

Hello, one and all. Thanks for tuning in to 91.9 KPTZ FM . I'm Simon Jaynes with the local news for Port Townsend on this Thursday, August 18, 2022.

The Port Townsend City Council approved an ordinance in its Monday regular business meeting that lowers the speed limit on edge lane roads (ELR) from 25 to 20 miles per hour. The ordinance also identifies one additional section of roadway in the Castle Hill neighborhood to be striped as an ELR. This would be Hancock Street between 9th and Sims Way. The two streets that were originally approved for this modification were Blaine Street between Monroe and Tyler, and Kuhn Street between North Beach and 49th.

An Edge Lane Road – for those new to the terminology – is a type of street in which two-way vehicle traffic shares a single, middle lane with wide lanes on both sides of the roadway for bicycles and pedestrians on foot. We have a city-wide striping project contracted to happen next month and with the passage of this ordinance, the three locations will receive official designations, lane striping, and 20 mile per hour speed limit signs. In order to convert the speed limit for these upcoming edge lane roads the city's municipal code actually has to be modified through a City Council vote, and the issue was originally scheduled for two readings to allow for discussion and public comment.

The Council did two notable things regarding this issue on Monday:

One was that they voted to wave council rules in order to approve the ordinance in its current form without a second reading at their next business meeting and without further public engagement on the issue. This appears to have been done with an eye toward expediting the project. Public works Director Steve King brought the timeline to the Council's attention and mentioned that passing the motion this week would give them more time to "get organized."

The second thing Council did in their discussions was to clearly signal a future interest in more broadly lowering speed limits across Port Townsend to 20 miles per hour. City Staff, in their overview of the ordinance, applauded the 20 mile per hour limit on Water Street between the ferry terminal and Taylor Street. Councilmember Monica MickHager, voiced her "disappointment" that there were only three streets being converted in the current ordinance. And Mayor David Faber, quoted literature from the "20 is Plenty" campaign stating that the 5 mile per hour reduction for 25 to 20 has been shown to "significantly reduce casualties, significantly reduce CO2 emissions and significantly reduce noise." The mayor went on to speculate that he, "seriously doubt(s) that there would be a lot of people who would be upset by the idea that our neighborhood roads would be reduced in speed to 20 miles per hour."

One local citizen did present public comments toward this agenda item on Monday. He is resident who identified himself as a "cyclist" and went on to question the reasoning behind investing time and money into edge lane roads when there are many existing roads with narrow shoulders and missing pavement that already present serious safety issues to cyclists. This lone commentor also indicated his displeasure at the idea of reducing speed limits when, as he put it, "drivers are clearly voting with their speedometers that the speeds on arterial routes are too low, not too high."

Despite this dissenting view from a local citizen, the City Council unanimously voted to wave council rules and to approve the ordinance for 20 mile per hour speed limits on the three sections of edge lane roads to receive striping and signage in September.

As always, anyone interested in seeing the agendas, participating in future City Council meetings or viewing archived video of past meetings, can find that information at the city of Port Townsend homepage (<https://cityofpt.us/citycouncil/page/agendasminutesvideos>).

There are couple of other platforms to participate in important community dialogues on the calendar today:

Its Thursday and the “Under the Tent housing Conversation” takes places from 5 to 7pm at San Juan and 22nd Street. Today’s offering is billed as an unprecedented opportunity to interact with all of our local governing bodies – City, County, Port, and PUD – in a discussion about desired ways to address our local housing crisis. Participants are encouraged to bring their creative and engaged ideas about what changes we need to create “housing for all”. It is a meeting Convened by the housing advocates at Housing Solutions Network.

There is also a Port Townsend School Board of Directors Meeting at the Gael Stuart Building today at 5:30pm. The public may attend in person or via Zoom. Masks are recommended and social distancing is practiced. The agendas including Zoom access information will be posted to the district website, <https://www.ptschools.org/> (scroll down to Announcements).

And that’s it for today’s local news. KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon Monday through Saturday, and at 5pm Monday through Friday. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. I’m Simon Jaynes. Thanks for listening and have a great day.