

Hello, one and all. Thanks for tuning in to 91.9 KPTZ FM . I am Simon Jaynes with the local news for Port Townsend and beyond on this Thursday, September 1, 2022.

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Happy first day of September everyone! It did have a bit of a Fall feel out there this morning didn't it – foggy and chilly though the early part of the day. Still no big changes predicted in the weather anytime soon. Mostly sunny skies this weekend and into next week with highs near 70 degrees. The only precipitation in the forecast is the occasional light mist in the morning like we had today.

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Schools on the Peninsula and across the state are preparing for students to return either this week or next. Quilcene and Brinnon School Districts went back to school on Monday this week, while in Port Townsend, the first day will be Tuesday September 6.

Students in the Port Angeles School District began classes today as planned, even though bargaining continued to the last minute between the teachers union and the school district yesterday, and a strike is still possible next week.

According to the Port Angeles School District Website, “A contract with the Port Angeles Educators Association (PAEA) – which covers teachers, counselors, nurses, therapists and psychologists – expired Wednesday. On Monday, membership voted to authorize a strike if an agreement could not be reached with the district.” No agreement had been reached with the PAEA as of 7pm Wednesday, according to a letter sent to parents by the school district, so a strike is still possible next week. “The union has reserved the right to call a strike at the discretion of the PAEA president. If a strike is called, we will notify you as soon as we are informed,” said the letter by Carmen Geyer, district spokesperson.

According to a *Peninsula Daily News* article from yesterday, “The union is seeking more designated planning time, smaller class sizes, and a wage increase, all which, it argues, would bring the district up to the same levels in other districts on the Olympic Peninsula, offer competitive compensation to its members, and be more attractive to recruit at a time when the district is experiencing across-the-board staff shortages.” State law dictates that unions must give districts two days to prepare for a strike. So, if a strike was called on Wednesday, it would not be in effect until Tuesday after the Labor Day weekend. The best place to find updates on these negotiations is the Port Angeles district website (<https://www.portangelesschools.org/>).

In Port Townsend, schools are set to open on schedule and the district has been hosting various orientations at the different campuses this week. Tonight, parents and students of Salish Coast Elementary as well as the OCEAN program are invited to a back-to-school night from 5-6pm. There is also a School Board Meeting at the Gael Stuart Building tonight at 5:30pm. The public may attend in person or via Zoom.

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One agenda item that has drawn a good deal of public comment is the proposal for an Early Learning Family Childcare Center to be constructed on the property at the High School. The High School site has been proposed because of its central location, its feasibility, and the willingness of the school district to cooperate on a lease for the land. The campus area being discussed is an unused field near the tennis courts along Blaine Street.

The proposed childcare center and the research surrounding it has been sponsored in large part by Jefferson Healthcare (JHC). As one of the largest employers in Jefferson County, JHC feels the need to address the

childcare shortage in the region and the effect it has on their employees, as well as their ability to recruit people. The Early Learning Childcare Center would include spots for 40 children ages 6 weeks to 5 years with 30% for state-subsidized families, a commercial kitchen, YMCA meal programs, and early learning center needs as well as Family Support Services and hours of operating from 6:45am to 7:15pm.

In a letter to the School Board, Public Hospital District Commissioner Kees Kolff said, “I urge you to support the creation of an additional childcare facility in our community by leasing land you own for which you do not have an identified purpose. Studies have shown that there is a lack of childcare this is affecting businesses of all kinds from retaining current employees and recruiting new employees. You and many others will benefit from this project.” Anyone interested in viewing or participating in the school board meeting tonight can find the Zoom link at ptschools.org (<https://www.ptschools.org/> > under Next Meeting). The meeting agenda contains an overview of the childcare facility proposal and lists of stakeholders in the issue.

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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](mailto:news@kptz.org). I’m Jim Burke. Thanks for listening and have a great day.