

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Ann Katzenbach with local news for February 18, 2022.

Four patients are currently hospitalized with COVID-19 in Jefferson County. To date there have been 2,927 cases of COVID-19 reported in Jefferson County for a total all-time positivity rate of 6.48%. The county has seen a significant decline in COVID-19 cases in recent weeks and that has led Dr Allison Berry of the county health department to announce that she will rescind the order requiring proof of vaccination at restaurants and bars by Monday March 11 or even sooner.

Tomorrow, Saturday, February 19, Jefferson County Health will offer free vaccinations at Chimacum junior/senior high school from 9-11am. This includes all shots for Pfizer age 5 and older and second and booster shots for Moderna age 18 and older. Appointments are recommended. Walk-ins are welcome. For appointments go to <https://www.jeffersoncountypublichealth.org/1429/COVID-19>.

The start of the Spring sailing schedule for the Anacortes/San Juan Islands and Port Townsend/Coupeville routes will be postponed by two weeks and will now begin on Sunday, April 10. The Washington State Department of Transportation says “the delay will ensure reliable service through the San Juan Islands while contending with continued crewing challenges.”

Vehicle reservations for the two added weeks of the current season on both runs will be released at 7am on Thursday, March 10. Reservations for the upcoming Spring season for travel on both routes between April 10 and June 18 will also be released on March 10. Reservations are not required, but are strongly recommended. Limited stand-by space is available on all sailings. Visit <https://wsdot.com/ferries/schedule/default.aspx> to make car reservations. As always, walk-on passengers do not need reservations.

The Jefferson Economic Development Council is looking for assistance in getting the word out about new Grant Funds that are available to small businesses in the county. The priority of this grant program is to help underserved businesses and those that received little to no funding in the previous grant rounds. It is also intended to provide funding to businesses that were adversely impacted by mandated closures. Business owners and nonprofits are encouraged to apply, including those that started operations during the pandemic. Special consideration will be given to applicants who have had difficulty accessing previous COVID-19-related grants and support, and those that come from historically marginalized communities. The application and more information on how to apply is available at <https://www.edcteamjefferson.org/grants>. The deadline is March 11.

On Tuesday, February 22, 7th Street between Hendricks and Grant Streets will be closed from 5am to 1pm. And on Wednesday and Thursday, February 23 and 24 between 7:30am and 3:30pm, Washington Street will be closed between Pierce and Walker to construct permanent islands that will slow traffic in that area.

Government offices, school and some businesses will be closed this Monday, President's Day, a holiday that honors all persons – all men so far – who served in the office of president of the United States.

The Great Backyard Bird Count begins today and runs through Monday, February 21. It's a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of international bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event and report their sighting online at birdcount.org. Anyone can take part in the count from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard or anywhere in the world. For more information about how to participate and send in your sightings, visit <https://ebird.org/home>.

And that's it for today's local news. KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5pm Monday through Friday and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us through news@kptz.org. I'm Ann Katzenbach. Thanks for listening. Have a great weekend!