

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Jim Burke with your local news and commentary for Thursday, December 5, 2024.

\*\*\*

Port Townsend Public Works Director Steve King sent out a press release yesterday: The City of Port Townsend has been awarded two grants in the past week from Washington State's Transportation Improvement Board (TIB). The first, for \$2.99 million, is a Multimodal Improvements Grant and will fully repair the Lawrence Street subgrade and surface, as well as sidewalks, between Harrison and Walker Streets. The second grant, \$260,000 for pavement preservation, will be used for chip seal paving along sections of F Street and San Juan Avenue as part of a larger chip seal project intended to preserve streets that are on the verge of failure.

Both grants are part of strong support from TIB in recent years. Additional grants from the TIB include a 2024 Complete Streets grant funding pedestrian access improvements, like sidewalks, ramps, bulbouts, and rain gardens along Lawrence Street. This project is currently underway and completing in mid-December. Adjacent Tyler Street pavement repair was also funded by TIB in 2023, complementing sidewalk repairs along the corridor leading to the Bell Tower, and will be completed in 2025.

City Manager John Mauro said: "It's really colossal, what the team has done here, and it's a direct result of political courage from Council. This success also relies on very strong partnerships with local businesses and groups like Disability Awareness Starts Here, Jefferson County Farmers Markets, Jefferson Transit Authority, and Port Townsend Main Street, and support by voters with the Transportation Benefit District, which came in at nearly 80% in 2023." The Lawrence Street Multimodal Improvements Grant is the largest of the grants from TIB so far and requires that the City match a portion of the funding with authorization to accept the grant forthcoming from City Council, likely in January of 2025. Some of the grant match may come from the stormwater utility fund, the Real Estate Excise Tax (REET), and the Transportation Benefit District Fund. Construction along Lawrence Street is currently planned for 2026.

\*\*\*

The following story includes a description of animal cruelty:

The PT *Leader* reports: For the first time in a half century, Southern Resident orca whales returned to Whidbey Island's Penn Cove. The endangered whales made their presence known early last month, breaching, tail-slapping and exploring the waters near Coupeville. The sighting was emotional for many, including Howard Garrett, co-founder of the Whidbey-based Orca Network. Garrett said, "At one point during their visit, a mother and her 20-year-old son passed near the Captain Whidbey Inn, where orca whales were once netted and strapped to the sides of fishing boats in the 1970s. They circled back and forth for at least 90 minutes, while the rest of the family did the same a quarter mile away, near where the mothers lost their young."

Penn Cove on August 8, 1970, was the site of a large-scale operation to capture the whales. Eighty whales were rounded up using explosives, speedboats, and planes, Garrett recalled. Seven were captured and sold to marine parks, while others drowned in the process. "Ocean Sun," one of the whales present during the return, survived the captures; the rest of the group was born afterward. Ocean Sun may carry the memory of those traumatic events, Garrett said, which could explain why the whales haven't returned until now. Garrett said, "They seemed to know what happened there. That's how they were behaving. It tells us they have the ability to communicate memories."

Garrett also spoke with Samish tribal leader Rosie Cayou about the whales' return. He said, "She felt they were releasing the spirits of the dead and kidnapped whales. It may have been a sort of ritual to honor those spirits, reclaim the waters, and overcome the trauma." While speculation remains about why the whales returned to the

cove, one thing is clear: they weren't there for food. Garrett said, "It had nothing to do with fish. They weren't foraging at any point."

The Southern Residents spent a total of 28 days in Puget Sound, before heading out to the San Juan Islands, according to Orca Conservancy. On November 28, they were spotted off the coast of Victoria, B.C. near Race Rocks, according to an Orca Network sighting report.

\*\*\*

KPTZ 91.9 FM broadcasts your local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us at [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org). This is Jim Burke. Thanks for listening.