds will not be maintained;

• Local government services, such as building inspections and permits, and planning department applications, will be handled through the county offices in Ukiah over 23 miles away.

To prevent this from happening, our city council is proposing a temporary emergency sales tax [Measure K], to provide funding for these essential services until our local economy recovers.

I just wanted to let you know our city council and city manager are working hard to address this issue. I have enclosed a Q & A to answer some of your questions.

You can reach me at: ggonzalez@cityofwillits.org.

Gerardo Gonzalez, mayor, Willits

Emergency sales tax Q&A

Submitted by the City of Willits

How bad are things? Can't the city just cut back expenses?

In a word, things are critical. Willits has had decreasing revenue for a number of years due to a number of factors. People are not shopping locally as much as they used to, and there are fewer travelers on Highway 101 who stop in Willits. While revenues decreased, expenses, like fire and property insurance, workers compensation costs, and pension obligations are increasing.

City staff has been reduced from 49 to 40 full-time employees. Willits city employees are the lowest paid public employees in the region, with police officers earning only about \$22 an hour as a starting salary. At some point it is impossible to continue cutting, and we have reached that point.

The city is proposing an emergency sales tax increase. How much is this going to cost you? For a purchase of \$10, it will add seven and a half cents to the cost. Willits already has one of the lowest sales taxes in the country, so this would just bring us more in line with other cities.

It is also important to know that food, medicine and rent are not subject to sales tax. In addition, people who live outside the City of Willits but who work, recreate and go to school here, and therefore benefit from city services, will pay a major share of this sales tax revenue.

I already pay state and federal taxes! Why should I pay more?

The city does not receive a percentage of your income taxes! The City of Willits derives most of its income through a sales tax of things purchased within city limits. We also receive a very small portion of

property taxes. The county, the state and local schools receive most of the revenue from property taxes. The county and state take most of the current sales taxes. Every penny of the new sales tax, if approved by voters, will stay in our community.

Can't we just use reserves until things get better?

Revenues have trended down for eight years, and we have used our reserves for the last three years, despite cutting staff and equipment and freezing needed positions. At the current rate we will run out of reserves in a little over two years.

What about cannabis taxes? Weren't they supposed to help the city?

Cannabis taxes help, but they can't close the gap. We anticipate \$350,000 in revenue in the coming year, and still anticipate a shortfall of almost \$700,000.

Has the city tried any other ways to address this issue besides new taxes?

The city has tried just about everything! We have sought grants, we have reduced our electrical bills by purchasing solar panels and other efficiency measures, we have refinanced all of our debt to the lowest possible rates, and we have cut every expense to the very bone.

If Willits does not have a police force, can't the Sheriff's Office just take over?

No. Mendocino County Sheriff Kendall has already said that the county Sheriff's Office is not equipped to take on Willits. They are already short-staffed, which would leave Willits without public safety.

What about the pool, parks, sports fields, the skate park, and the community center?

Without additional revenue, they too, will be unable to be maintained and would close.

Correction

In the July 30, 2020 edition of Willits Weekly, the story "Willits care home reports positive COVID test" incorrectly used the former name of the care home. The correct name is Redwood Creek Care Home. Willits Weekly apologizes for the error.

Candidate filing deadlines

Submitted by Mendocino County Elections Office

Mendocino County's candidate filing is in full swing for the November 3, 2020 Statewide Election for our local Special Districts and School/College Districts.

The filing period began Monday, July 13 and will continue through Friday, August 7, 2020 according to Assessor-County Clerk Recorder Katrina Bartolome.

Read the rest of Filing Over on Page 9



Tomatoes and Flowers

Vendors at downtown Willits Farmers Market provide a bounty of summer flavor and color

Those who frequent the Willits Farmers Market are very aware of the seasonal nature of the available produce and other goods. The start of the season offers certain greens which have a long growing season, garlic that grows over the winter, mushrooms which are climate controlled in their growing rooms, and other greenhouse-grown vegetables.

Savvy folks of the Little Lake valley know what to expect to find when they venture out to the market. Recently, a good variety of tomatoes have begun to emerge on the market tables of the Green Uprising Farm and the New Agrarian Collective.

Sara Stapleton and Caroline Radice of the New Agrarian Collective, based at the Ridgewood Ranch, have a plethora of beautiful produce, arranged artistically and designed to make even carnivores' mouths water. In the last couple weeks, they have been offering a display of several types of tomatoes, mostly heirlooms surrounded by baskets of red and yellow cherry tomatoes.

"We have some beautiful heirlooms," Stapleton said, "which we have a mix of French Heritage tomatoes, Cherokee Purples, Pineapples, Brandywines, and some beautiful cherry tomatoes. The red and yellow cherry tomatoes are distinct. The red might have a richer flavor and the yellow have a lower acid content."

The term "heirloom" is a bit nebulous as there is no distinct definition. What makes an heirloom? Radice offers, "I think heirloom is a really loose term that people use for a whole range of tomatoes. I don't believe there is a legal definition of 'heirloom.'"

"It's meant to be an old variety that's been around a long time," she continued. They're larger and more fragile than standard tomatoes you'll find in a grocery store. They have thin skins, they're large and have odd shapes that would not work well in the standardized grocery stores. The grocery stores also don't carry them because they are more perishable, Radice said.

"I believe they're meant to be an old variety that people have passed down for a long time, but there are actually seed breeders that are working on new varieties of heirlooms where they are using traditional breeding techniques, pollinating different varieties together, not GMO. There are some really cool new breeders that

have created the black tomatoes they sell at the farmers markets.

"There are so many microclimates in Mendocino County," Radice continued. "Some people up in the hills are above the frostline and their tomatoes can go through Thanksgiving. Tomatoes are generally not great that late in the season."

"Once they get rained on, the quality goes down a lot," she explained. "The skin can get thicker. That late in the season, some people will harvest green tomatoes and leave them to ripen in a cellar, and you can make all kinds of nice things with them, like sauces and salsa. It's entirely different from a summer tomato. They're great for cooking and making salsa. We'll be here through November with tomatoes."

Thankfully, the level of expertise in the Willits area allows the growers to maximize their potential and deliver the best, juiciest, and most tasty tomatoes that can be found.

Three weeks ago, Forget-Me-Not Flowers, a regular but seasonal vendor, showed up at the Willits market. Forget-Me-Not has been showing at the Willits Farmers Market for about six years, but only between July and early September, when they aren't liable to get frosted out in their micro-climate in the Laytonville area.

Grown on only ¼ of an acre, Forget-Me-Not Flowers manages to compound an amazing array of flowers and decorative grains into their bouquets. The rest of the year, the duo, consisting of Carissa Chiniaeff and Ella Hanson, works the land and the seeds to produce the glorious colors and textures

Read the rest of Market Over on Page 9



Above, from left: Onions and other root vegetables have begun appearing at the market, like these from Irene's Garden farm in Laytonville. Forget-Me-Not Flowers blends textures and colors into lovely displays of nature. Beets, as seen here from Irene's Garden, can keep for a long time in the right environment. Green Uprising Farm has fresh ripe tomato varieties.



Above, left: New Agrarian Collective heirloom tomatoes are surrounded by ripe orange and red cherry tomatoes. At top: This is also the season for fresh-picked blackberries. Above: Bouquet by Forget-Me-Not Flowers.

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Willits Weekly

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A Nostalgic & Modern Record of Community and Life in Willits

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Sherwood Firewise
creating safer communities

SAVE THE DATE & JOIN US

Evacuation Updates Forum with Special Guests:

Mendocino County Sheriff, Matthew Kendall
3rd District Supervisor, John Haschak
New Emergency Services Coordinator, Brentt Blaser

August 13, 6 to 8 pm

Zoom: <https://us/j/85625036304>
ID: 856 2503 6304, Password: 918795

Telephone (audio only): 669-900-6833
ID: 856 2503 6304, Password: 918795

send questions to: info@sherwoodfirewise.org

NCO NORTH COAST OPPORTUNITIES **EPIC**

Willits Weekly's
Puzzle Page

Sudoku, Word Search & Crossword

Table with 9 columns and 9 rows for a Sudoku puzzle.

PUZZLE ANSWERS ON PAGE 9

HOW TO SUDOKU
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

SUN SAFETY WORD SEARCH
L O S N T S B M O Y L P A E R L F U A S D
G S A O I N G G L B E I P S B Y F I N M P F
I F P U N V H U V F H A O S Y H S N P F
D T M E R C O M U I F O N T O B U N C N D R L E
R M E H C A P Y R T O N B G E S U B O Y C T
H O Y L H T Y A O O R N Y E S D U O D T
E D N P O P R S R I C F E L D D O U D T
C A A L Y I T U G T N N A U E V R S R V
O T C D B A A V H M O I Y A B U U M N I T
G N V R B C T A I H E C N R T G T T E
S P D L E E I T R R O D H L U L N Y N N H C
R H E S R R D C M N T A I H E C N R T G T T E
E C A U H E Y V E A L D F M S M N A U R
C H M D T R F S U H B U N H G C L A P A
N D I O E H M F G O C S V F I P P R M I E
A B R T B G G F Y M R E S P F I L T E R S
C P N E V I T I S N E S N O I T O L S C E
A M O N A L E M P I V S Y B C C L G M V
M F L N R G L S T O P S I O R U C L M V E

Table with 4 columns: BRIGHT, LOTION, PORES, SHADE. Rows include CANCER, MELANOMA, PROTECTION, SPECTRUM, CHEMICAL, MINERAL, RAYS, SPOTS, DEFLECT, NANOPARTICLES, REAPPLY, SUNBURN, FILTER, PHOTOSTABLE, RESEARCH, SUNSCREEN, LAYER, PIGMENT, SENSITIVE, ULTRAVIOLET.

Table with 30 columns and 10 rows for a crossword puzzle.

