

Photo by Peggy Fagerstrom

SOUTHERN SUNSET — On Sunday afternoon, the sun sinks slowly over the horizon into the Bering Sea.

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City to hold new NSEDC election

By Tara McCaw

Almost two months have passed since Adem Boeckmann won the popular vote for NSEDC representative, and now NSEDC is asking the City of Nome to hold a new election without Boeckmann's candidacy. Even though Boeckmann earned 260 votes, or 35.14 percent of the total 740 votes, controversy surrounded his victory. Boeckmann does not reside within official Nome city limits, and there were conflicting opinions over whether this fact affected his eligibility to run in the election.

According to Boeckmann, well before the election, he questioned the NSEDC board about whether or

not he could hold the position of Nome Representative, and an NSEDC attorney told him that it would be permissible.

However, according to a court judgement from a 1995 lawsuit between Tim Smith and NSEDC, the elections for representatives are to be held at regular municipal elections. According to Smith, one of the reasons for the lawsuit was the lack of clear election rules in the past. By holding NSEDC representative elections with municipal elections, they would have structure. "Open and fair elections are an important part of democracy. You can't make up the rules for the elec-

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Court grants Alaska Gold intervention in lawsuit

By Diana Haecker

U.S. District Court Judge Ralph Beistline last Friday granted Alaska Gold Company unlimited intervention in a pending civil lawsuit of Nome residents against the Army Corps of Engineers.

Plaintiffs Jana Varrati, Sue Steinacher and Austin Ahmasuk, and a Nome group called "Bering Strait Citizens for Responsible Resource Development" sued the Army Corps of Engineers over an issued wetlands permit for the Rock Creek mine near Nome.

The lawsuit alleges that the Corps violated the Clean Water Act, National Environmental Policy Act

procedures and the National Historic Preservation Act.

"Upon due consideration, and for good cause shown, the Alaska Gold Company's motion to intervene is hereby granted," wrote Beistline in his ruling.

Alaska Gold cited an interest in the outcome of the lawsuit as the Corps' admitted it could not adequately defend AGC's interest.

With Alaska Gold now being a player in the lawsuit, the court received AGC's answer to the plaintiff's complaint. The Corps filed a motion asking for more time to file their opposition brief beyond the

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Photo by Diana Haecker

YUMMY — Noah Thompson thoroughly enjoyed the goodies, candies and sugar cotton during last Saturday's Fireman's Carnival at the Rec Center. The Fireman's Carnival is the annual fundraising event for the local volunteer Fire Department, to perform crucial emergency response services to the community. Again, it was a great success as the Rec Center was bursting at the seams with people enjoying fun and games.

Sales tax revenues up, council considers inventory tax alternatives

By Laurie Mc Nicholas

In light of projected city sales tax increases this fiscal year discussed at a Nome Common Council work session Nov. 29, a majority of members seemed inclined to eliminate the personal property tax on business inventory held for resale. City administrators presented the Council with alternative proposed ordinances for either a temporary inventory tax exemption or elimination of the tax.

City Manager Randy Romenesko reported that local

sales are running \$1.5 million ahead of last year at this time and noted that if the trend continues through the year, sales will total \$5 million more than last year, generating an increase of \$250,000 in sales tax revenues. Last year's tax exemption on \$16.7 million worth of business inventory cost the City \$184,000 in revenues, he said.

Tom Sparks told the Council that Bonanza Fuel's contract to provide fuel for Alaska Gold mining opera-

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Winter storm hits Nome; downs phone lines and cables

By Diana Haecker

One winter storm after the other swept through the region since Sunday, November 26, dumping lots of snow on the ground as strong winds wreaked havoc with phone cables and the utilities.

Jerry Steiger, meteorologist with the Nome office of the National Weather Service said that Nome saw 7.5 inches of snowfall as the first significant snowstorm moved through the region on November 26 and 27. The



AP Photo/Al Grillo

ALASKA GOVERNOR — Sarah Palin, left, is sworn in as Alaska governor by Superior Court Judge Niesje Steinkruger as Palin's husband, Todd, center, holds the Bible during an inauguration ceremony in Fairbanks on Monday, December 4.

•NSEDC

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tion after the election,” said Smith.

Louie Green, Jr. agrees with Smith that conducting the NSEDC representative elections as municipal elections ensures that Nome procedure is consistent with other NSEDC communities. Green, who earned the second highest amount of votes in this October’s election, believes that following rules for municipal elections is the only way the election can have accountability.

Some people question, however, if indeed the NSEDC election, while run by the city, had all the same rules as a city election.

The Community Development Quota is a federal program open to all communities located within 50 nautical miles of the Bering Sea according to federal law. NSEDC President Eugene Asisick was under the impression that since CDQ is a federal program, Boeckmann would be eligible to run because he is eligible to vote in federal elections even though he is not eligible to vote in city elections.

Boeckmann’s candidacy was questioned early in the election but NSEDC lawyers told Nome City Clerk Leslee Wessel to leave him on the ballot. After Boeckmann won the popular vote, Green approached the City Council during the public grievances period of the Nome Common Council and sited the 1995 lawsuit.

There was no formal announcement of an election winner, though, according to Asisick, “the people have chosen their representative.”

