

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for June 16, 2021.

Jefferson County Public Health reported no new cases of COVID-19 yesterday, after an upswing in cases was reported over the weekend with 12 new positive tests. Right now, there are 42 test results pending. Since the beginning of the pandemic, there have been a total of 439 cases in Jefferson County. As always, you can get the most up to date numbers on the Jefferson County Public Health page (<https://www.jeffersoncountypublichealth.org/202/Public-Health>). Despite the low case count right now, the public health department's masking mandate is still in effect until June 30. You must wear a mask indoors in public spaces, including in businesses and other publicly accessible indoor locations.

Port Townsend is set to receive \$2.7 million in federal funding as a result of the American Rescue Plan Act. City manager John Mauro said at Monday night's city council meeting that city staff was unsure how much money Port Townsend would be awarded from the American Rescue Plan Act – but on June 7, the Washington State Office of Financial Management sent a letter to the city outlining the process for accepting and receiving the funds, and solidifying that Port Townsend will receive \$2.7 million. The city must return the required paperwork to the Office of Financial Management by June 18, and then will be awarded half of the funds by June 27. The second half of the funds will be received next year. The city council unanimously approved a resolution Monday night authorizing city manager Mauro to respond to the Office of Financial Management and accept the money.

American Rescue Act funds must be used before December 31, 2024, and the money can only be used for specific things. There are four categories of eligible uses: Responding to the economic impacts of COVID-19; providing premium pay for essential work during the pandemic; paying for government services related to the health emergency; or making investments in water, sewer or broadband infrastructure. Mauro explained that the funding will make a demonstrable difference in the revenue shortage the city had last year as a result of the pandemic. He said the city will schedule a workshop in the coming months for the city council to discuss priorities for the money.

On July 17, all six Port Townsend City Council candidates will be participating in a workshop to discuss the housing crisis in Port Townsend. Council candidate Tyler Vega advertised on his Facebook page that the event will take place at 3pm on July 17 at the Cotton Building. The council candidates will be joining with members of the local non profit sector, and the event will be moderated by the Housing Solutions Network. Vega, who is running for Pam Adams' seat on the city council, invited members of the public to come to the table on this topic – saying that we, as a community, have the leadership, organization and the resources to activate solutions for the housing crisis. Candidate Ben Thomas, running for Michelle Sandoval's seat on the council, commented on Vega's post, saying that he thinks the issue of housing underpins every other issue in town. Without affordable housing, he said, we are a shell of a community. The other candidates, who Vega said will also be participating in this event, are Libby Urner Wennstrom and Sky-Hardesty Thompson, who are running against Vega for Position 5; Cameron Jones, running against Thomas for Position 1; and Aislinn Diamanti, running unopposed for Position 2, which is Ariel Speser's seat.

You may have noticed some new sculptures up around town – the white, wooden geometric sculptures downtown, uptown and near Fort Worden are the new waymarkers for the city’s Creative District. Created by local artist Jonah Trople out of reclaimed fir from 100+ year-old materials, the sculptures mark the location of the Creative District, which encompasses the Downtown and Uptown Historic Districts and the historic campus of Fort Worden. The city was designated a Creative District by the Washington State Arts Commission last fall. The designation provides resources, grant opportunities, technical assistance, training and networking, and tracks each community’s creative economy progress.

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.