

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for November 24, 2021.

Jefferson County Public Health reported 3 new cases of COVID-19 in the last two days. This brings our total case count, since the beginning of the pandemic, up to 1,276 . There are currently 48 active cases in isolation. Public health also reported another death yesterday, making for two COVID-related deaths so far this week. The total number of deaths due to COVID in our county is now at 19. As with Monday's reported death, yesterday's was a man in his 70s who was vaccinated, but had a chronic medical condition, and had not received a booster shot.

The topic of purchasing new tasers for the Port Townsend Police Department came back to the city council, after they had tabled a vote on the topic at their last meeting. Police Chief Tom Olson explained to the council Monday night that the purchase of 16 new tasers for the department was necessary, as tasers are one of the only "less-lethal" weapons that officers can use to disarm someone, other than using their handguns.

But it turns out that PTPD officers rarely use their tasers. In 2021, PTPD officers have not deployed a taser at all, and have only had to display their taser three times total, according to Chief Olson. So if they rarely use them, why does the department need new tasers? Olson said the reason for the \$52,000 dollar purchase of 16 new tasers is because the ones they currently have are no longer under warranty from the manufacturer, Axon Enterprises.

Axon Enterprise is a company which develops technology and weapons products for military and law enforcement in the U.S. The company was founded by the creator of the Taser brand. The company has recently been criticized for helping promote a pseudoscientific diagnosis called "excited delirium" that police use to justify extreme uses of force that often lead to death. On Monday night, the council voted unanimously to approve the purchase of the new tasers, despite receiving public comments in opposition of the purchase. City councilmember David Faber said at the meeting that while a lot of people were concerned about the council moving forward on this issue, he believed there needs to be more action on policing in the state as a whole, and that the city is not in a position to change the current dynamics around policing. Mayor Michelle Sandoval said she believed the issue to be more of a budget request, rather than a policy issue. And, she said, the city spent all of last year working on policy issues with their ad-hoc committee on public safety and law enforcement.

However, the law enforcement and public safety committee did not broach the subject of making changes to the weapons carried by local police officers, or the department's use of force policies. The committee ended its work last January by making some broad recommendations to support statewide legislative items around policing and to create a public safety citizens advisory board, which has yet to come to fruition.

Washington State Ferries sent out a bulletin today reminding Thanksgiving Day travelers to plan ahead for busy holiday sailings and stay up-to-date on the latest schedules online. Some routes will be operating on alternate service schedules, while others will be operating on holiday or weekend schedules on Thursday, Nov. 25. Here in Port Townsend, where reservations are required to travel, nearly all sailings are already fully booked.

The city is asking citizens for feedback on their Streateries Program. The program, which allowed for restaurants and cafes downtown to use parking spaces and sidewalks for outdoor dining, is approved to continue through December 31 of this year. In the current configuration, the streateries use a total of 9 parking spots in the historic districts – Uptown and Downtown. Now, the city is asking for citizens to give their feedback on the program in an online survey. Go to https://mailchi.mp/d9f3c567008a/2021-streatery-survey-your-input-is-appreciated?fbclid=IwAR352esKkiPxII84lqsJxOUGVwXV7wFLfbD3eh_AEvjov5CH7TvkIyLfFWI on the city's website to give input.

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.