- CLUES ACROSS
1. Opposite of on
4. Creator
10. No seats available
11. About springtime
12. Flagship ESPN show (abbr.)
14. Automobile
15. A matchup
16. Porous volcanic rock
18. Utter repeatedly
22. Not written in any key
23. Revolved
24. Archival
26. Within
27. Smoker's accessory
28. Disfigure
30. Primordial matter
31. Thrust horse power (abbr.)
34. Kisses
36. Some is iced
37. A way to derive
39. Unaccompanied by others
40. Discontinued Google app
- CLUES DOWN
1. Passerine birds
2. Noisy quarrel
3. The front arm or leg of an animal
4. Early multimedia
5. Golden years
6. Large mollusk
7. Small arm of the sea
8. Persian jurisdiction
9. Atomic #81

WILLITS POLICE DEPARTMENT
POLICE LOG

July 27 to August 2
By Danya Davis, Willits Weekly

The officers of the Willits Police Department handled 144 incidents in this seven-day reporting period.

Summary of Active Investigations and Arrests

July 27
12:42 pm: Officers responded to a report of an unwanted subject in the 200 block of Margie Drive and issued a warning.

8:33 pm: Officers responded to a report of suspicious activity in the 1200 block of Locust Street.

11:14 pm: MADDOCK, Lillian Ruth (36) of Redwood Valley was contacted in the 1500 block of South Main Street. She was arrested on felony charges pursuant to 212.5 (C) PC (First Degree Robbery) and 148 PC (Resisting Arrest), and on misdemeanor charges of 11364 H&S (Possession of Drug Paraphernalia).



Lillian Ruth Maddock of Redwood Valley.

July 28
10:10 am: Officers responded to a report of unwanted subjects in the 300 block of South Main Street and issued a warning.

7:21 pm: Officers responded to a report of an unwanted subject in the 800 block of South Main Street and issued a warning.

July 29
3:58 am: Officers responded to a report of a suspicious person in the 1500 block of South Main Street.

9:29 am: Officers initiated a hit-and-run vehicle collision investigation in the 800 block of South Main Street.

12:21 pm: Officers responded to a report of an unwanted subject in the 100 block of Alder Court.

12:52 pm: Officers initiated a vehicle theft investigation in the 1600 block of South Main Street.

7:52 pm: Officers responded to a disturbance in the 100 block of North Main Street.

8:12 pm: Officers responded to a report of trespassing in the 100 block of North Main Street.

8:42 pm: Officers responded to a report of suspicious activity in the 20000 block of North Highway 101.

July 30
2:01 pm: Officers responded to a report of vandalism near the intersection of South Main Street and West Valley Street.

4:03 pm: Officers responded to a report of an unwanted subject in the 100 block of Holly Street and issued a warning.

6:01 pm: Officers initiated a theft investigation in the 300 block of East Commercial Street.

6:54 pm: Officers responded to a report of illegal dumping near the intersection of

More of Food From Page 1

threaten national and global food sources. At the same time, local food producers have risen to the occasion, finding new ways to produce and serve their communities."

Michael Foley, director of the School of Adaptive Agriculture, co-owner of Green Uprising Farm, and former Willits Farmers Market manager, moderated the presentations. "The pandemic revealed vulnerabilities in our food system that's driven many to embrace local food," he stated.

Foley went on to talk about the closures of meat-packing houses due to workers infected by COVID-19, which caused meat shortages. He also mentioned how dairies were forced to dump 10s of thousands of gallons of milk due to spoilage of their large-scale production.

Foley orchestrated the event where 29 Zoom participants virtually stepped into the working lives, concerns, and creative solutions of four local food producers.

To contact Foley, email foley.mw@protonmail.com. To learn more about the School of Adaptive Agriculture, visit www.

Railroad Avenue and Barbara Lane.

10:22 pm: Officers responded to a report of suspicious activity in the 1000 block of South Main Street.

July 31
6:55 pm: Officers responded to a report of an unwanted subject in the 1200 block of South Main Street.
9:23 pm: Officers responded to a report of suspicious activity in the 800 block of Hearst Willits Road.

August 1
6:06 am: Officers responded to a report of suspicious activity in the 1500 block of South Main Street.

9:07 am: Officers responded to a report of trespassing in the 800 block of Railroad Avenue.

10:02 am: Officers responded to a report of suspicious activity in the 100 block of South Main Street.

11:20 am: Officers initiated a theft investigation in the 1100 block of South Main Street.

12:11 pm: Officers responded to a report of an unwanted subject in the 1700 block of South Main Street.

4:47 pm: Officers responded to a disturbance in the 1400 block of South Main Street.

8:59 pm: Officers responded to a disturbance in the 200 block of School Street.

10:38 pm: Officers responded to a disturbance in the 200 block of School Street.

11:29 pm: Officers responded to a disturbance in the 200 block of School Street and issued a warning.

August 2

6:53 am: Officers responded to a report of suspicious activity in the 1300 block of Poppy Drive.

10:21 am: Officers responded to a report of illegal camping near the intersection of West Commercial Street and North Main Street.

12:20 pm: Officers initiated a theft investigation in the 1400 block of South Main Street.

12:34 pm: Officers responded to a report of vandalism in the 1000 block of South Main Street.

2:52 pm: Officers responded to a report of illegal camping in the 100 block of North Main Street.

6:40 pm: Officers responded to a report of unwanted subjects near the intersection of East Commercial Street and North Main Street and issued a warning.

11:33 pm: Officers responded to a disturbance in the 100 block of Creekside Court.

school-of-adaptive-agriculture.org.

Caroline Radice is the director of North Coast Opportunities' MendoLake Food Hub and co-owner of the market garden at the New Agrarian Collective. At the Zoom forum, she talked about the huge transition the Food Hub went through because of the pandemic.

"When shelter in place happened, the staff knew we'd lose the restaurant owners in particular, so we looked at something we were thinking about anyway, which is the public purchasing food right off the Food Hub website." Within a week, the staff came up with a new business plan that included mapping for distribution to people, and making sure the Hub could deliver orders and not lose money.

There are 93 farms currently signed up to provide food. The Food Hub has partnered with some local and governmental organizations so they can offer COVID-relief boxes to people in need. Farmers get paid for their products, the Hub aggregates

Read the rest of Food Over on Page 11



Ag Grants

Grateful Gleaners group awards funds to boost local food security

Submitted by the Grateful Gleaners

Proceeds from the successful Grateful Gleaner plant sale in May were sufficient to award grants to three worthy agricultural applicants, all of whom are dedicated to furthering local food security.

Two grantees are located at Ridgewood Ranch south of Willits. Ruthie King is owner and manager of livestock production at the New Agrarian Collective, which works closely with the School of Adaptive Agriculture. King sought assistance with purchasing portable fencing and fence energizers for more flexibility in moving her sheep through the landscape.

She supports farms on the ranch by grazing cover crops and doing weed control, as well as fire abatement and grazing around structures and riparian zones along creeks. King offers lamb and pork for sale to locals through a direct-marketing program.

Jes Pearce and Keith Michalak operate Buttercup Compost Lab, a small biodynamic farm at Ridgewood Ranch. Last year was their first year to offer a community-supported-agriculture program. Due to demand from the community, they have doubled the number of members this year and hope to double CSA membership again in 2021.

Their request was for a "quick-cut greens harvester" that operates with a battery-powered drill. This tool will help them make their harvesting operation more efficient, allowing them more time for teaching students at the School of Adaptive Agriculture and hosting agricultural workshops or even interns.

The third applicant to receive a Gleaner grant is the MendoLake Food Hub, which has gone through a massive transformation in the past five months as the world of food distribution and consumption has changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Geared to facilitating food orders and deliveries between farmers and wholesale customers, the Food Hub, under the auspices of North Coast Opportunities, has been getting bulk orders to restaurants, schools and grocery stores since 2015. Then when COVID-19 effectively closed restaurants and schools, a large percentage of Food Hub orders were cancelled.

Yet local grocery shelves were soon empty, and the demand for staple goods like grains, beans and rice was high. Caroline Radice, director of MendoLake Food Hub, and her staff saw that the Food Hub was uniquely positioned to respond to the increased need for local food as supply chains at the state and national level were broken.

The Food Hub team persisted in planning a new response to community food needs and now delivers food to local residents and food-buying groups in Willits and Ukiah, including high-risk people who need no-contact deliveries. The program has an online store open to the public. The program went from 30 orders placed once a week to 80 orders placed two times a week.

The Gleaner grant will help the Food Hub purchase a much-needed second printer. This printer will allow them to

Read the rest of Grants Over on Page 9

Willits Power & Hardware advertisement with contact information.

Crown Groceries advertisement with contact information.

NC Financial Group advertisement with contact information.

Carstar advertisement with contact information.



At top: Jes Pearce and Keith Michalak hold out handfuls of worm castings; they recently received a grant from the Grateful Gleaners to purchase a quick-cut greens harvester in order to make their harvesting operation more efficient. Above: Jes Pearce and Keith Michalak, who operate Buttercup Compost Lab, a small biodynamic farm on Ridgewood Ranch, stand in front of their compost heap. Above, left: Ruthie King – a recipient of a Grateful Gleaners grant – poses for a selfie with her herd of Icelandic sheep. Below: Icelandic sheep and two guardian donkeys graze at the headwaters of Forsythe Creek on Ridgewood Ranch.



Above: Jes Pearce and Keith Michalak transplant turnips at Buttercup Compost Lab.

SPIRITUAL PATHWAYS

Agape Bible Church
290 S. Lenore Ave.
Willits, CA 95490
Where love is first and the Bible is central.
Sunday Services:
9:15 a.m. - Bible Class, adult & children
11:00 a.m. - Worship
Awana: Tuesday, 6:15 p.m.
Info? 707-459-1905
www.agapebiblechurch.com

Amazing Grace Assembly of God Church
803 Coast Street
P.O. Box 489, Willits
707-303-5456
Morning Worship - 10:30 a.m.
Pastor Burton Jernigan
EVERYBODY IS WELCOME

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
265 Margie Drive
Willits, CA 95490
ALL ARE WELCOME
Sacrament Meeting
Sundays at 10:00 a.m.

