

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker with your local news and commentary for Thursday, January 2, 2025.

According to the *Port Townsend Leader*, the City of Port Townsend has now joined in the case of Kitsap Bank versus the Fort Worden Public Development Authority. Citing more than \$230,000 in unpaid utility bills and vendor payments, the city has urged the court to push the receiver to prioritize paying for basic operations and obligations before paying its own attorneys and professional fees. City Council Member Libby Wennstrom filed a separate declaration that included details about what isn't being paid to maintain the upper campus property. "The city's \$121,798 outstanding utility bill is quite substantial; nearly half of that balance has been incurred since the receiver took over management of the Fort Worden campus," wrote Wennstrom in the December 26 declaration.

The *Leader* also reports that Jefferson County will remain on the "distressed areas" list for 2024. A distressed area is defined as anywhere in the state of Washington where unemployment is 20% higher than the statewide average. Washington's monthly unemployment rate decreased slightly to 4.6% in November, down from 4.7% in October, but Jefferson County's unemployment for November was at 5.5%.

Jefferson County had 506 paid Unemployment Insurance claims from January through November this year. That compares to 495 individuals within Jefferson County who received payments for the full twelve months in 2023. The two industry sectors in the state with the largest employment gains for the year were education and health services, up 17,500 jobs and manufacturing, up 2,200 jobs. The wholesale trade sector reported the biggest employment loss for the year, with the number of jobs shrinking by 4,700.

Statewide, Employment Security paid unemployment benefits to 62,676 people in November alone, an increase of 5,619 over the previous month. Increases in paid claims in construction and agriculture contributed to the rise, according to a press release issued by the state's Employment Security Department. The highest one-month increases in leisure and hospitality were in the arts, entertainment, and recreation industries. The deepest one-month sector losses were in retail trade, construction, and wholesale trade. But three other sectors also saw decreases in employment: transportation, warehousing and utilities, education and health services, and professional and business services.

According to the *Peninsula Daily News*, two men were taken to hospitals last Sunday following a collision on U.S. Highway 101 at the Leland Cutoff Road. Fredrick Tuso, 78 of Brinnon was traveling northbound in a 1999 Mercedes CLK when he attempted to turn left onto Leland Cutoff Road without yielding to southbound traffic, the State Patrol said. Thomas J. Wolinski, 30 of Brinnon struck the Mercedes in his 1998 Toyota Rav4 while he was traveling southbound on the highway. The Mercedes came to rest in the embankment off Leland Cutoff Road while the Toyota fully blocked the road. Both vehicles were totaled. Though both men wore seat belts, both were injured: Tuso was flown to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle and Wolinski was transported to Jefferson Healthcare in Port Townsend. Neither drugs nor alcohol were involved, according to State Patrol.

And, finally, the M/V Salish afternoon sailings out of Port Townsend and Coupeville were delayed by half an hour after the ferry's 1:15 departure from Coupeville returned to Coupeville harbor in mid-crossing to assist a

diver in distress. The diver was recovered by local EMS in Coupeville harbor, but the sailings for the remainder of the afternoon were delayed. This disruption follows Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday evening's tidal cancellations and last week's cancellations due to the Christmas Eve crew shortage and the driftwood buildup in the Coupeville Harbor that delayed and canceled sailings on Christmas Eve.

KPTZ 91.9 FM broadcasts your local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Saturday. And don't forget: email your public health questions to contactus@kptz.org by noon tomorrow and they'll be answered by Public Health Officer Dr. Allison Berry and Emergency Management Director Willie Bence this coming Monday at 9:45am on the JimB show on KPTZ! I'm Diane Walker; thank you for listening.