

# Monroe council to consider tactics to increase affordable housing

BY POLLY KEARY, EDITOR

In an ongoing effort to increase the amount of affordable housing in Monroe, the city council will this month hear suggestions on new zoning measures that could stimulate building of less expensive homes.

"The city proposes to create incentives to increase affordable housing," explained Monroe Associate Planner Russ Wright. "There is a lack of affordable housing for not just low income homes but for middle income homes."

In fact, in spite of recent dips on home prices in the area, much of the available housing stock is out of the reach of even middle income families.

The county, in response to a regional lack of houses that the average family could afford, established a target for new affordable home creation in the valley.

Snohomish County has established targets for the number of affordable housing units the county needs by 2025, and has determined how many houses or homes each town will have to create to help hit those targets.

Monroe would need 2,300 affordable homes in all, about 100 more affordable homes per year.

That's a tall order. But the planning commission has been trying to figure out ways the city might at least gain a few more affordable homes.

One possibility is to allow for decreased lot sizes for homes that would be priced below a certain threshold.

Another would allow for increased lot coverage.

"Typically on a building lot, only 50 percent of the lot can be covered by hard surfaces," said Wright. "That could go up to 60 percent." That could, among other things, help lot owners add second mother-in-law cottage style homes to their properties to use as rentals.

Monroe City Council Member John Stima said he will consider any possible solution, but that he is wary of some.

"There's four little houses on Main Street that have no back yard at all," he said. "I'd have to

look at that to see how it looks."

He would prefer to avoid ugly, cramped dwelling places in town, he said.

"Just to stack houses, I don't know," he said. "As long as they weren't crammed in together, I'd look at it."

He did say that dropping the minimum lot size to as low as 4,000 square feet in exchange for low priced homes might work out, as long as the 50 percent lot coverage requirement was held in place.

Currently lot sizes range from 9,600 square feet in the Fryelands, to 7,500 square feet in the Chain Lake Road area and as low as 6,000 square feet in the oldest part of Monroe, said Wright.

Not all of the solution will mean additional houses, Wright noted.

"There is a rental component to this too," he said. "There is also a piece for multi-family housing."

That is something Stima is a little more reluctant to consider, he said. "Sometimes you have to go up, but then you have to have parking lots, and I don't know if apartments are what Monroe is looking for," he said. "We have our share of apartments."

One thing he would like to see, he said, was more housing developed on the second floor above Main Street businesses.

"That could be a good use of space," he said.

And the city could look at annexing land with the intention of creating zones for low cost homes, he said.

Monroe mayor Donnetta Walser said that she holds out some hope that developer Steve Harris will realize his dream of creating a housing complex for senior citizens, complete with more than 100 homes, along Chain Lake Road.

Not all of them would be low income, she noted, but it would go a long way toward helping Monroe increase its stock of affordable housing.

The council could take action on land use laws as early as November, Wright said.

## All about alpacas

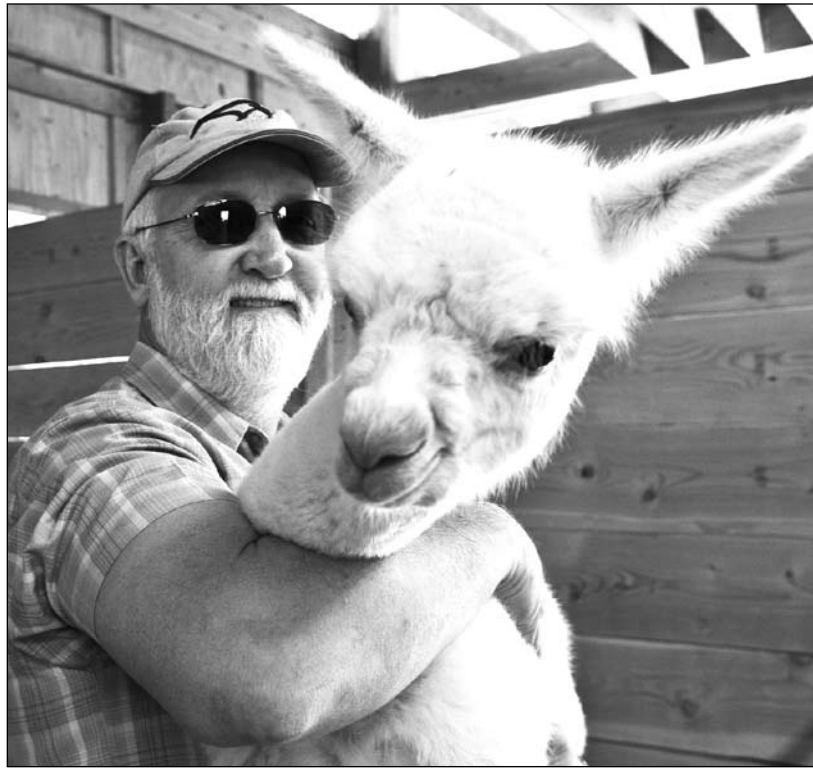


PHOTO BY JIM SCOLMAN

Jim Klaassen, co-owner of Monroe alpaca ranch Casa De Arboles, holds a new-born baby alpaca at an open house held at the ranch last week Sunday.

The baby's father, an alpaca aptly named Peruvian Don Juan, has about 150 progeny.

"Alpacas were only introduced into the United States in the '80's and the importation was stopped in 2001 when the registry was closed," said Maggie DiIullo, ranch co-owner. "There is not a lot known about alpacas."