Eckankar: The Path of Spiritual Freedom
• Sound of Soul events
• Membership Discourses
• Spiritual Discussions
• ECK Light & Sound Services
More information?
Call 707-456-9934
www.eckankar.org

Grace Community Church
Celebrating Life In Christ
25 Hazel Street, Willits
Adult Sunday School - 9:30 a.m.
Coffee Fellowship - 10:30 a.m.
Worship Service & Children's Church - 11 a.m.
Mid-week Bible Studies
Potluck every 2nd Sunday
Alan Klier, Lead Pastor
459-3106

St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church
61 W. San Francisco Ave.
Willits, CA 95490
Father Aaron Bandanadam
Mass times:
Confessions by appointment:
459-2252
Sunday Mass outside:
8:00 a.m. English
9:00 a.m. Spanish
We welcome All Walks of Faith

St. Francis Episcopal Church
1 North Main Street, Willits
707-459-3066
Church Services / Communion & Sunday School - 10:00 a.m.
Healing Prayer 3rd Sunday
ALL ARE WELCOME
The Rev. Betsy Bruneau

St. John Lutheran Church
Karl Bliese, Pastor
Church Service:
Sunday 10:00 to 11:00
Bible Study / Sunday School following the service.
(707) 459-2988
24 Mill Creek Drive
ALL ARE WELCOME

Willits Seventh-Day Adventist Church
399 W. Mendocino Avenue
707-459-5714
Sabbath School - 9:15 a.m.
Worship Service - 10:45 a.m.
4th Sabbath of every month family potluck at the school.
22751 Bray Road, Willits

Willits United Methodist
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ALL ARE WELCOME
286 School St. (at Pine)
Rev. Rosemary Landry, pastor
Worship Celebration
Sundays - 10:30 a.m.
Children's Sunday School - 10:45 a.m.
459-2855
Facebook: www.facebook.com

Hadrak Senior Center advertisement with menu and contact information.

2020 Redwood Empire Fair Virtual Livestock Show



Supreme Champion Hog
JARED BAROZA - REDWOOD VALLEY/CALPELLA 4-H

2020 Redwood Empire Fair Virtual Livestock Show



Supreme Champion Steer
KATIE BROWN - UKIAH FFA

2020 Redwood Empire Fair Virtual Livestock Show



Supreme Champion Goat
CHANCELYN JOHNSON - POTTER VALLEY 4-H

2020 Redwood Empire Fair Virtual Livestock Show



Supreme Champion Rabbit Meat Pen
QUINTON POWIS - POTTER VALLEY 4-H

2020 Redwood Empire Fair Virtual Livestock Show



Supreme Champion Lamb
HANNA SEEVER - POTTER VALLEY 4-H

Congratulations to our 2020 Redwood Empire Fair Participants

Jaden Doak- Reserve FFA Champion Steer, Supreme Grand Champion Reserve Steer, Top 5 showmen
Callie Brown- 2nd place market steer class winner
Catie Spackman- Grand Champion Percentage breeding doe, market goat class winner, top 5 showmen
Michael Kale- Market goat class winner, Reserve Champion FFA goat, Top 5 showmen
Danielle Barry- Reserve Champion Ram Lamb, Class winner: yearling ewes and pair of ewe lambs, 4th & 5th place fall lambs, Grand Champion and Reserve Grand Champion Registered breeding suffolk/hamp ewe, top 5 showmen
Samantha Arms- 3rd place fall lamb, Reserve Champion FFA lamb, top 5 showmen
Zeontrey Henson- Market swine class winner, Reserve Champion Market ready purebred hog

Ready, set, auction time!

Redwood Empire Fair holds virtual auction August 7 & 8

"I'm so very proud of all of our youth FFA and 4-H exhibitors every year, but this year, they're doing an amazing job adapting to a new program and making this virtual event happen," explained Jennifer Seward, CEO of the Redwood Empire Fair.

When the growing pandemic started really making it clear that an in-person fair was not looking possible, the REF board met and decided it was best to cancel the standard fair; however, it was done with the caveat that there would still be an online auction for the community youth.

While REF buildings are filled with exhibits, and the alleyways are lined with fair food and fun games, it's the livestock barns that hold the heart of the Redwood Empire Fair. Breeding stock is judged for its correctness and confirmation to breed standards, and the auction animals are scored for their market readiness and quality of meat. Showmen also receive scores on their ability to handle animals and showcase them to the best of their abilities.

Thankfully, the livestock portion of the fair was able to continue this year, albeit a little differently than normal, with the virtual format.

Exhibitors will show their animals during the auction that will start at 8 am on Friday, August 7 and run through Saturday, August 8 at 3 pm when sales close. After the auction, all winning bidders will be called to make a decision about reselling, donating or custom cut-and-wrapping their purchase. Bidders are welcome to log onto sconlinesales.com to bid. At the close, any active bidding on lots will be allowed to continue in a "racehorse finish" fashion, and those wishing to do "add ons" or make extra donations to exhibitors are welcome to do so until Sunday, August 9 at 3 pm.

Breeding and market classes were held virtually on Tuesday, August 3 and the rabbit classes earlier on July 30. At-home cameras helped showcase the livestock for judges who were able to assess the animals and showmen and place them appropriately in their breeding and market divisions. Those

with exceptional market animals placed highest, earning them supreme (the top) and reserve supreme (second best) of all entered animals. A list of the winners in the beef, sheep, hogs, goats and rabbits divisions is shown at left.

Some other winners included Willits showmen like Willits FFA's Danielle Barry who won first-place awards for her spring ram (which also won reserve in the overall breeding category), yearling ewes, and pair of yearling ewes. Barry placed as a top 5 showman in sheep showmanship, and fellow Willits FFAer Samantha Arms, also placed in the top 5 showmen in sheep. Catie Spackman won first place and Champion percentage doe with her breeding doe in the Boer goat class and placed in the top 5 showmen in goat showmanship. Willits 4-H's Kaleb Whitehurst received a second-place award for his February Duroc hog. Long Valley 4-H's Leibel Firs won third place in his rabbit meat class.

Coordinating the auction and virtual show was a giant job, and Seward noted her appreciation for many of the exhibitor parents and local volunteers who stepped up from across the community to help the fair undertake this new process.

"It's great to see all the people who have come forward and volunteered to make it happen for the kids," said Seward. "It's really the kids and the parents who are truly the stars of show, and it's been inspiring to watch them adapt to this process. People are excited to experience the online auction, and we truly appreciate the businesses who have also stepped up to sponsor the event. We're excited to still be able to hold the action and provide the buyers with the same high-quality meat that we have in the past."

A total of 134 lots will be available for auction including 19 beef, 69 hogs, 23 goats, 15 lambs and 8 three-rabbit pens. Base bids per species are as follows: \$3,200 for beef lots, \$1,200 for hog lots, \$750 for goat lots, \$1,000 for lamb lots, and \$300 for the pen-of-three rabbit lots.

For more information: call Seward at 462-3884.

Graphics and results provided by the Mendocino County Junior Livestock Auction

REDWOOD EMPIRE FAIR ONLINE LIVESTOCK AUCTION

AUGUST 7 - 8, 2020



REGISTER TO BID:
sconlinesales.com

BUYER REGISTRATION OPEN NOW!

2020 Redwood Empire Fair Virtual Livestock Show



Reserve Supreme Champion Hog
KARELI BAROZA - UKIAH FFA

2020 Redwood Empire Fair Virtual Livestock Show



Reserve Supreme Champion Steer
JAYDEN DOAK - WILLITS FFA

2020 Redwood Empire Fair Virtual Livestock Show



Reserve Supreme Champion Goat
AMBER THORNTON - POTTER VALLEY 4-H

2020 Redwood Empire Fair Virtual Livestock Show



Reserve Supreme Champion Meat Pen
KELLIE CRISMON - ANDERSON VALLEY FFA

2020 Redwood Empire Fair Virtual Livestock Show



Reserve Supreme Champion Lamb
HAILEY SEEVER - UKIAH FFA

HOW TO BID

2020 Redwood Empire Fair Jr Livestock Auction

5 EASY STEPS

- 1: Go to sconlinesales.com
- 2: Click on any of the Species Tabs
- 3: Click Register to Bid
- 4: Register for an Account
- 5: Log in August 7 & 8 to bid.

NOTES

- All transportation, processing and cut and wrap facilities will be the same as previous years. You will be contacted on Saturday, August 8th after the close of the auction for processing instructions. Please provide a good contact phone number when registering for your SC Online account.
- This sale is per head - you are bidding on the total price for the lot.
- There will be a racehorse finish - the auction closing will be extended in 4 minute increments while there are active bids within the 4 minute period.
- If you intend to re-sell or donate your purchase please contact Kelley (707)272-0871 or Carrie (707)671-6173 to make arrangements.

ADD-ON

- Add-ons will be allowed until Sunday, July 9 at 3 pm - If you don't want to buy a seller's animal but still wish to add on an amount to a seller's final price, you can pledge an add-on. This feature will allow you to donate a set amount to individual exhibitors if you wish to increase their sale price.
- If you would like to help the kids in a way that is not listed contact the Fair Office at (707)462-3884.

PAYMENT

- Payment is due immediately following the close of the auction.
- Payment Options**
 1. Check - include a copy of your invoice & make check payable to Redwood Empire Fair, mail or deliver to 1055 N State St Ukiah, CA 95482
 2. Cash - deliver cash to the Fair Office, Monday thru Friday, 8 am to 5 pm (closed 12-1). Bring a copy of your invoice.
 3. Credit Card - www.redwoodempirefair.com buyers info
- If you intend to re-sell or donate your purchase please contact Kelley (707)272-0871 or Carrie (707)671-6173 to make arrangements.

