

This is KPTZ FM 91.9 in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Nhatt Nichols, bringing you news and commentary from the Jefferson County *Beacon* for Wednesday, April 2, 2025.

City staff shared their collective 20-year “vision and roadmap” for Port Townsend and their plan of action this past Wednesday the 26th at the Salish Coast Elementary School Commons. Elected officials, consultants, and members of the public gathered to see the presentation, contribute to how policies are put into action, and voice their priorities. Topics presented ranged from mixed-use centers that combine residential and commercial development, high-density developments for housing solutions for future populations and growth objectives, updates to the 2020 Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) plan, developing Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) priority routes, connection points for walking/biking routes, the arts, and projected climate crisis impacts.

The city offered a data collection model by using stickers to mark if the people liked or disliked policy wordage. They also provided stickers to indicate opinions of urgency on proposed plans of action. There was limited space to offer feedback, but the public took to writing in the allocated space on the presentation boards, largely commenting on the climate proposals. With the climate crisis already here, federal food cuts, and impending land taxes, there was concern about food security and questions about why farms and agriculture inside city limits was not being promoted, especially in conjunction with the push for more developments. Comments written on the climate board included, “Promote farms and gardens as part of food web preparedness” and “Resilience equals food security.”

The city's presentation stated, “The Workgroup of the Jefferson County Climate Action Committee is following state guidance and building on our existing climate policies.” However, there were no further details that outlined what those policies are. Their housing solutions for Port Townsend proposed more high-density developments. The plan indicates locating denser development in areas where the existing land use plan already allows them. While much of the presentation was difficult to read or contained few details, there were seven tangible “implementation actions” offered, and people were invited to mark their perceived level of importance.

The overnight shelter at the American Legion in downtown Port Townsend will permanently close in several months and OlyCAP is anxiously awaiting the arrival of overdue funding for replacement units at Caswell-Brown Village to fill the gap. Peggy Webster, housing project manager at OlyCAP, said that the Washington State Department of Commerce has allocated funds to support the project, but the money is overdue and Webster is not sure if or when it will arrive. OlyCAP had earmarked \$110,000 to construct 15 living units at Caswell Brown: \$70,000 for materials and \$40,000 for electrical connections for the 8x10-foot units.

Debbie Steele with Community Build said that even though the money to build the shelters has not yet arrived from the state, the organization has begun building units with its existing funds. All of Community Build's living shelter units, as well as tiny homes on wheels that are built for families with low income, are built with volunteer labor. County Commissioner Greg Brotherton said that the county has a responsibility to fight for the marginalized, adding that it falls to the County and City of Port Townsend to determine the level of priority to allocate the needs. Brotherton said that the County is considering a larger role in homeless services and mentioned successful affordable housing projects such as Seventh Haven, a 43-unit affordable housing complex in Port Townsend, and various projects developed by Bayside Housing & Services.

Brotherton and Webster both say that the homeless issue is largely a housing supply issue and that more permanent housing is needed, but that building in Jefferson County is extremely expensive given the cost of

labor and materials. The city and county have been working hard to find policy approaches and funding mechanisms to relieve the problem, but building developers need to make a certain profit on each unit in order to undertake any project.

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