

This is KPTZ FM 91.9 in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Rachel Perkins, bringing you news and commentary from the Jefferson County *Beacon* for Wednesday, March 12, 2025.

On March 17, the City Council will meet to consider a paid parking pilot program for a section of downtown. Mayor David Faber acknowledged the high interest in the issue, noting that the hundreds of communications from city residents and businesses in recent months reflect a widespread belief that a parking problem exists, but these messages have not surfaced a clear consensus on what the problem is. In addition to complaints about ease of shopping for tourists or work access for residents, there are also concerns about the role of automobile emissions in deepening our climate crisis.

Popular suggestions from city residents for parking management approaches include: building a parking garage, eliminating cars from downtown entirely, better parking management to promote turnover in parking stalls, and encouraging transit use and active transportation options. Faber has been working with the City Council and staff to solve the perceived problems with downtown parking, arriving at a proposal to pilot a paid parking program, most likely across a one-mile section of streets downtown. Paid parking is expected to increase parking supply through higher turnover. The City does not have staff to enforce the current two-hour time limits on parking that are posted in some areas, but a pilot study is expected to produce data that will reveal how effective such a program would be within an overall parking management plan.

The current proposal recommends parking fees of \$2.00 per hour between 9am and 5pm, with possible free parking on Mondays and Tuesdays, which tend to be slower days for business. The recommended fine for noncompliance is \$65. Faber said that he is looking at various methods of payment to enable efficiency and ease of use for as many people as possible. Ultimately, says Faber, the Mayor and the City will act in accordance with the wishes of city residents and businesses, even if the majority sentiment turns out to be opposed to implementing paid parking.

Helping people understand their rights might seem like dry legal work, but working for the Jefferson County Immigrant Rights Association (JCIRA) allows Courtney Morales-Thrall, the Multicultural Center Administrator, to make a real difference in the lives of immigrants on the Olympic Peninsula. She describes hearing recently that a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) vehicle parked in front of the hospital in Port Angeles deterred someone from entering the hospital because they didn't feel safe, and she is concerned that situations like this will cause people to seek medical care elsewhere, which in our rural area could be hours away.

Despite the Keep Washington Working Act passed in 2019, which prohibits law enforcement from detaining anyone solely to determine their immigration status and restricts how much local police can work with CBP or Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers, immigrants have good reasons to feel nervous. In particular, the local immigrant community still bears the trauma of a campaign waged against them in 2008, when, after a suspected terrorist was apprehended at the Port Angeles border, the number of immigration agents in the area increased from four to 25.

This increased law enforcement activity led to 81 undocumented immigrants being taken into custody at roadblocks, though authorities were unable to find any additional evidence of terrorist activity. Trump's recent executive order allowing ICE into formerly protected spaces like hospitals and schools has reignited that trauma for many in the immigrant community, regardless of the State's new protections. In response, JCIRA has started a mental health partnership with a nonprofit based in Mexico. This program connects local immigrants with a

therapist in Mexico specializing in migration and trauma-informed therapy. This critical cultural understanding and language proficiency is needed in rural Jefferson County, whose local hospital has struggled to find the resources to provide even basic language support.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5 Tuesday through Thursday, partnering on Wednesdays to bring you stories from jeffcobeacon.com. You can submit ideas to the *Beacon* through info@jeffcobeacon.com. This is Rachel Perkins. Thanks for listening.