

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM on your dial in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant with news and commentary for Tuesday, April 29, 2025.

There are three open seats on the Port Townsend City Council this year. Incumbents Neil Nelson and Libby Wennstrom will run for re-election, while council member Ben Thomas will not run for a second term. Wennstrom was the last to make the decision whether to run, stating that her first term represented an "heavy lift" with uncertainty as to how public service fits in with her other obligations.

Her decision was partially influenced by Thomas' withdrawal, saying that having two new members on the council could be counterproductive to the city's goals. It takes a lot of time and effort to get up to speed as a council member; having done that work it made sense to continue.

Wennstrom expects that housing issues will be at the forefront of the council's agenda next term. There are other challenges such as downtown parking and what to do about Port Townsend's deer population. She said that housing is a complex national issue that faces every community and won't be easily solved. She said that the most controversial issues may be the easiest to address. Everyone is mad about potholes, but the solution is to find enough money to fix them. Downtown parking is a difficult issue that keeps being kicked down the road, she said.

So while we will have at least one new council member, it could be as many as three. We can't assume that either Nelson or Wennstrom will prevail in November. It is a likely outcome, as the interest in running for council has waned. In 2023, the most recent council election, there were no challenges for any of the four open seats. Some elected officials say that council races are unopposed because the public thinks they are doing a good job. More likely, people realize that the office brings with it a huge workload, and it is easier to complain from the side lines.

Candidate filing begins this Monday, May 5 and continues through Friday, May 9. There are three ways to file: in person, by mail, or online. The Jefferson County Auditor favors online candidate declaration. All the documents are presented in an orderly fashion, you can file from home, and you are not subject to the 8am to 5pm office hours.

There are other races happening this year. Jefferson County Acting Sheriff Andy Pernsteiner will run to fill a one-year unexpired term. This is the only partisan office this year, with the winner needing to run for a full term in 2026. Port of Port Townsend Commissioners Carol Hasse and Pete Henke are also up for reelection. Jefferson Healthcare Commissioners Jill Buhler Rienstra and Matt Ready have both indicated they will run for an additional six-year term. Local school boards and fire districts are also holding elections this year. For more information, go to the Jefferson County Auditor's website (<https://www.co.jefferson.wa.us/1266/Elections>).

The local protests against President Donald Trump and his policies continue. Indivisible Port Townsend has scheduled a fourth event from 1pm to 2pm this Saturday, May 3 on Sims Way between Safeway and the Kearney Street roundabout. Protests were held in the same location on April 5 and April 19, with attendance decreasing at the second event. Organizers are hoping for increasing numbers, as Trump's policies continue to stoke social and political unrest.

Another protest is scheduled for this for 4pm Thursday, May 1 also on Sims Way, honoring International Worker's Day.

A final reminder – the first half of property taxes is due by the close of business tomorrow, April 30. Mailed payments must be postmarked, put in a drop box or paid online in order to avoid interest or penalty charges. For more information contact the Jefferson County Treasurer's office, 360-385-9150.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news Tuesday through Thursday at noon and 5pm. To contact us, write news@kptz.org. This is Charlie Bermant. Thank you for listening.