

Good afternoon. You're tuned in to 91.9 FM KPTZ on your FM dial here in Port Townsend Washington. I am Simon Jaynes, bringing you your local news for February 17, 2022.

THING, a music and arts event produced by Seattle Theatre Group (STG) and Adam Zacks officially announced plans yesterday for the festival to return to Port Townsend this year. He tweeted, "We are excited to hang at Historic Fort Worden in Port Townsend, WA with you this summer. The 2022 dates and lineup for music, arts, and other things will be announced, Tuesday, Feb 22nd." THING premiered to a large audience at Fort Worden in August of 2019, presenting musical acts such as De La Soul, Jeff Tweedy, Calexico, Kurt Vile, The Violent Femmes. and dozens more nationally recognized up and coming acts. THING was unable up to follow its debut in Port Townsend, as the subsequent two summers were defined by the social restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, but KPTZ will be following this story and keeping you up to date as the Festival announces more details about its plan to return in 2022.

Upcoming: On Friday, March 11, Dr. Allison Berry, Jefferson County Health Officer, plans to rescind Jefferson County's proof-of-vaccine-card mandate for restaurants and bars in light of the rapidly declining COVID-19 case rates. Dr Berry said the rate of COVID-19 cases should drop enough by then, if current mitigations are followed, that lifting the health order requiring people to show proof of vaccination in restaurants could be done safely. If county case rates fall and stay below 200 cases per 100,000 prior to March 11, Dr. Berry will consider rescinding the order earlier. Currently, the two-week case rate is 742.47 per 100,000. The peak case rate occurred at the new year at 1,460. The last time case rates were below 200 per 100,000 was the end of November.

Berry said Jefferson County's mandate would be lifted in tandem with its identical requirement in Clallam County, though Jefferson County will most likely hit the threshold sooner than Clallam. Business owners who want to retain a vaccination policy may certainly do so, Dr. Berry said. This public health order being lifted locally comes against the backdrop of statewide plans to remove the public mask mandate by as soon as the end of next month. The ultimate lifting of the state's mask mandate is a decision that Gov. Jay Inslee will make, Dr. Berry told Jefferson County Commissioners at their weekly pandemic briefing Monday, and the timing of that is still being determined. Berry said the announcement date on the end of the mask mandate may come as soon as the end of this week, and she reiterated again, even if the mandate is lifted, people will still be required to wear masks in high-risk settings where there are vulnerable populations. People can of course continue to wear masks voluntarily, Berry said.

Jefferson County Public Health reported 14 new cases of COVID-19 yesterday, which brings our total case count, since the beginning of the pandemic, up to 2,904. There are currently 118 active cases in isolation and 4 Jefferson County residents are hospitalized. The percentage of the population who are fully vaccinated hovers around 75%.

Property tax statements have been mailed out across Jefferson county according to County Treasurer Stacie Prada. The first half tax payments are due by April 30. You can find a link to frequently asked questions regarding property taxes, including how and where to pay them, at the Jefferson County Treasurer's website <https://www.co.jefferson.wa.us/faq.aspx?TID=36>. You can also find a tax statement levy explanation, detailing which tax districts support which levy at (<https://www.co.jefferson.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/740/Tax-Statement-Levy-Explanations-PDF?bidId>).

According to Jefferson County Assessor Jeff Chapman, median home assessed values in 2021 rose approximately 10% from 2020.

Both School Levies did end up passing in Quilcene last week after the slim margin in both elections required every vote to be counted. The Educational Programs and Operations Levy passed with 61.84% yes votes and the Capital Levy won 52.16% to secure the \$12.3 Million Construction Bond for improvements.

Just a reminder for local parents of school age children – no school this coming Monday February 21. It is Presidents day.

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.