

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for April 21, 2021.

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Jefferson County Public Health reported four new COVID-19 cases yesterday. So far this week Public Health has reported a total of 15 cases, bringing up our numbers to 378. There are 67 tests pending, and 14 active cases in isolation.

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Tyler Vega, a 43-year-old computer consultant, has indicated that he plans to run for one of the three open city council seats, although he has not decided which one. As KPTZ reported last week, city council members Ariel Speser, Pam Adams, and Michelle Sandoval have all announced they will not be running for re-election this year. Vega told KPTZ that he is loosely aligned with two other candidates, the already-declared Aislinn Diamanti and another person he would not identify. Once filing week begins, the three of them will choose different seats, so as to not run against one another.

Vega said that many national issues such as climate change and Medicare for All can be addressed on a local level. He also said he favored carving up the golf course to accommodate housing alternatives. He suggested that the golf course build a "pitch and putt" facility, a game he enjoyed as a kid. Vega has run for office before. He challenged US Rep Derek Kilmer in 2016 and David Faber, now Port Townsend's deputy mayor, in 2019. He dropped out of both races. He can offer us no guarantee that he would complete the campaign this year, saying that if he is running against someone he feels is better qualified for the office he will back off – which is what happened two years ago with Faber.

Informed by his recent research, Vega said that he did not realize how much work is required by a Port Townsend City Council member, and people need to care a lot about the issues to make such a sacrifice. He says he cares about the issues, and for now is willing to commit to a campaign. Candidate filing week begins May 17. You can file online, by mail, or in person through the Jefferson County Auditor's Office (<https://co.jefferson.wa.us/1268/For-Candidate-Filing>). If you are planning to run for a local office, contact us through [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org).

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The Port Townsend city council voted Monday night to approve changes to the city code that will add some oversight to the financial workings of the Fort Worden PDA. This comes as the Fort Worden PDA continues to restructure its board in the midst of financial insecurity and after news came out of former mismanagement of funds. The PDA expects the Washington State Auditors' Office to complete the PDA accountability and financial audits by the end of the month, which should clarify the status of the alleged malfeasance and mismanagement.

The city's ordinance, which passed unanimously, adds language to the city code that allows the city manager and city financial advisor to work with the Fort and Washington State Parks to create a financial oversight committee that will develop a monitoring program for the financial and operational performance of the Fort Worden PDA in carrying out its responsibilities. The monitoring program will provide for frequent periodic review of PDA revenues and expenditures and projections regarding cash flows and revenue receipts, and will identify potential financial risks. The financial oversight committee will also be tasked with creating a corrective action plan for financial difficulties if needed.

The ordinance is also accompanied by a Memorandum of Intent to create a letter of agreement between the city, the PDA and State Parks that clarifies the roles and responsibilities of all three organizations, and sets milestones for the future of the Fort, including setting goals to work to submit a \$20-30 million capital improvement plan for federal stimulus funding; a reorganization of the PDA board and business plan, and amendments to the State Parks master lease to fit with the reorganization. The memorandum is vital, said Mayor Michelle Sandoval, because it highlights the fact that Fort Worden is a partnership between the PDA board, the city and State Parks – and that all three organizations must take part in the future of the Fort.

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The city council also voted Monday to extend their shutoff, late fee, and penalty suspension for utility accounts through the end of August 2021. Back at the beginning of the pandemic, on March 23, 2020, the city manager and mayor signed a proclamation suspending shut-offs, late fees, and penalties for utility accounts through June 30, 2020. Since then there have been three extensions of this proclamation. According to city staff, there are currently 62 customers over 60 days past due for a total of \$64,683.

The city does have a donation program fund for individuals who cannot afford to pay their utility fees because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently there is about \$7,000 in that fund. To apply for funding, go to the city website and click “Pay My Utility Bill” which will lead you to a page with a link to the application (<https://cityofpt.us/finance/page/utility-information>). That will also lead to a link to donate to that fund.

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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.