SALE OPENS AUGUST 7TH AT 8 AM - SALE CLOSING AUGUST 8TH AT 3 PM
FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL (707)462-3884



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WILLITS

We're all in this TOGETHER

WILLITS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The rest of **Masks** | From Page 1

"The three chambers came together and started working on this program," Moorhead said. "We got together with Sheriff Kendall and the CEO of Mendocino County, Carmel Angelo, and worked out a way to do this. The county came on board and liked the idea of education as opposed to enforcement. We drew up a proposal."

The plan is to have volunteer ambassadors visit businesses in the county and explain to them the importance of making sure their customers wear a mask inside the store.

"If you as a business owner don't do that," said Moorhead, "the county or the state could come in and shut you down. We don't want to see that. We want our businesses to be healthy."

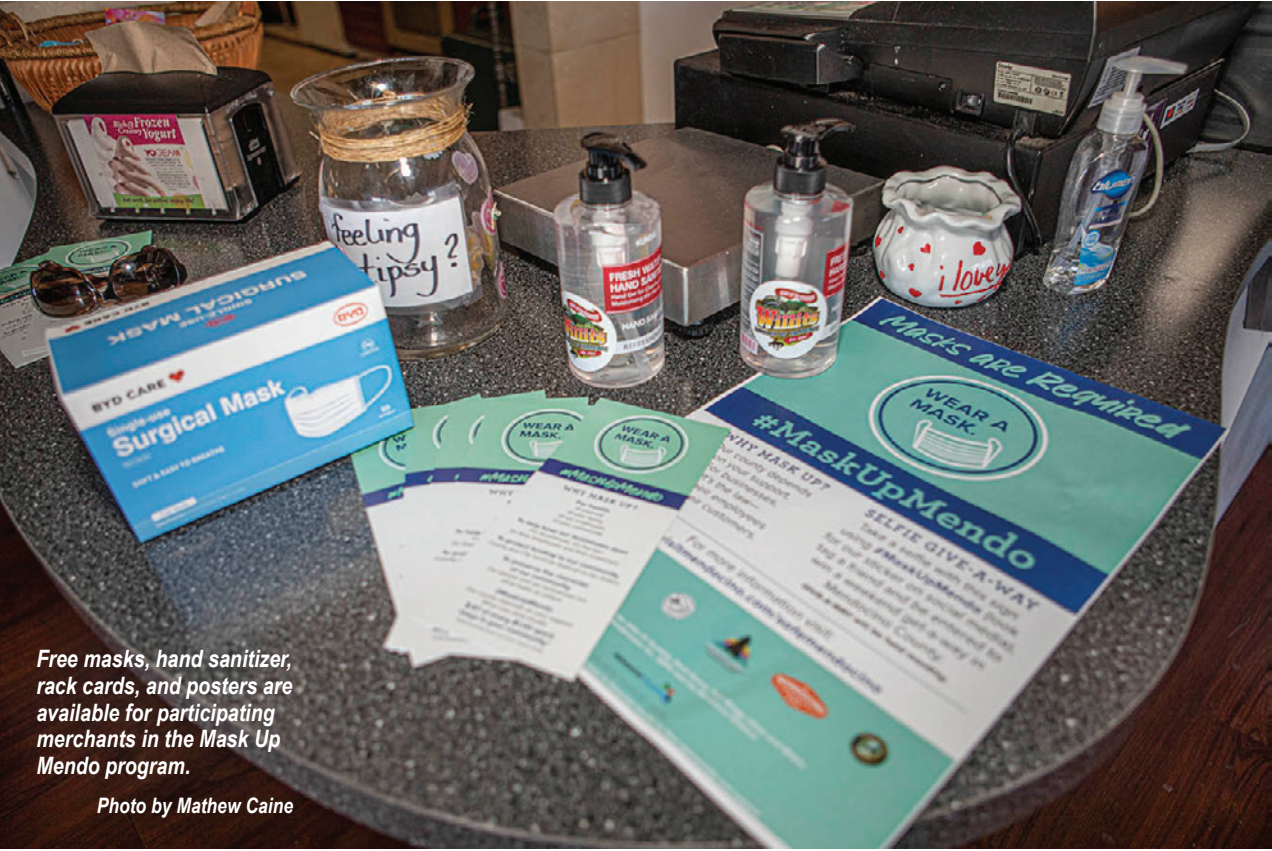
"Not only is it about health for you and your family and your community," he added. "It's about keeping your businesses open, keeping them healthy, keeping your neighbors employed so that they can pay their bills, and making them strong and economically vibrant."

"One thing that a lot of people don't think about is if our businesses don't stay open, our community facilities won't stay open. We won't have the tax money coming in, so they can't give you the services that you have come to expect. The county as well. There are a wide range of effects that are far more encompassing than just our physical health."

According to Moorhead, the methodology of the program addresses concerns over dealing with customers who don't want to wear a mask. The ambassadors will give the business owners a script to read to those who are unwilling:

"If you are here without a mask, you stand a chance of spreading COVID-19 to us, to our customers, to your family, and you put us in jeopardy of being closed down," the script reads. "You like to come in to our store, but if you continue to refuse to wear a mask, we may not be open anymore. I must insist that if you are in my store, here's a mask. Wear it while you're in the store. None of us want to see the stores closed down."

As part of the promotion for the program, the participating agencies are running a giveaway contest. Entrants will



Free masks, hand sanitizer, rack cards, and posters are available for participating merchants in the Mask Up Mendo program.

Photo by Matthew Caine

take a selfie holding the provided poster, using the hashtag #MaskUpMendo, tag a friend, and be entered to win a weekend getaway 'staycation.' The prizes will be awarded monthly.

The program encompasses several of the lesser-served areas of the county. "One of the nice things about this program is that we've been able to bring in Covelo, Leggett, Laytonville, and Point Arena," explained Moorhead.

"We're getting supplies out to them. Laytonville Fire Department has come on board to have a station at their firehouse where the businesses can come and get their supplies. They don't have to come to Willits. Point Arena and Anderson Valley have been able to come to Ukiah and pick up their stuff. There will be stations there for the businesses in those areas."

"We're trying to make it as easy as possible for businesses to get the supplies," Moorhead said, "and we're going to try and make it as easy as possible for our volunteer ambassadors."

"Another wonderful ancillary situation," added Moorhead, "is that we are now in talks with the Lake County Chambers of Commerce to have them adopt our program, and we're going to help them. The importance of that, obviously, is that people from Lake County come to our county to shop, and vice versa."

To volunteer to be an ambassador or to find more information, visit www.visitmendocino.com/safemendocino, or contact any of the participating Chambers of Commerce: Willits, 459-7910; Ukiah, 707-462-4705; or Mendocino Coast, 707-961-6300.

Sherwood Oaks outbreak show their incredible partnership and dedication to saving lives and protecting the most vulnerable in our community."

According to Wells, nine patients have been transferred to Adventist Health Mendocino Coast over the past week to help stop the spread and provide extra hands to help care for the residents. "We have a dedicated COVID-19 care unit for these patients, which allows for protection through isolation and infection prevention. I am proud of our passionate team who are assigned to caring for these patients to aid in their recovery and prevent the further spread of COVID-19 to our community."

The leadership team of Adventist Health in Mendocino County started working on a plan at the start of the pandemic. "Our main concern with this crisis was overwhelming our limited healthcare resources. We opened our Incident Command Center in March, and our teams came up with plans to add beds, procure the necessary supplies and plan for staffing needs," shared Wells.

The three hospitals cancelled elective surgeries and other non-essential procedures and appointments early on to prepare for the expected surge. While it didn't come at that time, Wells says, the extra time allowed the team to continue refining the plan, getting everyone familiar with it and securing the necessary supplies and equipment. "It bought us critical time to refine our processes and truly prepare. And now, a few of those surge plans are being deployed, and I'm so proud of teams for their dedication, flexibility and resilience."

Surge planning added the potential to double the number of hospital beds in the county if a full-blown surge occurred. This strategy provided 100 extra beds to allow the three hospitals to care for COVID-19 patients as well as other patients needing care, including surgeries and emergency services, locally. It also involved a ground-breaking innovation that allows patients to be cared for at home, yet served by physicians and nurses just as if they were inside the walls of the hospital. The Adventist Health Hospital@Home provides additional bed capacity, while keeping patients safe and protected from the virus.

"Throughout the pandemic, we've maintained a hospital inpatient census of around 70 patients between the three hospitals, leaving 30 beds of our traditional 100 beds free. With the surge strategies that provide up to 200 total beds, we have ample capacity to serve Mendocino County as we continue to care for the community through this crisis," stated Wells.

Dr. Bessant Parker serves as the medical officer for Adventist Health in Mendocino County and has been instrumental in coordinating the response strategy

to COVID-19 across the hospitals. "Managing infectious disease is part of everyday business for a hospital. The coronavirus may present us with a volume of patients that we don't normally see, but our hospital has been caring for COVID-19 patients and other patients needing care, and we continue to be ready. We also continue to work with public health and our healthcare partners to best coordinate our resources," shared Dr. Parker.

As part of surge planning, the hospital also secured additional ventilators, thousands of masks, and other essential personal protective equipment (PPE), which are monitored on a daily basis. The value of being part of one team serving the county means moving resources where they are needed.

"Our materials management team sends a report every day, making sure our teams have what we need, and we plan for any eventual needs," Parker said. "We are able to move supplies to the coast and even share them with partners such as Sherwood Oaks. Additionally, being part of a health system in three states, we are able to depend on resources when we need them. We really are stronger together, and having the support and access to these resources as a rural community has never been more important."

