

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Jim Burke, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, July 12, 2022.

Yesterday was the Board of County Commissioners Meeting and Dr. Berry said that, nationally, case rates are flat and there are some “pockets” of increased hospitalizations across the country. She said there are a lot of “breathless reports” about BA-4 and 5. And it is true that, especially when it comes to BA-5, it seems to get by many who have had previous infections. She said people should not rely on previous infection alone to protect themselves past 30 days, unless they are vaccinated and boosted which might extend that protection to 90 days. As always, she recommends people wear a well-fitting, high quality mask in indoor public settings regardless of vaccination status.

In Washington state, where cases are at a relatively stable rate, 40% of new cases are of the BA-5 Omicron variant. The BA-5 variant is even more contagious, but no more severe than previous omicron infections which have all been less severe than the Delta variant. The good news is that here in Jefferson County and also in Clallam County we are starting to see a real decrease in cases. It was brought up during questions about how much underreporting there is here.

In Jefferson County the two-week case rate is 563 per hundred thousand, a slight decrease. One person is currently hospitalized, for a total of 136 hospitalizations. 128 new cases were added this week for a total of 4,770 cases. No new deaths this week so 30 people have died due to COVID-19 in Jefferson County since the pandemic began.

In Clallam County the two-week case rate is 539 per hundred thousand. Total cases now stand at 13,984. No one is currently hospitalized, for a total of 409 hospitalizations, and there have been 117 deaths in Clallam County since the pandemic began.

Last evening, right here on KPTZ 91.9FM, Angela Gyurko, the President of the League of Women Voters of Jefferson County put questions submitted by the public to the two candidates for Jefferson County Sheriff: Joe Nole, the current Sheriff, and his challenger, Art Frank, ahead of the August 2nd primary. Both candidates are Democrats, so there were many things that they agreed on. The primary is a “top two” primary, so they will both advance to the November election, but the primary might provide some insight into the chances for either candidate to win this fall. Both agreed that interventions in the community to deal with drug addiction, homelessness, mental health, and poverty can go a long way to preventing or lessening crime, especially property crimes.

Whereas Joe Nole touted his work to improve procedures and bring in a mental health professional part-time to the department, his relationships with staff and the community, Art Frank touted his own depth of experience in law enforcement going back as far as Los Angeles, and claimed he would do a better job of organizing the Sheriff's Department, making it more efficient, and be more responsive to the needs of the community.

When asked about a recent acquisition of an armored vehicle to the department, there was some small disagreement about cost. The vehicle which is officially called a BAE Cayman, or MRAP (you can look it up – it stands for Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected) was passed along at no cost from a department in California. Joe Nole said it cost \$3,000 to transport it here and Art Frank said it cost \$4,500 to get it here. The vehicle is basically functional, and after the cost of installing some equipment, the cost to the department will be minimal. They both agree on that and agree that it would only be used for “active shooter” situations, and they could keep

Law Enforcement personnel safe and possibly end the incident without harming the “active shooter.” They also said it could be used in some natural disaster situations as well. They both hope it would mostly sit idle and never need to be used. Both candidates encourage input from the public, and you can go to <https://art4sheriff.net/> and <https://www.reelectjoenole.com/home> and ask them questions directly.

You can listen to the forum on KPTZ.org on our streaming archive, and please tune in tonight for another candidate forum at 5:30pm. Tonight’s forum will feature 5 of the 6 primary candidates for the two seats from Washington’s 24th Legislative District: Mike Chapman and Matthew Rainwater for Position 1, (Position 1 candidate Sue Forde is unable to attend) and Darren Corcoran, Brian Pruiett, and Steve Tharinger for Position 2. And tomorrow at 5:30, July 13, the last forum before the August primary will include the candidates for Jefferson County Commissioner, District 3: Greg Brotherton, Jon Cooke, and Marcia Kelbon.

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. This is Jim Burke. Thank you for listening, and have a good Wednesday.