

This is KPTZ 91.9FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Nigel O'Shea bringing you news and commentary for from the Jefferson County *Beacon* for Wednesday, August 21, 2024.

Over the weekend, residents of Brinnon tensely waited to see if they would need to evacuate as the Jupiter fire blazed in the Duckabush. As of the 20th, the fire has spread to nearly 400 acres and is only 8% contained. The rain and wind over the weekend helped to slow the spread and push the flames away from the lower Duckabush, where many anxious residents are still under a level one evacuation advisory. Residents above Duckabush Road are still under a level two evacuation warning, meaning they should be prepared to evacuate at any moment.

Volunteers worked tirelessly to feed firefighters and medical crew by making sandwiches and handing out snacks from Halfway House, a Brinnon restaurant that donated its kitchen to the effort. The food preparation work has now moved up to Camp Parsons to be closer to the lines the firefighters are currently working on. Firefighters have asked that everyone avoid traveling to this area until the fire is fully contained. They also no longer need food donations, but the Brinnon Fire Department is still accepting cash donations to help cover the cost of their fire response.

The future of the Caswell-Brown temporary shelter for the unhoused is still uncertain, according to Viola Ware, the new housing director for the Olympic Community Action Program, better known as OlyCAP. When it was originally formed, housing contracts with residents only provided shelter for one year. With those contracts coming to an end, there are concerns from residents who may soon be losing housing. Ware said, "More than likely, we'll extend with people there."

She also noted that residents had not received the help they needed to transition into permanent housing and that if they do extend the contracts, they hope it will last for at least a year. OlyCAP has sought the aid of the Foundational Community Supports (FCS) program to help house Caswell-Brown residents. Utilizing Apple Health benefits with Medicaid-reimbursed funds, FCS offers supportive housing and employment to people with complex needs. This program has been so popular that applications far exceeded the initial available resources. Despite these setbacks, Ware came into her new position at OlyCAP in June hopeful and quickly began implementing changes at Caswell-Brown. OlyCAP recently got a permit for a new building on-site at Caswell-Brown to create a services office.

Not only does Ware plan to assist residents in their search for a more permanent home, she's already hired a landlord liaison to help secure it. She's also helped form a new resident's council for Caswell-Brown, which she plans to consult on decisions regarding everything from hiring staff to budget priorities.

There are still challenges ahead of OlyCAP, however. The construction of an emergency shelter remains one of the biggest problems facing our community, as the current emergency shelter only has one year left in its contract with the American Legion Hall in Port Townsend. Legion Commander Wyatt Ranson said, "Regardless of where the Caswell-Brown Village is at July 1st of next year, there absolutely will not be a shelter at the Legion; we will not entertain any talks or anything." An end to the contract has been rumored for years as the Legion stretched far beyond their initial offer.

The Community Outreach Association Shelter Team, or COAST, originally signed a contract for the shelter with the American Legion in 2006, intending to be a temporary agreement during winter seasons only. Soon after, OlyCAP took over managing the shelter. They began offering it as a year-round service in 2017. Despite a complex relationship with the shelter, members of the Legion generously continued to approve the contract.

This year, however, that changed. OlyCAP's contract with the Legion ended in June, and Bayside Housing & Services took over on July 1 this year. Even if funding is found for Caswell-Brown's Phase 3 emergency shelter, the chances of completing construction by next summer are slim.

Jefferson County Commissioner Greg Brotherton said in a recent Shelter Coalition Meeting that if the money does materialize, he will come "hat in hand" to the Legion, asking them for hopefully just six more months to complete construction.

The Angel of the Arts award is back, and the Port Townsend Arts Commission needs your nominations. This Award honors an individual or artist collective in any discipline whose efforts on behalf of local art have been outstanding. All nominations will be reviewed and a recipient will be selected by the Port Townsend Arts Commission. Selected recipients will be honored at a ceremony scheduled for Thursday, October 3, 2024, at the Cotton Building. Nominations are due to the Arts Commission by September 15, 2024.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5 Monday through Friday and at noon on Saturdays, partnering on Wednesdays to bring you stories from the *Jefferson County Beacon*. You can submit ideas to the *Beacon* through info@jeffcobeacon.com. I'm Nigel O'Shea and thanks for listening.