

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with with local news and commentary for Thursday, May 20, 2021.

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Jefferson County hasn't reported a positive case of COVID-19 since last Friday, May 14. The count stands at 412, with four active cases in isolation and 28 people awaiting test results.

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH), in conjunction with Health Commons Project, is making it easier for schools across the state to implement both diagnostic testing and screening testing for COVID-19. According to a press release, the new funding will allow districts and schools the option to add screening tests to their COVID-19 testing strategy if they choose. Until now, most districts and schools opted to focus on just diagnostic testing for students and staff with symptoms or exposures to people suspected of having COVID-19. Adding an option for screening tests can improve a school's ability to further prevent disease spread where in-person learning is happening. This kind of testing can help schools head off potential outbreaks before they occur, and it can be a useful tool for students participating in athletics or other extracurricular programs, the release states.

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After an early flurry of candidate filings major Jefferson County offices have shown no action since Monday. As of a few minutes ago candidates have filed for seats on the City Council, The Port of Port Townsend, The Jefferson Healthcare Board of Directors and the Port Townsend School District. While every spot has drawn a contender they are all unchallenged. If three or more candidates file for a position they will be winnowed down to two during the August 3 primary. If just two people file they will proceed directly the November 2 general election. In races where only one candidate files they are elected by acclamation and will take the office without challenge in 2022, barring a robust write in campaign. Unchallenged races are bad for democracy, especially in a year when three city council members are retiring. The good news is that Jefferson County candidates often wait until the last minute to file, in order to maintain the element of surprise. People can file online, by mail or in person by appointment, as long as the filing is received by 4:30pm Friday – that's tomorrow. For details contact the Jefferson County Auditor; <https://www.co.jefferson.wa.us/1268/For-Candidates>, 360-385-9119 or 360-385-9117.

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Last week our local U.S. Representative Derek Kilmer and Republican Indiana representative Trey Hollingsworth introduced the Yes In My Backyard (YIMBY) Act, bipartisan legislation to identify obstacles to, and opportunities for, increasing home construction through better zoning, by-right development, and faster permitting. The legislation aims to encourage localities to eliminate discriminatory land use policies and remove barriers that prevent needed housing from being built around the country, according to a press release. Kilmer said that the pandemic exacerbated the already crucial housing crisis. New construction must take place, and the bill is intended to help communities in our region and across the country reduce barriers to housing construction and build more affordable housing for the folks who need it the most. The problem is that zoning and land use policies stifle construction. As these regulations have increased, they have resulted in fewer homes being built, and untenable cost increases. Additionally the bill aims to increase transparency on local land use policies and encourage localities to reduce barriers to housing production.

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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).

This is Charlie Bermant. Thank you for listening.