

This is Casey Dolan with your local news for Wednesday, May 11, 2022 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

Jefferson County Public Health reports that 19 new cases of COVID-19 have been added yesterday, Tuesday, May 10, bringing the total number of cases to 3,622. The two-week case rate is 537 cases per 100,000 people. The risk of COVID-19 transmission in public, indoor places is high, so it is recommended that everyone wear a well-fitting, high-quality mask while in public, indoor places.

Yesterday, the FBI captured a couple from Auburn on the run in Port Townsend. The couple had been scheduled to be sentenced two days earlier for having engineered a Ponzi scheme in which they bilked \$25M from 2500 investors, offering promises of gold and silver for their investments. Diane Erdmann, 49, and Bernard Hansen, 61, were arrested after a hotel worker in Port Hadlock recognized them, their van and their dog from television news reports. This story is developing.

The Washington State Department of Transportation intends to close the Hood Canal Bridge for four weekends this summer and fall so crews can upgrade and replace key parts of the bridge's locking system. The dates have not yet been specified, but closures will extend from 11pm Friday through 4am Monday each time the bridge is closed. County Commissioner Greg Brotherton noted during Monday's board of commissioners meeting that the shutdowns would coincide with the summer tourist season. There will also be reduced service from the normal two-boat ferry to only one on the Port Townsend-Coupeville ferry route, continuing the current regimen of crossings. Brotherton also mentioned that US Highway 101 was a lengthy detour route for those trying to travel to the Olympic Peninsula.

The Port Townsend Council Culture and Society Committee is meeting today to review a proposal submitted by the Port Townsend Arts Commission on establishing a position of Poet Laureate for Port Townsend. The Poet Laureate would work with the City Council and the Arts Commission to develop a program that would help raise the community's awareness of the importance of poetry to the health and vitality of our community. The Poet Laureate would receive an honorarium of \$1000/year, serve for one year and give four readings of original poems per year at events pre-determined by the City Council in consultation with the Arts Commission. After each reading, the city will send the poems out with its newsletter. According to the proposal, "The Poet Laureate Selection Panel would consist of three to five informed individuals from literary arts organizations located both within and beyond Jefferson County." Each panelist would receive a \$300 honorarium.

It seems a fitting appointment for a community proud to call itself home to local nonprofit, independent award-winning poetry publisher Copper Canyon Press. Members of the public can attend the Committee virtually by going to the city website (<https://ptpubliclibrary.org/citycouncil/page/council-culture-and-society-committee>).

The Washington State Association of Timber Counties is holding a special meeting today at the County Courthouse in Port Townsend. The public can only attend virtually through a Zoom link which can be accessed through the Jefferson County website (<https://www.co.jefferson.wa.us/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=926>). According

to the published agenda, there will be a review of the timber training program and status updates on the Board of Natural Resources, Federal forestland issues and the 20-year Forest Health Plan.

Following these reviews, the discussion will turn toward the upcoming 2022 wildland fire season and how to prepare for it. The Association will also address the Forest Carbon Project (<https://www.dnr.wa.gov/news/dnr-launches-first-nation-carbon-project-protecting-forests-and-creating-over-million-carbon>), the Department of Natural Resources' setting aside of 10,000 acres of trust lands for participation in the voluntary carbon market.

The Washington State Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal Plant Health Inspection Service have confirmed the state's second detection of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) – also known as bird flu – in a non-commercial backyard flock in Spokane County. The affected flock is a mix of about 75 geese, chickens, ducks and guinea fowl. This is the second detection of the virus in Washington state this year, the first being confirmed on May 5 in Pacific County also in a backyard flock. There are no detections in commercial poultry in the state. There is no immediate public health concern due to the avian influenza virus detected. Avian influenza does not affect poultry meat or egg products, which remain safe to eat. As always, both wild and domestic poultry should be properly cooked.

KPTZ 91.9 FM broadcasts your local news Monday through Thursday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Friday and Saturday. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. I'm Casey Dolan, thank you for listening.