

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM on your dial in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant with news and commentary for Tuesday, May 13, 2025.

Filing week ended on Friday, with several contested races and some incumbents remaining unchallenged.

The biggest election news is that Jefferson Healthcare Jill Buehler Reinstra, the longest serving public servant in Jefferson County, has withdrawn her candidacy. Buehler Reinstra, 76, served as a commissioner since 1995 and has seen the hospital through several growth phases. She initially filed for the position but subsequently decided to withdraw after Patty Rhoden filed for the seat. Buehler Reinstra said that Rhoden was uniquely qualified to serve as hospital commissioner, with extensive administration and finance experience. Buehler Reinstra told KPTZ this morning that it was in the best interest of the hospital to step aside and concentrate on serving the remainder of her term. We were unable to reach Rhoden this morning, but to be fair we didn't give her very much time to respond.

Three positions are open on the Port Townsend City Council with the two incumbents, Neil Nelson and Libby Wennstrom, unchallenged. The two will be elected by acclamation and serve four-year terms. The council position one seat, now held by Ben Thomas, drew three candidates; Fred Obee, Dylan Quarles, and Mikki Porter. The top two vote getters in the August 5 primary will advance to the November 4 General Election.

The three candidates offer a diversity in age and experience.

- Fred Obee, 71, worked as a journalist for 40 years, including 20 at the Port Townsend *Leader*. He said this experience prepares him to serve on the council because he's been watching government for a long time and understands how things work and move through the system. He said he is running because the city is embarking on some potentially questionable projects, and a different direction might be necessary. Specifically, the proposal to turn a portion of the golf course into housing, which he said is not a good idea.
- Dylan Quarles, 39, said he is running to continue the work of Thomas, who is vacating his seat after a single term. Thomas's voice, according to Quarles, will be missed and he wants to continue his work addressing the issues that face working families. Like Obee, he is a writer – although an author of science fiction novels – a screenwriter, and the owner of a small publishing company. Also, like Obee, Quarles thinks that transparency is one of the city's most important responsibilities.
- Mikki Porter, 34, has worked for Washington State Ferries for the past 15 years, which has given him a deep understanding of how essential public services and infrastructure are to our daily lives. A lifelong resident of the community he is committed to helping it grow in a way that serves everyone. He said that decisions made at City Hall have a direct and personal impact on our neighbors, our families, and our way of life.

While there are several contested races, only one of them will force a primary: the city council race. In such a case the governing body is responsible for the cost of the election. In this case, Jefferson County Election Supervisor Quinn Grewell estimates this race could cost the city around \$70,000. Porter is aware that he, as the last candidate who filed, essentially forced the primary. But did not want to challenge an incumbent and wanted run in a way that adds to the conversation, not divides it. "While I know this creates a primary election, I also believe that even in a small town, voters deserve choices," he said.

On the Port Townsend School Board. Timothy Hawley and Amanda Grace are running to replace Jennifer James Wilson, who has served on the board since 2009. Incumbent John Nowak is running unopposed for a four-year term.

And this just in. Former Fort Worden Hospitality employee Natalie Maitland will succeed Mari Mullen as the executive director of the Port Townsend Main Street program.

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.