

This is KPTZ 91.9FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Nigel O'Shea bringing you news and commentary from the Jefferson County *Beacon* for Wednesday, April 9, 2025.

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The transformation of the old golf course on Marrowstone into a conservation burial site lies dead in the ground. Jefferson Land Trust began studying the feasibility of the property on Marrowstone Island as a possible site following the submission of a conditional use application permit; they presented a proposal to the community in late 2024, which was met with immediate and intense pushback. The initial year-long research efforts were to begin after the support of their board of management, water specialists, habitat biology group, geohydrologist, and a Bremerton-based water quality firm confirmed findings. The team was to conduct boundary surveys and ecological studies to determine safety and focus conservation efforts on supporting wildflower meadows for the local pollinators through prairie restoration and the gentle expansion of the remaining old-growth forest, with guidance from the Conservation Burial Alliance and the Green Burial Council, as well as input from conservation burial grounds around the nation.

James Wright, a Marrowstone property owner and vocal opponent to the proposed use said, "We are not against the concept of conservation burials; this in our opinion, was just not the right place for it. We are grateful to the Land Trust for realizing this and responding to the community's pushback." In view of the community's overwhelming opposition, Wright said, "It was a misstep from the Land Trust to not engage the residents before filing for the permissional use permit and only reaching out to thirteen neighbors."

Marrowstone Islanders are interested in keeping the property public. They are discussing the island-wide responsibility and potential of a community group buying the land with the guidance of the Marrowstone Island Foundation (MIF), a nonprofit organization formed in 2000. With the conservation burial shut down by the locals and six years of searching for sustainable options, the property owner is ready to sell. The islanders hope there is time to organize and develop a purchase plan, but there is no guarantee they can come together before a private owner buys. However, the property will likely be hard to sell with the conservation easement, and they hope this will allow for more time.

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A Washington State Senate Bill could effectively end Ferry Advisory Committees (FACs) if signed into law. SB 5161 has already passed the Washington State House and Senate and is now a few steps away from ending the requirement for Washington State Ferries (WSF) to consult with local ferry advisory committees, like the one we have here in Jefferson County that advocated on behalf of the Port Townsend-Couville route. Members of FACs are worried that cutting their official voice out of the process will lead to worse service.

Instead of FACs, WSF has proposed spending \$75,000 on a two-year study that will replace the role that FACs currently serve. County Commissioner Heather Dudley-Nollette sits on the Jefferson County FAC and has seen it as an important voice. Dudley-Nollette said, "While I understand the need to create efficiencies and that perhaps Washington State Ferries perceives this as one of those opportunities, at the same time, who are you going to use as the foundation of your study resources if you don't have ferry advisory committees anymore?"

The volunteers who serve on these committees advocate for the diverse needs of those who use ferries with Washington State Ferry (WSF) decision-makers, working with other FACs to create a collaborative environment that doesn't pit communities against each other when vying for limited resources. They also investigate, prioritize and, in many cases, resolve local ferry issues, saving ferry staff time. They conduct reviews and analyses of issues, plans, and legislation for local governments and legislators, which their staff lacks the time and resources to do. And the best part of FACs? None of their work costs the public any money.

Though the proposed study only temporarily ends the requirement for WSF to consult with FACs, there is no guarantee that they will be reinstated after the two-year study ends. Dudley-Nollette said, “When something is gone, it’s hard to put it back,” adding that she would be willing to continue serving on the advisory committee even if Washington State Ferries no longer was required to take their advice as she’s seen the benefit a local FAC provides.

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A call for entries in the Northwind Art Gala fundraising art auction is open now. Visual artists working in two- and three-dimensional media, including jewelers, are invited to submit up to five pieces before the May 1 deadline. A panel of local artists will serve as jurors; they will select 50 pieces for the fundraising art auction, which will be part of the Northwind Art Gala on June 28 at White Lotus Farm in Port Ludlow. A public preview of the 50 pieces in the auction will be held June 10 and 11 at the Cotton Building in downtown Port Townsend. More details are found in the CaFé portal reachable via NorthwindArt.org ([https://artist.callforentry.org/festivals\\_unique\\_info.php?ID=15179](https://artist.callforentry.org/festivals_unique_info.php?ID=15179)).

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KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5 Tuesday through Thursday, partnering on Wednesday to bring you stories from the *Jefferson County Beacon*. This is Nigel O’Shea. Thanks for listening.