

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM on your dial in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Angela Michelle bringing you news and commentary from the Jefferson County *Beacon* for Wednesday, August 20, 2025.

Under the terms of a lease between the City of Port Townsend and the non-profit Friends of the Golf Park, city staff is evaluating the Friends' plan for long-term operations of the golf course over the next 20 years, including a report on its completion of required milestones in the first of four phases in the agreement. That first two-year phase expires this December. Should the Friends fail to meet the phase one metrics, the City may terminate the lease.

The lease holds open the option for affordable housing to be developed on a portion of the land. "We have a pipeline of land we are required to identify and have ready for some purpose, and housing's been that primary purpose for Council. We never want to manage housing," City Manager John Mauro said, addressing a common reason voiced in local social media and among some City Council candidates for their opposition to housing being developed on any part of the golf park. Housing development is also seen by many residents as a threat to the indigenous camas plant and soils on the Kah Tai Prairie Preserve at the southwest corner of the park. The camas plant requires regular maintenance through weeding and other methods, including burning, to remain healthy and thrive from year to year, according to Celeste Dybeck, a S'Klallam Tribe member. Burning has stalled in recent years, but the NPS (Native Plant Society) is "currently in the process of planning and coordinating the process to restore traditional/ecological burns to Kah Tai Prairie Preserve," Darrow said.

So far, the group has received donations of \$250,000, two of \$50,000, and several \$10,000 donations. The group is conducting a fundraising campaign aimed at securing 100 donations of \$ 1,000 each and 1,000 donations of \$100 each. The city is providing certain resources and financial contributions to the effort.

News by Scott France

Representative Emily Randall held a listening session with local small farmers from Clallam and Jefferson counties at Finnriver Farm and Cidery on August 18. Many of the questions related to concerns over lost funding and resources after the passing of H.R.1, "Big Beautiful Bill". Attendees responded hopefully to the reassurance that bipartisan conversations are still possible. In the absence of Federal action or funding, Randall encouraged local governments and municipalities to lead in policymaking. But she thinks that farming could be a potential area for bipartisan progress. She said, "We've been hearing a lot from big agriculture about some of the negative impacts of this administration's actions on funding decisions and immigration. Food is rotting in fields across the country." Randall said that the Trump administration is most persuaded by messaging from big business.

Communities could exert a measure of climate action, if not policy progress, by investing in solar panels, heat pumps, and electric or hybrid buses. Randall suggested reaching out to people wherever you may strike up conversations and urge them to contact their representatives, especially if they are Republican districts. She said that Republican lawmakers are receiving far fewer communications from their constituents than Democratic lawmakers are.

News by Scott France and Heather Johnson

Ty Hodge, a longtime resident of Port Hadlock, had been charged with a series of misdemeanor-level crimes in the District Court, including fourth-degree assault, mischief, and disorderly conduct. A week before Hodge's trial date, prosecutor Chris Ashcroft requested a continuance – a legal request to postpone the trial – because they had not yet subpoenaed their witness, a police officer who was unavailable on the scheduled trial date. Judge Mindy Walker granted the continuance and set a new trial date for July 17, which falls after Hodge's speedy trial expiration date of July 13.

A week before Hodge's new trial date, the prosecutor filed to dismiss the case without prejudice in district court and re-filed in the superior court. The escalation was based on a new damage report of the offence. Hodge was charged with a felony instead of a misdemeanor, and the prosecutor wanted to reset the 90-day speedy trial timeline. Hodge's defense team, led by attorney Jack Range, had been prepared to go to trial since July 10. Psychological and emotional distress while living with a pending trial, even if a defendant is not incarcerated, is one reason why the Speedy Trial laws exist. On Friday, August 8, in Jefferson County Superior Court, Superior Court Judge Brendan Mack granted the state one week with reluctance. Because Hodge was not in custody, Mack did not see prejudice, but said, "The Court recognizes the inconvenience of uncertainty and waiting with charges weighing over your head can be stressful." The hearing was rescheduled to Friday, 15, with Mack preceding.

The defense opened with the request of analysis under Criminal Rule 3.3, meant to ensure timely justice. Drawing inferences from the minutes, Mack agreed with the defense that there was insufficient evidence provided by the state to prove there was a continuance requiring the administration of justice. There was, however, evidence of Hodge objecting to the motions to continuance, a key action in the four considerations of the Barker vs Wingo test. "Maybe the state will appeal the Court, but I'm going to grant the dismissal," Mack ruled.

News by Angela Down.

KPTZ brings you local news Tuesday through Thursday at noon and 5pm. To contact us, write news@kptz.org.