The challenge for hospitals and clinics nationwide continues to be testing supplies. "There were challenges with testing before the increase in cases, but now with the increased cases comes the increased need in testing; and the supply doesn't match the demand."

The hospitals all have Abbott machines and a BD Max, which uses a different reagent to process the tests. "We have procured different testing equipment specifically to make sure we have a back-up when the other has issues. But now with the demand nationally, both companies cannot keep up with demand."

To make sure there are enough tests for those who need them the most, Dr. Parker says the hospitals are following state guidelines for prioritizing testing for individuals. "Top priority for testing is individuals who have symptoms who are to be admitted to the hospitals, healthcare workers with symptoms, and those individuals needing to be tested as part of management of outbreaks such as in the case of Sherwood Oaks."

"We understand community members are concerned, and they want to get tested. We've had individuals show up in our emergency rooms who have no symptoms but are coming back from travelling or needing to go back to work. While we would like to be able to test everyone, our resources do not allow us to do that at this point. As acute care facilities, our priority will always be caring for the sick to save lives. As such we would prioritize testing for those whose test results will inform care decisions."

As these challenges remain and the pandemic is not over, Dr. Parker reminds the community to continue taking precautions to do their part as healthcare workers on the front lines continue to do their part. "The response to this pandemic requires a community effort. We cannot do this work alone. Please continue to support our healthcare workers by sheltering in place, wearing masks when in public, and only gathering with your stable social bubble."

Even as the increase in cases continue, along with the added strain of sheltering in place and managing their own families at home, Wells says the teams at all three hospitals continue to be inspired and dedicated to caring for the community. "I am continually in awe of our teams. The care they have been providing has been heroic, smart and relentless; and I couldn't be prouder of their dedication to being a force for good and serving in love for our community." Adventist Health Mendocino Coast, Adventist Health Howard Memorial and Adventist Health Ukiah Valley are part of Adventist Health, a faith-based, nonprofit integrated health system serving more than 80 communities on the West Coast and Hawaii. Founded on Seventh-day Adventist heritage and values, Adventist Health provides care in hospitals, clinics, home care agencies, hospice agencies, and joint-venture retirement centers in both rural and urban communities.



Current Job Openings:

Assessment Information Supervisor

Department Analyst I – Extra-Help

Deputy Clerk of the Board of Supervisors I/II

Deputy Sheriff-Coroner I/II

Real Property Appraiser I

Revenue Recovery Specialist

Staff Assistant III -

Full-Time & ExtraHelp

For a complete list of current job openings and to apply:

www.mendocinocounty.org/government/human-resources

EOE

The rest of Grants | From Page 5

decentralize their operations in order to reduce crowding of staff and the consequent risks of working in too-close quarters during the pandemic.

The Grateful Gleaners' mission is also related to food security. The group has worked to reduce the waste of fruit and vegetables grown in the backyard orchards and gardens of local residents and has organized volunteers for this purpose for the past 15 years.

A team leader recruits from one to five volunteer gleaners to harvest fruit on a given day, using ladders, picking bags, and buckets to fill boxes, which are weighed and delivered to local non-profits. Produce usually includes apples, pears, plums, and occasionally large amounts of garden produce.

During the pandemic, special precautions will include the use of masks, thorough hand hygiene, social distancing, and reduced car-pooling. The collective gathering of fruit in the open air is a wonderful "feel-good" opportunity to do something meaningful for those in need of extra food and nutrition. And usually there's enough fruit for volunteers to take some home to their own kitchen.

To contact the Grateful Gleaners if you have fruit that needs to be picked, or to volunteer, call their message phone and someone will return your call within 24 hours: 707-367-7391.

The rest of Filing | From Page 2

If an incumbent fails to file for their seat, the filing deadline for that race will be extended through Wednesday, August 12, 2020.

Due to COVID, we are trying to do as much of the candidate forms via email and the USPS as possible to reduce the in-person visits to our office. Appointments can be made for those who would prefer to come into our office.

If you are interested in serving on a local board, please call our office, we will be happy to email you the application. Once we receive the completed application, we will be able to email out the other forms that are required to be completed. Please don't wait until the last minute; get this done as soon as possible

Please call or email our office for additional information or to receive an "Application for Declaration of Candidacy" at 707-234-6819 or mcvotes@mendocinocounty.org.

Willits Weekly

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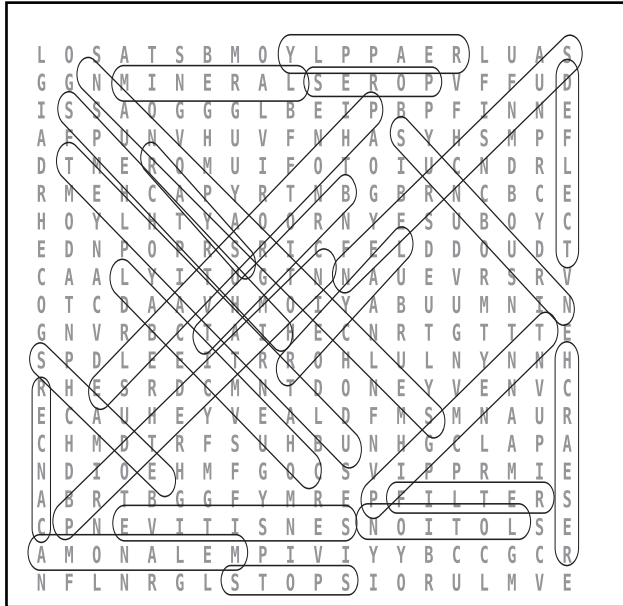


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LEGAL NOTICES

WW283 Fictitious Business Name Statement

2020-F0371
The following person is doing business as Monkey Wrench Mens and Womens Wear, 150 #A S. Main St., Willits CA 95490.
Registered owner: David J. Edgar, 15 Maple Street, Willits CA 95490.
This business is conducted by an individual.

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name listed above on N/A.

FBN statement filed with the Mendocino County Clerk-Recorder on July 21, 2020
/s/ David J. Edgar
Publication dates: 07/30, 08/06, 08/13, 08/20/2020

WW280 Fictitious Business Name Statement

2020-F0348
The following person is doing business as Monkey Wrench Mens and Womens Wear, 150 #A S. Main St., Willits CA 95490.

Registered owner: Shannon Germann, 24401 Sherwood Rd., Willits CA 95490.
This business is conducted by an individual.

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name listed above on N/A.

FBN statement renewal filed with the Mendocino County Clerk-Recorder on July 7, 2020.
/s/ Shannon Germann
Publication dates: 07/23, 07/30, 08/06, 08/13/2020

WW282 Fictitious Business Name Statement

2020-F0358
The following person is doing business as Camomoto, 1250 South Main Street, Willits CA 95490.

Registered owner: Swamikrupa 1986 Inc., 1250 South Main Street, Willits CA 95490.

This business is conducted by a corporation.

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name listed above on July 10, 2015

FBN statement renewal filed with the Mendocino County Clerk-Recorder on July 16, 2020.
/s/ Trikamlat T. Patel, President
Publication dates: 07/30, 08/06, 08/13, 08/20/2020

WW281 Fictitious Business Name Statement

2020-F0336
The following person is doing business as Camomoto, 1435 Hulett Place, Willits CA 95490.

Registered owner: Jean Hanamoto, 1435 Hulett Place, Willits CA 95490.

This business is conducted by an individual.

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name listed above on N/A.

FBN statement renewal filed with the Mendocino County Clerk-Recorder on June 25, 2020.
/s/ Jean Hanamoto
Publication dates: 07/30, 08/06, 08/13, 08/20/2020

The rest of Market | From Page 3

from which they create their arrangements.

At the farmers market, they offer bouquets from \$3 to \$15, or they will happily and creatively make up whatever bouquets to fit the consumer's taste and budget. A portion of their customers get a weekly bouquet as part of a consumer-supported agriculture program which is paid into in the winter months to help buy seeds and equipment and other necessities.

Chiniaeff, a self-described "flower nerd," loves the geometry of nature and the Fibonacci sequence that is apparent in the patterns of the flower faces and petals. She is also taken with all the Latin names such as Helianthus, Scabiosa, and Achillea millefolium (yarrow).

"You have to pick the flowers at just the right time," stated Chiniaeff, "and harvest them in the right way or they'll drop and not be sellable. You have to keep paying attention."

Approaching the Forget-Me-Not booth is like entering a world of color and life. Some of their best customers are the bees who feast on all the nectar, attracted by the myriad of colors, but people should not worry about the bees. They are only there to do their job.

The Willits Farmers Market is looking for a manager for the winter months, said Francisco Hernandez, who is currently in charge. If interested, please call Hernandez at: 510-679-7470. The market can be found at the old Rexall parking lot off Main Street, every Thursday afternoon from 3 to 6 pm.

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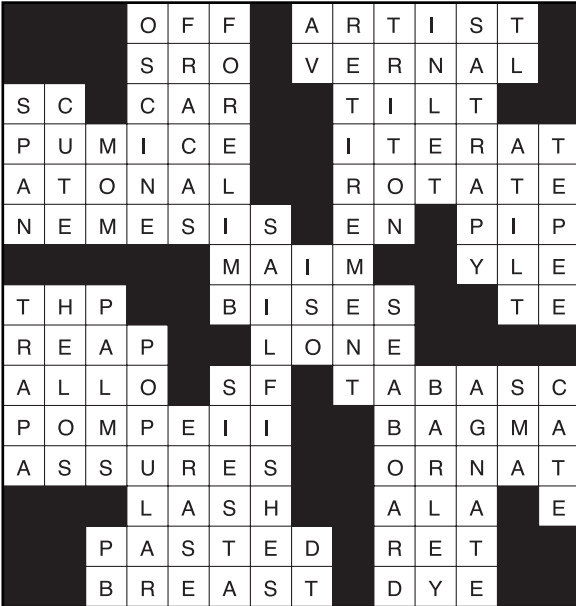
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Willits Food Bank Open
Willits Community Services & Food Bank continues to distribute food, following COVID-19 safety provisions, to hungry families and individuals in the Willits area, with an increase in numbers served. The front office at 229 E San Francisco Ave is closed to the public, but the back door area is open for food distribution on Wednesdays and Fridays from 1 to 4:30 pm. Homegrown produce donations to share with the food bank are welcome. Info: 459-3333; financial donations to WCS can be mailed to 229 E. San Francisco, Willits CA 95490.

