

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Carmen Jaramillo with local news and commentary for December 7, 2021.

The City of Port Townsend is considering a land purchase on the outskirts of town to create a new neighborhood for affordable and workforce housing. The 14.4-acre property is located off of the first roundabout on the way into town on Evan's Vista Way. The project hopes to create 80 to 150 units of varying sizes and types for a wide range of income levels. The new neighborhood might also include commercial and mixed use buildings to bring other residents to the area, as well as connections to the Larry Scott Trail.

Public Works Director Steve King said they looked at several properties already owned by the city and other private properties but that none were large enough for the number of units they are hoping to create. The project now is in its very early stages. It is still not known what organizations or businesses would build in this area if purchased and more funding will be required to build out the existing infrastructure.

The city estimates it will cost about 4.1 million dollars for a sewer pipe extension and lift station for the neighborhood. King said the city has been working with the Housing Solutions Network and local housing providers to give their perspective on the project but that much more outreach and public engagement will be needed. Purchase of the land will cost the city about 1.39 million dollars, 98% of which will be funded by a Washington state affordable housing grant. The city will foot the bill for the remaining \$23,000 from the affordable housing fund. The city also has access to another 1.7 million dollars in grant funding for infrastructure improvement in the area but plans to seek other federal funding options to help cover the cost of expanding the sewer system. The council may move to approve the land purchase as early as next week. If approved the sale will close on December 17.

Winter is setting in on the Olympic Peninsula but no signs of snow yet. The 10-day weather forecast predicts no snow on the Quimper Peninsula but lots of rain with temps in the low 40s during the day and mid 30s at night. Snow is predicted for areas further south along the Hood Canal including in Quilcene on Sunday and Monday. Take advantage of the Port Townsend Farmers Market this Saturday and next as they will be the last markets of the season. The PT Farmer's Market will reopen in April 2022.

In local COVID-19 news, Health Officer Dr. Allison Berry said in a letter to business owners that she is not prepared to lift the vaccination order for indoor dining unless we see a significant drop in our local case rate. Case rates are measured by the number of cases per 100,000 residents. She said anything above 75 per 100,000 is considered high. Under 25 cases per 100,000 residents is what regions should strive for to loosen restrictions according to the old state-wide phase system used widely last year. Jefferson County remained under 25 cases per 100,000 for the majority of 2020 but has been well above 75 since the summer time. For the past 8 weeks our case rate has remained consistently around 200 cases per 100,000 residents. When the order was first enacted, the local case rate was 486 cases per 100,000 residents, this week it was 214. Berry said if we can see our case rate drop below 75 for two weeks then she will revoke the health order.

Seeing no end in sight, some businesses who refused to participate in the order are changing their tune. Pedro's Fiesta Jalisco in Port Hadlock took an early stand against the health mandate in September. They originally said on their Facebook page that they believed the order violated the medical privacy of their patrons and opened

their already overworked staff up to more harassment. After being take-out only for almost three months, they will be reopening their dining room for lunch only from 11am to 3pm.

In other news related to the indoor dining vaccination order, a Port Angeles woman has filed suit against Jefferson and Clallam County's health mandates saying they violate her constitutional rights. The suit filed last month in Tacoma names county officials and board of health members as defendants. It alleges they have knowingly violated the constitution and have committed "treason" against their country for mask and vaccination mandates. Jefferson and Clallam County agreed to pursue a joint legal defense against the suit last week in the county commissioner meeting. Commissioner Kate Dean said she sees the lawsuit as a frivolous waste of county resources.

Now for our local case numbers. Public Health added 11 new cases of COVID-19 yesterday bringing the total confirmed case count to 1,335. 26 cases are in active isolation and two people are hospitalized locally.

And finally, I don't know who out there needs to hear this but there are two weeks until the winter solstice, when our days will finally start to get longer again. I know my non-seasonal depression is definitely not helped by the sun setting at 4:30.

That's all from me for today. KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and five PM Monday through Thursday and at noon on Friday and Saturday. You can contact us through news@kptz.org. I'm Carmen Jaramillo. Thanks for listening.