

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 March 17, 2022.

According to the Jefferson County Public Health Website, our 2 week COVID-19 case rate is still in the "Moderate" range – between 101-200 per 100,00 – which means it is still recommended that people mask in public indoor spaces, even though the public mask mandate has been removed for almost a week. The case rate and recommendation will be updated on Friday. Jefferson County recorded 3 new cases of COVID-19 yesterday bringing the total numbers of cases since the beginning of the pandemic to 3,134.

During their Monday night Business meeting this week, the Port Townsend City Council took on the question of what to do with our outdoor dining areas that have become such a familiar site over the past two years. The fenced off "streateries" as they are known – the seating areas set up in public right of ways and parking spaces in front of restaurants around town – do require permitting and approval by the city. The Council first approved these temporary eating and drinking zones in mid 2020 and since then the Streatery program has been renewed three times, with the latest extension set to end May 9.

Based on public comments from residents, restaurant owners, and from City Council Members themselves, it appears that the hope is to make these open-air dining experiences a permanent part of Port Townsend's streetscape. The City Council heard from multiple restaurant and café owners who all echoed the sentiment that for one: The streateries had kept them in business during tough times these past two years, and two: That as business owners, they would enjoy the opportunity to improve the look and function of these spaces if they were to become permanent. According to local restaurant owner Kris Nelson, she hopes to "build something that adds to our streets and makes them attractive, and not just keep putting rope on her tent." "I've spent a fair amount of time in Europe," said council member Libby Wennstrom, adding that, there, sidewalk cafes add to a lively feeling – even in colder places such as northern Germany. "They manage," she said.

At the same time, streateries are taking about 10 parking spaces out of the equation between downtown and uptown. In a survey by the Port Townsend Main Street Program last year, business owners complained about that, and about the way some of the streateries look. Public Works Director Steve King told the council. "Our existing streateries are tired. They've been beat up by the weather." King then went on to outline the plan for surveying the community about permanent streateries, proposing city code changes and potentially approving those changes – all by May 2. Council member Rowe admitted that they were facing a tight timeline for actually revising the municipal code by May 2, but during the course of the meeting, the council appeared in agreement that this was a better goal than merely offering up another extension for the temporary program. Main Street and the city will conduct another survey via Facebook and their website later this month. To receive the survey directly, people need to sign up for Main Street's e-newsletter via <https://ptmainstreet.org/> (scroll to bottom) by this Sunday March 20.

It has been less than a month since Thing NW announced the festival would return to Fort Worden August 26-28 of this year. Interested festival goers can now browse the day-to-day schedule of events at <https://thingnw.org/schedule> to check out which artists will be appearing which day. Seattle Theatre Group, who is producing the event, says so far they "are happy with sales and the response has been overwhelmingly positive."

One important point to keep in mind for anyone coming in from out of town for the festival is that most – if not all, traditional lodging in Port Townsend has already been booked for that weekend. Both Fort Worden and Fort Townsend Historical State Parks are completely reserved for all tent, RV, and other camping sites from Aug. 26-28. The Port Townsend Inn and the Harborside Inn were quoted in the *Leader* this week as being out of hotel rooms for that weekend and are both still getting calls every week, with people hoping to find accommodations. The Harborside Inn has started a waiting list for people looking for a place to stay. The Officer's Row houses at Fort Worden have been reserved by Seattle Theatre Group for the time being, to house concert organizers and talent. They have until April to officially book these spaces or to release them. A wait list has been created for these potential accommodations as well. At this point the Jefferson County Fairgrounds is being discussed as one more camping area that could be opened up to people attending the festival. KPTZ will continue to investigate this situation for updates on how to contact the fairgrounds or any other camping and lodging options that become available to the public.

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.