

Hello again. This is Derek Firenze with your local news and commentary for Thursday, April 27, 2023 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

City staff was lucky no one brought their clubs to last night's open house for the future of the golf course. The staff pitched four concepts to an audience of around 200 people: #1 to restore the golf course as is; #2 a hybrid course with added amenities like a dog park, boardwalk, trails, and public open space; #2a is called "Space for Nature" and would phase out golf over 20 years in favor of expanding amenities with natural spaces; and #3 was called "Central Park" which would immediately abandon the golf course to establish a community gathering space with the amenities and natural spaces and an additional amphitheatre.

Cue the Q&A when things got hostile. Attendees were told to ask one question, and one question only. Instead, a barrage of opinions and stacked questions left city staff with pained faces. Chris Jones, founder of Groundswell, the landscape architecture firm hired by the city, ended the session by inviting the audience to "a fun interactive session," which was met with groans.

The interactivity was a repeat of the sticker process from the first open house, however attendees were only given one sticker this time to place on their favorite concept. Carrie Hite, director of Parks and Recreation Strategy, noted that the stickers were only a general gauge and whichever got the most stickers would not necessarily be the final decision. Robert Horner of local brewery Propolis noted that concepts 1 and 2 could be seen combined as in favor of golf while 2a and 3 get rid of golf. Using that metric, opinion was split. I counted 104 stickers on the combined 1 and 2 with 105 stickers on 2a and 3. Looked at individually, however, the Central Park concept had the most with 89 with the restored golf course behind it with 69. Those who missed the open house can still voice their opinion on the city's Envision website where a similar survey is posted. And a virtual online open house will happen Monday, May 1 (<https://cityofpt.us/engagept/page/envision-port-townsend-golf-course-and-mountain-view-commons>).

Speaking of natural spaces, local activist Alex Eisenberg, a volunteer for the Jefferson County Anti-Racist Fund who has supported numerous local environmental protests, traveled to Nevada this week to join some of the Paiute-Shoshone Tribes in a direct action to protect Thacker Pass, which could become the world's largest open pit lithium mine. Protestors say Lithium Nevadas, the corporation running the mine, did not do the proper tribal consultation prior to approval and have brought forward lawsuits still in process.

On Tuesday, Eisenberg joined in a peaceful, prayerful action, putting her body alongside others directly in the line of heavy machinery to delay construction. The traditional Paiute name of Thacker Pass is Peehee Mu'huh meaning "rotten moon." What has been a biodiverse ecosystem is already changed from what Eisenberg had seen on previous visits to the site, she noted during a livestream Tuesday. Thacker Pass is a critical corridor for wildlife such as pronghorn antelope and mule deer. The Nevada Department of Wildlife has described the mine as having "adverse impacts to wildlife, ground and surface waters, and riparian vegetation within and outside the project area. These impacts include effects to an array of species and will likely have permanent ramifications on the area's wildlife and habitat resources."

The region has also been called the most important greater sage-grouse habitat in Nevada, home to 5 to 8% of the global population. Contrary to mining company claims, Eisenberg has witnessed grouse at the site of the proposed open-pit mine. The mine is also in the watershed of several creeks that host threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout, and nearby springs that are the only home of the King's River pyrg (an endemic springsnail species).

Beyond the habitat concerns, the site is also considered a sacred burial ground for Paiute-Shoshone Tribes as two massacres occurred there, one at the hands of US cavalry. Connecting it to her own heritage's tragic history, Eisenberg believes that the land should be protected as a sacred historical site so descendants of the dead can visit and see the land just like she was able to go and see the land where her people were massacred in the holocaust.

The lithium mine is of course meant to supply the electric car industry, and General Motors invested \$650 million in the project this year. Experts expect demand for the material to skyrocket, and the Biden administration has made expanding the domestic supply of these minerals a priority. Eisenberg disagrees. "We can't mine our way out of climate crisis," she said in her livestream, adding, "It's not just oil and gas. It's not just uranium ... It's all of these things that are being extracted that are causing toxifications of land, that are increasing carbon emissions." To learn more, go to <https://www.protectthackerpass.org/take-action/>.

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. This is Derek Firenze. Thanks for listening.