

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant with news and commentary for Tuesday, November 26, 2024.

We are heading into a cold winter, which means that it will be a hard time for the unhoused in Port Townsend. One of the most important resources is the Winter Warming Center, which operates between 8:30am to 12:30pm seven days a week in the Pope Marine Building across from City Hall. This is the seventh year of its operation, the sixth in its current location. There are already indications that this resource will be stressed more than usual. Julia Cochrane, the de facto executive director who has run the program since its inception, told KPTZ that the demand has already increased. Most years the Center draws ten to twelve people at the beginning of the season, it is already serving 24 people every day.

The Warming Center offers only a small part of the unhoused puzzle. The American Legion Shelter provides overnight accommodations but lets out at 8am. The Warming Center operates from 8:30am to 12:30pm so people are on their own until the shelter opens in the evening except Tuesday through Friday when the Recovery Cafe is open for shelter and meals. The catch there is a sober requirement, for which many people don't qualify. Currently, the Warming Center has five paid staff members. On-site manager Ben Cassard was himself homeless in 2018 and a guest of the shelter. The next year he returned as an employee.

Cochrane is the only volunteer. She expects that the American Legion Center will close permanently next year, at which time she hopes to secure a facility that will operate around the clock, all year. This will require a more reliable funding stream, both to secure an inexpensive space and convert the staff to full time.

The center already lost in the bidding process to occupy the former KPTZ studios at Mountain View Community Center for the operation of a children's advocacy center. Cochrane agreed with that decision as the studio is well suited for that function, but she said that Mountain View is the ideal location for a year-round shelter.

Cochrane is scheduled to appear on KPTZ next week, at which time she will provide further information about the warming center and other efforts to support the local unhoused population. The program, *Attention Please!*, will broadcast at noon and 5pm next Monday, December 2 and at noon on Saturday, December 7. For more information, go to the Jefferson Interfaith Action Coalition website. (<https://www.jeffersoninterfaithaction.org/www>).

The Climate Action Committee announced the availability of the first fast chargers for electric vehicles in the county. They were installed at 2409 Jefferson Street (near the intersection with Sims Way) over the summer. The facility came to pass due to a collaboration between the City and vendor EVCS, with funding from the Washington State Department of Transportation. The chargers can fill an EV in less than 30 minutes, depending on the vehicle. In addition to the chargers, the facility houses an electric vehicle rental service. People who don't own a car can rent the vehicles to run a quick errand, while others seeking to learn about electric vehicles can satisfy their curiosity.

When proposed one year ago the chargers were adjacent to the Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce and Visitor's Center, but the chamber closed down and moved the Visitor's Center to Fort Worden. So the chargers are isolated in one of the least interesting parts of town. It's walking distance from Safeway and the Co-op, but tourists in need of a charge probably aren't interested in food shopping. Presumably, these won't be the last fast chargers to appear in East Jefferson County.

KPTZ broadcasts local news at noon and 5pm Monday through Friday and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us through at news@kptz.org. I'm Charlie Bermant. Thank you for listening.