

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, May 7, 2025.

During a routine closure for a marine vessel at 1:02pm on Monday, May 5, the Hood Canal bridge experienced a mechanical malfunction. Washington State Department of Transportation maintenance crews were able to resume service at 9:26 pm, after initially announcing that they were unable to predict when the bridge would reopen. As of filing the Department of Transportation website states, "Washington State Department of Transportation continues to investigate the cause of the May 5 malfunction. The malfunction kept the bridge closed to vehicle traffic for an extended period. Until the issue is identified and resolved, the bridge will be restricted to partial draw span openings for boat traffic."

Anderson Lake is closed due to toxin levels. Elevated levels of the potent nerve toxin anatoxin-a were detected in a water sample taken from Anderson Lake on Monday, April 22. Test results showed that the toxin level is 90 times higher than the Washington State recreational criteria. Exposure to anatoxin-a can result in illness and death in people and animals when ingested, even in small amounts. Washington State Parks has posted "Danger – Keep Out of Lake" signs at access points to the park, alerting visitors of the hazard. Water-based recreational activities such as fishing, boating, and swimming are prohibited until the bloom dissipates and the toxin levels decline. Anderson Lake State Park remains open for other recreational activities such as horseback riding, hiking, biking, and birdwatching.

Election season has officially kicked off in Jefferson County, with the start of filing week, the week in which candidates for government office can file to run. Applications opened Monday, May 5 and will close on Friday, May 9. Candidates then have until May 12 to withdraw their application. So far, only a handful of candidates have filed; nearly all of them are incumbents standing for re-election. Among the exceptions is Acting Sheriff Andy Pernsteiner, who is hoping to be elected to the office that he currently occupies.

Most notably, Fred Obee, a former journalist and long-time city resident, is running for the Port Townsend City Council seat currently occupied by Ben Thomas, who has chosen not to run for re-election. Obee spent 20 years at the Port Townsend *Leader*, starting as a reporter covering county government and eventually becoming the *Leader*'s general manager. He has continued to be an involved community member, moderating election forums for the League of Women Voters and serving on the Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce. He has also served on the board of the statewide Washington Coalition for Open Government for a decade. The coalition is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that supports citizen access to government records and meetings. Obee cited a desire to be a part of the discussion around long-term planning as one of his major reasons for running, with a special interest in the findings of the Financial Sustainability Initiative, which won an award in 2024 for Local Government Excellence in Community Sustainability.

[Fred Obee speaking] "There's a couple of things in there that make me wonder what you know whether that's going to be possible or not. One is that they want to annex the Glen Cove industrial area as a way to, I guess, to get more tax money into the city. And I don't...I wonder whether that's politically possible."

Obee also stated an interest in keeping the golf course undeveloped and using other city-owned property to address the affordable housing crisis. Obee's press release said, "The city's own reports show we have plenty of

vacant land to accommodate our projected population. We don't need to carve up public open space to provide housing." The city's financial position is also quite worrying, Obee said.

Obee applied for the seat Aislinn Palmer vacated in 2024, but wasn't appointed at that time. He is currently running unopposed, but with four days left for candidates to file, someone will likely file to run for the same seat.

[Fred Obee speaking]: "I'm not hoping for an opponent, but if one pops up, I'm happy with that. I always think positions should be contested; that's part of my DNA as well. We benefit from a discussion, and that's how we choose the way forward. So I'd be happy to have one."

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