

LEVY RESULTS

	Percent voting Yes
• Bellingham Schools	68.8%
• Ferndale Schools	
Maintenance & Operations	63.4%
Facility Improvement	60.7%
Memorial Field upgrade	53.6%
• Lynden Schools	62.0%
• Fire District 17 (Sandy Point)	84.4%

Each of these measures requires sixty percent approval. Results courtesy of the Whatcom County Auditors office, as of 8 p.m., Tuesday March 14.

For Evergreen Water-Sewer District commissioner **Jutta Ahmed**, a moment of truth is looming. Evidence is mounting that she does not live within the district and therefore is not legally qualified to serve as one of the three commissioners for the strife-torn district, which serves Paradise Lakes. She is meanwhile boycotting meetings until a long list of conditions is met. (see page 3)

Paul Isaacson has filed a lawsuit in Whatcom County Superior Court against the Whatcom County Council. Isaacson claims the council has broken the law with its recent **moratorium on the subdivision** of short-plat land parcels of less than five acres in suburban enclaves and transportation corridors, causing the land to be devalued without compensating land owners. (see page 3)

Secret Harbor, an Anacortes-based residential treatment center for emotionally troubled adolescent boys, appears to be losing the public-opinion battle in its bid to relocate to an out-of-the-way 36-acre site it has purchased on Mosquito Lake Road eight miles south of Welcome. (see page 4)

The Whatcom County Public Works Department has discovered 478 culverts and similar features that, when repaired, will open up more than 200 miles of **habitat for salmon**. So far, field crews have surveyed 278 barriers to assess upstream fish habitat, and have found 227 miles of spawning and rearing habitat blocked. Other inventories in Whatcom County, primarily on the state highway system, have identified an additional 423 miles of stream habitat blocked by culverts and similar barriers. After two years of field work that covered more than 500 miles of streams on private and public lands, the department found more than 1,000 culverts and other in-channel features--478 of them, or 46%, partially or completely blocked. "We're also looking at the amount and quality of fish habitat that's being blocked by these barriers," Steve Fox inventory project manager said. "Once we have this information, we can decide which barriers will give us the biggest bang for the buck in habitat gain, and we'll fix those first."

400 homes for Galbraith Mt?

*Site to be developed
by Trillium and Skeers*

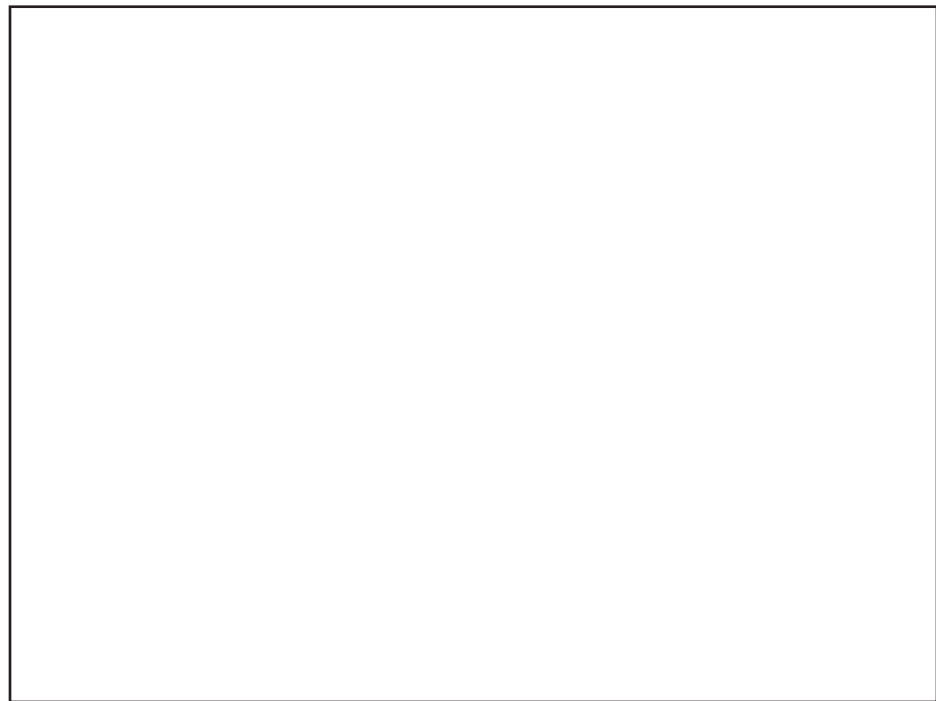
by MELANIE VALM
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BELLINGHAM - Tuesday, Trillium CEO David Syre filed for a comprehensive plan amendment that would change the designation of land on Galbraith Mountain from "commercial forestry" to "rural." The request was turned down this time, but is almost certain to be resubmitted in the future. This request marked the beginning of the process to put a housing development in an area whose current use is primarily a mountain biking recreation area.

