

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant with news and commentary for Tuesday, December 31, 2024.

While a judge's ruling on December 20 most likely rescued Fort Worden State Park's 2025 season, there is still a lot of 'splainin' to do as to how that will happen. To that end, Washington State Parks will host a series of on-campus meetings next week including tenants, park management, and other stakeholders in order to determine next steps.

State Parks employee Chris Holm, who is currently acting as the campus business manager, told KPTZ that he is hoping that the meetings will establish a clarity and path forward that will not change the next day. He said this has not been the case for several months, where new obstacles emerge on a regular basis. After ten years of managing the Fort Worden Parks Campus, the Public Development Authority sought to dissolve in the Fall. Many participants hoped that the park would revert to pre-PDA times, when State Parks directly managed park tenants. But a considerable debt forced a receivership, with a controversy as to the disposition of a fund balance that didn't quite cover the debt. There is a difference of opinion as to who will get paid for their time, between lawyers litigating the case and small vendors who were not paid for their services already rendered.

Holm said that he did not know about the disposition of the receivership but expressed a desire that parks and tenants can deal with each other directly. Next week's meetings are not open to the public, but with the number of local organizations participating, relevant details will soon emerge. The Washington State Parks Commission could address the issue at its next regular meeting, scheduled to convene January 29 and 30 at the Department of Ecology headquarters in Lacey. That meeting is open to the public with a virtual option available.

Today represents 2024's last gasp, bringing to an end a year that many of us will be glad to leave behind. It doesn't mean that we have to get all weepy or introspective about it, as there is an opportunity to participate in Port Townsend's annual First Night Celebration. Beginning at 3pm today at various locations, the event invites attendees of all ages to experience live music, circus arts, stargazing, interactive art, history, art exhibits, fireworks, and more. Sponsored by the Production Alliance, it seeks to embrace the new year with a cosmic twist. The suggested donation is \$10 per person or \$20 per family, although no one will be turned away. Tickets for the Circus, to be held in the American Legion, and Key City Public Theater events are sold separately.

Circus admission is \$20 per adult and \$15 per child, with a splendid time guaranteed for all. Performing musicians include the instrumental trio Intensive Porpoises, the Unexpected Brass Band, and songwriter Laurence Cole. Activities include a Lantern Parade beginning at 6pm, Fire Spinning at 6:45, and fireworks at 7. There will be several food vendors, although the event itself is non-alcoholic.

First Night was conceived by a small group of artists and musicians for the December 1975 New Years Eve celebration in Boston, seeking to avoid the emphasis on alcohol typical of New Year's Eve parties and focus instead on live and interactive arts and culture performances. Today, more than 200 cities nationwide host First Night celebrations. In Port Townsend, this tradition has continued for more than ten years. For a full schedule, search online for First Night Port Townsend (try <https://theproductionalliance.org/events/first-night>)...although at this point you might as well go downtown and wait for it to begin.

On Monday, January 6 at 9:45am KPTZ will broadcast the Public Health Report as it is presented to the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners by Public Health Officer Dr. Allison Berry and Director of Emergency Management Willie Bence. They will answer listener questions. To submit questions, write to contactus@kptz.org by noon on Friday, January 3.

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.