

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with with local news and commentary for Thursday, June 3, 2021.

Jefferson County added one new case of COVID-19 on Wednesday, a male in his seventies. Men now surpass women in the virus gender count, 218 to 200. Three cases are in isolation, with 87 test results pending.

Jefferson County is taking some creative steps to address different aspects of the local housing crisis. The first is a proposal to purchase a tract of land at the south end of town to provide a landing spot for homeless people, and the second – as reported in yesterday's Port Townsend *Leader* – is to transform Manresa Castle into housing for people who are working here but can't find a place to live. The ventures would be funded out of the \$6.3 million in revenue expected from the American Rescue Plan Act.

At this point both ideas are in their infancy, with a lot of answers needed before they are taken seriously. For instance, what will a homeless enclave contain, and how will it be maintained? What kind of leases would be available in the new Manresa, and would the 41 individual units be retrofitted with kitchens? Designated as "workforce" housing, the Manresa units are not intended for people who are moving to Port Townsend looking to set up their massage business. While the idea may seem radical, it follows the lead of government entities who have purchased local hotels to alleviate their housing shortage. Both will attract widespread opposition, although perhaps more so for the homeless center idea. Acting County Administrator Mark McCauley, quoted in the *Leader*, said that any project funded by the Rescue Plan Act funds – such as the Port Hadlock sewer, a childcare facility and digital upgrades – will invite pushback from some community members. While it is a local landmark, Manresa Castle has struggled financially throughout the years. And this is not the first "creative" suggestion for the facility. Just after marijuana was legalized in Washington, a local entrepreneur wanted to turn it into a cannabis themed destination resort. The proximity to the hospital probably killed that one. Both ideas will face a lengthy approval and development process, so there will be plenty of opportunity for public comment. If they reach fruition they could set the template for how other communities manage their housing issues. Or they could be complete disasters. Stay tuned.

While it struggled through the pandemic like any other business, The Quimper Mercantile Company reported a profit last year and will for the first time pay dividends to its shareholders. The \$5 per share dividends will be paid as checks and sent to the address on record, according to a report sent to stockholders this week. In 2015, stockholders voted to defer dividends until the business had 90 days worth of operating cash on hand as well as positive retained earnings. Both goals were met in 2019 but the pandemic did not allow the leeway to distribute the payments. The total payout is \$37,155, reflecting 7,431 shares now held. Additionally, the business is in the final stages of hiring a new general manager after a nationwide search. Board president Peter Quinn told KPTZ the choice is down to two candidates, with an announcement expected this month.

Every day is special, but some more so than others. The Washington State Patrol is participating in National Secure Your Load Day this Monday, June 7. State troopers and commercial vehicle enforcement officers will conduct traffic stops and inspections to ensure that all cargo is safely secured. The officers will also educate the public about the importance of this simple safety measure. The Secure Your Load safety day originated in 2004

when a driver was blinded and nearly killed by an unsecured piece of particle board that flew out of a trailer on Washington Interstate Highway 405, according to a press release.

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.