

In Port Townsend, this is Diane Urbani de la Paz with local news and commentary for Thursday, December 29, 2022 on KPTZ 91.9 FM.

Governor Jay Inslee has announced the appointment of Brandon Mack as our new Jefferson County Superior Court judge. He will replace Judge Keith Harper, who plans to retire at the end of January. Mack currently serves as a full-time family law court commissioner in the Clallam County Superior Court. The governor said Mack has demonstrated an outstanding work ethic, with patience and compassion: “He’s also humble and respectful in his work, committed to listening and learning from all parties and sovereign partners.”

Yesterday afternoon I received the news that the Cocoa Forge, Port Townsend’s artisan chocolate factory, will soon close. Mark and Sue Fitch write in an email to fans: “When the clock strikes midnight on December 31, the great grinding stones will lay quiet, the fire under the roaster put out, and yes, The Chocolate Faucet flow will be turned off”

“We have loved ‘turning on the chocolate lights’ for you. Thank you for your patronage, your kindness and most of all, thank you for your curiosity,” Sue and Mark continue. They’ll be open one last day for local pickups at the Cocoa Forge, which is on Monroe Street behind Key City Public Theatre. That’s this Saturday, December 31 from 11 in the morning until 4 in the afternoon. Then, as of January 1, the rest of the chocolate inventory will be sold online or by mail order until it’s gone. When I asked for more information, Mark declined to elaborate.

At the other end of downtown Port Townsend, at the intersection of Water Street and Gaines Street, City crews discovered a failing sewer main on Tuesday. This caused a sewer backup of the line serving all of downtown and much of Uptown. City Public Works Director Steve King said crews used pumps to bypass the failed section of pipe, and no sewage flowed directly into the Bay. Now the city is making an emergency repair and will contract with Seton Construction for further fixing of the sewer main. Meanwhile, access to adjacent businesses and some of the sidewalks on Gaines Street and Water Street will stay open.

In happier news, I know it’s only Thursday but it’s not too soon to mention the activities coming up Saturday during First Night in downtown Port Townsend. This event comes roaring back this year, with a celebration of art and creativity at multiple venues. You can make your own LED-lit lantern at the Cotton Building and then join the lantern parade. You can watch a circus and acrobatics performance at Brigid’s Loft. You might visit the Jefferson Museum of Art and History, write down your New Year’s resolutions and then seal them with a wish in your own miniature bottle, to be reopened next year. I’m just scratching the surface of First Night festivity. The entire schedule, from 3:00 Saturday afternoon to the fireworks at 9:00, is found on the Production Alliance website (<https://www.theproductionalliance.org/>).

On Sunday, New Year’s Day, this being Port Townsend, the creative flow continues at Fort Worden State Park. Centrum will provide the space for a Creative Working Studio, open to the public. The theme is Jump Start Your Creativity in 2023. You’re invited to come to the fort’s Building 205, upstairs, where you might make a

collage, an altar, a drawing, a painting. You can bring your own journals and art materials to use or share...and food, to eat or share, as well as a cup with your preferred tea or coffee. Hot water will be provided, as will lots of time to explore questions and intentions for the new year and to listen and express your heart's longing. The creative studio will open up Sunday afternoon and evening, from noon until 7:00. Information can be had by emailing local artist Glo Lamson at glolamson@gmail.com.

Hey, thanks for listening! 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 Diane Urbani de la Paz, offering a reminder to take care of one another and wear your mask indoors.