

This is Casey Dolan with your local news and commentary for Friday, February 24, 2023 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

OlyCAP (the Olympic Community Action Program,) has seen a boom time for funding during the pandemic, but local economic and social conditions are shifting which might affect future funding. On December 31, 2019, OlyCAP could claim 35 revenue contracts totaling more than \$6 million. By December 31, 2022, the nonprofit more than tripled that amount to \$21.7 million in revenues through 78 contracts. The abundance of available capital enabled the funding for new projects like 7th Haven, Caswell-Brown Village, an emergency mobile food market, housing for youth initiatives, Foundational Community Supports, and low-income water utility assistance. But the well might be drying up.

Speaking to the *PT Leader*, Cherish Cronmiller, executive director for the organization explained, “Rental assistance, utility assistance, certainly donations, all of that is going to be down. That happens with a CAP agency, sometimes the revenue goes up and down depending on what grants and funding streams are available and what projects we’re working on.” The organization currently faces some of its biggest projects ever with the 7th Haven housing project (a 43-unit apartment building for low-income individuals and families) and the planned expansion of Caswell-Brown Village to include both an emergency shelter and permanent supportive housing for families. But staffing is reduced, dependent on where the allocations were. Forty positions were dropped when enough privately operated home healthcare operators came online locally that the nonprofit was able to back out of the healthcare field, while 20 positions were added in housing and early childhood classrooms. Funding is starting to dwindle in certain areas, housing being one. Cronmiller said to the *Leader*, “Some of those rental assistance dollars are going to be going away, so we are trying to supplement that so we can keep the staff that we’ve hired up with a different type of funding stream that will continue to allow us to provide case management support for customers.”

As reported in several news outlets, the special meeting of the port commissioners last week reached a unanimous decision for the Port of Port Townsend to buy the Short’s Family Farm – 253 acres of farmland in Chimacum – for \$1.4 million, but the deal is contingent on \$1 million of funding from the state. Port Commissioner Pam Petranek said to the *PT Leader*, “I look at this farm as returning so much more to us, and that is to the health of our county and the wealth.” She went on to note that the port’s capital reserves do not come from property tax payments or the port’s special industrial development levy.

Eron Berg, Port of Port Townsend Executive Director, said that the additional \$400,000 for the purchase will come from revenues from port operations. The purchase price falls in line with an earlier appraisal of the property. The project has been dogged by difficulties, most particularly the possible conflicts between farming and concerns over salmon habitat. The conservation easement constricts use of the property and seasonal flooding has continued to worsen with each year. Conservationists say that fixing the flooding and rehabilitating Chimacum Creek’s salmon run, which runs directly through the length of the property, would conflict with the terms of the easement.

As reported in the *PT Leader*, Berg had an email exchange with Erik Kingfisher, the stewardship director for the Jefferson Land Trust which holds the easement. Berg said, “He did provide in his email that Chimacum Creek is going to be a challenge because of the topography and elevation; that will be a difficult reach to thread the needle with drainage, salmon enhancement, and farm activity. But I think he, like most of the people I’ve talked to, is excited about the possibility of trying to get to the finish line.”

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.