

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, November 12, 2020.

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The election is over, with Jefferson County reporting a 90.3 percent return from all the ballots mailed. This was the second highest in the state, following San Juan County's 90.9 percent return rate.

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The pandemic is not over. Jefferson County reports 102 cases of COVID-19 since testing began in the spring. Five new cases were added on Tuesday, three males and two females across the age range. The new cases push up our positive rate to .9 percent, which is below the Washington State rate of 6.7 percent. South Dakota has the highest ratio of positive tests, with 54.6 percent.

Our low rate can be attributed to our low population density, but also because most people are following masking and social distancing rules. This does not exempt us from something now known as "pandemic fatigue," where people are not taking precautions that are known to blunt the virus. along with a desire to hold Thanksgiving celebrations.

Washington State Health officials have warned that any in-person gathering is risky, and emphasized that gathering for Thanksgiving is not a good idea. People who want to visit family for Thanksgiving should limit themselves to only the most essential activities, and quarantine for two weeks before even a small outdoor gathering.

And to belabor the obvious: Wear a mask around people you don't live with (even close friends and family). Stay home as much as possible. Limit the number, size and frequency of gatherings, and only attend gatherings that are essential. Wash your hands frequently, get your flu shot, and stay home if you're sick. Otherwise, we could end up like South Dakota.

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Jefferson County is considering the implementation of a sales tax increase dedicated to the creation of affordable housing, according to the unofficial Jefferson County Washington news Facebook page.

A new special purpose sales tax of 1/10th of one percent, or a dollar for every \$1,000 purchase could generate \$600,000 a year dedicated for affordable housing in Port Townsend and Jefferson County, which could be leveraged into 6 to 10 new units per year. If implemented soon, sales tax collection would begin by April 2021.

Instead of sprinkling the money on assorted projects, housing providers propose it be focused on creating entry-level housing. The goal is to break the logjam that prevents people from rising up the ladder from transitional and supportive housing into permanent housing, of which there is almost none available here for rent or purchase.

The next step toward approving the tax will occur at a special Meeting of the Jefferson County – City of Port Townsend Joint Oversight Board (JOB) on Affordable Housing and Homeless Housing, taking place at 11am tomorrow, Friday the 13th, broadcast on the county website. Those wishing to comment before the meeting should do so at [jointoversightboardhousing@co.jefferson.wa.us](mailto:jointoversightboardhousing@co.jefferson.wa.us). There will be other public comment opportunities available throughout the process.

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Port Townsend's Salish Coast Elementary School was recognized with an award of Merit from American Institute of Architects' Committee on Architecture for Education, one of five awarded nationwide.

Now in its third year of operation, the school is on the site previously occupied by the Grant Street Elementary School, which was built in the 1950s and demolished in order to make way for the new structure.

The building was designed by Integrus Architecture in Seattle after input from community members, students, and Pre-K through Grade 5 teachers and staff. The design sought to reflect and reinforce its community's close ties to the land and the surrounding Salish Sea, leveraging indoor/outdoor learning environments as a safe home base for students to use as a launching pad for exploring their world while inviting the broader community into the daily lives of their children, according to the Integrus web site.

The indoor/outdoor learning aspect, at least, provides a benefit during pandemic times.

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This is Charlie Bermant. Thank you for listening.