Andy Wappler

Andy Wappler, former chief meteorologist for KIRO TV, joined Puget Sound Energy in February 2008 as part of the utility’s effort to communicate the need for renewable energy and energy efficiency in order to meet the challenge of climate change.

Certified by American Meterological Society, Wappler is a graduate of the University of Washington and of Northwestern University.

By making some simple changes at home, he and his family have cut their electricity use by nearly 40 percent, and their natural gas use by as much as 10 percent. He will present at the November 12 President’s Luncheon on how saving energy can save your business money.

The event is sponsored by Olympic Legal Services. Olympic Legal Services, P.S., focuses its experience and ingenuity on helping individuals, businesses, homeowners’ associations, and public entities successfully navigate the areas of business law, real estate law, intellectual property law, and employment law, by offering comprehensive, creative and cost-effective solutions with a personal touch.

RSVP to the chamber today. The luncheon is held on Thursday, November 12 at 11:30 at the Anacortes Lutheran Church – 22nd and O Ave. (This is also the chamber’s annual membership meeting, where members will vote on the slate of incoming board members.)
A community within a community!

Stop by and get acquainted with our independent and assisted living services. 360-293-1300

1300 “O” Ave. • Anacortes, WA • info@chandlersquare.com

a message from the director

After a busy summer, we seem to have launched into an even busier fall. Hopefully this is an encouraging sign of our re-emerging economy—tourism, new business in town, and increased commerce. If you haven’t already done so, please check out our quarterly Key Business Trends on the Web site [www.anacortes.org] click on the Relocate tab, and then on Community Information. This excellent report, compiled through our Economic Development division, details such areas as retail tax receipts, accommodations activity, real estate transactions, relocation packet requests, and marina traffic. The general trend in most areas: decreased volume over the past two years, moderated by a flattening over the past quarter. For example, the same number of homes were sold during June-August in 2009 as in 2008 (though at a considerably lower average selling price). If you believe as I do that home sales are the key to our economy, this is a step in the right direction. The focus of this report is to provide benchmarks that you can use in gauging your own business. We will issue updates in December, March, June, and September.

As you read this, we near another election date, with important ramifications to our city, port, and schools. During the past few months, your chamber was instrumental in providing candidate information through a variety of forum, luncheon, and debate formats. If you haven’t already done so, I urge you to vote. The chamber board also sought to educate members on the specifics of Initiative 1033, which would have a substantial impact on governmental funding—please review this statement and consider carefully the focus of this initiative.

I wanted to welcome our new board members: Robert Atterberry (Avenue Catering /Bob’s Chowder Bar), Pete Kovach (Chandler’s Square), Andie McMakin (Summit Park Covered Storage), and Matt McKay (HR Strategies). They will make a great addition to our board and I look forward to working with them. The new members joined the rest of the board at our annual retreat on October 28. We will provide detailed information on 2010 strategies and goals which emerged from this meeting in our next newsletter.

In this last Director’s Letter of the year, I wanted to thank all of our members for their continued involvement with the chamber. Over a difficult year we have managed to sustain our membership and actually expand our programming. This was only possible because of consistent membership support. I look forward to a dynamic 2010, during which we will continue to focus on our principal mission, advocating for our members and enhancing the benefits we provide.

As always, I welcome your suggestions. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or comments you may have.

—Mitch Everton

Legislative Update

State Representative Barbara Bailey attended the chamber’s governmental affairs division meeting on October 8. A wide range of issues were covered—detail appears below.

Rep. Bailey is very involved in aspects of state finance and budgeting. She indicated that current projections call for a shortfall of approximately $1.2 billion in state revenues that will need to be addressed in the next short session, which begins in January. When asked about progressive steps that could be taken at the state level to address this continuing problem, Ms. Bailey indicated that she would like to see allocated funding tied more closely to actual results, with an increase in accountability and a determination as to whether stated program goals were accomplished.

A key area of discussion centered around that state of the pension system, specifically PERS 1. Rep. Bailey estimated that PERS 1 is currently under-funded to the tune of approximately $8 billion. As the pension system is essentially underwritten by the State’s general fund, Washington taxpayers will shortly find themselves on the hook for this deficit. According to Rep. Bailey, this area of state finances has not gotten a lot of press (“a dirty little secret”) but that will change.

Under educational reform, this issue is not a lack of basic funding—41% of the State’s expenditures go to K-12. Rather the central issue is the level of bureaucracy that feeds at the same trough. Rep. Bailey is in favor of a comprehensive review of the educational system and ways to increase its efficiency.

