

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. I'm Jim Burke, with your local news and commentary for Tuesday, January 16, 2024.

The city of Port Townsend sent out this message this morning: "The January 17, 2024 Finance and Budget Committee Meeting is canceled."

The weather again. Last Thursday, January 11, temperatures here in Port Townsend dropped from the low 40s into the low 20s in a half hour and continued to drop into the teens over the next couple of hours. The initial wet precipitation formed a nice layer of ice under the few inches of snow that fell in under two hours. As we previously reported, there were countless spinouts and accidents and, because of the deep freeze that followed, many stayed home over the weekend. The salt that was put down in some areas did not become effective until the temperatures rebounded somewhat into the 20s. The sun also helped, and the clear skies were a nice bonus.

So now, the predictions are that we will have another band of precipitation that will be coming up from the south sound starting around rush hour and reaching us in the middle of the evening. The weather system promises a wintry mix, especially in Clallam and Whatcom counties and around the Hood Canal. The snow will linger and accumulate around Bellingham and persist. But behind this system, Jefferson and Clallam counties will see a return to temperatures in the 40s in the next two days.

The National weather service issued this Severe Weather Alert: Mixed precipitation expected, with areas of freezing rain. Total snow accumulations of up to one inch and ice accumulations of up to one tenth of an inch. In San Juan County, including Stuart Island, Waldron Island, Orcas Island, San Juan Island, Lopez Island, Blakely Island, and Decatur Island, Lowlands of western Skagit County, including Cypress Island, Guemes Island, Anacortes, Mount Vernon, and La Conner, Everett and vicinity, including Stanwood, Marysville, and Mountlake Terrace and Admiralty Inlet Area, including Port Townsend, Whidbey Island, and Camano Island. From 7pmM this evening to 4am Pacific Standard Time Wednesday. Plan on slippery road conditions, it says.

So, the best bet is to take care of any travel you need to do, especially if you need to cross the Hood Canal Bridge, by late this afternoon and stay close to home this evening. By morning we will wake up to melting or melted snow, a low of 36 and a high of 40 here in Port Townsend tomorrow

From *The Washington State Standard*: Schools | Enrollment at Washington's K-12 public schools has dropped by 47,885 students since the 2019-2020 school year. State funding is tied to enrollment so, as the number of students drops, it can create financial pressures for districts. The response by some has been to consider school closures. State officials don't seem eager to prop up schools with declining enrollment. Education policy experts believe it's often better to close one school than to spread resources thinly across too many. But while closures might make financial sense on paper, they can be a blow to students and families in places where schools are important parts of the community fabric. The *Standard's* Grace Deng dug into the issue, looking specifically at pushback against a proposed elementary school closure in the Olympia area. See the entire article at <https://washingtonstatestandard.com/2024/01/15/as-enrollment-drops-school-closures-loom-for-more-washington-communities/?emci=6acac164-dbb3-ee11-bea1-0022482237da&emdi=0dc70a78-87b4-ee11-bea1-0022482237da&ceid=553235>.

Today, U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) announced that improvements she proposed for the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program are included in the tax package agreed upon by the top tax writers in the U.S. Senate and House. Once approved by Congress, these improvements would fund an additional 1,700 units of affordable housing in Washington state in 2024 alone. Since 1986, the Housing Credit has paid for nearly 90% of the federally-funded affordable housing construction across the country, and has financed nearly 3.5 million affordable homes, including more than 100,000 in Washington state.

Senator Cantwell said, “This is the biggest investment in housing in 35 years – and greatly needed. It will provide over 200,000 new units nationwide over the next two years. In the State of Washington, it will mean over 6,000 new units. This supply catch-up will help working families in both urban and rural areas across the country, and I’m appreciative of Sen. Wyden and Rep. Smith for including this critical investment in the deal announced today.”

Since its creation, the Housing Credit has helped build or restore nearly 100,000 affordable homes in the State of Washington. The economic activity that the credit generated has supported nearly 170,000 jobs and generated more than \$19 billion in wages.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Saturday. You can reach out to us at news@kptz.org. This is Jim Burke. Thanks for listening. Please, be careful out there.