At the NSEDC Board of Directors meeting on November 29, board members adopted the following recommendations set forth by the NSEDC Bylaws, Rules and Regulations Committee as decided in accordance with NSEDC attorneys: “[We] request the City of Nome to set aside the results of the October 3 election for NSEDC member representative and set a date for a special election. The committee notes that the voter and candidate eligibility requirements applied during the regular election were not consistent with established corporate policy and practices with respect to voter and candidate eligibility requirements.

“[We] instruct the Nome City Clerk to conduct a special election under the rules and procedures that applied to elections in prior years, including limiting eligibility either to vote or to run for the office to persons who are residents of Nome and eligible to vote in municipal elections. The Committee believes that any changes to the election procedure should not apply retroactively.”

Though frustrated that he will not be serving as Nome’s representative, Boeckmann does not hold a grudge against NSEDC. “I feel that the NSEDC board has done exactly what they had to in the circumstance. I know several of the board members like brothers and I know they have done right. If people are happy about the way things turned out they should thank Tim Smith and Louie Green, Jr. for getting the election thrown out,” said Boeckmann. He continued, “I hope to find another way to help fisheries in the region in the future.”

At this time NSEDC has not clarified who exactly will be running in the make-up election or when it will be held.

•Alaska Gold

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original December 1 deadline. The opposition brief on the issue of the preliminary injunction motion is now due on December 11. The preliminary injunction means that the plaintiffs seek to halt construction at the Rock Creek mine and further destruction of the wetlands at the heart of the lawsuit until the judge makes a final ruling.

Rick Van Nieuwenhuysen, president and CEO of NovaGold, the Canadian parent company of Alaska Gold Company, said, “Clearly we have a lot at stake here. We have invested millions of dollars to date on exploration and engineering studies, including a huge amount on studying how best to minimize the environmental impacts of our operations.

“We started this process several years ago and have consistently shared our plans with the residents of Nome with community meetings and regular publications in *The Nome Nugget* with the Bucket Line articles.”

In addition, Doug Nicholson and Warren Woods have an open-door policy and have always been willing to discuss anyone’s specific concerns.

“Quite honestly, I think Nome also has a lot at stake as well – we have over 60 people employed or about to be employed – most from Nome and the surrounding communities.

“We have also used a lot of local suppliers and contractors to complete the work we have to date. All that would have to stop if the few local people and outside environmental groups who oppose the project are successful at getting their Injunction.

“There is a well-defined process to follow and I believe that the Corp. of Engineers, the State of Alaska and NovaGold followed that process. It seems a bit odd to me that three months after the permits were granted that these outside interests have suddenly shown an interest in the project and the process.”

•Council

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tions would alone generate enough sales tax revenues to make up for the \$184,000 the City could have collected on business inventories. “Really, the sales tax increase is a huge thing,” he added.

Council members disagreed on whether to renew a one percent exemption of the sales tax for purchasers of electric, water, sewer and landfill services. The exemption, which ended last month, has cost the city \$66,000 in revenues, Romenesko said. Councilman Jerald Brown questioned whether the exemption is useful, noting that it had reduced his monthly utility bill by only a dollar or so. Councilman Stan Anderson replied that those who do not have high incomes may appreciate the savings and that the exemption has value as a gesture.

At the end of the work session the question of how to spend the City’s \$100,000 Community Benefit Share from Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation remained open.

Council members reached consensus on refunding of school bonds after Romenesko assured them that the move would save the City about \$65,000.

Nome mayor will serve on Palin’s transition team

By Diana Haecker

Governor-elect Sarah Palin last week announced Nome Mayor Denise Michels as part of her transition team to serve as an advisory team leader for the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

Michels told *The Nome Nugget*, “I feel very honored to be chosen as part of the transition team, and I will do whatever I can do to help her out.”

Michels said she received a call from Palin’s office on Monday, November 27, and asked her if she wanted to be part of the transition team. Michels accepted. The transition advisory team consists of 18 leaders altogether, assessing the functionality, strengths and weaknesses of all state departments and to make recommendations to Palin. Kotzebue’s Paulette Schuerch was named team leader for the Governor’s office.

Michels cited the historical relationship Nome, and rural Alaska in general, has with the Department of Military and Veteran Affairs. “Going back to the Territorial Guard, Nome had and still has an active longstanding relationship with the military. We have the armory here, a very successful JROTC program, the Steward River National Guard shooting range and, due to our frequent storms, constant contact with the Department,” Michels said.

In an effort to smooth the transition from the outgoing Murkowski administration to the new Palin/Parnell administration, Palin actively seeks input not only from the named team leaders, but also from the public across Alaska.

On the state’s website www.gov.state.ak.us/govelect/ Palin solicits comments from the public, saying, “I will always be a Governor of the people. In order to do that, I need your help, your guidance and your suggestions. Please take the time to give our transition teams your written suggestions and help make our new administration a success.”

Palin announced last week the first three members of her cabinet. Former Anchorage Police Chief Walt Monegan will serve as Department of Public Safety Commissioner, longtime corrections superintendent Joe Schmidt was named Commissioner of the Department of Corrections and former DNR Deputy Commissioner Marty Rutherford will take over the top job at the Department of Natural Resources and will serve as interim Commissioner.




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for another
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