

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Jim Burke, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, May 31, 2022.

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KPTZ joins Local 2020 to cheer on a variety of organizations across Jefferson County who are partnering to organize Car Free Day on June 1 (tomorrow!) Students, employees and all residents are asked to leave their cars at home, or drive less, and use alternative ways to get to school, work, or run errands. More info at <https://12020.org/>.

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Habitat for Humanity of East Jefferson County has finalized the purchase of 17 acres on Mason Street in Port Hadlock for the development of a new neighborhood that will provide more than 100 permanently affordable single- and mixed-family homes for low- to modest-income residents. Currently zoned as Rural Residential, so it's able to have one home per five acres only, the parcel will be rezoned as Moderate Density before homes are built with the addition of a sewer system and other infrastructure for the future community.

Once the sewer is in place, the land will be capable of higher density than land on septic alone. A Port Townsend *Leader* article posted online yesterday said that Habitat will spend the next three years planning and conversing with the community to ensure the neighborhood fits in with the wants and needs of the Hadlock community, and reflects its existing style. Siobhan Canty, president and CEO of the Jefferson Community Foundation said, "We really want to make it feel like a neighborhood that fits in with the folks that are already there and houses already there." Jamie Maciejewski, executive director of Habitat for Humanity of East Jefferson County, said her team is "so inspired by the generosity of local people to make housing happen."

Most of the \$4.4 million to purchase and develop the land came from individuals. Jefferson County provided \$500,000 through the American Rescue Plan Act and a remaining \$600,000 is needed to complete the project. Canty said, "I hope that everyone in our community celebrates this success and I hope it's the next success of many. We have a long way to go and this is a step in the right direction." Volunteers and donations are still needed. To learn more or to make a donation, go to <https://www.habitatjec.org/> or <https://jcf Gives.org/>.

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Also online at the Port Townsend *Leader* website: Jefferson County commissioners unanimously voted last Monday to withdraw their support for a \$124,000 grant to pay for roof repairs and new windows at Trinity United Methodist Church. The decision was a reversal of their earlier support of an application to the Washington State Department of Commerce for a general purpose Community Development Block Grant. The church needed a municipal partner to apply for the grant funding, and county officials had said the support of the grant would have no impact on the county's budget. Officials noted that the county had previously awarded a \$20,000 grant to Trinity United Methodist Church to assist with improvements to the 150-year-old church. Church officials had contacted the county for grant application assistance for a \$124,000 state grant to help with several repair projects, including an upgrade at its preschool building to make it handicap accessible, fixing flood damage, and replacement of an old oil furnace/boiler. Renovating the kitchen, a new roof and the replacement of 30-year-old windows were part of the "ask." The Port Townsend church is facing a June 1 deadline for the grant application.

Several community members have raised alarm about public funding being awarded to a church project. County resident Tom Thiersch was concerned about the use of public funds by a religious institution. County Commissioner Heidi Eisenhour said the grant assistance request had raised many questions. "I feel like there's

not enough detail in terms of the community impact that the funding would have,” she said. Commissioner Kate Dean said she also had concerns, and said, “I have enough discomfort that I’m worried about proceeding. Perhaps a larger conversation was needed.” She went on to say she doesn’t see enough safeguards in place to make sure that it’s the right use of public funds. Commissioner Greg Brotherton went further: “...I don’t think I would support any religious organization for these grant monies,” he said. “I just think that there’s other ways that we can work together,” Brotherton said, adding that he was always willing to look at a specific project that a religious organization is looking for partnership on. “I’m always willing to consider it. But...this is really general capital improvements, it seems to me,” Brotherton said. Commissioners voted 3-0 to pull their support for the grant.

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And Dr. Allison Berry, health officer for Clallam and Jefferson counties, did not report to the County Commissioners yesterday, as it was Memorial Day. She did speak on Friday to the Peninsula *Daily News*. “We are not seeing the kind of surge we used to see,” said Dr. Allison Berry. “Given that we are at 800 or more cases per 100,000, normally by now we would have seen significant increases in hospitalization and death, and we’re just not seeing that here, not right now,” she said Friday.

Dr. Berry expects the first round of approved COVID-19 vaccines for children 6 months to 4 years old to be available to the public on the Peninsula by the end of June. “We are putting in place plans for how to make sure that those get delivered quickly to families once they are available,” Berry said. “I think the good news about this vaccine is that the early data that we have is that this vaccine is safe and highly effective, particularly for this age group,” which is the age range of children for whom “we are seeing the highest amount of hospitalization,” she said.

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Monkeypox has reportedly been spreading recently in the U.S. But don’t panic. As of Friday, one case had been reported in Washington state. That was in a King County man who had traveled recently to a country where other monkeypox cases had been identified.

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Following the mass shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde TX, the subject of gun violence as a public health issue is again rising in conversations among health officials and the public. “When it comes to gun violence, I think it would behoove us to look at this issue as we look at causes of death,” Dr. Berry said. She said gun violence is now the number one cause of death in children. Before that, the top cause of child deaths in the U.S. had been motor vehicle accidents. Dr. Berry said, “When looking at those causes of death, one of the things we see is a rapid rise in deaths due to gun violence and at the same time a rapid drop in deaths due to motor vehicles. That’s not an accident. That’s because of public health intervention and reasonable safety measures. I think we could apply those same public health interventions when it comes to things like gun violence/”

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The COVID-19 numbers for today:

In Jefferson County the two-week case rate is 923 per hundred thousand (slightly off the peak last week of 938 per hundred thousand) for a total of 4,029 cases. No one is currently hospitalized.

In Clallam County, the case rate is 850 per hundred thousand for a total of 12,653 cases. That level is ever so slightly up from last week's case rate of 842 per hundred thousand. There are 2 people currently hospitalized, and there have been 112 deaths in Clallam County since the pandemic began.

You can see the latest numbers and report new cases at the counties websites:

<https://jeffersoncountypublichealth.org/1429/COVID-19>

<http://www.clallam.net/Coronavirus/>

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KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and five Monday through Thursday and at noon on Friday and Saturday. You can contact us through [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org). This is Jim Burke. Thank you for listening, and have a good Tuesday.