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ages of 6 and 12; 34 people between the ages of 13 and 18; 115 people between the ages of 19 and 34; 78 people between the ages of 35 and 49; 58 people between the ages of 50 and 64; and 43 people who are 65 or older.

There has been a total of 19,330 tests done in this county. As of Wednesday evening, the results of 11.2 percent of those tests, or 2,169 tests, were pending.

County not on watch list after all

One of the larger COVID stories in the county this week is an official acknowledgement from the county administration that the county has not yet been placed on the state's watch list. This was confirmed on Friday, July 31 by Interim Public Health Officer Neomi Doohan and again on Tuesday, August 4 by county CEO Carmel Angelo.

This is in contradiction to a county press release, which was approved by Dr. Doohan and which was written by county Public Information Officer Sarah Dukett, and which was released on Saturday, July 25, which stated that the county was on the state watch list.

The press release states, "Today, the California Department of Public Health notified Health Officer Dr. Neomi Doohan that our county has been placed on the state watch list. When placed on the state watch list, a county is subject to the restrictions the state has established in order to slow the spread of COVID-19. This new watch list status will be reflected on the state COVID-19 website on July 28, 2020, at this link: www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/CountyMonitoringDataStep2.aspx"

On July 20, Dr. Doohan issued a revised public health order which incorporated all of the restrictions that would have been imposed on the county, if the county had been placed on the watch list. That public health order took effect at 11:59 pm on July 24.

On Friday, Doohan explained why the county has not yet placed on the watch list.

"There is a situation across the state where local jurisdictions are seeing certain data, and that data is not being seen at the state level," Doohan said. "What we are seeing at the Mendocino County level is data that would qualify us for the watch list, but then when we are in contact with the state, they are not seeing our numbers as high as we are seeing them, on the front line.

"To be on the watch list we need to have 100 new cases of COVID-19 per 100,000 people, in 14 days. So [for Mendocino County] that would be 90 new cases in 14 days. So we have exceeded that. But the state isn't seeing those numbers being as high.... The problem had to do with reporting those numbers up to the state from the laboratories in our county, up to a system called CalReady," Doohan said.

CEO Angelo said much the same thing on Tuesday morning. "There are problems with data collection and data reporting throughout the state," Angelo said, "and Mendocino County just happens to fall into the group of California counties whose data has not caught up, at the state level. Regarding the state watch list, our data supports being on the state watch list, but right now we are not officially on the watch list," Angelo said.

On Sunday, August 2, Public Information Officer Dukett released a press release stating that Dr. Doohan was working on a revised public health order. Doohan did release that order on Monday, August 3. The only change between the August 3 health order and the July 24 health order is that the most recent health order clarified there is a limit of 100 persons at the few types of outdoor gatherings that are permitted under the health order. These gatherings are religious services at places of worship, and certain cultural gatherings that normally take place in houses of worship, such as weddings and funerals, and also political protests.

Update on county care homes

Seven residents of the Sherwood Oaks Care Home in Fort Bragg have died due to COVID-19, the county announced on Sunday, August 2. Outbreak testing for the coronavirus was done, and the results are back. There have been 29 positive cases of the disease at Sherwood Oaks, including 20 residents and 8 staff members. One community member also tested positive for the virus.

Six people connected with Sherwood Oaks have been placed in the Adventist Health Coast Hospital. Five of those are residents of the facility, and the sixth person is the community member who contracted the disease.

In addition, positive cases have been reported in connection with three care homes in inland Mendocino County, including one care home in Willits. According to Public Information Officer Dukett, one staff person who works at Mountain View Care Home in Ukiah, one staff person who works at Ukiah Post-Acute Care in Ukiah, and one staff person who works at Redwood Creek Care Home in Willits, have all tested positive for the virus.

The case at Redwood Creek Care Home was confirmed on Wednesday, July 29. Dukett said at that time she would put out a press release on care homes that afternoon, but the press release was not forthcoming.

When asked why, Dukett said that one positive case by a staff person does not constitute an outbreak. In order for there to be an outbreak, a resident has to test positive. Since there was no official outbreak at the Mountain View, Ukiah Post-Acute Care, or Redwood Creek care homes, the Public Health COVID-19 team decided they would not issue a press release on those test results.

When asked if outbreak testing was done at Redwood Creek, Dukett said testing was done on the day the results were learned, which was July 29. When asked what the results of those tests were, Dukett said she was not certain, but that she had not heard of any more positive cases coming out of Redwood Creek, and she added, that, because test results for outbreak testing come back within four days, that she would have heard, if any of the test results had been positive.

additional revenue the city is on the verge of closure," said Gonzalez. "We have cut all we can and based on current projection, our operating reserve will be depleted soon."

He added that if the city were to close, the Mendocino County Sheriff's Office would take over police services in the city.

However, in the "Q & A" section attached to the letter, it states that County Sheriff Matt Kendall has informed the city that his department "is not equipped to take on Willits. They are already short-staffed, which would leave Willits without public safety."

The county would also have to handle other services in the city such as building inspections and permits, planning department applications, and all neighborhood road and street repair.

The facilities that would be closed would include the Willits City Pool, Willits Community Center, and parks and play fields would no longer be maintained.

In an attachment to the ordinance called "Argument in Favor of Measure (K)," it stated that the 3/4 cent tax would provide about \$1 million annually to the city for 10 years, and "all money will stay in Willits to benefit local residents" and "cannot be taken away by the state."

It also said the measure "requires a clear system of accountability, including a Citizens Financial Oversight Committee and mandatory financial audits to ensure the money is spent properly."

A staff report from the city manager's office attached in the council agenda last week stated that "at the current rate, our remaining reserves will run out in about 2 years. We have no more to cut and still maintain even the most basic services and maintain our legal responsibilities such as accounting, paychecks, insurance, human resources – and police services."

The report went into quite a bit of detail about the how the city got into this desperate situation. It discussed how declining revenue and increasing costs over the last several years had led to a structural deficit, despite some heavy cutting by the city, as well as pursuing other sources of revenue and refinancing bonds.

According to the report, Willits was already looking at a large deficit in their budget for the 2020/21 fiscal year, and the impact of COVID-19 on local businesses is expected to double that.

The general fund deficit for the fiscal year 2020/21 is projected at around \$700,000, and this follows two years of deficit spending which depleted the general fund reserves by a total of around \$800,000.

In a budget presentation at the meeting by interim Finance Director Andy Keith, he showed that if the projections hold up, the general fund reserve will have declined by around 50 percent in about four years – down from nearly \$3 million to less than \$1.5 million (see below for more coverage of the budget discussion).

The city manager staff report noted that currently sales tax in Willits, at 8.375 percent, is the lowest in the region, since most other districts in Mendocino and Lake County had implemented "special" taxes during the Great Recession years of 2007-2009.

"To deal with the recession, the city chose only to cut staff and services," it read, noting that city staff had been cut back from 49 to 40 fulltime positions in the last three years. "In addition to cutting staff, the city stopped updating equipment, computer and financial systems and stopped giving competitive wages."

"The fiscal year 2019-20 budget included additional cost containment measures such as frozen positions, hiring restrictions, employees picking up greater shares of pension costs. We didn't purchase police cars that we needed, nor other important supplies."

In terms of revenue, it said that local sales tax had declined by about 8 percent since 2012, "whether by the bypass, cannabis legalization, or simply because people are increasingly shopping online." Fiscal year 20/21 is projected to have a 20 percent decrease, largely due to the COVID-19 impact.

As far as rising costs, it stated that disaster insurance has been increasing at a rate of 20 to 40 percent per year over the last few years, and that "other unavoidable costs like workers compensation and pension costs continue to escalate."

In addition, with Willits being handed over ownership of Main Street from Caltrans this year, maintenance related to that is expected to now cost the city "more than \$250,000 every year."

The report also broke down why sales tax is so important to the city of Willits, accounting for about 53 percent of all its tax revenue. The next largest contributor is property taxes (10 percent), which the city can't increase due to the restrictions of Proposition 13. Business licenses, by comparison, only generate about 3 percent of the city's tax revenue.

The report emphasized that the city receives no money from any state or federal income tax paid by Willits residents, and a large majority of the property and sales tax currently paid by residents goes to the state, the county, and local school districts. Schools and community colleges get the biggest chunk of local property taxes.

It said that other elements of revenue, such as the city's excise cannabis tax and grants, have helped but are not "closing the gap."

As far as looking at what else to cut, the report said that realistically the only option would be to cut the police funding by about \$500,000, which would mean losing half the officers. This would lead to only one shift being covered in the city, and no police presence for 10 to 12 hours every day.

It called such massive cuts to the police department "a paper solution," since the perception of Willits as a "declining or failing city" would hobble the city's ability to recruit and maintain police staff and other city positions, and would lead in "a matter of months" to the "dissolution of the city" anyway.

He also said that the low staffing levels the city was working with in their general fund departments was unprecedented in his experience.

"You essentially have 8.3 positions left that essentially perform all of [these] functions – the general administrative functions, park functions, administrative public works functions, and community development functions," said Keith. "So basically you have eight people in total who provide all of those services. Which in my perspective and having worked in this business for 30 years, I've never seen an organization that has that little support dedicated to the general fund core functions. So you're doing an exemplary job with the staff that you have, and how you're doing it with eight people is amazing."

