

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker with your local news and commentary for Friday, September 27, 2024.

According to the *Peninsula Daily News*, on Wednesday of this week, after Jefferson County Health Department staff noticed a surprisingly large number of cats on a Brinnon property during a septic system investigation, animal control departments from Jefferson County, Clallam County, and Sequim returned to the property and seized over 140 cats, many of whom are very young kittens.

The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office is investigating second-degree animal cruelty, a gross misdemeanor that can result in up to 364 days in jail and fines up to \$5,000, but charges have not yet been filed. Some of the cats are being treated for fleas and other test results are pending before a final decision can be made. Return to the owners and/or kitten adoptions will not be possible until the matter of charges has been decided. In the meantime, the cats are sheltering and receiving treatment at Center Valley Animal Rescue in Quilcene. For photos of the kittens or to donate for their care, visit <https://centervalleyanimalrescue.org/>.

This from *Washington State Standard*: A 14-month investigation has led to charges against the political committee Let's Go Washington for allegedly violating campaign finance laws while gathering signatures for six initiatives last year, including three on the ballot in November. A hearing is set for October 3.

According to the charges, Let's Go Washington did not "accurately and timely" report its spending on signature gathering for each of the measures. Public Disclosure Commission staff also assert the committee failed to obtain and disclose information from vendors on their spending on subcontractors for signature gathering. They also accuse the committee of not producing requested campaign records.

The dispute is rooted in Let's Go Washington's unprecedented success last year in gathering signatures for six initiatives to the Legislature. Lawmakers adopted three – dealing with guidelines for police pursuits, parental rights, and taxes. Voters will decide the fate of three additional measures this fall that seek to repeal the capital gains tax and the cap-and-trade system and make the state's new long-term care services program voluntary. Lawyers in the case are pressing for action on the allegations before the fall election.

The *Washington State Standard* also reports that Washington schools have one of the highest absenteeism rates in the country. Factors influencing absenteeism include mental health issues, disabilities, lack of affordable childcare – which forces older kids to stay home and take care of their younger siblings – and access to transportation.

With student absenteeism at record highs, about half of Washington districts, including the Port Townsend School District, have begun using a tool developed by researchers at Washington State University to help get kids back on track. The tool is called WARNS – the Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students. The 40-question, web-based assessment for middle and high school students is meant to help figure out why individual students are missing classes and what they need to stay in school. It asks kids detailed questions about their relationships with their peers, mental health issues, family environment, school engagement and more. Once a student finishes the assessment, both the student and the school receive a set of scores indicating their risk level for different outcomes.

If you live in or near a special flood hazard area, Jefferson County and the City of Port Townsend recommend that now is a good time to consider purchasing flood insurance, as homeowner's property and casualty insurance doesn't cover losses originating from flood events. Flooding in western Washington generally occurs between the months of October and April, but floods are most common in the autumn and especially November. To see if you are in the flood zone and learn about insurance options, go to <https://www.floodsmart.gov/flood-insurance>.

And finally, the City of Port Townsend reminds us that if you're having a hard time remembering your trash and recycling collection day you might want to get the Waste Connections Mobile App. To view your pick up schedule and receive collection notifications, just search "WasteConnect" for android or iOS phones.

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