

Hello again and Happy Thanksgiving! This is Derek Firenze with your local news and commentary for Thursday, November 23, 2023 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

The new Kearney Street roundabout opened yesterday without accident, though there were a few close calls. More than one local person took to social media to report experiences of near misses due to people driving over the raised central island. Because of the tightness of lanes at the intersection, the low island is meant to allow larger vehicles to drive over it as they would otherwise be unable to fit the turns. Regular drivers, of course, are meant to go around. Without planters in the middle like the other two roundabouts in town, however, it's easy to lose sight of that only slightly raised central island.

Help should be on the way though as reflective paint is still to be applied and bring attention to the changes as well as the pedestrian crosswalks. Work will continue on the project for approximately two more weeks, but traffic should not be affected. Permanent striping is scheduled to happen in the spring of 2024.

When I made my first drive through the roundabout on opening day, it was easy enough for me to see the pedestrian crossing my lane in time to make my stop, but I have excellent vision and can easily see difficulties for others arising, especially at night.

I'll add that I highly recommend using turn signals in all roundabouts. I've previously asked representatives for the Washington State Department of Transportation about turn signal use in roundabouts and they believed it was the law to signal when exiting, but I could not actually find evidence to support that. So while you might not get a ticket for it, remember that flicking that blinker could save a lot of headache, and maybe even a life.

Speaking of greatly needed and highly visible paint at a roundabout, you may have noticed work has resumed on the mural for the Velo Cats Collective bike shop at the Thomas Street roundabout. After my previous report about how the city denied a permit to the bike shop for a mural of animals riding bikes across the front and side of the building, city officials came by the business to find a solution.

City officials did not back down on their interpretation of the code, but negotiated a way forward nonetheless. The paintings of the bikes themselves were at issue, since they constituted an ad for the business and the city limits advertising signage to 100 square feet. The animals who ride the bikes, however, do not constitute advertisement. To make it work, the city helped Velo Cats measure out how much of the mural's square footage contained wheeled machines, including unicycles, but excluding the animals. When I asked Velo Cats co-founder Jonathan Arp why they didn't leave unicycles out of the measurements, he noted that he did in fact own a unicycle and that while they do not currently sell unicycles, the business would be happy to do work on a unicycle if a customer ever brought one in.

The final measurement for the sign on the front of the building came in just under the limit, so after re-submitting their permit, work has begun again. The mural for the side of the building, however, cannot be completed as it was originally designed since those bikes would exceed what is allowed. Arp said the collective is still figuring out what they want to do, but was happy to at least have this first chapter wrapping up.

If that wasn't enough new art to be grateful for, there's a new release from Chimacum-based small press Empty Bowl by New Mexico poet and artist John Brandi. Brandi's haiku practice spans four decades – a steadfast

companion to his life as a poet, visual artist, and author of numerous books. The haiku collected in *The Rain Sweeps Through* are culled from wherever they first landed: pocket pad, a paper napkin, a daily journal, the palm of the author's hand, or in notes accompanying his field sketches. As the author writes in a moving afterword, "[the haiku] world is timeless within one's given time. There is always the vastness, that upside-down raven at play between the dust devils spinning across the mesa. There is always intimacy, that bead of sun moving on the back of the housefly on the windowsill. The haiku mind is tuned to both worlds, alert to what either might deliver."

To help promote the new book, Empty Bowl will be hosting a reading with Brandi and local legend Bill Porter – also known as Red Pine – on Friday, December 8 from 4:30 to 6pm at the Port Townsend Friends Meetinghouse. This free reading will be followed by refreshments and a book signing with both authors' work available for purchase.

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