

Hello again! This is Derek Firenze with your local news and commentary for Wednesday, January 22, 2025 beamed in from the *Jefferson County Beacon* for KPTZ 91.9FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

Flyers and zines warning of “Dollar Store Danger” are popping up all over Jefferson County, as a local activist group raises alarms about the incoming Dollar Tree store in Port Hadlock. The Quimper Resiliency Network, or QRN, is behind these materials which voice strong opposition to the new store. Speaking of which, construction on the Dollar Tree is slated to be completed by mid-February, according to Josh Gass, the general contractor working on the project. While QRN’s members acknowledge that affordable goods are sorely needed in the area, they argue that a dollar store is not the right solution. QRN Founder Hannah Welch recalled the dollar store in Port Townsend closing many years ago, and holds hope that the new store won’t last, but added that simply hoping for change is not enough.

The activist group has taken aim at dollar stores with a focus on several issues: from lead poisoning to resource extraction, low wages, and the broader economic consequences they say these stores bring. Much of the information in QRN’s zine is pulled from a 2022 report by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, which paints a troubling picture. The report suggests that dollar stores are not just a symptom of economic distress, but a driver of it. According to the report, these stores tend to drive out local businesses, leave communities with fewer options for fresh food, and weaken local economies by draining wealth away from them. They also contribute to higher crime rates and greater community instability.

One significant issue QRN highlights is the economic impact of dollar stores. Their zine notes that, compared to locally-owned businesses, dollar stores contribute far less to the local economy. In fact, for every dollar spent at a local business, between 45 to 60 cents stays in the community. For chain stores, that number drops by half to between 14 to 30 cents.

But it’s not just economics that concerns QRN. They also point to safety issues, such as reports of illegal levels of lead and cadmium repeatedly found in children’s products sold by dollar stores. A recent example I found while doing my own research includes a 2023 recall of an apple cinnamon puree targeted towards infants sold by Dollar Tree, which was linked to elevated lead levels in children. That product was recalled after several children were found to have elevated blood lead levels, with Dollar Tree the only physical store to sell it, though it was also available online.

Despite these concerns, Welch emphasizes that the community does indeed have a significant need for affordable goods, and QRN believes that relying on corporate giants without accountability to local needs is not the right path forward. Instead, they are pushing for creative, community-driven solutions like pop-up free stores and an online inventory to share local resources and goods that are already available.

The Quimper Peninsula has a unique history of finding alternative solutions outside traditional capitalism already. For example, the North Olympic Exchange has been a staple in the region, offering a barter and trade system where “life dollars” – a form of community currency – helps meet local needs without relying on corporate systems.

If you’d like to voice your own concerns about the incoming Dollar Tree, QRN has created a survey to hear from the community. You can find that at tinyurl.com/QRNSurvey. You can also contact them through QuimperResiliencyNetwork@gmail.com.

All of those links and emails are available here or with the full story which can be found at <https://www.jeffcobeacon.com/>.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday at noon and 5pm, partnering with the Jefferson County Beacon on Wednesday to bring you stories from JeffCoBeacon.com. You can submit ideas to the *Beacon* at info@jeffcobeacon.com. This is Derek Firenze. Thanks for listening.