

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for November 10, 2021.

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Jefferson County Public Health reported 6 new cases of COVID-19 yesterday. This brings our total case count, since the beginning of the pandemic, up to 1,202. There are currently 31 active cases in isolation. The Washington State Department of Health announced yesterday that as of November 6, more than 10 million doses of COVID vaccines have been given out across Washington since distribution began in mid-December 2020. According to Jefferson County's public health director Dr. Allison Berry, public health officials consistently find that, in state-level data, those who are unvaccinated are 8 times more likely to contract the virus as those who are fully vaccinated.

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Water rates for city residents might go up somewhere in the range of 7 to 9 dollars per month next year, if not more. At the city council's workshop meeting on Monday night, public works director Steve King explained that the city is nearly finished negotiating with the paper mill for a new agreement in which the mill will operate and maintain the city's water pipelines. But because there are some hefty investments needed to replace portions of the pipeline that are aging, King said there will be additional revenue needed to cover some of those costs. That's why King anticipates that city residents will have to pay an additional 7 to 9 dollars per household per month for water. In addition, there could be an additional 2 to 4 dollar increase per month to pay for work that needs to be done outside of the city's agreement with the mill.

The city also plans to raise the connection fee for new residents connecting to the city waterline. Presently the connection fee is \$4,494. King said the city proposes bumping up the connection fees to keep up with inflation. The average construction inflation rate is 3.2%, which would increase the connection fee to \$5,600.

King said the city is also considering adding a local facilities charge, which is a charge for properties that receive a specific benefit for city utility infrastructure. This extra charge would apply to locations where the city had installed pipelines to help provide connection to the system and locations where the city had installed reservoirs or booster pump stations, benefiting only a portion of the city. City residents will have a chance to give their input on this topic. Next Monday, the council will be reviewing a draft of the agreement between the mill and the city, and at the December 6 council meeting, they will be doing a first reading of an ordinance putting these new water rates in place.

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The city's Culture and Society Committee will be meeting today at 4:30pm. The committee will be discussing a proposed resolution to decriminalize entheogens, which are natural psychedelic plants and fungi. The drafted resolution declares the investigation, arrest, and prosecution of anyone engaging in entheogen-related activities, including but not limited to the cultivation of entheogens for use in religious, spiritual, healing, or personal growth practices, should be the city's lowest law enforcement priority. The committee will be reviewing the draft of the resolution, before passing it along to the city council for final approval. It must be approved by a majority vote of the council before being enacted.

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With the time change last weekend, the afternoons are growing darker each day, so the PT Main Street Program is combatting the darkness with their annual lighting program – wrapping strings of lights around trees in

uptown and downtown Port Townsend. This year, Main Street is hoping to light up the Tyler Street Plaza for wintertime. On Giving Tuesday this year, they are asking for donations to purchase string lights over the plaza, to create a more festive outdoor atmosphere that encourages people to enjoy the plaza, even after the sun sets, which this time of year can happen around 4:30pm.

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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](mailto:news@kptz.org). I'm Lily Haight. Thanks for listening.