

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. I'm Jim Burke, with your local news and commentary for Friday, November 17, 2023.

The *Seattle Times* reports that Seattle Theatre Group's (STG's) music and arts festival THING will not return to Port Townsend next year. After three years at Fort Worden Historical State Park, THING will shift to a new location yet to be announced for 2024. STG cited a "revenue shortfall" and "location accessibility factors" as the reasons for uprooting the eclectic festival that launched in 2019. As scenic a location as Fort Worden was, the move isn't all that surprising.

After selling out its inaugural weekend in 2019, when capacity was limited to around 5,000, attendance seemed to stall or decline once the three-day festival returned from a two-year pandemic hiatus in 2022, despite increasing capacity. This summer, ticketed attendance hit around 4,000 on Saturday – typically the busiest day of a weekend fest. While the Fort Worden grounds easily could have handled much larger crowds, making THING a relatively hassle-free festival to navigate, lodging in the small, artsy community of Port Townsend could be hard to come by during the busy event weekend.

Adam Zacks, STG's chief programming officer, in a news release said, "We would be remiss to not acknowledge and thank Fort Worden and the entire Port Townsend community for shaping THING to be the incredible festival it has become. Port Townsend is at the heart of THING and we intend to carry that spirit into future iterations. We're disappointed to not bring THING back to Port Townsend next year but are excited to build upon the special relationship we have with Fort Worden."

Although STG declined to shed light on THING's new home, the news comes days after the arts nonprofit announced it's teaming up with Remlinger Farms to create a 6,000-capacity outdoor venue in Carnation. The bucolic Remlinger Farms venue is slated to open next summer and would seem an obvious fit for THING closer to Seattle. The deal will give STG a fourth, larger venue in a portfolio that includes the Neptune, the Moore, and Paramount theaters in Seattle.

THING's Port Townsend pullout comes just as the festival was integrating better with a local arts community that initially greeted the big-city concert promoters with apprehension. THING was born after a pair of 2018 Modest Mouse concerts were used as a Fort Worden test run. Modest Mouse drummer Jeremiah Green, who died late last year, was a longtime Port Townsend resident who had independently dreamed of creating a similar event and the band returned to play at THING last year.

Despite the festival site shake-up, STG isn't leaving Port Townsend entirely. The organization will still run education and community engagement programs at Fort Worden next summer, along with other "stand-alone events and concerts" yet to be announced. If THING moves to Carnation maybe they should rename it CarneY? After all, it won't be our THING anymore!

Yesterday I spoke with County Commissioner Kate Dean about the prospect of running for Derek Kilmer's seat which he will vacate at the end of next year:

- Jim Burke: When do you think people will know?
- Kate Dean: The strategists say if I'm going to do it, I have to do it soon. So this is definitely top of mind for me – complicated by the holidays, of course – but within the next couple of weeks I need to make a decision. That's in part because a lot of people want to know where to throw their support. We see that when it's too early – when someone throws their name out and they get endorsed – we say, hey wait, you

don't know the whole list of candidates. Let's give people a chance. It's important to start fundraising and getting your message out. So before the end of the year, probably in a week or two, I'll make the final decision.

Commissioner Franz has some deep pockets and friends with deep pockets. Maybe somebody said she's the one who can win because she has access to all that money. I have to believe we can do better than that. We certainly need to give other people a shot.

- Jim Burke: That's supposed to be the process.
- Kate Dean: I was really inspired by the member of Congress, House of Representative just to the south of our district, Marie Perez, had a surprise victory in 2022. She's an average, working person. We can still do this, Washington. We don't have to cede elections to the wealthy.

On Monday on *Attention Please!* at 5pm and the following Saturday at noon, there will be a longer interview with Kate Dean explaining why she thinks it's important that a local person be elected to Congress in our district.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us through at news@kptz.org. This is Jim Burke. Thanks for listening.