

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

Dr. Allison Berry and Willie Bence both spoke with the Board of County Commissioners yesterday and answered questions. There were no questions from KPTZ listeners, so you all must be very well informed. You can listen to their remarks right from our homepage (<https://kptz.org/2022/02/28/county-public-health-report-2-28-22/>).

In Jefferson County, the current case rate is 525 per hundred thousand. Still falling. Total case count: 3,066 since the pandemic began. 79 cases currently, 4 are hospitalized. There have been 27 deaths.

Friday, March 11, Dr. Allison Berry still plans to rescind the Clallam and 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. The CDC is rating counties across the country with LOW, MEDIUM, or HIGH case rates. Clallam and Jefferson Counties are both still in the HIGH case rate category, according to the CDC website (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>).

Beginning March 21, face masks will no longer be required in most settings, including K-12 schools and childcare facilities. Masks will still be required in health care settings such as hospitals, outpatient and dental offices, long term care centers, correctional facilities, and on public transit. In addition, beginning March 1, today, vaccine verification for large events will no longer be required. (<https://medium.com/wagovernor/covid-19-trends-give-leaders-confidence-to-look-towards-next-phase-of-pandemic-response-a46340dd2997>).

The Port Townsend City Council has affirmed a new group of residents to examine the Sims Gateway and Boatyard Expansion Project. The project, a source of passionate discussion around town, now has an advisory group called the stakeholder committee. The nine members are tasked with looking at the project from a technical standpoint "to determine what is the best solution," city Public Works Director Steve King told the council Tuesday night. While people can watch them, the viewing public will not be invited to comment until the panel's findings are forwarded to the city's Parks, Recreation, Tree and Trail Advisory Board (PRT-TAB). That board was the body that forwarded the idea last summer of cutting down the poplars on both sides of Sims Way – alongside the Boat Haven and Kah Tai Lagoon.

The city and Port of Port Townsend and the Jefferson County Public Utilities District, whose power lines are close beside a stand of elderly poplars, joined in a plan to reimagine Sims Way. The old trees could be replaced with native species, a pedestrian-bicycle path put in, power lines undergrounded, and the boatyard expanded, officials from all three entities agreed. In the following months, the Gateway Poplar Alliance, a group of opponents to that plan, has written letters, posted paper hearts onto the trees, and asked the port and PUD to "stand down their chainsaws." Their website (<https://www.poplaralliance.org/>) describes some alternatives to the city-port-PUD proposal.

The City Council is focused on the new stakeholder committee. It includes people with a variety of interests: Arlene Alen, director of The Chamber of Jefferson County; landscape designer Kate Dwyer; Ron Sikes of the Admiralty Audubon Society; arborist Forest Shomer; and permaculturist Jennifer Rotermund, who will serve as the liaison with the PRT-TAB. Residents Dan Burden, Russell Hill and Steve Mader are also members, along with Joni Blanchard, who's been quite vocal in her opposition to the poplar-cutting plan. The city's next step, King said, is to hire a consultant to work with the stakeholder committee on the whole Sims Gateway proposal.

Deputy Mayor Amy Howard said the committee and the PRT-TAB members are all volunteers, “and I would like to entreat the community to be kind to them, even in disagreement. “We are all people, and we are all trying to do the best we can for each other,” she said. The public will have a chance later to comment and participate in the PRT-TAB meeting, King said. That panel meets only every other month; its next session is April 26. The City Council voted unanimously to recognize and support the stakeholder committee process.

The Clallam County Auditor’s Office is assuring residents whose doors have been knocked on by people seeking voter registration information that they do not represent the county agency. If anyone comes to your doorstep to ask about your voting status, they are not from any government agency, and they should identify themselves as being from some nongovernmental group. You are not required to share any information with them whatsoever.

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.