

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant with news and commentary for Tuesday, December 3, 2024.

A boiler failure at the Fort Worden Commons has caused the facility to close for the winter season, moving customer service functions to the Guardhouse and shifting other functions to various locations around the Fort Worden Campus. The Commons will close to the public this Sunday, December 8, and reopen the following day at the Guardhouse. Front desk functions where guests are greeted and assigned accommodations will move, as will the Reville Cafe that serves breakfast and lunch. The Guardhouse, serving dinner and hosting a full bar, will continue its regular operation.

A limited number of already scheduled events will move to other buildings where heat is available, such as the JFK building and the USO center. Regular meetings of the Port Townsend Rotary Club have already relocated to the Seminar Building. There currently is no heat in the Commons building. Those still in the building are heating their areas with space heaters until the move takes place.

Fort Worden's Managing Director of Operations Natalie Maitland said that some areas could be similarly heated for specific events, should the need arise. Group guests who have events booked in to the Commons during the winter will receive communication from the Group Sales team which will make arrangements for their events to continue, according to an email to Fort Worden partners.

There are no solid estimates for the completion of the boiler replacement or its cost, but the building is expected to remain closed for the winter season. It will certainly open this spring when heat is no longer required. Hours will be Sunday to Wednesday, 8am to 4pm; and 8am to 8pm Thursday through Saturday. The menu will provide espresso, pastries, lunch, and dinner options plus beer, wine, and spirits. All ages are welcome.

Concerns about the local unhoused population is front of mind as the weather gets colder, with the issue explored in depth on this week's *Attention Please!*. That program is now available at kptz.org and will be rebroadcast at noon on Saturday, December 7.

This is only part of the story, as unhoused people have trouble taking care of their pets, which provide them emotional support. This is the basis of Port Townsend Pet Helpers mission. According to the service's executive director Laurie Riley, people who are in dire situations may be homeless and/or disabled.. A pet is very often the only living being who will love them unconditionally. People can be judgmental and this particular segment of the population often feel this. A pet provides a depth of love, and provides a lifeline to its so-called owner.

Riley manages a network of volunteers that coordinates efforts to provide food, vaccinations, and spay/neuter services to pets and people who don't have access to that care. Serving the unhoused population is only part of their purpose, as many people living on society's margins cannot easily manage food, rent, insurance, and other expenses in order to support their families. After all that, feeding and vaccinations for their pets becomes a bigger stretch.

Additionally, there are too many animals out there. Allowing them to reproduce unchecked adds to the problem. Riley said this need has increased exponentially. Not so long ago they received two or three requests for service every week, lately it's two or three each day. 2025 will be a big year for the organization, Riley hopes to provide free spay, neuter, and vaccination clinics. Vaccinations can be performed under a tent, for instance, while spay and neuter requires access to a veterinarian's office. Partnerships to provide these services are in

process, Riley said. Potential clients are screened with regards to their income and expenses, with appropriate levels of help being offered. Documentation is helpful, but there is little fraud involved. People find it hard to ask for needed help; when they do so they are sincere, according to Riley.

Pet Helpers Port Townsend is currently in fundraising mode, hoping to collect at least \$10,000 to meet service goals. For more information or to contribute visit <https://pethelpersporttownsend.org/>.

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.