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'Coach Welch'

School nurse-turned-hockey player breaks the mold.

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Friends in need

Red Cross bolstered by effort from schools; donations for local help down.

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Local

Judge orders jail time for serial groper.

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Weather

HIGH: 25
LOW: 17
Mostly cloudy, snow or flurries possible.

Full forecast, PAGE A2

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Hubbub in Houston

Emotions run high at hearing

BY TODD L. DISHER
Frontiersman

HOUSTON — After a sometimes heated back-and-forth between himself and the city council, Sgt. Charlie Seidl will continue to serve on the Houston police force.

A Monday night performance evaluation of Seidl took on the tone of a trial, as council members asked him about his involvement with two separate incidents. The police officer was suspended from duty earlier in the day, and although a narrow 4-3 vote allows Seidl to keep his job, that support came without some hard questioning.

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Houston Police Department Sgt. Charlie Seidl answers questions in front of a packed house during a performance evaluation at an emergency meeting of the Houston City Council on Monday. Seidl was placed on suspension Monday morning.

ROBERT DeBERRY/Frontiersman

Service officer fired in wake of dog shootings

BY TODD L. DISHER
Frontiersman

HOUSTON — The officer in charge of animal control duties for the city of Houston has been fired amid claims of overestimating the true cost of euthanasia, information that may have spared eight animals from being shot.

Last week, the four dogs and four cats at the Houston Animal Shelter were disposed of by way of gunshot. City officials claimed the animals had been at the shelter since November, and the city could not afford to feed them indefinitely or pay for lethal chemical injections.

At the time, Deputy Mayor Lance Wilson said the cost of euthanizing a dog started at \$65 and was scheduled

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WINTER WONDERLAND



ROBERT DeBERRY/Frontiersman

Fresh snow covers the Little Su in the Hatcher Pass area Monday afternoon. Up to 8 inches fell over Saturday and Sunday and more is expected throughout the week. For a complete forecast, see page A2.

Copper theft suspect can remain out of state

BY ANDREW WELLNER
Frontiersman

PALMER — Since the conditions of his release weren't clear, a judge has ruled that a man accused of stealing \$114,500 in copper cable could stay in Washington while his case moves forward.

Bob Ristick was one of three people arrested for felony theft in the case, which came to light three weeks ago. The other two were an associate of Ristick's, Robert Stevens, and an employee of Matuska Telephone Association,

'You're on notice. You've got zero tolerance on this one.'

Superior Court Judge Eric Smith

Howard Tesham. The copper wire in question was property of MTA and police investigators managed to intercept it before it was shipped to Washington state to be recycled. In order to get out of jail, Ristick

posted \$100,000 bail in cash. He appeared at the Friday hearing by phone from his home in Puyallup, Wash.

At the hearing, Assistant District Attorney Allison Collins asked Superior Court Judge Eric Smith

to order Ristick to come back to Alaska and forfeit his bail. She said there was a bail condition placed on Ristick that he not leave the state. Since he was in Washington, Collins argued, he was therefore in violation of his bail conditions.

But Smith said he wasn't so sure. At a previous hearing, Superior Court Judge Vanessa White had modified Ristick's bail conditions, removing the requirement that he have a third party appointed to

See SUSPECT, Page A9

OUR NEIGHBORS

O'Bryan is an advocate for seniors and Valley government watchdog

BY TODD L. DISHER
Frontiersman

MAT-SU — After 30 years of public service, Elsie O'Bryan has the right to hold politicians' feet to the fire.

The ex-city clerk for the town of Houston, longtime senior citizen advocate and current special education assistant believes that to complain about the state of affairs, one should have his or her hat in

the ring. With the wear and tear on her hat, O'Bryan said she is not shy about voicing her unhappiness.

O'Bryan first moved to Alaska in 1977. The trip was originally scheduled as a visit to a friend, but she ended up coming with three trunkloads of personal belongings and never looked back.

She started to work with the Vista Volunteers, a precursor to the ser-



TODD L. DISHER/Frontiersman

Elsie O'Bryan has been one of the driving forces behind the annual Christmas Friendship Dinner and a longtime voice in Valley politics.

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