For general fund costs, he noted that the police department is the biggest expenditure for the city (about \$2 million annually), but after that California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) and insurance payments are the next two biggest costs.

"What I wanted to point out with the CalPERS and the insurance is that's over \$1 million for those two things combined, and those are essentially fixed costs," he said. "There's not a whole lot you can do to reduce those costs. And the fact of the matter is these costs continue to rise year after year after year."

Despite the uncertainty about revenues over the next year, Keith did include an estimate in the budget about how much COVID-19 would reduce revenues for the city – \$346,770, with the vast majority coming from lost sales tax and \$55,470 coming from losses in the transient occupancy tax.

However, with a total projected deficit of \$694,638 for 2020/21, and two large deficits in the previous fiscal years, Keith said their deficit problems clearly were not all due to COVID-19 impacts.

"One thing I did want to point out is those red numbers are systemic, and something needs to be done to resolve this systemic budget deficit issue," he said.

The large enterprise funds – water and wastewater – both showed deficits for the fiscal year as well, but Keith said that overall these funds were still in good shape.

The water fund had a projected deficit of over \$1.1 million, but he said this was primarily due to one-time capital improvement projects such as the solar array which was recently purchased at the city wastewater plant for around \$730,000, and which is expected to save the city money in energy costs in the years to come.

"It's recognized that the water fund has a pretty good fund balance," he said.

The wastewater fund showed a projected deficit of about \$300,000; however Keith noted that the number didn't include the refinancing of wastewater bonds which was approved at the July 21 meeting, which "is going to end up saving quite a bit of money."

It is expected that we will be revisiting the budget in September/October as tax receipts information becomes available," he continued. "The issue we are facing is that we know that our revenues are down significantly, we just don't know by exactly how much. Every jurisdiction in the country is facing the same issue with the COVID-19 crisis, which is why cities are passing baseline budgets now, so that we can continue operating, with potential revisions in September and October."

In his presentation to the council at the meeting, Keith noted a lot of the same trends that were highlighted in the Gonzalez letter and the staff report regarding the sales tax measure – namely that rising "fixed" costs and falling revenues for the city were leading to a serious "structural" deficit.

He also said that the low staffing levels the city was working with in their general fund departments was unprecedented in his experience.

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Prior to the vote the council discussed the merits of putting a sales tax measure on the ballot.

In voicing her support, Councilmember Madge Strong pointed out that many essential goods such as groceries, medicine and rent are exempt from sales tax, making it less impactful on lower income people.

She also noted that people living just outside the city limits, as well as tourists, often use city facilities and resources, and sales tax is an effective way to have them contribute towards those costs.

"And so them shopping in the city is a way for them to contribute to the city's revenues," said Strong. "So this is a way to spread the burden of revenues to run the city to people who are actually using the city a lot. So I think that's a fair thing to do."

Councilmember Saprina Rodriguez said she was in support, but wanted assurance that the council would be involved in crafting a plan about what the revenue would be spent on.

"I am in support of this measure," she said, "but I would plead with each of you that if you vote in favor of this this evening that you also make a commitment that you will advocate for a collaborative process for a comprehensive plan."

Mayor Gerry Gonzalez said that while on the council and as former Willits police chief he's seen firsthand how much cutting of costs the city has already engaged in.

"When I started as an officer, we had a lot more officers back then," he noted, "And the city dealt with their financial woes by attrition basically. People left, and we didn't fill positions. One of the last things I did as chief was I cut out the administrative assistants and passed on the duties to dispatchers. And I absorbed a lot of the bill-paying duties to myself. And I knew that didn't do any favors for the chief that followed."

Councilmember Greta Kanne called the tax measure a "Hail Mary" for the city.

"Our backs are against the wall, and we can't keep going the way we're going," she said. "And I have no problem putting this to the voters asking them what they would like us to do. I wish we had done this sooner. I wish that instead of burning through our reserves and getting down to 27 percent, we had moved this forward two years ago. I think this is going to be a really difficult time to go to the voters and ask for a sales tax increase."

The November 3 vote on Measure K will require a simple majority of Willits

residents approval to go into effect.

Budget discussion

Before the discussion about the sales tax ordinance, the council approved adoption of a budget for the fiscal year 2020-2021.

As explained in the agenda summary report by Keith, what was passed at the meeting was a "baseline budget, meaning it only includes baseline expenditures and it is not much different than what was passed last year, except that it details known increases and decreases in revenue and costs and includes projected losses from COVID-19."

"It is expected that we will be revisiting the budget in September/October as tax receipts information becomes available," he continued. "The issue we are facing is that we know that our revenues are down significantly, we just don't know by exactly how much. Every jurisdiction in the country is facing the same issue with the COVID-19 crisis, which is why cities are passing baseline budgets now, so that we can continue operating, with potential revisions in September and October."

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Supervisors John Haschak and Ted Williams will sit on an ad hoc committee which will work with county staff and representatives from state resource agencies to further refine requirements on protocols to comply with CEQA.

The goal in this work will be to reach full agreement on language and on process, and to monitor the results. An additional goal will be to evaluate the success rate if this approach is used, "success" being defined as getting state annual cultivation licenses for existing permit holders, and for those cannabis growers in this county who have applied for, but have not yet received, a county permit.

Supervisor McCowen pleaded to be placed on that ad hoc committee instead of Haschak. McCowen argued that he was the superior supervisor for the job.

"I would suggest that with my planning background, as well as my history of cannabis regulation in the county, if the board wants someone that thoroughly understands every aspect of the issue, I think that I am very well qualified to be working with staff," McCowen said.

Speaking to Haschak, McCowen continued. "You have also been engaged in the issue. But you've made it very clear that you don't support the use permit option.....I would point out that you delayed by a month the initial discussion of the new direction. You delayed by a month and a half discussion of the zoning table when it was on the agenda for June 16. We're pushing to off again. And, although you said you viewed the use permit as an alternative, your first choice is simply to keep plowing forward with the current system, which is unworkable for many people," McCowen said.

At McCowen's request, Haschak polled the board on what it wanted to do. Williams suggested that Haschak and Williams be placed on the ad hoc that will continue to work with the state on improving the existing ordinance, but that McCowen should work with staff on creating a new, land use-based ordinance.

Although both county CEO Carmel Angelo and Planning and Building Services Director Brent Schultz said they would prefer to work with just one ad hoc, the board went ahead and named McCowen to the second ad hoc.

As the exhausted board crawled to the finish line on the cannabis topic, board action was not always clear. A motion by Williams outlining general steps for the board to take in the immediate future was approved unanimously.

Williams' motion was to 1. direct staff to begin working on crafting a land use-based cultivation ordinance; 2. establish an ad hoc which will continue to work with existing cannabis cultivation applicants on completing the CEQA checklist, otherwise known as Appendix G; and 3. that ad hoc will make recommendations to the board on next steps.

A second motion by McCowen was also approved unanimously. That motion prioritized which cannabis growers will be the recipients of the county's efforts to get them a state annual cultivation license.

Those groups will be, first, those growers who have a current county permit; second, those growers who have a state provisional cultivation license; and third, all other applicants in the county's cannabis regulatory system.

The board did not vote on naming Haschak and Williams to the existing ordinance committee. That decision was made by Haschak, in his capacity as chair. Neither did the board vote on directing McCowen to work with county staff on drafting a land use-based cultivation ordinance. That decision was made as a "board direction" after Haschak had polled the board.

An additional wrinkle arose at the very last minute during which the cannabis issue was under discussion. Haschak said that if there was disagreement over which ad hoc had priority over the use of staff time in doing its work, that the Haschak-Williams ad hoc would take priority. The board was not given an opportunity to discuss that statement by Haschak.

A deeper look at the miasma

During the board's discussion of the cannabis issue, several facts became clear. It is clear that the county's permit issuing system has failed. After three years and three months, the county has successfully issued just 270 permits, out of 1,429 permit applications received, a completion rate of only 19 percent.

More than 800 permit applications are lingering in a kind of bureaucratic limbo, waiting for approval from either the California Department of Food and Agriculture or from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, before the state tells the county that the county can issue a permit.

Planning and Building Services Chief Planner Julia Acker-Krog told the supervisors that 42 percent of applications from 2017 are still "under review" by the county, meaning that they are swirling around in the bureaucratic limbo presided over by the state.

The County of Mendocino and the State of California have systems of permitting and licensing that are at odds with each other. The county's 50-page cannabis cultivation ordinance regulates the cannabis industry by laying out a raft of provisions and regulations that apply to the entire inland area of the unincorporated part of the county.

Although cultivation permits are specific to the site, up until now they haven't contained the level of environmental protection required by CEQA.

The state has a much smaller regulatory framework for cannabis, but one that requires site-specific environmental protections which are consistent with CEQA. The difficulty is finding a way to attach the site-specific protections required by the state onto the county's approach to permitting.

The State of California won't tell the county that it can issue a permit unless and until the county finds a way to meet the state's environmental requirements.

The State of California cannot and will not issue an annual state cultivation license, unless and until applicants have a county permit to cultivate cannabis.

Currently, the state has issued more than 800 provisional

licenses to cannabis cultivators in Mendocino County. These provisional licenses are only good until December 31, 2021. By January 1, 2022, growers who wish to grow within a legal framework must have both a county permit and a state annual license. If they don't have an annual license, growers cannot grow legally in this county, even if they have a county permit.

People from Mendocino County's Planning and Building staff, and from County Counsel staff, and people from the state agencies have been in discussion for the past year and half, and have arrived at a series of tentative solutions. However, it appears that the various state agencies are not in alignment, and are pursuing not one, but two, roads to compliance.

The Department of Food and Agriculture has designed an application add-on called Appendix G, which is a checklist of site-specific environmental questions. This application oftentimes requires a written description of the parcel for which the application is being sought. There is a difference of opinion on how difficult and how exacting this written description is to complete.

