

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Taylor Clark, with with local news and commentary for Tuesday, August 3, 2021.

There is a lot of COVID-19 related news in Jefferson County today. Six new cases were added over the weekend, bringing the total number to 518. Thirty one cases are now in isolation, with four test results pending.

After just a few in-person meetings the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners has moved back into a virtual format, starting yesterday and continuing with a special meeting tomorrow. At yesterday's meeting Public Health Officer Dr. Allison Berry told Commissioners that the first case of the COVID-19 Delta Variant has reached Jefferson, which she describes as "profoundly contagious" with "high viral loads." Jefferson County continues to see high numbers, with a case rate now of 147 per 100,000, the second highest recorded rate since the pandemic began. Berry said cases are "being driven almost exclusively by unvaccinated folks who travel and bring the infection home, to work, and to their friends." There are no-large scale outbreaks in the county. She cautioned that current vaccines are 97% effective, but are not "bulletproof."

What can you do? Wear a mask indoors, in spaces where you don't know the vaccine status of those around you. And if you are unvaccinated, do the rest of us a favor and stay home. In your room. By yourself.

Jefferson Healthcare has relaunched the dedicated COVID-19 Nurse Consult Line (360-344-3094). Nurses will follow up with Patients within 24 to 48 hours to triage symptoms and schedule Testing at the Jefferson Healthcare Drive Through Testing Station, open 7 days a week.

Anyone who experiences severe respiratory symptoms should go to the Emergency Room. Those with mild respiratory and cold symptoms are encouraged first to call the Nurse Consult Line: (360-344-3094). Triage through the Nurse Consult Line avoids unnecessary wait time and minimizes exposure to others.

All patients, visitors, and employees of Jefferson Healthcare continue to be universally masked with hospital-issued masks and everyone is temperature screened before entering the buildings. Still no word as to when the hospital cafeteria will reopen to the public.

Jefferson County Department of Emergency Management will offer a pop-up Back to School Pfizer clinic at the Quilcene School District August 23. This is for both Quilcene and Brinnon students. More information will be forthcoming for this clinic, as well as others being scheduled for late August and September. According to DEM director Willie Bence, the DEM has a supply of masks for businesses in need, along with hand sanitizers.

And today is primary day. In past years this story would lead the news report. But this isn't past years. While the COVID-19 caution level at the courthouse has increased, the auditor's office is still accessible for those who have not yet voted. The best way to vote is by mail or at one of the seven countywide drop boxes. If you are a registered voter and have not yet voted, the Auditor's office will supply a ballot and a private place to vote. If you are not registered, the Auditor's office will, again, fix you up. So you have no reason not to vote. Like you have no reason to stay unvaccinated. The deadline is 8pm tonight; to mail, drop off, or submit your ballot in person.

Port Townsend voters have only one race on the ballot – for the City Council District 1 slot now occupied by Michelle Sandoval. Three candidates – Libby Uner Wennstrum, Tyler Myles Vega and Sky Hardesty Thompson – will be narrowed down to two to face off in the November 2 General Election. And while anything can happen, we predict that Hardesty Thompson will be knocked out of the race. We base this on money spent, the number of signs, public chatter, and the fact that Hardesty Thompson did not bother to submit a statement to the official voter’s guide.

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.

Today’s news was written by Charlie Bermant. This is Taylor Clark. Thank you for listening.