

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for January 27, 2021.

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At their final meeting Monday night, the city council's ad hoc committee on law enforcement and public safety finalized their recommendations for the future of our local police department. The committee, which is composed of all seven of the city council members, then voted to forward these recommendations to themselves, to be approved in the form of a resolution at a future city council meeting. This ended the work of the ad hoc committee, which was formed last June in response to national protests against police brutality and racial injustice in America. The goal of the committee was to look at the way the Port Townsend Police Department currently operates and determine if any changes need to be made.

After more than six months of meetings, in which the committee discussed the police department's budget, union contract, policy manual, and alternate policing methods, the committee created a set of recommendations that included creating a police advisory board, which will work with the new chief of police to help keep officers accountable and improve the relationship between the police and the community. The city also plans to form a separate new committee on racial equity and justice.

On a local level, the city plans to expand the services of the Navigator program and the Community Safety Officer program in the 2022 budget and beyond. The city also plans to engage county officials, such as the prosecutor, county commissioners and Sheriff on law enforcement policies to ensure that the other jurisdictions have policies that align with the city's. This could include requiring that Sheriff's deputies wear body cameras while working cases within city limits.

Councilmember David Faber expressed his desire to limit the school resource officer's ability to charge students with crimes, but the council decided to leave that decision up to the Port Townsend School District.

And on a statewide and national level, the committee's recommendations also gave instructions to the advisory board, city staff, and the council in the future to engage with Port Townsend's US congressional and state legislative delegation on state and national law enforcement policy, including the topics of qualified immunity, the decriminalization of illegal substances, and ending debt-based driver's license suspensions.

Mayor Michelle Sandoval expressed concern about the recent insurrection at the nation's capitol. Given the findings that show a very large percentage of rioters were ex-military, current military, or current law enforcement officers, Sandoval said she hoped there could be a way to assure community members that the officers sworn to protect them were not part of white supremacist and white nationalist groups, like the Oath Keepers, who led the insurrection earlier this month.

While there was no easy solution to Sandoval's concern – which involves not only the police department, but every law enforcement office that operates in the city including the Sheriff's Department, State Patrol, and Border Patrol – the council plans to continue the conversations locally with other elected officials and law enforcement departments.

The final draft of the committee's recommendations will be available for members of the public to view and comment on when it goes before the city council in the coming weeks.

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Jefferson County now has had 286 cases of COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic last year. The county public health department reported three new cases yesterday, and a total of seven new cases so far this week. 64

people await test results. Two of the most recent cases occurred in the mid-county area, while one is from south county.

For updates on our local case numbers, go to the Jefferson County Public Health website (<https://jeffersoncountypublichealth.org/1466/Case-Information>), or the Jefferson County Facebook page.

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Vaccination appointments are mostly on hold as Jefferson County awaits new shipments of vaccines. Those who are 65 and older can go to Jefferson Healthcare's website (<https://jeffersonhealthcare.org/covid-19-vaccine/>) to sign up to receive an email notification for when they are eligible to make an appointment to be vaccinated.

For those who are not yet 65 years or older, you can find out whether you are eligible for vaccination by going to FindYourPhaseWa.org. After filling out a brief questionnaire about your health, employment, and living situation, this website will estimate whether or not you qualify for vaccination in our current phase.

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And that's it for today's local news. KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon Monday through Saturday and at 5pm Monday through Thursday. You can contact us through [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org). I'm Lily Haight. Thanks for listening.