

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. I'm Jim Burke, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, May 2, 2023.

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Back in March, longtime Kitsap County Commissioner Rob Gelder announced plans to step down from his position representing North Kitsap in May. As reported by the *Kitsap Sun*, Gelder, who was first appointed to Kitsap County's board of commissioners in 2011, said in an email announcement that he would be resigning to become the assistant county manager for Thurston County. Per state law, with Gelder's resignation, Kitsap County's two other commissioners, Katie Walters and Charlotte Garrido, will be charged with selecting his replacement. If the two commissioners fail to agree on a selection, Gov. Jay Inslee will appoint a replacement to the board. Three current elected officials from Bainbridge Island headline the field of 11 candidates vying to be appointed as Rob Gelder's replacement as Kitsap County commissioner.

Among the group of candidates announced by Kitsap County Democrats are state senator Christine Rolfes, who represents the 23rd Legislative District in Olympia, and current Bainbridge Island City Council members Joe Deets and Clarence Moriwaki. Melody Sky Weaver, director of the Port Townsend Public Library, is also among the candidates to replace Gelder. Candidates must, like Gelder, be a Democrat and reside in Kitsap County Commissioner District 1, which has boundaries that include North Kitsap and Bainbridge Island. Gelder's replacement would serve for the remainder of his term, which expires at the end of 2024.

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The Washington State Department of Health website reports the two-week COVID-19 case rate in Jefferson County is approximately 127 cases per 100,000. No one is currently hospitalized. There have been a total of 5,068 reported cases in Jefferson County since the pandemic began.

On April 19, the levels of COVID-19 virus present in Port Townsend wastewater indicated an upward trend in the presence of COVID-19 in our community. Dr. Berry indicated yesterday during her talk with the Board Of County Commissioners that the Covid-19 detected by wastewater surveillance has dropped significantly. She said that there are little spikes in levels after every weekend, when there are more people visiting, but that the levels drop during the work week.

No new COVID-19 deaths were reported. The all-time number of deaths reported on the State website is 36, but Jefferson County says the overall death count due to Covid is 37. Dr. Berry explained yesterday that there was a death reported to the state previously that has not been added to the overall count at the state level. So, the "extra death" is not a new death. The last reported deaths in either Clallam County or Jefferson County were in March according to the Washington State DOH Covid-19 data dashboard. To pore over the data yourself, you can go to <https://doh.wa.gov/emergencies/covid-19/data-dashboard>.

Whether you live in Jefferson or Clallam County, you are encouraged to report a positive home test to: <https://doh.wa.gov/emergencies/covid-19/testing-covid-19/tested-positive-covid-19> or <https://safercovid.org/mytest/index.html?lang=en> or simply report your positive result to Washington's COVID-19 hotline at 1-800-525-0127.

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The Washington State Patrol (WSP) reported on April 29 that in King County alone they investigated three collisions this past Thursday and Friday which resulted in four individuals losing their lives.

The first collision was on SR 167 Thursday evening where a motorcycle rider lost their life after being rear ended by a pickup due to speed, inattention, and following too close.

The second collision happened Friday morning on I-90 near MP 42 where a driver of a vehicle lost their life when they left the roadway and struck an overpass support pillar. The cause of this collision is still under investigation.

The third collision occurred Friday afternoon on SR 410 where a vehicle crossed the centerline and struck another vehicle which resulted in the two occupants of that vehicle losing their lives. The driver that crossed the centerline was airlifted to Harborview with serious injuries. The investigation in this tragedy led to the conclusion that the driver was reaching for their cell phone.

State Patrol sent out another report of a multi-vehicle collision just east of Port Angeles over the weekend that involved a car that failed to stop behind a stopped car on Highway 101 and caused a chain reaction. There was reportable damage to three vehicles and one person was injured. When one of the drivers whose car was rear-ended got out of the car, they had left it in drive, so it started to move by itself. A truck driver blocked it with his truck to keep it from rolling further.

Inattention can cause accidents and make matters worse after an accident. The Washington State Patrol wants to stress the importance of not driving distracted and adhering to all traffic laws which are in place to make the roadways a safe place to travel. As the weather improves, there will be more vehicles on the roadways, especially motorcycles. Please remember motorcycles are harder to see. Please eliminate distractions and use all your attention to drive safely.

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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](mailto:news@kptz.org). This is Jim Burke. Thanks for listening!