

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. This is Casey Dolan with local news and commentary for Thursday, June 20, 2024.

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Jefferson County Public Health is alerting us to dangerously high levels of fecal bacteria in the water off East Beach on Marrowstone Island. The department has issued advisories online urging people and pets to avoid contact with the water at East Beach until new samples can be tested and declared safe. A warning sign has been posted at 330 East Beach Road. Samples collected at the beach this past Monday averaged more 500 enterococci per 100 milliliters of water. The Washington Beach Environmental Assessment, Communication and Health (BEACH) program warning level is 104 enterococci per 100 milliliters of water. Enterococci bacteria in the water indicates that human or animal feces are present. Fecal-contaminated waters can result in gastroenteritis, skin rashes, upper respiratory infections, and other illnesses; children and the elderly may be more vulnerable to waterborne illnesses. Jefferson County Public Health monitors saltwater swimming beaches weekly from Memorial Day through Labor Day as part of the Washington BEACH program.

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The *PT Leader* is reporting that former Port Townsend Mayor Brent Shirley filed a complaint on May 6 against City Manager John Mauro, alleging Mauro inflated his professional credentials to obtain the position and now engages in conduct that has driven away employees and created a hostile work environment for city employees and council members. Shirley asserts that “Individuals have left their employment with the city due to his improper verbal behavior, including raising his voice and treating employees in a demeaning manner.” Shirley sent his complaint via a 900-word letter to city council and the city attorney. He claims he has heard a steady stream of comments regarding Mauro from past and current elected officials and employees and that some may be afraid to speak for fear of retribution.

Shirley submitted an open records request on May 24, asking for Mauro’s most recent employee evaluation conducted by an independent firm and any and all documents related to the city manager’s evaluations since he was hired. He’s also requested Mauro’s self-evaluations, council member and staff evaluations of Mauro, and direct reports from other staff members and the results of an all-employee survey conducted in mid-May. Shirley sent a request for an update on June 12, but did not immediately receive one.

Port Townsend Mayor David Faber, asked for comment, replied in an email: “When Mr. Shirley sent in his vague, third-party accusations, I spoke with the city’s HR director Cynthia Shaffer and the city’s contract attorney Alexandra Kenyon for direction.” Faber, who also has a half-time job, said the deadline did not enable him to determine the “exact correct person we sent this issue to, but I believe it was the hearings examiner.” Faber said it was his understanding that they “contacted Mr. Shirley, who either could not or would not substantiate the claims he makes in the letter, and does not want to proceed with an ethics complaint.”

Discussion of Shirley’s complaint and request for an investigation has not been on the regular city council agenda. It remains unclear how the council will proceed. Mauro has responded to the accusations saying, “I stand confidently by my record.” He also said that Shirley’s accusations are false.

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The Department of Transportation alerts us that the bridge over the Elwha River on US 101 west of Port Angeles will soon be open to traffic. Crews are increasing their work time to have around-the-clock one-way alternating traffic controlled by traffic signals near mileposts 239 on US 101 as early as Monday, June 24. A

signal will be near each end of the bridge. The speed limit will be reduced to 35 mph. The reduced speed limit will take effect once signs are uncovered. Currently, US 101 over the Elwha River Bridge is closed.

After construction of the new highway section is complete on June 24, traffic will be routed onto it and the new Elwha River Bridge. The new span is 40 feet wide with two 12-foot lanes. The shoulders are 8 feet wide to accommodate people who walk or roll.

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KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us at [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org). I'm Casey Dolan and I thank you for listening.