

This is Casey Dolan with your local news and commentary for Wednesday, May 17, 2023 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

The Washington State Department of Health reports “unusually low flu activity” during 2020 and 2021, no doubt due to the advised pandemic restrictions, but the 2022-2023 flu season proved to be the deadliest in five years. A total of 262 Washingtonians were reported to have died from the flu, including 257 adults and five children – a tenfold increase compared to the 2021-2022 flu season.

This year’s flu vaccine reduced risk of influenza A-related hospitalization among children by nearly three quarters and among adults by nearly half, according to the Center for Disease Control. Despite vaccine effectiveness, flu vaccination rates have decreased nationally in certain groups. Flu vaccination rates for children dropped more than 6% and rates for pregnant people decreased nearly 15% compared with pre-pandemic rates. In Washington state, flu activity rose at the end of October and peaked by the end of November. As of the end of April, there was only minimal flu activity.

The Board of County Commissioners has prioritized the development of preapproved plans, known as “stock plans”, to reduce residential housing construction costs and shorten permitting times. In support, the Jefferson County Planning Commission voted to establish a Stock Plan Subcommittee to select designs that accommodate community needs. The due date for submissions has been extended to June 15, 2023. Designed plans may include previously-designed plans, or plans specifically for this use. Other submissions might include Tiny Homes on Wheels from Labor and Industry-approved fabricators that meet American National Standards Institute “plus” standards. Initial review will include labor and industry paperwork and engineer/architect/designer attestation that the unit meets Port Townsend or County standards.

The three-step approach to the development of stock plans requires that plans be submitted by June 15, 2023. As step two, a joint city/county selection committee will review these plans in July, after posting them online for public comment from June 19 to July 4. Step three involves funding plan review using the soon to be adopted (in July 2023) State Building Council Codes.

On Monday, the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) heard a presentation of proposed fee and rate changes in addition to proposed changes to the county parks and recreation fee policy. The new 2023-2029 schedule will apply to campgrounds, event shelters, recreational facilities and the Memorial Stadium and HJ Carroll athletic fields. Speaking at the BoCC meeting, parks and recreation manager Matt Tyler said, “The new fees are comparable to those charged by other agencies in the region.” He explained that fee increases were due to escalating use, inflation, and the need to improve and protect these public assets. Campground fees will increase the most. The *Peninsula Daily News* gave an example of a possible increase: An overnight stay at Lake Leland may rise from \$18 to \$25, increasing in \$5 increments until 2029. The current average cost of a stay at a similar campground is \$29.

Last Saturday, May 13, a motorcycle fatality occurred on SR-104. The motorcyclist, Mylinda McDaniel, 31, of Burien, Washington, perished as a result of crossing the center line and colliding with an oncoming car. Drugs and alcohol are not reported to be a factor and she wore a USDOT-compliant helmet.

Speaking of SR-104, there will be an extra overnight closure on the Hood Canal Bridge tomorrow, Thursday, May 18. The bridge will close to all traffic from 11pm each night to 4am each following day. Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) explains that the closure will allow contractor crews working for more time to complete the removal of an embedded anchor plate associated with the pyramid centering system. Two pyramids and receivers are part of the center lock system that helps keep both halves of the bridge in place. Always check the WSDOT Hood Canal Bridge web page (<https://wsdot.wa.gov/travel/roads-bridges/hood-canal-bridge>) for updates because the work and associated closures are subject to weather and could be rescheduled to a later date.

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.