

This is Jim Burke, substituting for Casey Dolan with your local news for Wednesday, November 2, 2022 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

It is November 2, 6 days until Election Day. In Jefferson County, as of this morning 11,318 ballots have been returned to the County Auditor, which is 41.6% of the ballots out there. Of those ballots, 176 have been challenged. In Clallam County 19,340 ballots have been returned, just under 34%. 228 ballots have been challenged in Clallam County. You can check the status of your ballot on the county elections webpages:

Jefferson: <https://www.co.jefferson.wa.us/1266/Elections>

Clallam: <https://www.clallamcountywa.gov/162/Elections-Voter-Registration>

Ballot return statistics: <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/research/ballot-return-statistics.aspx>

Yesterday, U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) sent a letter to Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Chair Lina Khan to express concern about the pending acquisition of Albertsons Companies, Inc. by the Kroger Company, which would merge two of the largest grocery store chains in Washington state. The press release from Senator Cantwell's office included this from the letter they sent to the FTC chair: "Together, the 337 Albertsons and Kroger grocery stores in Washington represent 21.5% of the state's total. Underserved communities throughout Washington benefit from these stores and what they provide in price competition, convenience, high-quality nutritional access, and pharmacy services. Given their aggregate share of the state's retail grocery sector, we fear that Washington is at disproportionate risk of losing stores as a result of the proposed merger" Kroger owns QFC and Fred Meyer and Albertsons owns Safeway. With a QFC and a Safeway in Port Townsend, it's hard to predict if the merger would result in the closure of one of those two stores. The full text of the letter is available at

https://www.cantwell.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Lina%20Khan_Kroger_Albertsons%20Letter%20Final.pdf

East Jefferson County's newest child-care center project is now official following the Port Townsend School District's approval of a resolution to lease more than one acre of school-owned land to the Olympic Peninsula YMCA. As Reported Monday in the *Leader* online, the school district's board of directors unanimously approved the resolution to lease the land to the YMCA at their meeting on October 20 and the YMCA will be responsible for the ownership and operation of the child-care facility.

The Early Learning and Family Support Center will be located on the eastern side of the Port Townsend High School campus near the tennis and pickleball courts. It is to be built on vacant land formerly used for physical education classes and it is expected to be completed by mid-2024, according to the school district. Residents on the Olympic Peninsula have long struggled to find adequate child-care services due to a lack of availability with current daycare centers, with parents facing multi-year waiting lists just to secure one spot. Coming in with an estimated budget of \$2.5 million to build the facility, the Early Learning and Family Support Center could assist up to 40 children between ages 6 weeks to 5 years. The majority of funds needed for the center are expected to come from Jefferson County, grant and foundation funding, and federal money.

Port Townsend High School Principal Carrie Ehrhardt said during the school board's meeting, "It really excites me knowing that we could support our community this way, and I promise that we will do everything we can at the high school to make sure that we are good neighbors to our YMCA and this center." The center will also provide family support services with a family resource navigator to assist kids and families in need. There will

be a commercial kitchen to offer kids food year-round, six classrooms, a meeting/community room, playground, and a parking and drop-off area.

Jefferson Healthcare began research into the daycare needs of the local community in 2020, and completed a report that included a survey of local residents, a site feasibility study for the high school property, a wide range of data collection, a needs assessment, and other related data for the child-care project. One of the key figures behind the idea for the daycare center and report was Dr. Molly Parker, who spearheaded the planning and prep needed to bring the Early Learning and Family Support Center from a simple idea to a concrete plan. To get the center from blueprint to finished building, the YMCA must agree to the land lease. Linda Rosenbury, superintendent for the school district, said, “The earliest day to execute the lease would be...Monday, December 12.”

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5 PM and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. This is Jim Burke. Thank you for listening.