

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Jim Burke with local news for April 6, 2022.

\*\*\*

Jefferson County Public Health reported 4 new cases of COVID-19 yesterday. This brings our total case count, since the beginning of the pandemic, up to 3,212. There are currently 28 active cases in isolation and one Jefferson County resident is hospitalized. The two-week case rate for Jefferson County is at 171 per 100,000 as of yesterday. For the most up to date case information, visit the Jefferson County Public Health website (<https://www.jeffersoncountypublichealth.org/1466/Case-Information>).

\*\*\*

The New Old Time Chautauqua is teaming up with The Production Alliance to make Rhody Festival weekend an even bigger event this year. While fundraising and planning is currently underway for the traditional Rhody Festival events – starting with the trike races on May 18 and ending with the grand parade on May 21 – the New Old Time Chautauqua is planning to host a three-day weekend of action, adventure, fun, history, and civic engagement with epic performances on May 20 through 22. The New Old Time Chautauqua will kick off with a dance party and picnic at Fort Worden in the evening on May 20, followed by an outdoor movie. On Saturday, the 10th annual cake picnic will take place after the Rhody Grand Parade, followed by a Chautauqua show at Fort Worden in the evening. On Sunday, there will be two hours of workshops provided by the Chautauqua – on topics ranging from juggling and hula hooping to historical and educational talks given by local Indigenous community leaders, educators, and historians. You can learn more about the weekend of events by going to the Production Alliance's website, at <https://theproductionalliance.org/>.

\*\*\*

The city council may be adding renter protection laws to their work plan for this year, thanks to a comment from a member of the public pointing out how rental prices have skyrocketed this year. Conner Bouchard-Roberts, owner of publisher Winter Texts, wrote a public comment to the city council for their meeting this week, pointing out how in his experience, along with many others in town, rental prices have gone up in the beginning of 2022, just after many landlords filed their taxes. Some rents went up more than 70% in one increase, he said.

Rent control laws at the municipal level are illegal in Washington State, but Bouchard-Roberts pointed to the work of local legislators in Auburn and Seattle, where they have found alternative ways to bolster renter rights. One example is increasing the duration needed to notify a tenant of a rent increase of more than 5%. In Auburn, legislators require landlords to give tenants 120 days notice. In Seattle, landlords must give 180 days notice.

"I suggest we as a city move forward, with extreme urgency, to pass our own rental legislation in this template to help work against the disintegration of the living viability for the working class in town," wrote Bouchard-Roberts in his letter to the city. The request did not fall on deaf ears: At the end of the city council meeting on Monday, councilmember Monica MickHager requested that the council look into drafting legislation that could help protect renters' rights. The item was added to the city's "suggestion board" which means it is on the city's radar – though with the current work plan, it is unknown when this will be given time and attention by both staff and council members.

\*\*\*

Results are in for the city's survey on their Streateries and Parklets program. A total of 520 people responded to the survey – and 325 of the respondents support the establishment of a long-term Streateries program. One of

the main concerns brought up by the 186 people who do not support the program, is the loss of parking spaces downtown because the streateries are allowed to place tables and tents in spaces in front of the businesses. This takes away from parking downtown, and the tents some restaurants have erected also block views of some of the neighboring storefronts. More than 200 of the survey respondents wrote that they wanted the streateries to be required to complement the historic seaport feel of downtown, and be made with high quality, durable materials, so that they withstand the gale force winds that often batter Water Street. A majority of respondents also wrote that streatory owners should be required to pay an annual fee to take up the space on the sidewalk and parking spots. A majority also supported a parking enforcement and management plan. You can view more of the survey responses by going to the city's website, and finding Monday night's agenda, which has a link to the survey responses (<https://cityofpt.us/citycouncil/page/agendasminutesvideos>).

The next steps for the city are to reach out to the Historic Preservation Committee to see if there are any design standards they should include in a potential code revision should the city decide to make the streateries project permanent. Then, the issue will come back before the city council on April 18, when council members will look at a draft of the proposed code changes.

\*\*\*

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](mailto:news@kptz.org). I'm Jim Burket. Thanks for listening.