

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. This is Jim Burke, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, April 23, 2024.

From the *Peninsula Daily News* this morning: Jefferson County is set to receive more than \$200,000 for opioid abatement later this year, the result of a class action suit against Johnson & Johnson for the company's role in the nation's opioid epidemic. In January, the state settled with Johnson & Johnson for \$149.5 million. \$123.3 million will be spent on opioid abatement programs statewide. The amount counties and cities will receive depends on how many jurisdictions join the settlement by May 11.

On Monday, the Board of Jefferson County Commissioners unanimously approved a motion for the county to join the settlement. Lawyers for Keller Rohrback – the Seattle law firm representing several Washington jurisdictions, including Jefferson County – estimate the county's share of the settlement funds will be a minimum of \$231,544 with an estimated actual payment of \$243,258. Per the county's agreement with the state on the sharing of opioid settlement funds, money will be distributed by the Port Orchard-based Salish Behavioral Health Administrative Services Organization for a range of programs to help local governments deal with the effects of the opioid crisis. Funds from Johnson & Johnson will be allocated in a one-time payment as opposed to the annual payment agreed to as part of other opioid settlements.

Jefferson County is set to receive more than \$883,000 over 14 years from a settlement with CVS, Walgreens, Walmart, Teva, and Allergan, and more than \$896,000 over 15 years from a settlement with McKesson Corporation, Cardinal Health Inc., and Amerisource Bergen Drug Corporation. Both cases settled in 2022.

There are a range of activities the funding can be used for that qualify as opioid abatement, including medically assisted treatment programs and the overdose reversal drug naloxone, but also prevention programs, data collection, training, and research. Commissioners said they should be strategic in how this settlement money is used, and they suggested items like housing and therapeutic courts as potential recipients.

It's Election Day for voters in Quilcene and Clallam Bay. Voters in both communities are being asked to approve levies to fund local services. Voters in Clallam County Fire Protection District No. 5 – which covers Clallam Bay and Sekiu – are being asked to approve a levy increase to fund local firefighting services. The explanation for Proposition 1 said, "This proposition will authorize the District to establish its levy rate at \$1.10 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation for collection in 2025. The funds will be used to maintain current service levels. The dollar amount levied in the final year shall serve as the District's future tax levy base." This is the first levy rate adjustment the district has requested in more than 30 years. Ballots can be returned to official Clallam County drop boxes located throughout the county.

In Jefferson County, Quilcene voters will be asked for a second time to approve an educational programs and operations levy for the Quilcene School District after voters rejected the levy in a February special election. The proposed levy would raise about \$3.8 million through 2028, and it would include \$904,537 in 2025 and increase incrementally to more than \$1 million in the final year of collection. The levy failed by 25 votes in February, but shortly after the election, the Quilcene School Board held a special meeting and voted to place the same levy on the next available special election ballot. Board members previously said many community members claimed not to have understood the full impacts of not approving the levy, and a Yes committee was formed to support the measure in a subsequent election.

Ballot drop boxes are located throughout Jefferson County, but only SOME: County drop boxes at the Nordland Fire Station, Olympic Peninsula Gateway Visitor Center, the Hoh Indian Nation, and the Quinault Indian Nation are NOT available to receive April 23rd ballots. In-person voting will be available at the Jefferson County Auditor's Office from 8:30am to 8pm today. Clallam County voter information can be found online at (<https://clallamcountywa.gov/162/Elections-Voter-Registration>). Jefferson County voter information can be found at co.jefferson.wa.us/elections (<https://co.jefferson.wa.us/1266/Elections>).

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.