

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant with news and commentary for Tuesday, February 11, 2025.

Local constituents have new avenues to better connect with government, as both the City of Port Townsend and Jefferson County are striving to improve customer service.

Jefferson County has completely redesigned its website, providing a graphically friendly environment with direct links to twelve departments and functions, rather than a confusing text-based system that was in place for several years. The top six choices include links to boards and committees, permits and licenses, and employment, while the bottom six provide direct links to departments like elections, public works, public health, and the sheriff's office. Taken together, it's a lot easier to find the information that you need.

Information Technology Director Shawn Frederick, who joined the county in the midst of the redesign process, said the new design has drawn positive feedback from the public. He told KPTZ that websites are important in today's world, providing agencies with the best opportunity to connect with the public. This new site communicates necessary information, makes resources available, provides a direct connection to county staff, and provides a way to inspect public records. All of these functions have been available for some time, but it's important to present them in a way that the public can understand. Frederick said that websites are never really finished; there will always be new information. And they are a collaborative effort. Each department has a designated employee who can update the website as needed, whether it is a weather-related emergency or a code change. This assures that each department is presenting the latest information.

Clerk of the Board Carolyn Galloway said she hopes that the website will become a one-stop shop for all Commissioner agendas and interactions, putting information like agendas and minutes into a single place where it can be more easily accessed by the public.

To view the ever-evolving county website go to <https://www.co.jefferson.wa.us/>.

As for the city, customer interface was quite different before COVID, when visitors could walk through the front door and head up to the department they needed – be it Public Works, finance, planning, or the executive offices. After the construction of a plexiglass barrier, it was no longer possible to visit these departments unannounced. It has taken this long to coordinate customer service. Today the front desk acts as a funnel to the various departments. Two employees, with a third to be hired, are dedicated to providing the information needed by visitors, in many cases eliminating the need to visit the departments directly.

Mayor David Faber told KPTZ that the move is all about efficiency. In the past each department had its own front desk where separate employees handled walk-ins. Previously, if you have questions about the low-income program for city utilities, for example, it wasn't clear who you needed to ask. Today, the front desk points people in the right direction. The process also increases efficiency for city employees, having a single point of contact, where people are trained in hospitality makes a lot more sense than having a front-desk person for each department, especially when those employees had other responsibilities.

Take potholes, a common concern. There is an avenue to report potholes online, something the average person might not know about. The front-desk people can walk visitors through that process or provide another avenue if the visitor does not have an online presence.

City Hall is located at 250 Madison Street in downtown Port Townsend. The lobby is open from 9am to 4pm Monday through Thursday. Otherwise, you can connect with the city services at <https://cityofpt.us/>.

These steps improve how we interact with government. But providing open access and ease of use is the responsibility of all agencies. We should expect nothing less.

KPTZ 91.9 FM provides local news Tuesday through Thursday at noon and 5pm. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. I'm Charlie Bermant. Thank you for listening.