

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for March 16, 2022.

Jefferson County Public Health reported 1 new case of COVID-19 yesterday. This brings our total case count, since the beginning of the pandemic, up to 3,131. There are currently 12 active cases in isolation and two Jefferson County residents are hospitalized. Our COVID-19 case rate in Jefferson County is currently at 189 per 100,000. Even though the state and county's mask mandate has been lifted, public health officer Dr. Allison Berry recommends wearing a mask in indoor settings until the case rate is below 100/100,000. This is especially important in crowded indoor spaces where vaccination status is unknown. Masking is also recommended for those who are unvaccinated, or in a high risk group or who are immunocompromised, on cancer treatments or taking immunosuppressive medications. 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>).

The Port Townsend city council voted Monday night to request the planning commission take on the task of updating the Temporary Encampment Zoning Code, so that Pat's Place – a transitional supportive housing village made up of wooden tiny homes on 10th and Rosecrans Streets in Port Townsend – can last longer than the six to eight months that is currently allowed for in the city's code. Pat's Place is the second temporary housing village project taken on by Bayside Housing and a host of community volunteers, who built a village of tiny-homes for people experiencing homelessness to have a roof over their head. The villages are not meant to be a long-term housing solution, but given the lack of affordable housing in Port Townsend and Jefferson County, it can take longer than eight months for someone to find a permanent home here.

The managers of Pat's Place have asked the city to explore an extension to the 240-day limit. Because making changes to city code takes time, city attorney Heidi Greenwood explained to city council members that the city will likely enact an interim regulation to extend the limit, so that the time for Pat's Place won't expire before the planning commission has time to amend the code. The city also tasked the planning commission with the job of looking at the code that regulates off-street parking for ADUs. Currently, city code requires there be two on-site parking spaces – each a minimum of 9 feet wide by 19 feet long – for each single-family residence, and that if you want to build an ADU you must have an additional 9-feet wide by 19-feet long on-site parking space.

The planning commission has had many of their meetings canceled in the past year, and the city's building department currently does not have a director, as Lance Bailey quit last December. But the city council members have expressed a desire to make even more changes to city code to ease the burden of the affordable housing crisis. Several council members, including Monica MickHager, Aislinn Diamanti, and Ben Thomas suggested at a meeting a few weeks ago that the planning commission take a look at inclusionary housing code – which would be an amendment to city code that would require developers who are seeking permits for large housing developments to include a certain percentage of affordable housing in their project.

This idea was spurred by the fact that two new development projects in town are taking place, but won't necessarily add any affordable housing to our area. The Cook Avenue building project will have market rate homes and the Madrona Ridge project off of Rainier Street and Discovery Road is still in the permitting process, although the hearing examiner, who will make the final decision on the project permits, hinted at the hearing that the city's hands are tied when it comes to requiring developers to create affordable housing. You can always make suggestions to the city council by emailing public comment to publiccomment@cityofpt.us, or

by attending a city council meeting virtually and clicking the “raise your hand” button on Zoom. City council meetings are now being held in a hybrid format – so you can attend in person at city hall, or online by going to cityofpt.us (<https://cityofpt.us/citycouncil/page/agendasminutesvideos>).

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.