

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Thursday, July 22, 2021.

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The Jefferson County Public Utility District is beginning the process of bringing high-speed internet to rural areas of the county, after the state legislature passed two bills allowing PUDs to directly sell broadband services to residential customers. This will not soon provide an alternative to Port Townsend residents who are dissatisfied with their current service; rather it will provide fast broadband to people in rural areas who currently have a nonexistent or weak internet connection. For those dependent on the internet it will change the quality of life in these rural areas, and make them more appealing for remote workers and make it easier for businesses to operate in these areas. The areas slated for the upgrade to what is expected to be the fastest internet in the county are Quilcene, Discovery Bay, Gardiner, and portions of Chimacum. It is a huge project, both financial and practical, involving the installation of individual fiber to each property and costing twelve million dollars. Customers will not suffer the cost as available Federal grants will pay for the process, according to PUD spokesman Will O'Donnell. Costs are undetermined, but O'Donnell hopes that the monthly fee will be around \$65 for premium service. The grant applications are now in progress, with the condition of completing the work by the end of 2022. The PUD will survey residents this week about the need for the service, sending postcards to each property in the service area. O'Donnell encourages people to respond, as more support will strengthen the grant application. Many residents will embrace this new service, as it will make their lives easier. Others may oppose the action, as it could bring more strangers to town. In the meantime, the PUD provides free wireless internet at twelve locations through the county where people can access the web through their own devices. For a list of the locations go to the PUD website (<https://www.jeffpud.org/>) and click the broadband tab.

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Jefferson County will receive almost four million dollars in government funding toward pandemic recovery. At this week's meeting of the board of county commissioners, the board discussed agencies and projects that could be funded through CARES Funding (\$950,000) and ARPA (initial funding: \$3.129 million). Potential grant fund recipients from CARES include the Jefferson PUD, Port of Port Townsend, Jefferson County Library, Schools, YMCA, and the NW Maritime Center. ARPA funding would go toward the purchase of the Jefferson Community School and the Mill Road property for housing.

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Derek Kilmer, who represents Jefferson County in Congress, often mentions notable people like the late Congressman John Lewis to make a point. This week he's taken a left turn in that respect, evoking Leslie Knope – the character played by Amy Poehler on “Parks and Recreation” – to underscore the idea that parks are a critical part of our country's infrastructure. They protect and preserve our natural resources, provide economic opportunity for the nearby communities, and remind us of the importance and beauty of our environment. In a press release, Kilmer said he was proud to support the Great American Outdoors Act, which permanently and fully funds the Land and Water Conservation Fund and provides critical funding to repair and preserve our national parks. This year, Congress needs to continue addressing the infrastructure needs on our public lands, both for the sake of our environment and the rural communities that are the center of our state's outdoor recreation economy. Kilmer is looking for people to show support through his website, saying “If you agree with me (and Leslie Knope) that we should protect and preserve our national parks, will you add your name next to mine?” (to show your support, go to

[https://act.myngp.com/Forms/-2568858680651936256?midqs=gXOJ6Oq3q-0uUxE8I\\_bPJQ=&gpid=50\\_115\\_19827&ms=em21\\_210721\\_NatPrk\\_adv\\_gq\\_act\\_DK\\_ettx&refcode=em21](https://act.myngp.com/Forms/-2568858680651936256?midqs=gXOJ6Oq3q-0uUxE8I_bPJQ=&gpid=50_115_19827&ms=em21_210721_NatPrk_adv_gq_act_DK_ettx&refcode=em21)

[210721\\_NatPrk\\_adv\\_gq\\_act\\_DK\\_ettx&utm\\_campaign=em21\\_210721\\_NatPrk\\_adv\\_gq\\_act\\_DK\\_ettx&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=dkil](#)

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Registered voters who have not yet received a ballot for the August 3 primary should contact the elections office. In addition to the mail, Jefferson County has an Accessible Voting Unit located in the courthouse next to the Auditor's Office. It is available 8:30am-4:30pm weekdays; Election Day hours are from 8:30am- 8pm. For information or to request a ballot call (360) 385-9119 or email [elections@co.jefferson.wa.us](mailto:elections@co.jefferson.wa.us).

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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.