Of the three-member council committee, only Dan McShane was supportive of the request. The other two, Seth Fleetwood and Carl Weimer, dissented.

"This (change) is intended to initiate interactive community exploration of the long-term possibilities for the Galbraith Mountain area," said Trillium spokesperson Mauri Ingram.

Currently, forestry zoning of the nearly 2,400 acres allows no housing development at all. The original intent of commercial forestry zoning, according to the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan, was to provide for, encourage and sustain long-term



Construction has begun on the 172-lot Hannah Creek development on Birch St., at the north end of Galbraith Mt. photo by Melanie Valm

productivity of forest resources.

Construction has already begun for a new development at the end of Birch Street, where many of the northern trailheads for Galbraith Mountain are located. Skeers Construction owns and is developing this area. According to Skeers' web site, the develop-

ment, Hannah Creek, consists of 172 lots. Houses will range in size from 1,700 to 2,500 square feet. The Skeers site is located within the city limits and is zoned for single-family residences with a minimum lot size

see **GALBRAITH** page 6

Local PSA gets national coverage

30-second spot focuses on environmentally friendly cars that run on vegetable oil

by SARA L. GEBALLE
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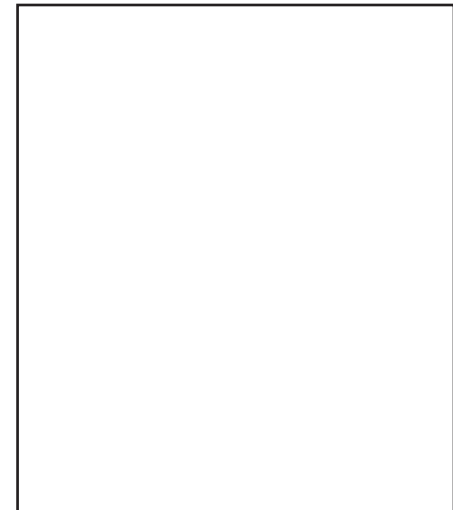
BELLINGHAM - Kat Dukes and Zoe Wainwright, both 14, two students from WellSpring Community School, are starring in a TV public service announcement (PSA) produced by Bellingham-based Environmental Media Northwest (EMNW). The 30-second spot, which is expected to air nationally next month via distribution by Comcast Cable, focuses on environmentally-friendly cars that run on vegetable oil. According to Michael Schutte, executive director of EMNW, there are already several such vegetable oil-fueled vehicles in our area. And one local

company, Whole Energy, is now contracting with Whatcom County restaurants to collect their used cooking grease which can then be filtered to a purer form usable for fuel.

Burning vegetable oil fuel is considered even cleaner than bio-diesel, Schutte said, as it does not lead to any net gain of carbon dioxide being released into the atmosphere. Thus driving such vehicles should not contribute to overall global warming. A second selling point made in the PSA for vegetable oil fuel, is how growing crops specifically for fuel can create jobs for American farmers.

The PSA was filmed at WellSpring School by local filmmaker, Tom Ensign, and pro-

see **PSA** page 6



WellSpring students Zoe Wainwright (left) and Kat Dukes (right) getting ready for the shoot.

photo by Sara L. Geballe

The China Communique

*n*A few “myth-understandings” regarding China

by **LARRY KLEPINGER**
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Last year, 2004 Congressional Candidate Larry Klepinger moved to Fujian province in China and accepted a teaching position offer at Fuzhou University. The WI has invited him to write a series of articles communicating what is really happening in China— through the eyes of a casual observer – without the major media spin. You can contact Larry via email at larry@larryklepinger.com. Or visit his website www.larryklepinger.com for more information.

