

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, August 13, 2025.

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The Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners voted on a plan to save Quilcene water. After silt was found in water from the Quilcene Campground spigot next to the Quilcene Community Center, the community and the PUD discussed shutting down the water supply and requiring campers to bring their own. Quilcene residents attended the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) meeting on Monday, August 11, to hear alternative proposals and weigh in on the importance of having a clean water source in an area with a high saltwater table.

For many residents, this water source is the only place where they can get clean potable water year-round, including during winter freezes. After hearing from local residents, the BoCC chose to explore spending an estimated \$20,000 to install a clear water spigot that wouldn't interfere with the needs of those who have paid to camp in the county park. The Board of County Commissioners is still discussing long-term options for providing water in Quilcene. If you would like to provide feedback, there will be a BoCC outreach event at the Quilcene Community Center on September 9. For more information or to submit a public comment, email [jeffbocc@co.jefferson.wa.us](mailto:jeffbocc@co.jefferson.wa.us).

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The votes are in from the Port Townsend City Council Primary, and Fred Obee and Dylan James Quarles will be appearing on the ballot in November. Mikki Porter, who secured only 127 votes, won't be continuing the race. Obee won the lion's share of the votes, with 69.36% to Quarles' 25.31%, but the race is far from determined. A whole host of factors may have contributed to Obee's big win, including a discrepancy between the state and county deadlines on submitting material for the voters' pamphlet. Obee is pleased with the outcome, stating in an email to the *Beacon*, "I got the feeling my message was resonating with people, so it was great to get that confirmation. My message remains the same: We need to be more focused on updating the city's critical infrastructure, more prudent in spending, more effective in reaching out and listening to residents, and more transparent as a government."

The main issue for Quarles is finding ways to support working families, particularly in housing. However, he feels that it's a challenging platform, as many working families have already been priced out of Port Townsend and are therefore ineligible to vote for city council members. "...we are we are now trying to chase housing affordability and get our arms around it when it is a bear...we're in the twilight of the fight, and I'm going to do everything I can before the sun goes down to try to reverse some of this divestment and some of this migration."

Going on to outline his focus on new construction impact fees to raise funds for affordable housing: "and I don't want it to be something that is seen as being cost prohibitive to new builders, you know, like people who are building modest homes, or people who are building ADUs that they plan to rent is work for housing, or nonprofits, like, there's a slew of ways that we could, you know, waive impact fees for nonprofits like Habitat or Olympic Housing Trust or, if you're a family on a modest income," explaining that the fees would be applied to larger building developments to help offset rising housing costs for the housing-insecure.

In some ways, Port Townsend is bucking national trends, with the majority of the vote going to the older, more conservative candidate. Following Zohran Mamdani's win against Andrew Cuomo in New York, Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell came second to longtime progressive activist Katie Wilson. Although this is primarily an urban phenomenon, many pundits predict that progressives in rural areas are taking note of the way many progressive voters are feeling.

Both candidates cited low primary voter turnout as a contributing factor to the large gap between Obee and Quarles. However, current city council member Libby Wenstrom pointed out that the 3,900 votes were on par with ballots over the past ten years. Obee and Quarles plan to spend the next few months campaigning in person to reach potential voters. Obee said, “I’ll be knocking on doors, putting up yard signs, meeting with neighborhood groups, and attending events. I’m looking forward to the November vote.”

Quarles is also moving his campaign into the real world. “I’m moving into the real world. I’m gonna press flesh, you know, we’re gonna do canvassing, we’re gonna hold events. Folks have already offered to host me for these kind of backyard you know, meet the candidate events. I’m going to knock on some doors, and I’m going to engage with people in the real world, in a place where it’s much harder to just believe something, because it confirms your bias.”

Reporting by Nhatt Nichols

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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.