

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Taylor Nations with local news and commentary for Tuesday, September 24, 2024.

From the PT *Leader*: The Quilcene food bank project has been reenergized, following an announcement from leadership at the Jefferson County Food Bank Association (JCFBA) on September 13. Barker Creek Consulting of Silverdale will take over project management and spearhead soliciting design-build proposals to complete construction. Craig Uchida, the board president, said, "This decision was necessary. Our executive director and the new officers on the board were not involved in any of the initial planning of this project. We need to understand why this project has become what it is and make sure it meets the needs of our community, not just now but well into the future."

Patricia Hennessy, the agency's executive director, underscored Uchida's sentiment, and she said, "This hard restart is an opportunity. The idea is to bring some important infrastructure to the community. We're not going to abandon the project – we need to re-think it. What started as a \$250,000 project ballooned into a structure that will likely cost well over \$1 million to complete." Hennessy said the project was ill-conceived and originally launched without a designated budget. Project funding, she said, had been coming out of reserves that should have been used to pay for food and other operational expenditures.

Planning for a new Quilcene food bank facility began in 2019. The project broke ground in November of 2023, with an anticipated completion date of December 2024. However, between November 2023 and December 2024, the food bank association's board leadership changed. Hennessy said that the new board determined the original design, planning, and budget decisions, which had been made by prior leadership, was not sufficient to serve the needs of JCFBA's operations going forward. As a result, the board decided it was necessary to conduct a forensic audit and placed the Quilcene building project – the largest expenditure in the association's 37-year history, on hold, Hennessy said.

The audit process, led by Insightful Analytics of Sedro-Wooley, is examining organizational financial records dating back to at least 2020. Hennessy said the audit includes analyzing bank statements, deposit and donation records, vendor invoices and payments, tax returns, contractor agreements, and meeting minutes of both the board and committees specifically related to the Quilcene building project. According to food bank association staff, early audit findings indicated the necessity to hire an outside construction consultant to oversee the completion of the new Quilcene building.

Hennessy said one of the immediate first tasks is to winterize the building. Hennessy said, "It's a shell of a building. We're going to have to go back to the drawing board on this, we're going to start from scratch. It's going to take some time and planning." She continued, "It stinks that this project is where it is, but we have an opportunity to hit the pause button. This is an opportunity to really rethink how we use this space. We will have a new food bank for Quilcene, but we've got to do this right."

According to the food bank association, local food banks were serving about 2,700 households per month. This year, they report, that number has jumped to 3,400.

As the leaves begin to turn, Washington State Ferries's (WSF) next round of virtual public meetings will help turn the page on its busiest season. A pair of meetings will feature a question-and-answer session with WSF directors and decision-makers, who will also provide the latest information on summer travel, crewing, and service reliability. One meeting was scheduled for today Tuesday, September 24 at noon, but participants can

still register before the online meeting scheduled for Wednesday, September 25 at 6pm (https://wsdot-wa.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_pmqJxPp5TwSOgMMbLmhkPw#/registration). Prior registration is required for this virtual meeting.

Each public meeting covers the same material. Meeting participants will be able to ask questions and provide comments ahead of time. After the meeting, video recordings will be available online on WSF's community participation page (<https://wsdot.wa.gov/travel/washington-state-ferries/about-us/community-participation>).

For the latest service updates, sign up for rider alerts (<https://vmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me/L0/https:%2F%2Fwsdot.wa.gov%2FFerries%2FRouteAlerts%2F/1/01000191de0998d3-bd9872a3-eaf0-4973-bfe6-df7579352f69-000000/PRv4JmNUdvhisLIkQi3-UDXiSaY=391>) and track each ferry using the real-time map (<https://vmm0dj30.r.us-east-1.awstrack.me/L0/https:%2F%2Fwsdot.com%2Fferries%2Fvesselwatch%2Fdefault.aspx/1/01000191de0998d3-bd9872a3-eaf0-4973-bfe6-df7579352f69-000000/pKHSRXVMU01iRJpAzncixkXSFn0=391>) online.

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