I thought it might be good, for a change, to let you in on what it is like to live and work in China from what I see going on around me.

But a word of caution is needed before we start. For years I strained under the media-hyped illusion that everything in China was on the go, the people never stop working, everywhere there were Communist soldiers roaming the streets, practicing religion was strictly banned,

and that they are getting ready to take over the world.

Well, there is a grain of truth to some of the above – but that is all – just a grain. Let’s take them in order.

China is on the go

This is absolutely true – but with certain caveats. China is in desperate need of energy. We run out of electricity on a semi-regular basis, our “high-speed” Internet is slower than 90 weight gear oil in the dead of winter, the streets in most towns outside of metropolitan areas are woefully inadequate, potholes everywhere, drainage systems iffy, at best, with non-potable water out of the tap.

That said, China is racing toward trying to fix these problems the best it can. But the population is burgeoning, people are demanding more services, yet the socio-economic infrastructure is struggling to keep pace. It is an amazing kaleidoscope of observing everyone trying to catch up with the 20th Century – not to mention the 21st.

The Chinese siesta – Communist style

Ever since the Communist Revolution many Chinese take a two-hour lunch/nap. It was designed to help the workers get enough sleep so they could help “rebuild” China. At our university everyone closes down from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. I was shocked when I found this out and at first thought it was just school policy. Then we went to a hospital and found out that they didn’t open until 2:30 in the afternoon, not to mention some government agencies getting back later than that.

But here again, when the Chinese do work they go all out. What an American construction company accomplishes with one backhoe, hundreds of Chinese workers do by hand. China puts new meaning to the phrase “manual labor.” It is truly sobering to see line upon line of people digging a trench with picks and shovels to lay electric cable lines in the ground.

Communist soldiers everywhere

This simply is not true. Although

we live by a military base there are very few soldiers out on the streets. And they are not walking around with guns at the ready, looking for innocent civilians to shoot. I actually thought they would be everywhere – but on the contrary – they are few and far between.

This does not mean they are not here. They are. But soldiers are not out parading around, goose-stepping in circles as they are many times portrayed in the American media.

Religious practice

As was mentioned in my last article, this is what shocked me the most. I was lead to believe – again by the “mainstream media” – that Christianity was banned, and if you were a Christian, well, you were executed on the spot. Not true again. I have had a number of students proudly proclaim to me that they are Christian – and wear T-shirts stating as such.

The great yellow peril

The Chinese are going to take over the world! Not in my lifetime. The Chinese have 5,000 years of history – most of it fighting each other – with a few foreign invasions interspersed along the way.

The last thing China wants is another war – especially with Amer-

ica. It can hardly feed and clothe itself. There is no way it could conduct a successful war, Taiwan notwithstanding, maintain its populace and keep the wheels of industry churning out goods and services at such a hectic pace.

Yes, the Great Chinese Bear is starting to wake up. But in my estimation, the people I have talked with only want a place where they can raise their kids in a friendly, safe atmosphere, conduct their daily affairs in mutual harmony – then go home at night, have dinner with the family, crack open a beer or two and relax. It sounds kind of like what most everybody else is looking for.

Just wait until Monday Night Football gets here. *n*WI

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PARADISE

from page 3

had missed two consecutive meetings, fellow commissioners Gordon Travis and Linda Largent sent her a letter advising: “the Board will declare your position vacant if you are absent from the next scheduled meeting without being excused.”

At the following meeting, the board neither declared the seat vacant nor excused her absence. Largent made a motion to remove her from her seat, but Travis refused to second it. He said “maybe we can excuse her,” but no motion was made - leaving the matter in legalistic limbo.

The district’s attorney, Bob Tull of Bellingham, told the Whatcom Independent he had been asked to attend the March 18 meeting in an attempt to unravel the legal knots the district finds itself in, and was developing a position on the February 9 letter. “Research suggests that once the warning letter is sent, it becomes self-actuating,” he said, but declined to draw any conclusions.

