

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for November 3, 2021.

Preliminary election results show Libby Urner Wennstrom, Ben Thomas, and Aislinn Diamanti as Port Townsend's newest city council members. Wennstrom won the race for Position 5 on the city council with 73% of the votes. Her opponent, Tyler Vega, received about 27% of the votes. Wennstrom will be replacing Pamela Adams. Thomas won 75% of the votes for Position 1 and his opponent, Cameron Jones won 25%. Thomas will be replacing Michelle Sandoval. Aislinn Diamanti was running unopposed and will take Ariel Speser's spot on the council.

The Port of Port Townsend had two seats up for election. Carol Hasse ran unopposed for commissioner Bill Putney's seat, and Pete Hanke ran again, unopposed. The port commission will now be entirely composed of longtime marine trades people: Hasse was one of the founders of the Wooden Boat Festival and owned Port Townsend Sails for many years; Hanke currently owns Puget Sound Express – a whale-watching company out of Point Hudson; and current commissioner Pam Petranek is a commercial fisherman with Cape Cleare Salmon.

In our other local contested races: In the one contested Quilcene school board race, Paul Mahan won, with 58% of the votes. His opponent Ronald Jones was close behind with 42% of the votes. The Port Ludlow Fire District also had one contested race – Glenn Clemens won the position 3 commission seat, with 60% of the vote. His opponent Ron Helmonds won 40%. These are just preliminary results – according to the county auditor's office, 8,311 ballots have been counted so far, with 2,529 left to count. Turnout this year was low, with only 30% of registered voters turning in a ballot.

Jefferson County Public Health reported 5 new cases of COVID-19 yesterday, and one new hospitalization. This brings our total case count, since the beginning of the pandemic, up to 1,169. There are currently 35 active cases in isolation. The health department added additional hours to their Moderna booster shot clinic coming up this Saturday, November 6. There will now be the opportunity to sign up for a booster shot appointment from 9am to noon at the Chimacum School, in addition to the 1pm to 4pm appointment slots the health department had already planned. There will also be a Moderna booster shot clinic on Saturday, November 13, from 1pm to 4pm at Blue Heron Middle School in Port Townsend. Booster shots are only available for people 65 years of age and older and those aged 18 to 64 who are at high risk of severe COVID-19. Appointments are required for these three clinics. You can schedule your appointment by going to the Jefferson County Public Health website (<https://www.jeffersoncountypublichealth.org/202/Public-Health>), or calling the Department of Emergency Management's vaccine hotline at 360-344-9791. You will need to bring your vaccine card to your scheduled appointment.

Despite all city council members expressing their discomfort with using federal COVID-relief money to fund the police department, they voted unanimously to do so anyway at their meeting Monday night, setting aside \$160,000 of American Rescue Plan Act funding for two 2022 Ford Police Interceptor Pursuit Rated Utility/SUVs. Councilmember Ariel Speser was the only "no" vote at first, but after council discussion switched her vote to yes, saying she was viewing the use of funding as investing in staff resources the same way the city would invest in new vehicles and equipment for the public works department. Councilmember Pamela Adams said she planned to vote yes because driving old cars is a safety issue not only for the police, but for members of the public, and she did not view buying new cars the same way she would if they were purchasing equipment to further militarize the police.

But these aren't ordinary vehicles. Test data from the Michigan State Police shows that the Ford Police Interceptor Utility is the fastest cop car out there – with the ability to reach 100 miles-per-hour in a mere 13.5 seconds, something not seen very often on Port Townsend's 25-mile-per hour streets. Councilmember David Faber said he has a lot of questions about how police departments are funded in the first place, and what kind of equipment is truly needed in a community like ours, versus what police departments would like to have, but he added that those questions are a larger conversation that he didn't believe the council was prepared to wrestle with at the current moment. The request for new police vehicles came from the new police chief, Thomas Olson, who wrote in his agenda summary that not only are the vehicles needed for safety reasons, but they also provide the benefit of an improved image for our local police department for recruiting purposes. Currently, he wrote, many of the police department's vehicles are not even in use right now because of staffing shortages, but that the staffing shortage "is going to change very soon."

The request for new cop cars was not the only one made by police chief Olson at Monday's city council meeting. The council also discussed spending about \$52,000 on 16 new tasers for the police department. Mauro explained that all of the police department's tasers save three are no longer covered by warranty from the manufacturer, Axon Enterprises, leaving the city with a major liability. Not only that, but Mauro pointed out that the state requires police departments to have a "non-lethal" weapon, such as a taser. Councilmember Speser expressed frustration with the predicament that the city was in. "We need to find a way to get away from spending \$50,000 on tasers," she said, adding that the thought of using a taser as the only alternative to pulling a gun on somebody was a "bleak silver lining." Several council members had questions about the new tasers, and how frequently officers with the police department use their tasers, and so the council decided to table the vote until they could get more information from Chief Olson.

Last year, the city did have a six-month long process where they took a "deep dive" into the police budget through the ad-hoc committee on law enforcement and public safety. During this process, the city council made no changes to the police department's budget, despite widespread calls from the community to "defund" the police and refocus funding on mental health and housing services.

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.