

This is Casey Dolan with your local news for Wednesday, September 14, 2022 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

Port Townsend will have clean, breathable air again. According to IQAir – an organization that monitors global air pollution and a technology partner of the United Nations Environmental Program, UN Habitat, and Greenpeace – the air quality index for Port Townsend registered a “Moderate” 62 at noon yesterday. This was a marked improvement from the previous “Unhealthy” high of 157 on September 10 due to smoke from the Bolt Creek Fire, Brush Creek 2 Fire, and Goat Rocks Fire. The bad “chewy” air last Saturday burned the eyes of many attendees at the Port Townsend Annual Boat Festival. Most of the smoke was from the Bolt Creek Fire, which was sparked Saturday in the remote Stevens Pass area, forcing evacuations of mountain communities. The Red Flag Warning that was put into place on Thursday was lifted for the peninsula last Saturday night. Southerly and westerly winds coming off the Pacific are pushing wildfire smoke out of the area, but there is still no containment of the Bolt Fire, as of yesterday, with nearly 8,000 acres already scorched. As a reminder, a burn ban continues through September 30 for any burning other than recreational fires. This includes residential yard waste burning, and land clearing burn.

A forum is set for candidates running for the 6th Congressional District and the state Legislature on Sept. 30, 5-7pm, at the Gardiner Community Center at 980 Old Gardiner Road. The public has been invited to submit questions by tomorrow, Thursday, to TeamJefferson@protonmail.com or text/call Therese Stokan at 360-640-0658. The forum is co-sponsored by Health Freedom Information (HFI) and Olympic Peninsula Independent Activists (OPIA), groups based in Jefferson and Clallam counties. Questions received from the public will be consolidated by topic and compiled to reflect the public interest, organizers said. Doors will open at 4:30pm for seating, and those who want seats are asked to arrive then. A section in front will be reserved for mobility-challenged public and members of the press.

As of Monday, Elizabeth Kreiselmeier, a Gig Harbor Republican, and U.S. Rep. Derek Kilmer, a Gig Harbor Democrat – who will be represented by his campaign manager, Kevin Schilling – had confirmed participation in the segment of the forum dedicated to the 6th Congressional District. Also having confirmed were candidates for Legislative District 24 Brian Pruiett, a Carlborg Republican running for Position 1 against Rep. Steve Tharinger, a Port Townsend Democrat; and Sue Forde, a Sequim Republican, running for Position 2 against Rep. Mike Chapman, a Port Angeles Democrat. Confirmation is still pending from Tharinger and Chapman. Candidates will be given the compiled questions on Friday of this week to allow for preparation and response.

In an effort to offset a 30% shortage of corrections officers at Clallam County Jail, the Clallam County Sheriff's Office will use American Rescue Plan Act funds to offer referral, signing, and retention bonuses. As reported in the *Peninsula Daily News*, Clallam County Sheriff Bill Benedict told the Clallam County commissioners, “We need to do something regarding the jail really, really quickly.” Patrol deputies who would be lateral hires, either moving over to corrections or from another agency with the same qualifications, will receive a \$25,000 bonus payable in three annual installments, while an entry-level hire will receive a \$10,000 bonus. Both hires would receive a \$2,500 referral bonus. Benedict said the jail is down nine positions, or 30%, which is typical of jails statewide. He said the Washington State Patrol is down 100 positions, Tacoma is down 85 positions, Seattle is down 400 positions, and King County is down 100 positions. “These are huge numbers. It’s put us in a bidding war,” Benedict said.

Finally, please be careful out there. A new study based on data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and National Safety Council reports that there were 327 deaths on Washington roads in the first half of 2022, up from 249 for the same period in 2021. That's 78 additional deaths, or a 31% increase – the sixth-highest jump among states.

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