

Hello again. This is Derek Firenze with your local news and commentary for Thursday, January 25, 2024 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

Last Thursday, January 18, Habitat for Humanity East Jefferson County (EJC) presented their vision for a new neighborhood of over 100 permanently affordable homes in Port Hadlock known as the Mason Street Project. This is a revolutionary step for the organization considering it is more than 10 times the 11 homes it built last year which was a record for our local chapter. If successful, the project could be an example for not only other local housing organizations, but for the nation as a whole. While still in its preliminary stage with a master plan at least three months out, there was much to celebrate already. Instead of maximizing the property to 205 homes, Habitat EJC has opted to maintain plenty of trees and green space along the Chimacum Creek which the land sits alongside by capping it at 150 homes using a mix of attached homes with shared amenities as well as a 24-unit apartment building. They've also partnered with Olympic Neighbors to set aside a number of rooms specifically for people with disabilities.

The 17 acres of land on Mason Street in Port Hadlock was purchased back in 2022 for \$1.25 million and Executive Director Jamie Maciejewski told me that she estimates it will be under \$4 million for the horizontal development of the land alongside the sewers soon to be put in by the county, without which this would not be possible. While the designs for the master plan will nail down building costs better, Habitat currently estimates it will cost between \$8 and \$10 million to complete the first round of building, with the mortgages covering the rest of the cost. The original estimate put the project at \$40 million in total, but that was when they were thinking of building only 120 homes and Maciejewski made clear that when it comes to costs, "We're really working on our best guesses right now."

To acquire the remaining funding, Habitat EJC is looking to state and national delegations where talks have already begun, as well as private donors both near and far, including the possibility that people could invest privately and be able to get back their money in the future at a somewhat lower than market interest rate, similar to the kinds of loans the Local Investor Opportunity Network is known for. As Maciejewski said, "I expect it will be many legs on the stool."

On Sunday, The CoLab, a coworking space in downtown Port Townsend, celebrated a lovely renovation under the new management of Rachel and Joel Carben. The CoLab was founded in 2011 by Heather Dudley-Nolette and Frank DePalma, who had a vision to bring coworking to our rural community before the concept had even been popularized by corporations like WeWork. Since its founding, The CoLab has helped members connect, both through lasting business collaborations and friendships in our era of a remote and globally distributed workforce, with reliable, fast internet, and 24/7 office access. The new owners have been members since 2016, and purchased the space in November of 2023. They've thrown on a fresh coat of paint and added a number of new amenities like white board walls, standing desks, and acoustically engineered privacy booths.

Finally, an update on the lawsuit regarding logging a legacy forest in Quilcene that I reported on last week. The Jefferson County Superior Court ruled on Monday that the oldest trees can continue to stand for at least a little while longer. In legal language, the motion for preliminary injunction was granted to allow the case to go forward without cutting two of the most structurally complex stands. In its ruling, the court ordered that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is, "enjoined from carrying out either directly or through a contractor, any logging operations (including but not limited to tree harvest and road building, or pre-haul maintenance) in

the areas described as Unit 1 and Unit 2 of the ‘Last Crocker Sorts’ timber sale.” The case was brought forward by the Legacy Forest Defense Coalition due to the DNR’s failure to follow its own Habitat Conservation Plan goal of achieving functional older forest structures across 10 to 15 percent of Western Washington. The court noted that the DNR “does not provide a rational basis for not following its own policy.” This will buy the “Last Crocker” forest at least a few more months before the court will make a final decision on just how important those trees are to the DNR’s goal.

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.