## Letters

### Food Bank thanks volunteers

To the editor:

The Sky Valley (Monroe) Food Bank has a program called "School Days Rule Days." Our aim is to ensure that every underprivileged Monroe student has the opportunity to start school with supplies recommended by the Monroe School District.

How a child feels that first day of going back to school can set the tone for self esteem for the whole school year. Although providing food is our main mission, we know the families we see are struggling severely. If they cannot afford enough food for their families, how difficult it must be to also meet this need for their children.

Since we do not use contributions meant for food for special programs, we let the community know it is a special project and any funds meant for school supplies must be clearly marked (written on the check or told in person).

This year we provided backpacks and supplies for each grade from preschool through twelfth grade to 627 students, over 28% more than last year. We thank those of you who had the heart

and the wherewithal to help these wonderful children begin their school year feeling proud and ready! We wish you could see their gleaming faces as we hand them their backpack and/or bag of supplies.

To those of you who helped us, please feel the deep reward of making a difference in the hearts and lives of children who deserve the same preparedness as anyone else.

We thank the Teresa Martin and Sonia Ohlde families for volunteering their time planning, organizing, and managing the program extraordinarily well. We thank the donors profoundly for changing the lives of those who needed a helping hand. We ask that you please remember us for your holiday giving as we try to provide food over 5,500 times per month at ten meals each time. Please call for info on how to help at 360-794-7959 or visit www.sv-foodbank.org

Again, THANK YOU so very much!

Julie Morris  
Executive Director  
Sky Valley Food Bank

## You are invited to Fire Station Open House Saturday

It's Fire Prevention Week this week, and the Monroe Fire District has lots of events planned to help area residents learn good fire safety habits.

The public is invited to attend an open house at the Fire Station at 163 Village Court in Monroe Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. to learn more about fire safety.

There will be station tours, demonstrations, hands-on activities and a fire safety trailer, as well as opportunities to win prizes. Sparky the Fire Dog and Topper the Arson Dog will be on hand, and so will the Airlift NW helicopter.

Household burns are a leading cause of injury and death in the United States.

Each year, 3,000 people die in the United States as a result of home fires and burns, and another 200,000 people wind up in the emergency room as a result of burns.

The Monroe Fire Department is teaming up with the National Fire Prevention Association to help educate people on ways to avoid burn injury.

Here are nine things to remember:

- 1. Keep hot foods and liquids

away from the edges of counters and stoves. Accidental food and hot water spills account for a lot of burns each year.

2. Have a three-foot "kid free zone" around the stove.

3. Never hold a child while carrying or handling hot foods or drinks.

4. Be aware of hot things, like irons, curling irons, stove tops, ovens, fireplaces, lamps, heaters and candles. Make sure kids are not at risk.

5. Put tamper-resistant objects in electrical outlets to keep kids from sticking things in them.

6. Never leave a kid alone in a room with a hot object such as a candle, a stove, a heater, a curling iron or a fireplace.

7. Avoid long sleeves while cooking.

8. Set your hot water heater no hotter than 120 degrees.

9. You can buy anti-scald shower heads and faucets. They can help avoid scald burns, which are another common cause of household burn injury. Remember that children's skin is more sensitive than adult skin and burns more easily.

## Good Deeds

### Cascade Eagles give bingo bonus to food bank

On September 23, Ron Eader (left) and Cal Hanson from the Cascade Eagles Aerie #2327 handed \$979.86 to Julie Morris, Executive Director of the Sky Valley Food Bank, from barstool bingo games. A bit of money was taken from each bingo card purchased to go toward the food bank. For more information on the Cascade Aerie bingo games, please call (360) 794-8155.



### Monroe Scouting for Food Drive a success

Monroe Cub Scout Packs 48, 51 and 138, and Monroe Boy Scout Pack 148, collected food and monetary donations at Monroe grocery stores on September 11th through 13th as part of the 2009 Scouting for Food Drive. The packs' combined efforts yielded 1008 pounds of food and \$1376.72 for the Sky Valley Food Bank.

Thank you to Monroe Fred Meyer, Safeway and Albertson's, who enthusiastically supported the scouts' efforts. A special

thank you goes to Carla Stewart, Administrative Director of the Sky Valley Food Bank, for her kind words and for helping with paperwork and food collecting supplies.

Monroe Cub Scout Packs 48, 51 and 138 and Monroe Boy Scout Pack 148 are part of the Mount Baker Council of the Boy Scouts of America. For more information, please visit the Mount Baker Council website at www.mountbakerbsa.org.

# THE MONROE MONITOR & Valley News

# Classified Ads

Deadline for Classified Ads is 4 p.m. every Friday for the next Tuesday's publication.

3 line minimum: \$12.50. Call Kathie, (360) 794-7116 for other prices.

Check your ad the first time it runs. The Monroe Monitor/Valley News is responsible for only one incorrect insertion.

Table of classified ad categories and listings including Real Estate, Help Wanted, Rentals/Lease, Miscellaneous, Service Guide, and Legal Notices.

Table of classified ad categories and listings including Apartments for Rent, Houses for Rent, Help Wanted A-Z, Houses for Rent, and Houses for Rent.

Table of classified ad categories and listings including Help Wanted A-Z, Notice of Position Vacancy, and Miscellaneous for Sale.

Advertisement for 'America NOTICED!' featuring a woman reading a newspaper and a list of services like school district budgets, property questions, and public hearings.

Advertisement for 'Statewide Classified Ads' with a 'get history buff. loc.gov' logo and a 'Room for one more?' ad for foster care.