

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for March 9, 2022.

Jefferson County Public Health reported one new case of COVID-19 yesterday. This brings our total case count, since the beginning of the pandemic, up to 3,104. There are currently 33 active cases in isolation and three Jefferson County residents are hospitalized. As a reminder: the mask mandate in Jefferson County ends this Friday. But Dr. Allison Berry, the public health director in Jefferson and Clallam Counties, recommends you continue to mask up in indoor spaces, especially if you are unvaccinated or immune-compromised. As always you can find the most up to date information on case numbers and hospitalizations at the Jefferson County Public Health website (<https://www.jeffersoncountypublichealth.org/1466/Case-Information>).

A hearing took place yesterday regarding the Madrona Ridge Development project – a housing development in the works that would produce 167 single family homes in the area west of Rainier Street, north of the Discovery Road roundabout. The project is being taken on by the company Montebanc Management LLC and the plans are being drafted by ESM Consulting Engineers. Yesterday's hearing was to request preliminary approval for its permit applications to build the 167-lot detached single family home development.

The hearing, which you can watch by going to the city's website and clicking on "Agendas and Minutes" (<https://cityofpt.us/citycouncil/page/agendasminutesvideos>) was presided by hearing examiner Phil Albricks, who spent more than an hour listening to the engineers and designers hired by Montebanc Management describe the plans for the project. He also listened to city staff members discuss some drawbacks and issues with the permit applications. Members of the public also had the opportunity to comment – and several pointed out the lack of affordable housing in Port Townsend, and how the developer does not plan to set aside any of the development for affordable housing.

"The Madrona Ridge project, as proposed, is to be 167 detached single family houses crammed together on lots smaller than a standard city lot in Port Townsend," wrote Peter Bonyun in a public comment. "We are being told by the developer that this project is intended to be "middle" income housing," he added. "We have no assurances of this." Bonyun pointed out that the developer will be stripping the land, grading, constructing roads, installing infrastructure, and then staking lots and selling them to the highest bidders who will then build homes for the market price. This is similar to the housing development project on Cook Avenue, where homes are being built and sold for more than \$700,000. "Currently the "market" is out-of-area folks with the resources to bid up every sale," commented Bonyun.

Other commenters pointed out a desire to see different types of houses built, as opposed to just detached single-family homes. However the city's report pointed out that Port Townsend code encourages but does not prescribe a variety of housing types and designs. Specific single-family house design within a preliminary PUD is not part of the application submittal requirements. But Montblanc intends for all lots to be developed with detached single-family residences. No decisions were made at yesterday's hearing, and there is still time to submit comments to the hearing examiner. All additional comments should be emailed to publiccomment@cityofpt.us by next Monday, when the hearing examiner will reconvene the hearing to take a look at final public comments. After that, the hearing examiner has 10 business days to issue a final decision on the permit. That decision, he pointed out, is appealable in the Jefferson County Superior Court through a Land Use Petition Act.

As predicted by city staff last fall, water rates will be increasing starting April 1. The final Water Supply Agreement between the city and the Port Townsend Paper Mill was approved at the end of 2021. This marked a historic effort in providing water sustainability for the City of Port Townsend for the next 20 years. The agreement ensures that equitable costs for untreated water are covered by both the city and the Port Townsend Paper Corporation (PTPC). This equitable coverage of costs is accomplished by each entity paying for actual volume of water consumed. As a result, the city anticipates approximately \$4.5 million per year will be paid by the paper mill, while the city's expected share will be approximately \$500,000 per year based on historical consumption. Payment for raw water consumption will fund operations and maintenance of the system as well as replacement of transmission pipeline, sections of which are now almost 100 years old.

As a result of this new agreement, city resident's water rates will increase beginning April 1, 2022: The monthly water base rate will increase from \$22.06 to \$23.13. Water usage charges increase from \$3.12 per 1,000 gallons to \$3.27 per 1,000 gallons. The water capital surcharge will remain \$22.00 to fund ongoing capital improvement projects. These rates also reflect applicable business taxes that the water utility incurs, such as State Excise Tax (5%) and City Utility Tax (18%). You can expect to see these changes on your water bill starting in April.

And that's it for today's local news. KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5pm Monday through Thursday and at noon on Friday and Saturday. You can contact us through news@kptz.org. I'm Lily Haight. Thanks for listening.