

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, February 16, 2021.

On its website Jefferson County now reports 326 cases of COVID 19. This number does not include cases reported over the holiday weekend. For the latest data go to the Jefferson County Public Health website (<https://jeffersoncountypublichealth.org/1466/Case-Information>) or the Jefferson County Washington Government Facebook page. There are 18 active cases now in isolation and 15 people are awaiting test results.

Jefferson Healthcare is scheduled to reopen its COVID-19 vaccination clinic tomorrow, February 17, after its vaccine order was approved by the state. The hospital has changed the process for vaccine notification. Instead of posting available appointment times for which people compete it requests that people register, to be notified when its their turn.

Hospital spokesperson Amy Yaley told KPTZ that the previous system caused problems for both patients and staff. It was stressful to send out 15,000 emails for 975 appointments, causing the appointment scheduler to crash and increased patient frustration. This process is emotionally driven, worsened by the need to sit in front of a screen and hit refresh, according to Yaley.

Once people register and qualify, they will receive an email that includes a scheduling link to the registration system, with the recipient given 48 hours to accept the invitation and schedule directly. This approach maintains the commitment to vaccinating the oldest, frailest, and most vulnerable residents first; removes the anxiety and stampede-like urgency triggered when we announce vaccine is available, and institutes a fair-minded and methodical system in place. Once you are registered, there is one primary line, it is moving, and you're in it, according to the hospital's web site.

Couples who share an email address need to register separately, using their own birthdates to differentiate the requests.

This week's order includes 975 Pfizer first-dose vaccines and 200 Moderna second-dose vaccines. Deliveries usually arrive on Mondays but were delayed by the weather. The hospital reported that it will operate the vaccination clinic, located near Manresa Castle, every weekday until the supply is gone.

The hospital places a new vaccine order every Monday, so more could arrive next week. Those needing vaccines can register with the hospital for notification of their eligibility. For more information go to <https://jeffersonhealthcare.org/covid-19-vaccine/>.

We are now in Phase 2. This allows eating and drinking establishments to operate at 25 percent capacity, ending alcohol service at 11 pm. Diners are limited to six people per table, from no more than two households. Retail can operate at 25 percent capacity, with curbside pickup encouraged. For more details log on to the Washington State website. Local restaurants were eagerly awaiting the phase change, anticipating Valentine's Day crowds, but that was thwarted by the snow.

In the meantime, restaurants are reemerging. After a lengthy closure the Highway 20 Roadhouse is now open from 8am to 2pm Sunday through Thursday and until 7pm on weekends.

The Pourhouse, which has remained open for outdoor drinking, is not going to accommodate the change. In a Facebook post, the owners said they understood how having no indoor seating this winter has been extremely difficult, but will continue to only offer outdoor seating for the time being. Neither the staff nor the customers are comfortable being in a closed space with unmasked people, so the indoor space will be restricted to those ordering or picking up to go. With masks required. The requirements are to wear masks when inside, other than when actually eating and drinking.

Each restaurant has its own response to the reopening, so you'll need to contact each one for their rules and restrictions.

The weather has eased up a bit, little consolation to those left outside. Shelter options include the American Legion Shelter at 209 Monroe Street, open during daytime hours, and the Warming Shelter in the Cotton Building downtown that is open daily from 8:30am to 12:30pm. No food will be available at this location. If the weather turns cold the hours may be extended. There are no plans to open any additional buildings at the Fairgrounds.

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.

This is Charlie Bermant. Thank you for listening.