

Good afternoon. You are listening to KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Simon Jaynes with local news for December 16, 2021.

It's been wet, it's been cold, it's been windy this week. It's been December for 16 days now but we are coming closer every day to the winter solstice. December 21st – the shortest day of the year at which point we can begin to count on a little just more light with every passing day. With several winter weather warnings appearing and then being canceled in surrounding counties over the past 24 hours, it appears that the cold front moving in from the west is lacking the precipitation it was originally thought to contain. So while you shouldn't go planning any snowball fights for this weekend just yet, the national weather service does show temperatures dipping into the low thirties by the middle of next week.

Winter break starts for students in the Port Townsend Schools this Saturday December 18 and extends until Monday January 3. As everyone heads into these holidays and begins to plan for family gatherings, the Center For Disease Control has updated its guidance on the use of at-home COVID tests, suggesting people use the self-tests before getting together indoors with members of other households and noting the tests can be used regardless of vaccination status or whether someone is experiencing symptoms.

Jefferson County Public Health reported 4 new cases of COVID-19 yesterday. This brings our total case count, since the beginning of the pandemic, up to 1,370. There are currently 25 active cases in isolation and one Jefferson County resident hospitalized. The county's case rate remains at 165 per 100,000 with no new deaths and at least one of two people being released from the hospital following treatment for COVID-19. Officials said Saturday that the first three cases of the omicron variant have been confirmed in Washington state. The cases were found in Thurston, Pierce, and King counties, according to the state Department of Health. It is important to remember that you can always get information regarding where to get your vaccine or booster shot, at the Jefferson County Public Health website

(<https://www.jeffersoncountypublichealth.org/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=845>), or Jefferson County Government Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/jeffcowagov>).

There are several holiday-themed events and activities coming up this weekend and the following week:

Secret Gardens Northwest in Port Townsend will host a holiday-themed open house on Sunday. Visitors can check out sparkling holiday displays, shop for gifts, take a walk through the garden, enjoy a hot cider on the house. Children are welcome. The garden center is located at 13570 Airport Cutoff Road.

The 27th annual uptown gingerbread contest is happening at the Port Townsend Library. Entries will be accepted from December 15 through December 28. Winners will be announced on December 30. Please drop off your Gingerbread House to the Port Townsend Public Library during library hours at 1220 Lawrence Street. You can call the Library at 385-3181 with questions.

Families can drop off children's letters to Santa at the office of the Port Townsend *Leader* at 226 Adams Street.

And Port Townsend Main Street is promoting the winter window wander – a local contest involving finding a hidden train in business's' window displays. To participate you'll want to turn in your score card and fill out the entry form on back to be entered to win a holiday prize. These cards can be found at any participating downtown business.

The Main Street Association is also reminding local business owners of an important community-oriented program called LENT, which is a low-interest loan program for Port Townsend Commercial Historic Districts. The microloan funds available with this program are a tool to offset some of the financial impacts businesses endure from emergency situations, and are made available through the Port Townsend Main Street Program. Upon re-payment of the loan funds, the money will be returned to the Main Street Program for recirculating as part of future LENT Fund microloans. The upcoming quarterly deadline for application for these funds is January 15, 2022 and anyone wondering if they may qualify should go to <https://ptmainstreet.org/business-resources/loan-programs/> or call the Main Street office at 385-7911

The Hood Canal Bridge will be completely closed for five continuous hours on three consecutive nights next week. The five-hour overnight closure will give crews the time to continue work on a project that replaces and bolsters bridge equipment, according to the Washington State Department of Transportation. Department officials are strongly encouraging drivers to plan for the shut-down. The scheduled closures are from 11pm to 4am Monday, December 20 through Wednesday, December 22. Officials said the bridge will not open for any traffic – including emergency response vehicles – due to the nature of the work. The work is weather-dependent and may be rescheduled if necessary.

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 Simon Jaynes. Thanks for listening and have a great day.