

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

Jefferson County Public Health reported one new COVID-19 case yesterday, making a total of 8 new cases so far this week. There are currently 11 cases in active isolation 66 test results still pending. The total number of cases since the start of the pandemic is nearing 400. Right now it sits at 398.

The city council unanimously approved an ordinance at their meeting Monday night that will establish a commission of city residents to determine a new salary for city council members. The current compensation for council members is \$500 a month and \$750 a month for the mayor. The compensation amount has not been adjusted since 2007. At a council workshop meeting back in April, council members discussed the process of establishing a salary commission to review the current compensation and recommend an increase, decrease, or no change, to council compensation. Council members who work full time, such Amy Howard, who works two other jobs in addition to being a city council member, hope that a pay raise for council members will encourage a more diverse set of candidates to run for the three open seats on the council this year.

The commission will be made up of five city residents who cannot be city employees, or related to city employees. The commission will complete their work within 120 days, and then file a salary schedule with the city clerk. All of their meetings will be open to the public. If members of the public disagree with the commission's final decision, they will be able to file a referendum petition, which would then require the salary change to be approved by a vote of the public. The ordinance also states that a new salary commission will be appointed every seven years to review city council compensation.

To hear more about what it takes to be on the city council and also work a full time job, tune in to Compass on KPTZ this Saturday at noon, where I will be speaking with council members Amy Howard, David Faber, and Ariel Speser about how to make running for council more equitable for working class citizens.

Craig Durgan, the chair of the Jefferson County Republican Party, submitted a public comment at the city council meeting Monday night inviting members of the council to attend an event commemorating the fourth anniversary of the Cherry Street affordable housing project on May 8. In his letter to council members, he invited each of them to come to the event and speak about their contributions to the project and the timeline and budget for its completion and occupancy. Four years ago, the city took out a \$834,000 bond to fund engineering, design, permitting and pre-construction costs for an apartment building called the Carmel Building, that was barged over from Victoria and placed on a Cherry Street property. City council at that time authorized a loan to Homeward Bound Community Land Trust with anticipated repayment funded partly by the rent of those units. After a reorganization of the Homeward Bound's board, the building's foundation was finally laid two years after it arrived in Port Townsend. Then, last fall, the city council authorized the city manager to negotiate the transfer of ownership of the property from Homeward Bound to Bayside Housing.

Neither city council members nor city staff responded to Durgan's comment during the public meeting Monday night. Under the city's "Engage PT" site, the only update about the project is a one-paragraph explainer, explaining that the transfer of ownership work is "currently underway." While Durgan's comment may have been intended to drag what he called "the benefits of one-party rule by Democrats" through the mud, his invitation to city council members to speak on the state of the project seems like a legitimate, and helpful, request for the city to be more transparent, and more communicative, with members of the public.

KPTZ news reached out to city manager John Mauro for an update on the project, and he responded that there is not much to share at the moment. The city is still negotiating on how to take the project forward, he said, and he does not expect to bring anything before the council in the near future. Mauro did report during the city council meeting on Monday that the city of Port Townsend received 3.1 million dollars from the state budget to assist in city infrastructure for affordable housing. He said his team is still learning about what that means, as the state legislature just closed last week, but that he's excited about engaging in a conversation about how to best use those funds.

And in other city news, Mayor Michelle Sandoval announced that the city is planning a joint meeting with county commissioners, the Sheriff, and the prosecutor to discuss law enforcement and public safety on May 24. This will be a continuation of the work done by the city's ad hoc committee on law enforcement that was created in the wake of the murder of George Floyd by police officer Derek Chauvin. One of the ad hoc committee's goals was to align values with city and county law enforcement, since county sheriff's deputies often cover shifts within city limits, or respond as backup to city officers.

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.