Does she live in Paradise?

Ahmed’s troubles go beyond the boycott since many allege she does not live in the district. “Her primary residence is Vancouver, Canada,” Largent stated. “I’ve known her and her husband over ten years. They’re lucky if they’re down here 30 days out of the year.”

A neighbor who takes walks past the Ahmeds’ property in Paradise

“at least 30 or 40 times a year” told the W.I., “I’ve seen someone there once in five years.”

Another Paradise resident took it upon himself to pass by the Ahmed property during his early-morning exercise 18 times this winter. He said he never saw the Ahmeds’ car in the driveway. “I don’t feel she’s qualified,” he concluded. “She’s not a resident.”

In an October 28, 2005 affidavit for a Vancouver Court of Appeal proceeding, Mrs. Ahmed identified herself as living on Vancouver’s Granville Street. Eleven days later she was elected commissioner.

At the close of a February 27 telephone interview with the W.I., Mrs. Ahmed, speaking from Paradise Lakes, told the Independent if it had any further questions it could call her “at home.” When asked, “You mean, in Vancouver?” she replied, “Yeah.”

Interviewed by phone in Vancouver, she said, “I usually live there (in Paradise), but because of all the problems that have happened, I’m staying in Vancouver.”

The Washington Association of Sewer and Water District maintains registered addresses for all Washington water district commissioners. A call to the association’s executive director, Hal Schlomann, disclosed that Mrs. Ahmed had registered her address as being in Vancouver, not Paradise - a discrepancy he found “strange, in that commissioners normally reside full-time within the districts they serve.”

Paradise residents have the op-

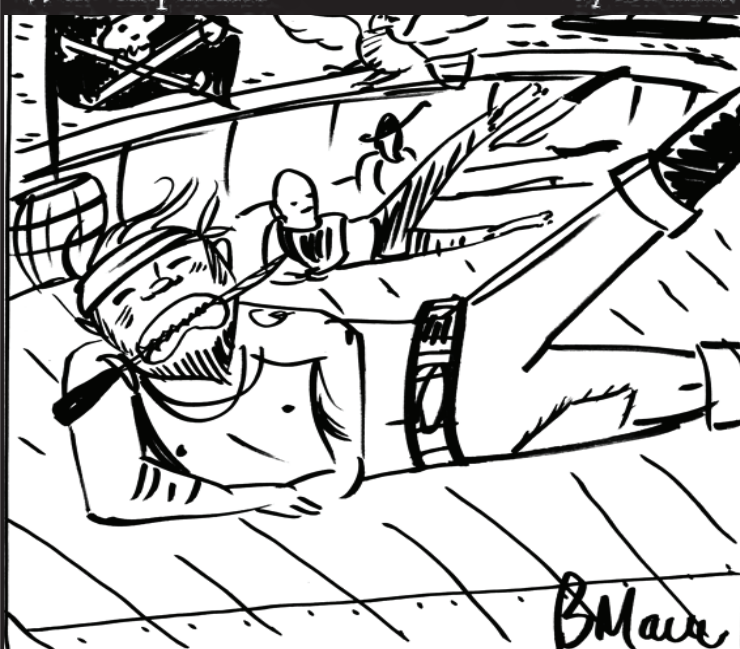
tion of filing a challenge with Whatcom County Auditor Shirley Forslof respecting the residence information provided by Mrs. Ahmed as a candidate for public office. The challenger and Mrs. Ahmed would then be invited to a hearing with Forslof and a county prosecutor. If Forslof ruled against her, she would lose her seat on the district’s board. The decision could be appealed to Superior Court.

The March 18 meeting has become an issue itself, since Fairhaven is 30 miles from Paradise and the public notice announcing the move may not pass legal muster. The resolution authorizing the move was never signed by the requisite two

commissioners, although the minutes recording the passage of the resolution were. Moreover, its language named the Bellingham main library the new venue, but the public notice referred to the Fairhaven Library.

The Fairhaven session will likely be full of distractions from issues such as budgeting and the status of improvements to the district’s system. District residents may have little more than their collective woes to ponder on the long ride back to Paradise. *n*WI


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Pilates of the Carribean