

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for March 17, 2021.

Jefferson County's COVID-19 numbers continue to slow down. Since March 2, only one new case has been reported, and only one case is in active isolation. Thirty people await test results. For more numbers, go to the Jefferson County Public Health website (<https://jeffersoncountypublichealth.org/1466/Case-Information>) or the Jefferson County Facebook page.

Last week the State Senate Law and Justice Committee heard public testimony about HB 1054, a bill that would ban a range of police tactics, from chokeholds, neck restraints and tear gas, to use of military gear and no-knock warrants. HB 1054 would also create a statewide policy prohibiting police from initiating car chases unless in pursuit of probable violent or sexual offenders.

If this bill passes, it will require our local Sheriff's Department to change the way they operate. In the past four months, Jefferson County Sheriff deputies have engaged in at least three high-speed chases. Two of them ended with a PIT maneuver, a tactic in which deputies use their vehicles to force a fleeing car to turn sideways abruptly, causing the driver to lose control and stop.

On December 14, deputies reached speeds of about 100 miles per hour on Highway 20 around 11pm while chasing a man suspected of burglary. And just last month, deputies used PIT maneuvers in two separate car chases, both of which were initiated due to the individual allegedly speeding and not stopping when officers activated their emergency lights.

In 2015, an investigative report published by USA Today showed that between 1979 and 2013, more than 5,000 bystanders and passengers had been killed in the U.S. due to police car chases. Tens of thousands more were injured as a result of high speed chases, often for minor infractions such as driving with a suspended license or failing to stop at a stop sign.

The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office policy manual states that deputies are authorized to initiate a pursuit when it is reasonable to believe that a suspect has been given an appropriate signal to stop by a law enforcement officer and is attempting to avoid arrest or detention by fleeing in a vehicle. The policy allows deputies to make the decision of whether to engage in a pursuit in the moment by considering a variety of factors, including the seriousness of the suspected crime and its relation to community safety. Deputies must decide whether the suspected offense and the apparent need for immediate capture is worth the risk to their own lives, as well as innocent motorists and others, such as passengers and bystanders.

In addition to creating a more defined policy on when officers can initiate car pursuits, HB 1054 would ban officers from using chokeholds and neck restraints, and from releasing dogs to apprehend suspects. The bill is currently scheduled for an executive session in the Senate Committee on Law and Justice at 10:30am tomorrow, March 18.

The city pool at Mountain View Commons will reopen for limited use next Monday, March 22. The pool will be switching to an online reservation system that will allow for 45-minute lap swim sessions limited to four people at a time. There will also be 45-minute time slots available for deep water aerobics and other

independent water exercise activities, limited to four people at a time. Fitness classes and swim lessons will not be available at this time, and social distancing guidelines must be followed in the pool and in the building.

You can make a reservation by going to the Mountain View Pool website (<https://cityofpt.us/pool>) and selecting the “Make Reservation” button at the bottom of the front page. You will then be taken to the ActiveNet website, where you can reserve a spot by adding the lap swim or deep-water session you would like to attend to your cart. There will be no fee for making a reservation; you will be charged when you arrive for your session.

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.