

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I am Casey Dolan with your local news and commentary for Wednesday, February 21, 2024.

We begin with some good news. Crime is down in Port Townsend, according to the *Peninsula Daily News*, and we have the numbers! This may be due to new hires. Speaking to the Port Townsend City Council on February 12, Police Chief Thomas Olson and Deputy Chief Jeff Thaxton said the department has been able to add several officers to its ranks, but positions such as police navigator and school resource officer still remain vacant.

Thaxton said that crime in 2023 was down even as calls for service were up. The department made over a thousand traffic stops last year, up from 765 in 2022, but only 191 resulted in some kind of citation. The number of DUI arrests increased from nine in 2022 to 21 in 2023, and criminal traffic citations – someone driving with a suspended license or other infraction – went from 12 to 22 over the past two years. The number of reportable traffic collisions was down 25%, while total collision-related calls were up 24%. Use-of-force incidents by the department were up, but Olson attributed part of that increase to legislative changes requiring departments to report additional kinds of contact, including wrist holds and other restraints. The number of use-of-force incidents increased from 16 in 2022 to 39 in 2023, which included seven injuries to suspects and two injuries to officers.

The *Maritime Executive*, a business journal for maritime industry executives, reports that the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) finished an investigation into the loss of the fishing vessel Hotspur off Prince of Wales Island in Alaska in 2022 and concluded that an undetected leak in an unoccupied space probably sunk the ship. On July 29, 2022, the vessel left Port Townsend, laden with nets and gear. It headed north up the Inside Passage, bound for Sitka. The weather conditions were favorable, but on August 2 at 7:30pm, while the vessel was crossing the Clarence Strait, the master and senior deckhand noticed that Hotspur was listing to port. The captain made a distress call and two nearby good samaritan boats responded. The Hotspur continued to list further to port as the crew launched the liferaft. The captain and his crewmembers rowed safely away from the boat as it rolled over, and they set off several signal flares to show their position. The two good samaritan boats arrived shortly after and retrieved all five crewmembers for transport to Ketchikan. No injuries were reported.

Hotspur sank with about 1,100 gallons of fuel on board and was declared a total loss at a value of about \$1.2 million. No salvage efforts were attempted. The NTSB noted that the master had “poked a hole in the hull” while cleaning sludge out of the engine room bilges three weeks before the accident. NTSB ultimately concluded that flooding from an unknown source in the lazarette or port void space likely caused the casualty. The agency advised operators to test their bilge alarms regularly, since the devices provide the only available early warning of void space flooding.

We have an update to the story of the man arrested who was jailed in connection with his month-old baby found dead January 20 in Kah Tai Park. Jordan T. Sorensen had all charges against him dismissed without prejudice last Friday in Jefferson County Superior Court, according to the *Peninsula Daily News*. He had been held for investigation of unlawful disposal of human remains and investigation of removal/concealment of a dead body since his January 21 arrest. James Kennedy, Jefferson County prosecuting attorney, wrote in his two-page order of dismissal “the State does not possess sufficient evidence to support a felony level prosecution.” But Kennedy does claim that his office has evidence to support charges of “concealing human remains” (a gross

misdemeanor) and “disposing of human remains” or “failing to notify the coroner of human remains” (both misdemeanors).

However, it is possible that if his office pursued the lesser charges, it could be precluded from pursuing more serious charges in the future, Kennedy wrote, because of a state mandatory joinder rule that requires related offenses to be joined together for trial. Kennedy wrote, “Given the possibility that additional evidence may come to light in the future, it does not seem worth it at this time to pursue these charges.”

KPTZ 91.9 FM broadcasts your local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. I'm Casey Dolan and I thank you for listening.