

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with with local news and commentary for Thursday, July 1, 2021.

Jefferson County logged one new case of COVID-19 yesterday, a male in the 0-19 age group. Four active cases are in isolation, and 17 people are awaiting test results. Masks are no longer required in several settings. Even so, many people are still wearing them for their own protection and because you can never tell who's vaccinated and who isn't. Business signs requiring unvaccinated people to wear masks are on the honor system and honesty is in short supply these days. If there is any doubt, here's an explanation of the new abnormal from County Health Officer Dr Tom Locke:

- Universal masking will continue to be required on all public transportation, in health care settings, schools, congregate living facilities (like homeless shelters and assisted living facilities), and all correctional facilities (jails and prisons).
- People who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 infection are no longer required to wear masks in other settings, indoors or outdoors.
- People who have chosen not to be vaccinated are still required to wear well-fitting masks in indoor spaces, both publicly accessible and in places of employment.
- Employers are required to determine the vaccination status of their employees and assure that unvaccinated employees maintain necessary indoor masking and distancing precautions.
- Businesses are allowed to inquire about the vaccination status of their customers and require that all unvaccinated individuals continue to wear masks indoors.
- As for county buildings, visitors can ditch their masks if they either show their vaccination card or sign a statement saying they have completed the shots.

The county's homeless quandary continues. It turns out that Governor Jay Inslee's extension of the eviction moratorium does not protect the homeless encampment at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds and the Fair authority could begin the eviction process. To offset this, the county has offered the fair board \$100,000 as compensation for use of the land until September 30. The fair board is due to meet on Tuesday, July 6 to accept or reject the offer.

In the meantime, the county is moving to line up an alternative site for a homeless encampment that will hopefully be in place once the eviction from the fairground occurs. New possibilities include the Jefferson Community School, which would be used to administer the program and a 30 acre area on Mill Road just south of town. This site would have some benefit to the general public as the county would then construct an area where users of the Larry Scott Trail could park, according to District 3 Commissioner Greg Brotherton. Brotherton said that the board is prioritizing the problem and while it can do nothing to address the systemic causes of homelessness it can develop a plan to alleviate the effects on a local level.

There is some optimistic news from the Fort Worden Public Development Authority, as it has secured bridge funding that will pay bills that were in arrears and allow it to accept and solicit new grant funding and tax breaks. The new funding will allow two incomplete projects – glamping and an energy upgrade – to proceed.

The PDA's financial straits have been attributed to a loss of funds brought about by the pandemic, but information presented at yesterday's board meeting disclosed that lackluster financial reporting has been occurring at the PDA since 2017.

Former Port Townsend City Manager David Timmons, who has served as the PDA's Interim Executive Director since late last year, got an upgrade on Wednesday as the board voted to remove the "interim" from his title. Timmons retired from the City in 2019, a few years longer than his original intent. So while he tries to get away they keep pulling him back. In any case, Timmons is drawing on the same skill set as he used in the city – the ability to find funding sources to alleviate financial crises.

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.