

Hello again. This is Derek Firenze with your local news and commentary for Thursday, December 7, 2023 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

I previously reported on this year's annual Water Street Shuffle – the sad dance of local businesses off the beleaguered main drag of Port Townsend – and in the last few weeks another two businesses have put up closing signs in their windows. The Perfect Season and 1851, both boutique retail shops, are the most recent departures. The Perfect Season managed to last many seasons with multiple decades downtown, as its doors first opening in April of 2000. 1851 also opened in an April, but only five years ago in 2018.

This year's end of tourism has also brought difficulties farther afield, however, with Farm's Reach Cafe in Chimacum announcing it will be closing permanently at the end of February 2024. Current owners Arianne and BG Patterson purchased the cafe from its previous owners in 2014, while the business itself first opened its doors in 2010 serving locally grown fresh food, made from scratch in house.

While the Pattersons celebrated great success early on – paying off their loan on the business within their first three years – both eventually took jobs in different industries after believing they had found a buyer for the business during the pandemic. That first buyer fell through and in the Spring of this year, they announced, and I reported, that the cafe's manager Aubrey Hubbard would buy the business with the help of the Local Investor Opportunity Network, or LION. Sadly, that also eventually fell through. Hubbard had to step away from the business, leaving the Pattersons stuck between a rock and a hard place as their landlord was unable to offer a long-term lease. Both failed sales cost them, as well as a number of renovations they made to the building in the attempts to sell. During all this trouble, they accrued significant debt. With the closure of the business, they are hoping the community will continue to support them by launching a GoFundMe campaign to cover their remaining debts.

Their last day of business will be February 29, 2024. Afterwards they plan to prepare for a community liquidation of all physical assets – again to try and take down the debts. In the meantime, those who would like to donate to the GoFundMe can go to https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-us-close-without-debt?utm_campaign=p_cp+share-sheet&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.

To end this local business report on a bright note, local couple Michaela and Jay Kothman are celebrating their purchase of Ajax Cafe in Port Hadlock. The couple has successfully owned and operated Quillbilly's Restaurant and Bar in Quilcene for a little more than two years and will now use their dining dexterity to extend Ajax's open hours by adding lunch. Ajax's new open hours are Thursday through Monday with lunch from 12 to 3pm and dinner from 5 to 8. The new lunch menu includes small plates like salads, fries, and falafel bites, as well as larger dishes like sandwiches and bowls with various proteins served over a flavorful base of either their loaded house salad or Mediterranean couscous. You can find Ajax on the waterfront at the less shuffled location of 21 North Water Street in Port Hadlock.

And while those businesses shuffle, the earth itself moved with a mudslide on Tuesday on the lower Duckabush Road in Brinnon. The Brinnon Fire Department announced the mudslide in the early morning hours while rainfall was causing the Duckabush River to crest. Luckily, no accidents were reported. Jefferson County Public Works arrived on the scene and had the bulk of the mud cleared by noon with the road reopened while they continued to monitor the slide. The Brinnon Fire Department also noted that this same area experienced a similar event last year.

Let's end with a smile. The SmileMobile, a roving mobile dental van, is back in Jefferson County and located at the Tri Area Community Center in Chimacum today and will return once more Monday, December 11 through Thursday, December 14. The dental teams will see individuals and families with Apple Health and/or no dental insurance. Need a dental exam or have a tooth concern? Call 888-286-9105 to schedule.

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.