In terms of tax reform, our current tax structure hurts the business community and makes our state less competitive. We need to review and reform this.

While generally in favor of smaller, more efficient government, Rep. Bailey was not in accord with Initiative 1033. In her view, we need to re-look at this in better times. The toll the initiative would take is draconian and could end up doing more harm than good.

Finally in the area of health reform, Rep. Bailey stressed cost-containment and the need for people to take personal responsibility for their health. The answer in her view is not to increase the government’s role in providing insurance but rather to make that industry more competitive and to address the high cost of doing business.
ISLAND RENTALS, purchased in 2007 by Scott and Marie Webster, has been serving Anacortes and the surrounding areas since 1975. Long-time Northwest residents, Scott and Marie continually strive to grow their business by focusing on the ever changing needs of our community.

ISLAND RENTALS provides a wide selection of equipment and supplies for contractors, homeowners, and event planners. From hand and power tools to excavators, trailers, compressors, chaffing dishes, linens, tables and chairs, matching customers with the correct equipment is key.

ISLAND RENTALS can arrange long- or short-term rental programs, tailored to your project and budget. Factory trained mechanics ensure equipment is in top condition and are available to service and repair your gas and diesel engines, generators, mowers, tractors, saw, trimmers, and equipment of all kinds. Prompt delivery and pick-up service with easy RV access is available for safe and efficient propane fills.

Contact Island Rentals today to learn how they can provide the equipment and service you need to finish your next job or plan a spectacular event.

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Forbes: Washington second-best state to do business

Washington State is the second-best state to do business, according to Forbes magazine’s “Best States” ranking on competitiveness. Last year, the state ranked third.

Forbes' Best States ranking measures six categories considered essential to businesses: costs, labor supply, regulatory environment, current economic climate, growth prospects, and quality of life. The magazine considers 33 different data points to determine the rankings in the six areas. Business costs—including labor, energy, and taxes—are weighted most heavily. While Washington does have a tax on businesses’ gross receipts—the B&O tax—the lack of a personal or corporate income tax contributed to the state’s high ranking, something the magazine generally considers an advantage.

Don Brunell, president of the Association of Washington Business, said the ranking is welcome news for employers in the state. “During these tough economic times, a second-place Forbes ranking is encouraging news and hopefully will cause employers looking to invest in modernizing or building new facilities to look at Washington as a place to create new jobs and opportunities,” Brunell said. “It is key to Washington’s economic recovery to have our state’s business advantages nationally recognized. When you step back and look at Washington in relation to the rest of the country, we are doing well. We do still have work to do, however—our unemployment insurance, regulatory and workers’ comp costs are still too high. Those are big factors employers consider when looking to grow or locate a business in our state.”
A 2009 winds down and you start thinking about ways to grow your business in 2010, keep in mind the promotional opportunities offered by the Anacortes Chamber of Commerce.

Your membership with the chamber already offers important promotional benefits, including:

- Members are listed and linked on our Web site, which receives 30,000 plus page views per month. Members also have the opportunity to purchase banner ads in key locations on our site;
- Only chamber members are referred in response to the multitude of phone calls and visitors through the Visitor Information Center (over 2,000 touches per month);
- Members are listed and are able to purchase advertising in the annual membership directory, which is published and distributed in March;
- Members are invited to monthly networking and/or training meetings;
- New and renewing members are highlighted in the monthly newsletter.

The events put on by the chamber focus on improving the business and community life in Anacortes: through direct networking opportunities, by promoting visitors to the area, and by organizing quality community gatherings. There are sponsorships available for the Spring Wine Festival, Waterfront Festival and the Anacortes Jazz & Blues Festival as well as a variety of chamber member events.

You can also connect your business to chamber publications, the Web site, and other media opportunities.

Contact Stephanie Hamilton to set your goals for 2010.

Participating Restaurants:
- Adrift
- Bellissima Ristorante
- Cameron’s Living Room Dining
- Flounder Bay Café
- Majestic Inn & Spa
- Randy’s Pier 61
- Rockfish Grill
- Village Pizza/The Wheelhouse

This month restaurants throughout Anacortes are offering three course dinners for $30. At the end of the month, they will collectively donate 10% of their 3 for $30 proceeds to the Anacortes Food Bank.

Go try something new tonight! 

