

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for February 10, 2021.

The COVID-19 case count in Jefferson County increased to 323 yesterday, with eight new cases so far this week. For the most up-to-date numbers, visit the public health website (<https://jeffersoncountypublichealth.org/1466/Case-Information>), or the Jefferson County Facebook page.

The Port Townsend Creative District Subcommittee announced this week that artist Jonah Trole was chosen for the role of designing and creating five sculptures as markers to help visitors navigate the new Creative District. The Washington State Arts Commission named the downtown and uptown districts, as well as the historic campus of Fort Worden, as Washington State's newest creative district last May.

In December, the Creative District Subcommittee put out a call for artists to create wayfinding sculptures throughout the Creative District. After receiving eight proposals for the project, the committee decided on Trole, who is an artist and graphic designer located here in Port Townsend. Trole is the founder of the Clementine Art Department, a multi-disciplinary design studio. He will design and create five cedar sculptures nearly seven feet tall, which the subcommittee said will be both contemporary and primitive at the same time, with a "monolithic" feel. The cedar will be sourced and milled locally, sealed, then white-washed and made to withstand coastal weather conditions for more than 20 years. To learn more about the creative district, go to the PT Main Street website (<http://ptmainstreet.org/>).

Washington State Ferries will be hosting a public meeting online tonight, at 6pm, to discuss changes to the ferry service across the state as a result of the financial impacts of COVID-19. Throughout the pandemic, the Port Townsend/Coupeville ferry has been limited to one boat service, and WSF has discussed making cuts to this route because ridership is down.

Seasonal two-boat service will be returning this spring to the Port Townsend route, but WSF plans to cancel late-night sailings on the route during the summer. Commissioner Kate Dean expressed hope that members of the community will attend the meeting to advocate for the importance of the PT-Coupeville route.

This fall, after the state announced potential cuts to the Port Townsend ferry service, the Port of Port Townsend worked with a group of local leaders to hire a consultant to complete an economic impact study. The study showed that in 2019, the ferry accounted for a total impact of around \$57 million per year in local spending, as well as 695 jobs and \$30 million in annual labor income to the Port Townsend/Jefferson County economy. Dean said it might make sense to cancel late-night weekend sailings for commuter communities, but for a community that relies on festivals and events every weekend of the summer, it feels a little misguided.

To attend the meeting, head over to the WSF website (<https://wsdot.wa.gov/ferries>) and scroll down to the "Spotlight" section of the homepage, which has a link to register for February community meetings.

City staff members began discussing Port Townsend's desperate need for street repair with the city council at Monday's meeting – highlighting the implementation of a new Comprehensive Streets Program. A 2019 Pavement Condition Index Survey showed that our city streets need an estimated investment of \$17.7 million.

That's about \$1.5 million annually – just to maintain what we already have. Making major improvements, such as adding sidewalks or bike lanes, would need additional investment.

In 2020, the city budgeted \$912,000 for city streets. The funds for streets come from a percentage of the city's utility tax, and from the motor vehicle excise tax, or fuel tax. By comparison, the Jefferson County roads department had a budget of about \$9.4 million last year, and has about \$9.6 million this year.

With the city's low housing density and relatively high number of street miles – 88 miles to be exact – the current streets program is fiscally unsustainable. Public works director Steve King said the purpose of having a Comprehensive Streets Program is to assess the city's current investments and resources; identify street funding needs and options; prioritize investments; and develop a funding program. The Streets Program has 8 chapters to it, and the city's transportation committee will be diving into each chapter this year, taking a hard look at current street operations, street improvements, and preservation, as well as possible funding options. In June, the committee will present recommendations to the city council for the 2022 budget and for the future of the streets program.

According to King, funding for the major street improvements needed could come from a variety of places, such as a transportation benefit district, which allows funding to be sourced from car tab fees or sales tax. The city could also develop a local improvement district, or use the fire district annexation to levy additional taxes. He encouraged members of the public to engage in the issue of street improvements, by going to the Engage PT website (<https://cityofpt.us/engagept>) and learning more.

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. I'm Lily Haight. Thanks for listening.