

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker with your local news and commentary for Thursday, January 9, 2025.

On Tuesday, January 7, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced that Meta will be ending its US fact-checking program and removing restrictions on sensitive political content on its Facebook and Instagram platforms. Washington Secretary of State Steve Hobbs has responded with a press release warning voters that "Nation state actors will continue to seize opportunities to spread election misinformation and erode public confidence in our democratic processes." Hobbs reminded Washington citizens that as advances in AI and deepfake technology continue to spread, the risk of election-related misinformation grows, and that to ensure free and fair elections, his office offers a comprehensive elections website to give voters access to accurate, trustworthy information from reliable sources. For the latest on local elections, voters are encouraged to visit their county election websites.

The *Peninsula Daily News* reports that the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners has appointed Andy Pernsteiner as acting sheriff following the early retirement of Sheriff Joe Nole on January 3. Pernsteiner, who has served as undersheriff since 2019, has been with the department for over 27 years. Pernsteiner was appointed as acting sheriff to keep the position full while the Jefferson County Democrats select a longer-term acting sheriff. Interested Jefferson County residents may submit resumes and letters of intent to info@jeffcodemocrats.com before January 13. All applicants must also fill out a questionnaire on the County Democrats website at jeffcodemocrats.com (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeL9jROQwHE_3E7k2Qjxbe-4pQD41X3SHIHvu7y1Y0_hVHrjA/viewform).

Applications will be assessed starting January 14 and selected candidates will be interviewed on January 23. The board will then choose 3 finalists to submit to the County Commissioners on January 30. The person the commissioners choose to appoint will then serve until the November general election, when voters will select a new sheriff to serve for one year to finish Nole's term. A full-term sheriff will then be elected in 2026 and begin serving in January of 2027.

The city of Port Townsend has announced the creation of a Community Services Department, which will incorporate the existing parks and facilities teams, the library department, and a new arts and culture element to oversee the Port Townsend Creative District. "This change allows us to better integrate and sustainably deliver services to our community," City Manager John Mauro said. "We're drawing creative inspiration from elements that provide a high-quality public service like the library, building back some of the elements that have suffered from years of neglect like parks and facilities, and recognizing an opportunity to play a more meaningful role in carrying forward the work of the PT Creative District in expanding living-wage opportunities for local artists." Melody Sky Weaver, who served as the library director for 10 years, has been appointed as the director of the new department.

In other news, the city has announced that its monthly newsletters will no longer be sent out with its utility bills, but will now be available online. To sign up for that newsletter, go to <https://mailchi.mp/cityofpt/city-of-port-townsend-newsletter>.

Five people were hospitalized this past Sunday following a 3-vehicle collision at Center Road and state Highway 104, according to the *Peninsula Daily News*. A Kia traveling westbound on highway 104 collided with a Subaru traveling southbound on Center Loop Road that was attempting a left turn onto eastbound Highway 104 and failed to yield. The Kia driver was taken to St. Michael's Medical Center in Silverdale, the Subaru's driver and two of the passengers in the Kia were taken to Jefferson Healthcare, and a 16-year-old passenger in the Kia was flown to Harborview following the accident. A third vehicle, a Mercedes, struck debris from the Subaru, but no one in that car was injured. Both the Subaru and the Kia were totaled. The Mercedes sustained reportable damage and was driven from the scene. All people involved were wearing seat belts, and neither drugs nor alcohol were suspected, the State Patrol said.

KPTZ 91.9 FM broadcasts your local news on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday at noon and 5pm. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. I'm Diane Walker; thank you for listening.