

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Jim Burke, with local news for February 1, 2022.

One week from today, February 8, is election Day in Jefferson County, with two important school levies on the Ballot. One is the operations levy, and the other is a capital projects levy. They are three-year levies that fund schools starting next year through 2025 and they replace existing levies. The operations levy is slightly less of a tax on local homeowners, compared to the current levy, and the capital projects levy is a slight increase over the current levy. After doing the math, a homeowner with a house valued at \$350,000 in 2020 paid \$504 per year and would pay \$469 per year in 2024.

In Jefferson County, there have been 2,514 cases of COVID-19 since the pandemic began. 99 people have been hospitalized, and 3 are currently hospitalized. 22 people have died from COVID-19 since the pandemic began in Jefferson County. Over 80% of people in Jefferson County have been vaccinated with at least one dose, and over 75% have been fully vaccinated. The state is now including children five years of age and older in their vaccination reporting, which just happened yesterday so those numbers will take a slight dip in the near future.

The Board of County Commissioners did not meet yesterday because it was a fifth Monday and is historically a non-meeting day. So there was no public health briefing from Dr. Berry and Willie Bence on KPTZ. The next meeting and address are scheduled for Monday, February 7, and will be broadcast at the usual 9:45am on KPTZ.

Last week, Dr. Berry emphasized that the case rate here is still very very high. If we look at the case numbers on the state website this week, we are starting to come off the peak of this most recent spike. She was asked about reporting to the state about genome sequencing of the current strain – omicron. But because the gene sequencing done in Jefferson County, she said, is done by the hospital, it doesn't get reported to the state, so it appears there is no omicron here in Jefferson County. She pointed out that because omicron is over 98-99% of cases in every other county in Washington State, we should assume that the omicron variant is everywhere here. Omicron is far more transmissible than the previous variant, delta. Thus the need for masking distancing, and vaccinations, including boosters.

N95 Masks are available for the asking at Tri-Area Pharmacy, two local QFC stores, and the Port Townsend Safeway.

Submit your Public Health questions to Dr. Allison Berry and to Willie Bence by emailing contactus@kptz.org. Note: The weekly deadline for these to be submitted is on Fridays at noon, to be answered at the following Monday's BOCC meeting.

The following is from an article in *The Peninsula Sunday News* by Diane Urbani de la Paz: In hopes of helping the Fort Worden Public Development Authority move toward better times, the state Parks and Recreation Commission has given it a number of financial breaks. The PDA's 50-year lease of the campus – lodging, restaurants, conference spaces – at Fort Worden State Park was a topic during the commission's all-day meeting Thursday. State Parks staff had recommended that, given the depression of tourism revenues, the PDA should receive a one-time waiver of several requirements. Those include providing camping reservation and front-desk services and selling \$250,000 worth of park Discover Passes.

Another staff recommendation called for the PDA to be given a one-time award of up to \$150,000, to offset the cost of grounds maintenance at the Fort. During the past year and a half, staff and volunteers have intermittently provided that work. The PDA's lease had also required the sharing of 3.5% of its gross revenues throughout the year. As part of the proposed lease amendment, State Parks staff advocated for suspending that until May 2023. After a lengthy report by Peter Herzog, assistant director of parks development, the State Parks commissioners unanimously approved all of these changes in the PDA's lease. Commissioner Ken Bounds expressed his admiration for the work of David Timmons, the executive director who took the helm of the PDA in late 2020. A combination of financial mismanagement and the global pandemic put the organization in a bad way nearly two years ago, and Timmons got it "out of the mess" and into a sustainable model, Bounds said.

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. This is Jim Burke. Thank you for listening.