

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM. I'm Jim Burke, with local news for Jefferson and Clallam counties for Tuesday, November 15, 2022.

In Jefferson County, the two-week COVID-19 case rate is 171 per 100,000 people. No one is currently hospitalized. 34 new cases were added this week for a total of 6,207 cases. The total count of COVID-19-related deaths in Jefferson County stands at 32. Jefferson County Public Health staff estimate that 1 in 4 COVID-19 cases in Jefferson County were reported to public health last week. The risk of COVID-19 transmission in public, indoor places is moderate. At this level, it's recommended everyone wear a well-fitting, high-quality mask in public, indoor settings.

Dr. Allison Berry and Willie Bence will deliver the Public Health Briefing to the Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners next Monday, at 9:45 am and we will broadcast it here on KPTZ 91.9FM. Submit your Public Health questions to Dr. Allison Berry and Willie Bence by emailing contactus@kptz.org by this Friday, November 18 at noon, to be answered next Monday, November 21. You can still report positive home test results on Jefferson County Public Health Website: <https://jeffersoncountypublichealth.org/1429/COVID-19>.

(You can still order COVID tests from Washington State until the end of the year at: <https://www.sayyescovidhometest.org>)

Kevin Mason and many of his neighbors hope Port Townsend city officials will change their minds about his hand-built Raccoon Lodge. Between 100 and 150 people gathered Saturday at his home on Clay Street in uptown, where he has built a house-like structure on the large stump of what used to be a massive Monterey Cypress tree with a 52-foot circumference. The 150-year-old tree broke in half about three years ago, said Mason, 75, who moved into the house there nearly two decades ago. The professional carpenter and the leader of the popular Kevin Mason and the PT All Stars began work on it as therapy following cancer surgeries this year, he said Sunday.

He's quoted in an article in the *Peninsula Daily News* from yesterday as saying, "Generations of raccoons and birds have lived in that tree, before it came down. I felt bad for them and thought there must be something I can do. I was planning on starting to tear it down next week, but that was before all this." "All this" being the support of his neighbors.

He wants city officials "to rescind the deadline and let me finish and then send a qualified engineer to see if it is strong enough." He said city code officials told him that, once the lodge was down, other structures on his property would be inspected. Mason said, "I am terrified. I had not slept for two weeks. I was waking up with my heart pounding at 1 in the morning." That was before he felt the groundswell of community support. He continued, "I've never had them come after me like this. I always thought I was doing the right thing. I was trying to be creative – do something that makes people smile."

The city posted a more extensive Q&A to its website yesterday. From the city website: "The City received a complaint about multiple unpermitted structures in the backyard of a property on Clay Street, including a structure that was under construction. City staff talked with the property owner, who agreed to stop construction in the backyard and remove the partially built structure. During the investigation staff also noted multiple unpermitted structures in the front yard of the property, including the tree stump structure in the adjacent right-of-way. The property owner indicated plans to construct a roof over the tree stump. City staff asked the property

owner to stop all construction on the tree stump until the current structure on the stump could be reviewed against the City code, which occurred over the following month. During that time City staff met again with the property owner to view and discuss the structure.”

Q: How was this decision made? This decision was not made lightly or quickly and involved several City staff and department directors. City staff reviewed the city code as well as permitting requirements and found that the City code does not permit structures to be placed in the right of way. Structures are not permitted in the right of way for safety risks and encroachment unless there is an agreement for donation/loan, maintenance, and insurance.

Q: Would other art projects be permitted on the tree stump? Absolutely. The City has encouraged the property owner to consider alternatives to the current structure that do not pose potential safety hazards and/or native plantings that enhance the wildlife habitat of the tree stump.

The next steps are: The City sent the property owners a voluntary compliance request with a November 30 deadline for the structure’s removal. As long as the property owner is working towards compliance or other solutions, the City generally does not escalate enforcement.

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