Latitudes & Attitudes

(Continued from page 1)

the same name. Per organizer estimates, L&A will bring approximately 200 boats and 1,000 participants to Anacortes the weekend of August 14–15 and will feature a Jimmy Buffett-style concert at Cap Sante Boat Haven. The atmosphere is fun and party-filled—participants simply show up and take part in the festivities.

This is an excellent opportunity for our members to engage an affluent group of boaters. L&A organizers want to ensure that there is a welcoming business community and that money gets spent in town. Many of the participants will be driving up and renting rooms. As with Trawler Fest, this will be the initial look many of these folks will have of Anacortes and its waterfront—obviously a key consideration is that they will like what they see and come back on their own for return visits.

We will provide additional information as the date nears. In the meantime, if you have any questions or comments, please let us know.

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- Rockfish Grill
- Village Pizza/The Wheelhouse

3 for $30 

Go try something new tonight!
2009 Anacortes Jazz & Blues Festival

Seattle Repertory Jazz Orchestra performed a tribute to Ray Charles and Quincy Jones on Sunday afternoon.

We can’t pull an event of this magnitude off without dedicated volunteers. Here are Nicole Johnston (City of Anacortes), Danielle Cordara (Chamber staff) and Mary E. Staley (Chandler’s Square – a Retirement Community).

Visitors came from all over the region to enjoy the great line-up at the Port Warehouse during the Jazz Festival. This couple from Seattle wanted their picture taken with “Fidalgo” our canine.

The Jazz Festival Committee would like to thank the following volunteers for their assistance:

- Barbara Atterberry – Avenue Catering/ Bob’s Chowder
- Carol and Donald Bergner – Fidalgo DanceWorks
- Carole Dolgoff – poster artist
- Wayne Flaaten – jazz volunteer
- Peggy Flynn – chamber member
- Barry Harter – Central Payment Corp
- Brenda Harter - SICBA
- Cordelia Hightower – Aurinco, Marine Solar Panels
- Carole Jackson – jazz volunteer
- Nicole Johnston – City of Anacortes
- Mark Lione – Cap Sante Inn
- Tammy Masalonis – McGregor Benefits
- Linda McGuire – Bayshore Graphics Department
- Matt McKay – HR Strategies
- Kent & Lisa Morrow – Northwest Rigging
- Robin Pestarino – Ponte Vecchio Corporation
- Vicky Ratcliffe – chamber volunteer
- Therese Rudzis – chamber member
- Mary E. Staley – Chandler’s Square – A Retirement Community
- Sandy Swartos – Steam Interactive
- Amy Terhune – Chandler’s Square/ Cap Sante Inn

Johanna Anderson wins Ana-Courtesy award

Last month’s winner of the AnaCourtesy award was Johanna Anderson from Gere-a-Deli. She was nominated by Matt McKay of HR Strategies. Matt commented: “no matter the situation, Johanna is ‘grace under fire.’ She makes the difficult look easy and is the picture of professionalism, with her pleasant demeanor and extraordinary catering skills. No matter how pressing the event, she always has time for a kind word and a smile.”

Left to right: Phil Gere, Johanna Anderson, Matt McKay
We thank the following members for donating door prizes at the September business connections lunch:
• Aurinco – Marine Solar Panels
• Bayside Specialties
• Bob’s Chowder & Barbeque Salmon
• Comcast
• Express Personnel Services
• KWLE 1340 the Whale
• Native Springs
• Scott Richards Insurance
• SICBA
• Skagit Publishing
• Star Bar

Thanks for donating to the September business after hours:
• Alice Bohnker Insurance Services, Inc.
• Anacortes Clean!
• Biz Point Communications
• Fidalgo Pool & Fitness Center
• MLS Bi-Coastal Construction
• Olympic Communications
• RIS Insurance
• Star Bar

Imagine this—Barry Harter of Central Payment Corporation as an elementary school teacher. We can see it! Barry is one of our Ambassadors and he lives by the golden rule. While attending Ball State University, Barry, like most of us, worked in various restaurants and hotels, which started his passion for the hospitality industry.

In 1982 he came to Anacortes and was employed at Boomers Landing Waterfront Restaurant for 11 years, which gave him the opportunity to buy Axelsons Café in Burlington in 1993.

Ownership was a huge change and a dream come true. The next 11 years went fast providing a successful food and beverage concept to the Northwest. In 2004 he sold the café.

