

Good afternoon. You are listening to KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Simon Jaynes with local news for January 13, 2022.

Jefferson County Public Health reported 36 new cases of COVID-19 yesterday. This brings our total case count, since the beginning of the pandemic, up to 1,880. There are currently 274 active cases in isolation, and 6 Jefferson County residents hospitalized. There have been 21 deaths in Jefferson county related to COVID-19 while in Clallam county, 4 more deaths were reported on Wednesday bringing their total since the beginning of the pandemic to 87.

The Port Townsend School District has reported 39 new cases among students and staff in the last two weeks. Students who have had a positive test are required to isolate and exclude from school for 10 days, but newly released guidance says that with a negative antigen test and strict masking, students can return in 5 days. According to Health officer Dr. Allison Berry in her Monday briefing, "If you are fully vaccinated, you are well protected against the worst of COVID-19." She says they are seeing good protection against hospitalization for the folks who are fully vaccinated and even better protection for those who are boosted. "So," Dr. Berry adds, "it really does still make a huge difference."

Voters in the Port Townsend School District will receive ballots for a replacement school levy next Wednesday January 19. These ballots will be due by February 8 to be counted in the election. School Levies are brought to the voters every 3 years and the upcoming election would set the tax rates for 2023 through 2025. In Washington state, school levies are an important part of the funding process that closes the gap between what school districts receive from the state and what they need to fund staffing increases, extra-curricular activities, health services, and facility improvements. The levy is funded through property taxes and the tax district gets to vote on whether to approve the proposed tax rate. The Port Townsend School District has a history of passing levies brought before the community going all the way back to 2001. For the years 2020-2022, we have been paying a combined tax rate of about \$1.54 per \$1000.00 of assessed value on properties. This year there are again two levies on the ballot. An educational school support levy that would tax at \$.90 per \$1000.00, raising \$3.45 Million for schools. And a capital projects levy that would tax at \$.46 per \$1000.00 of assessed value raising \$1.75 Million.

This puts the combined tax rate for the replacement levy in 2023 at \$1.36 per \$1000.00, a decrease of \$.18. According to School District Superintendent Linda Rosenbury, the Educational Support Levy would allow the district to increase staffing, as well as funding for special education and pre-school. It also funds sports teams, music, drama programs, and knowledge bowl. Rosenbury says, "Aside from the student fees associated with activities, all of the funding for these extra-curriculars come from the levy." She also mentioned non-instructional support as a key function of the levy, in that it funds health services for students, mental health, and transportation beyond the regular school day. Voter's will receive a fact sheet with their ballots detailing the specific projects and programs each levy will be allocated for. The Capital Projects Levy will raise funds for improving disability access, installing solar panels at Salish Elementary, and conducting a seismic retrofit study for the high school among other things. Once again, voters can look for ballots and information to begin arriving next week.

Jefferson County Commissioner Greg Brotherton held a virtual meeting this morning at 10:30am to give updates to the public on the Caswell-Brown Village, an open air homeless shelter project on Mill Road in Port

Townsend. KPTZ looks forward to reporting specific findings from this meeting once the transcript is available. According to a Port Townsend *Leader* article published yesterday, a recent workshop between officials from Olympic Community Action Programs (OlyCAP) and the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners focused on advancing the project to phase 2 beginning March 31. Phase 2 would add septic and running water to the camp, giving residents access to flushing toilets and a community kitchen. The *Leader* article stated that Commissioner Brotherton had requested the special workshop around funding, and that the commissioners agreed to spend an additional \$500,000 on the project, saying they would look into remaining federal relief funds. The Caswell–Brown Village, named in honor of two homeless people who succumbed to the elements, looks to eventually house up to 50 people in 40 spaces and has been an ongoing collaborative venture between the city, county and local non-profit OlyCAP.

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.