

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for April 27, 2022.

Jefferson County Public Health reported 17 new cases of COVID-19 yesterday. This brings our total case count, since the beginning of the pandemic, up to 3,415. There are currently 71 active cases in isolation, but no Jefferson County residents are currently hospitalized. County Health Officer Dr. Allison Berry reported on Monday that Jefferson County once again has a high transmission rate of COVID-19, with a positivity rate of 9% presently. About 70-90% of our cases are now being found through at-home antigen tests, which can be purchased at pharmacies. Dr. Berry reported Monday that there are two small clusters of outbreaks in schools, numbering three cases each, that are related to unmasking in classroom settings. Dr. Berry strongly recommends wearing the highest quality KN95, KF94 or K95 mask you can find when in public, indoor places. She said the trigger to go back to mandatory masking would be if our county saw a rise in severe disease causing hospitalization and death. If you contract COVID-19, Dr. Berry said to isolate for 10 days. After 10 days, you are not contagious. For more information, call the hotline at Jefferson Healthcare: 360-344-3094. For the most up to date case information, visit the Jefferson County Public Health website (<https://www.jeffersoncountypublichealth.org/202/Public-Health>) or the Jefferson County Government Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/jeffcowagov/>).

Preliminary results on the Quilcene School bond are in, showing a very close race. So far 50.77% of people voted to reject the bond, while 49.23% voted to pass it. The \$12.3 million bond measure – proposed to replace the elementary school, build a new Career and Technical Education (CTE) facility and make improvements to the athletic fields – narrowly missed the 60% supermajority needed for passage in February, bringing in an approval percentage of 59.37, just five votes short of the number needed for passage. The measure came back for another vote this month, and based on the preliminary results it looks like there may not be enough support for it to pass. So far a total of 782 ballots have been counted – 397 against and 385 for. There are still 49 ballots left to count. But for the proposition to pass, it needs 60% of the vote. The next ballot count will take place today at 4pm.

County Administrator Mark McCauley responded to the *Leader* article published a few weeks ago detailing a recent State Auditor's Office report that showed some significant errors in Jefferson County's 2020 financial reporting. According to the *Leader*, the mistakes brought to light in the audit included misclassification of more than \$113 million in ending cash and investment balances. While the *Leader* article did not make any mention of embezzlement or missing funds, rumors immediately began flying about what, or who, had caused the errors. A letter to the editor in the following week's paper questioned why treasurer Stacie Prada had not yet resigned. So McCauley took some time to explain in a bit more detail exactly what went wrong with the county's 2020 financial reporting at Monday morning's commissioner meeting.

"I think the public was aghast at this \$113 million," McCauley said at Monday's meeting. "What I'm going to try to do is explain, not make excuses." He began by explaining that the report released this March was an audit of the 2020 financial reporting, which he reminded was a difficult year due to COVID-19 and the stay-at-home order. On top of working with staff remotely, he explained that both the treasurer's office and auditor's office were short staffed at that time. The county was also going through a transition of software programs. The state audit noted that the auditor's office and treasurer's office use two different software programs for accounting. On top of that, McCauley said, the county was adding new software programs to merge the two conflicting programs into one. This could cause issues to occur in 2021's reporting as well, he said.

But the key reason there was a misclassification of funds was due to conflicting guidance from the State Auditor's Office itself. \$113.4 million in ending cash and investment balances was originally classified correctly, but in December 2021 the state changed their classification rules, and then informed the county that they had misclassified these funds in their 2020 reporting. Treasurer Stacie Prada also spoke at Monday's meeting to emphasize that no money is missing – the funds were just classified wrong. You can watch McCauley's entire presentation by going to the county's website (<https://www.co.jefferson.wa.us/>) and clicking on "Videos of Meetings."

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.