Schultz told the board that for one application that was submitted and which the state recently approved, Senior Planner Jesse Davis spent seven hours completing the Appendix G and the site description.

Schultz said that the application that Davis worked on was very simple, on land that had easy topography and that was perhaps the most straightforward application they could find. Other applications would be more challenging.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife has developed a sensitive species review questionnaire which includes six questions and which would be appended to the permit application before CDFW would sign off on the application.

Apparently, both Appendix G and the questionnaire are close to being finished and agreed upon.

Other facts concerning the cannabis situation in this county are less clear, and in some cases devolve to the level of opinion. For example, Planning and Building Services Director Schultz said that a land use-based ordinance was the best way forward.

"While our proposal is also no silver bullet, it is a known process throughout the state," Schultz said. "It gives a clear pathway to helping our applicants demonstrate less than significant environmental impacts, through conditioned discretionary actions. It also gives property owners adjacent to a proposed cultivation site a voice, when discretionary uses go forward to public meetings."

Schultz's encomium was echoed by county Senior Planner Julia Acker-Krog. "A discretionary permit offers great environmental protection, because, through the lens of CEQA, we are looking at all land use impacts, not just biological resources, but all sorts of impacts, be it miles traveled, greenhouse gas emissions, and we are able to condition it so that we get good sites and operative conditions that ensure there are no impacts."

But several members of the public challenged Planning and Building's glowing defense of the use permit system.

"I am skeptical about the use permit process," said Sheila Jenkins, who is a long-time member of Keep the Code. "I've seen it before. It's never provided more protection, as the staff claims. We've been subjected to the use permit process, and we know how it can be used to circumvent environmental protections.

"A few examples come to my mind: the pellet mill in Calpella, the asphalt plant on Outlet Creek, the Northern Aggregates quarry. A use permit does not provide more environmental protection. Exemptions can be issued, and no one would know," Jenkins said.

Another area of dispute is, which system would be better at quickly processing applications?

Longtime Willits Environmental Center member Ellen Drell, who advocates sticking with the existing ordinance, characterized the work required to get the county's permittees to having a state annual license.

"Actually, the county's permittees should have all of their annual licenses in place in a couple of months," Drell said. "County permit holders can complete the CEQA checklist – the mysterious Appendix G – themselves, and send it directly to the state. The county need only review it and keep a copy on file...."

"The path to implementing a path acceptable to CDFW for sensitive species is also now open and reasonable. It's outlined in Attachment A, and we urge the board to begin that process as well, immediately. Staff should send all permittees the sensitive species habitat questionnaire. It's simple; it's about six questions. The permittees can complete it and send it back," Drell said.

McCowan asked Schultz for his estimate of how many permits his department would be able to process under the existing ordinance. Schultz's answer was telling. "If we are fully staffed, and they don't get taken away from us or put on other assignments, we probably could process 150 or 200 permits by January 2022," Schultz said.

Supervisor Williams pointed out some surrounding counties that have adopted a land-use based system have not been terribly successful at processing permits. Williams mentioned that Humboldt County processed 70 permits last year, and Lake County, which also uses a land use-based system, processed 50 permits. Williams said that if Mendocino County's rate of processing permits was on a par with that of Humboldt County, given the current backlog of more than 800 permits, that it would take 12 years to process those permits.

Williams also said that Sonoma County has been using a land use-based system, but has grown dissatisfied with its results and is contemplating moving to a "ministerial system" like that of Mendocino County.

One area that neither Supervisor McCowen, nor Planning and Building staff have talked much about is the cost of adopting a land use-based approach. This approach would require expensive and time-consuming public processes: an administrative permit for apparently smaller, more out of the way, applications, a minor use permit for somewhat more complex applications, and a major use permit for those applications that are more complex or more controversial.

In a recent communication with Willits Weekly, Planner Acker-Krog detailed the costs of these permits. Including a \$2,456.75 CDFW surcharge for any approved administrative or use permit, the cost of an administrative permit would be \$4,748; the cost of a minor use permit would be \$6,629.75; and the cost of a major use permit would be \$10,738.75.

Williams said that somebody, either the county or the applicant, would have to bear those costs. Assuming a \$6,000 average cost for a use permit, Williams said that it would cost \$5 to \$6 million to move the 800 growers that have applied for, but who do not yet have a county permit, to the finish line.

He then clearly pointed out the dilemma facing the county. "If we continue with the current process, we do not believe the applicants will get their state licenses in time to meet the January 1, 2022 deadline," Williams said. "And we don't have the staff resources to complete this Appendix G.

"If we migrate to the land use model, we don't have the staff resources to get the permit holders their state annual permits by January 1, 2022, and that process may cost about \$6 million of public money – whether it comes from the county, or from the applicants, it's still public money," Williams said.

those into CSA-type boxes, and they deliver them to people around Mendocino and Lake counties. "I think [the home deliveries program] is the most impactful program I've ever worked on in my whole career," Radice said.

Visit the MendoLake Food Hub website at www.mendolakefoodhub.com and email questions about the COVID-relief boxes to orders@mendolakefoodhub.org.

Rachel Britten is the new owner and manager of the Mendocino Grain Project and continues to get help from former owner Doug Mosel.

After COVID hit, the shelves in the grocery stores were empty of many things, including flour. The Mendocino Grain Project was able to step up and fill the gap.

"I think we're so unique and lucky in this county to have a distribution like the Food Hub. It's been a huge part of how the Grain Project gets our products to people," Britten said during the forum. "They fill flour orders with a short turn around and usually grind it that day or the day before. "That way we're able to sell really fresh food, too," she said



Above, from left: A repurposed wine box half-filled with dried goods including organic milks. Do you recognize this masked woman? It's Deb Holcomb from the Willits Senior Center who volunteered Tuesday. The back of this SUV has everything needed for at least a week for a family of four. Groceries-to-Go tickets were placed on the windshields of cars to tell volunteers how many people in that household were receiving food. At right: Many volunteers enjoy distributing the food and go to other counties to help, like Kevin Luhr, left with his friend, Chris Wilbur. They met volunteering in Lake County and drove together to volunteer in Willits. One of the signs on the Redwood Empire Food Bank distribution truck. The well-organized line of cars had traffic controllers directing the long lines.



Photos
by Ree
Slocum

Help with Groceries

Redwood Empire Food Bank now offering food twice a month to all Willits households

August 4 was the first Tuesday of the month, and the Redwood Empire Food Bank was setting up in the early morning hours to distribute food to about 300 people from the Willits area. According to Redwood Empire Food Bank Regional Coordinator for Lake and Mendocino Counties Yolanda Avelar, there were about 30 cars already lined up and waiting when they arrived with the truck at 7 am for the distribution which opens at 9:30.

Once 9:30 rolled around there were at least 100 vehicles in a line that began to move at a decent pace as the food was distributed.

The long line of cars were well organized by Avelar and volunteers. Joan, a volunteer with a clipboard, took names of people and asked how many were in the household and placed yellow tickets under windshield wipers to alert volunteers as to how many boxes or bags of food were needed for each vehicle.

Masked volunteers dispensed commodities that ranged from repurposed wineboxes full of dried goods to frozen porkchops, butter, breads of all kinds including tortillas, and large bags of fruits and vegetables. They were piled in trunks, back and front seats, side doors and floors and people's laps.

People receiving the goods were grateful for the abundance of food they were receiving at no cost to them. "My whole family is grateful! I'm picking up food for my nieces and nephews and grandnieces and nephews who live with me," told one driver. Amanda from Willits who's feeding a household of seven, said: "I think it's wonderful what they're doing. It's a huge help in these troubling times."

Although it was a bit hot, volunteers as well as food recipients smiled. Deb Holcomb from the Willits Senior Center was volunteering and said: "It's nice to know we're helping all these people in our community. I enjoy it and have made new friends in Lake County." Chris Wilbur is a volunteer with Redwood Food Bank, lives in Lake County, and traveled with his volunteer friend Kevin Luhr and said of his experiences, "It's fun especially when you're meeting good people and you're doing a good thing."

Avelar, who fills in on any job that needs filling or gives volunteers breaks, and the truck driver, Chris, are the two people who are paid. Otherwise the huge jobs of getting some of the food bagged and given out and cleaning up are done with volunteer help.

"I'm pulled everywhere," Avelar said as she was directing traffic filling in for volunteers who didn't make it Tuesday. "We're trying to recruit volunteers," she told. "We know this is a tough time because of COVID. We try to do everything

we can to keep volunteers safe." She added that if one wants to volunteer, they need to be at the distribution site at 8:30 am for orientation and to be assigned jobs. If the distributors are in need of food, volunteers get a chance to go shopping before the distribution starts, they work the 3.5 hours, and help with clean-up.

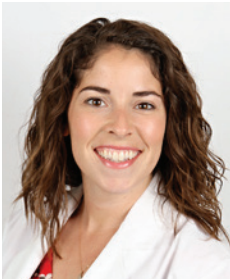
"You have to wear closed toe shoes, be ready to lift anywhere from 35 to 40 pounds, and need to be 13 years or older. It's fast paced and there will be a safety meeting at the beginning."

Until the end of December, the first Tuesday of the month is for distribution of the COVID-19 emergency food based on the Groceries-to-Go program. Avelar has expanded the third Tuesday of the month (August 18 this month) from Senior Basket, only, to include the Groceries-to-Go program where anyone in need can receive the abundant commodities. If you're a senior (age 60 and up), please call the Willits Senior Center at 459-6826 to get an application to sign up for the Senior Basket.

Redwood Empire Distribution is in the ballpark parking lot on East Commercial Street in Willits right after the County Museum and Roots of Motive Power.

For more information about the Redwood Food Bank and its mission to feed people, distribution times and places, visit <https://refb.org/>

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Erica Baumker, PNP
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