

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker with your local news and commentary for Friday, December 13, 2024.

Traffic was tied up on route 101 near Gardiner yesterday due to a fatal three-car accident at Discovery Point, according to Washington State Patrol. Apparently a 92-year-old man driving southbound on 101 swerved into the northbound lane, hitting the side of one vehicle and striking a second vehicle head on, knocking it over a guardrail and down an embankment. The driver of the first car was pronounced deceased at Harborview. The driver of the sideswiped car was injured and airlifted to Harborview, but the driver and passenger of the car that went over the guardrail were uninjured.

The Jefferson County Sheriff's office reports that this past Tuesday, a homeowner near the Hood Canal Bridge called to report that a man and woman dressed in black had broken into a storage container, stealing over \$11,000 worth of gold and jewelry. The suspects fled in an SUV but the victim threw a piece of firewood at their windshield, shattering the glass.

The suspects' SUV crossed the bridge and landed on its roof after a rollover collision near Port Gamble. The suspects fled the scene on foot, stole a small rowboat, and attempted to escape. But the rowboat capsized and they were forced to swim to shore, where deputies apprehended them. The miscreants were booked into the Jefferson County Jail following medical clearance.

For those concerned about the Albertsons Kroger merger and its effect on our local QFC and Safeway stores, the Washington State *Standard* tells us that the Federal Trade Commission and judges in Oregon and Washington have blocked the supermarket merger on grounds that that it would lead to higher prices, lower-quality goods, and lower pay for workers. The *Standard* now reports that Albertsons has canceled the process and is now suing Kroger, alleging the larger grocer didn't do enough to secure regulatory approval for Albertsons' 2022 agreement to buy Kroger. Albertsons sent out a press release saying Kroger "willfully breached" the merger agreement by ignoring feedback from regulators, refusing to divest required assets to appropriate buyers, and failing to cooperate with Albertsons.

Tom Moriarty, Albertsons' general counsel and chief policy officer, said in a statement that the merger would have helped consumers but that Kroger acted in its own financial self-interest instead. "Kroger's self-serving conduct, taken at the expense of Albertsons and the agreed transaction, has harmed Albertsons' shareholders, associates, and consumers," Moriarty said. "We are disappointed that the opportunity to realize the significant benefits of the merger has been lost on account of Kroger's willfully deficient approach to securing regulatory clearance."

In a responding statement, Kroger has called Albertsons' claims "baseless" and insists Albertsons repeatedly breached their agreement and interfered through the merger process. "This is clearly an attempt to deflect responsibility following Kroger's written notification of Albertsons' multiple breaches of the agreement, and to seek payment of the merger's break fee, to which they are not entitled," the statement said. "Kroger looks forward to responding to these baseless claims in court. We went to extraordinary lengths to uphold the merger agreement and the facts will make that abundantly clear."

According to the Port Townsend *Leader*, the City staff has completed an environmental review of the proposed Water Street Hotel and is now seeking public comment for the 50-room project. The four-story hotel, under the ownership of Anacortes-based Niviar, would replace the Sanderling office building at 1136 Water Street. The planning department encourages community members to submit public comments on the project to the department; the public will also have the option to appeal the department's decision.

And finally, listeners who live in the Highway 101 corridor between Gardiner and Quilcene may have noticed the recent flurry of PUD crew activity. PUD and fiber crews are working hard to provide main line and fiber drops to the remaining customers registered for PUD broadband service. To date, crews have provided fiber drops to approximately 1000 homes. Splicing and in-home installs are underway, and registration is open for their remaining fiber zones. To check if your home is within a buildout area, visit https://fiber.jeffpud.org/front_end/updates/late-august-update-for-quilcene-to-gardiner-project.

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.