

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

One of Jefferson County's longest serving elected officials is retiring this year. Jennifer James Wilson, who has served on the Port Townsend School Board since 2009, announced that she will not run for a fifth term. James Wilson, 67, told KPTZ that she originally planned to spend ten years on the board but decided that was not enough time to meet her goals. Working on the board continued to be stimulating. During her presence on the board she participated in six superintendent searches, ran numerous levy lifts, and helped to manage a smooth transition from the controversial Redskins name to the more benign Redhawks. The process took a full school year to accomplish but ended with all concerned feeling recognized.

When she started, there was a bridge to build between the school district and the community, something that is now in place. She now feels comfortable retiring because there is currently a strong board that includes capable, professional people with great dispositions and no hidden agendas.

James Wilson said that with luck adulthood can last a really long time, but childhood is fleeting. Children spend a lot of time in the school setting, so it's a sacred responsibility of the school system to make their time in class an enriching experience. She is leaving for an extended Pacific voyage tomorrow, beginning in Japan and including a trip to the small Australian town where she was an exchange student 52 years ago. Anyone interested in filing for the school board or any other of this year's elected positions must do so at the Jefferson County Auditor during filing week, May 5 through May 9.

One of James Wilson's final projects will be helping to determine the disposition of the Lincoln Building, a 130-year-old edifice on the high school campus that hasn't been useful for several years. This signals the end of valiant efforts to repurpose the space, all determined to be too expensive or impractical. It began as a schoolhouse but was storm damaged in the 1930s and subsequently determined to be unsafe in the 1980s. From that time it served as the school's administrative offices until the entire building was condemned in 2010. Since then it has entertained uses such as a tech center for Microsoft or another company, a performing arts center, or as low-income housing. Demolition costs were estimated at \$500,000 ten years ago, and that money was approved by voters and is now unspent, sitting in the district accounts. Another levy lift was approved by voters this year for that purpose. A bond issue will be necessary to finish the demolition process. There is no decided use for the land once it is vacated, something that will be determined by the district in the coming months.

There are a lot of senior care facilities in Port Townsend, but a new and much less expensive option is opening this summer. The Gray Muzzle Project, designed to house up to eight senior dogs at a time, will operate out of a private residence in Jefferson County. According to board member Tracy Wagner, the facility's goal is to provide forever homes and hospice care for disabled senior dogs. Instead of dying in a shelter, the dogs will receive organic food, homeopathic treatments, and massage. And it's not just for shelter dogs. Many people find it difficult to care for their elderly dog or afford their treatment. The property owner will live on site and provide overnight care, while the project is looking to recruit volunteers to take up the slack in the daytime. And as anyone who has ever to care for one dog will tell you, caring for eight of the little critters won't be a walk in the dog park. For more information, to volunteer or contribute, go to <https://www.thegraymuzzleproject.org/>. That's gray with an A.

KPTZ 91.9 FM broadcasts 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.