Barry has taken his hospitality passion into his new career as a consultant with Central Payment Corporation, by helping business owners with all their non-cash payments.

Central Payment is a leader in the merchant bankcard industry using the latest electronic financial transactions for retail, mail-order, and e-commerce businesses.

Barry feels that being a consultant allows him the opportunity to make a financial difference to every business in our area. He believes that face-to-face service, time and cost saving measures, and the appropriate equipment that improves a business’ bottom line is very rewarding. His goal is to help one business at a time, anytime, and all the time.

Being involved in the Fidalgo Island Rotary, Burlington Lutheran Church, BNI, and local chambers of commerce is a way to give back to the community.

“Love to live and love to volunteer!” says Barry.

Maybe we can get Barry back on stage for Chamber Cheers again this year.

You can call him at 360-333-0636 or email him at barryharter@comcast.net.
Membership Division Update

The Chamber’s Membership division has a number of important goals, which primarily focus on member retention, recruitment, and our value proposition. A key element in all three areas is member engagement—ensuring that member needs are recognized, accounted for, and ultimately met. The annual survey is an important conduit to this process, providing feedback on the programs and services we offer, scheduling, the newsletter, and most importantly, member priorities. This feedback has driven a number of initiatives over the last three years—as examples: breakfast meetings for members who can’t get away at any other time and “brown bag” lunches to further educational needs.

A central initiative currently underway in the division is the partnership with the school district’s Career Technical Education programming. The chamber has been active in identifying and developing internship, mentorship, and job shadowing opportunities, bringing together interested students and member businesses in an effective partnership. This is an ongoing effort—interested businesses can further explore the CTE program via the district Web site (www.asd103.org).

We are interested in scheduling the 2010 brown bag lunches. This is a great opportunity to highlight particular skills that you may have that would benefit other members, particularly in the networking and customer service arenas. In tandem with the presentation, members may also promote their businesses and make literature available. There is no cost to this program. Please contact the chamber office with any ideas that you might have.

Finally, we are always interested in expanding our Ambassador program. This important group, a committee of the Membership division, is responsible for representing the chamber in a variety of settings. It’s a fun experience and a great way to get to know your business community. If you are interested, please contact Matt McKay (HR Strategies) at 360.708.2034.

Washington State Travel Impacts

The state’s Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development just published its annual report to the Legislature detailing Washington State travel impacts for 2008. Key findings:

- Travel and tourism remain one of the most important “export-oriented” industries in Washington. Spending by visitors generates sales in lodging, food services, recreation, transportation, and retail businesses.
- While the majority of tourism is generated via in-state residents, approximately 63% of all visitor spending is associated with residents of other countries and states. This is primarily due to the importance of lodging revenue vs. day trippers.
- Travel spending accounted for over $1 billion in local and state tax revenue, representing roughly 5% of tax collections (excluding property tax).
- State tourism generated approximately $400 per household in revenue, 60% of which is attributable to out-of-state visits.
- Tourism generated 150,000 jobs and $4.3 billion in wages.
- Direct travel spending in 2008 was $15.7 billion—basically flat over 2007 when adjusted for inflation. Note: based on hotel/motel tax receipts, the Chambers Key Business Trends report calculates 2008 accommodations revenue for Anacortes at approximately $6.0 million vs $6.1 million in 2007, a decrease of 1.6%.

Contact Ann Marie Miles at 360-661-1334, or go to www.comcast.com/business
Thank you, volunteers!

Coast in and hang out at the chamber member dinner, dance and celebration on November 21 at 6:00 pm at the Port of Anacortes Warehouse.

We would like to thank Comcast Business Class (Ann Marie Miles 661-1334) for once again sponsoring this event.

SPONSORS:
(As of 10/26 — check your email blasts for additions)

Signature Sponsors
- Anacortes Community Theatre
- Anacortes/San Juan Island American Red Cross
- Bank of the Pacific
- Barrett Financial Services
- Bob’s Chowder Bar & BBQ Salmon
- Bunnies By the Bay
- Coast Aviation
- Gere-A-Deli
- Horizon Bank
- John Prosser Windermere
- McGregor Benefits

Wine Sponsors
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- Barrett Financial Services
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- Quantum Construction, Inc.

Martini Sponsors
- Bellissima Ristorante
- Brown Lantern
- el Jinete
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San Juan Lanes
Steam Interactive
Upstage Boutique & Men’s Store
William & Nulle, CPA, PPLC

Northern Trawlers