

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker, with your local news and commentary for Thursday, August 28, 2025.

Pipes ran dry on August 21 and 24 for several tenants of Port Townsend's Boat Haven after digging associated with Boat Haven's stormwater project unexpectedly undermined a main waterline. In order to prevent a rupture, water service was shut down starting at 4am on Thursday, August 21 so crews could restabilize the mainline and place the new manholes. A second shutoff took place on August 24 from 5am to 6pm to allow crews to replace the existing concrete conveyance line that sits under the water main. Both shutoffs impacted moorage tenants in the 300-ton yard and several businesses. The Blue Moose Cafe was forced to close for both days, and although customers appeared to understand that the closure was out of its control, cafe owner Tana Kettle said the closure definitely impacted the Cafe's bottom line. The stormwater improvement project is expected to wrap up in October.

The *Port Townsend Leader* reports that the appeal filed earlier this month with regard to parking requirements for the proposed Water Street Hotel went before Phil Olbrechts, the city's hearing examiner, on Monday, but the hearing lasted eight hours without resolution. According to Hall Equities Group (owners of the Quimper Mercantile shopping plaza), the design for the hotel, which is slated for construction across Water Street from the plaza, does not allow enough parking, which will result in overflow to the Mercantile lot.

Site plans show the proposed 50-room hotel with a cafe offering 10 on-site parking spaces – two for those with handicaps, and four for electric vehicles, leaving four spaces for guests and employees. The city's SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act) review of the project concluded that many hotel employees would be walking to work and that most guests would be arriving by ferry. Emma Bolin, the city's director of planning and development, said that she had reached the SEPA conclusions without doing a study but through anecdotal evidence, adding that city code does not require a parking analysis and that city policies deprioritize parking.

But Hall Equities witness Barney Burke, who once managed the downtown parking and redevelopment agencies for the city of Mountain View, California, estimates that overflow parking impact from the hotel could reach 43 spaces, equivalent to 30% of the 145 parking spaces available on Water Street.

Lacking a resolution, Olbrechts has scheduled a continuation, to include presentation of closing arguments, for September 10, and has declared that while he appreciates all the facts that have been presented, his decision will come down to simple law.

Chimacum and Port Townsend students will return to school next Tuesday to enjoy expanded facilities, new teachers, and broader course offerings, even as school leaders work through challenges in funding and enrollment. While student enrollment in Port Townsend will be similar to last year, the Chimacum School District is budgeting for a loss of 25 to 30 students.

Continuing to lose enrollment is one of the challenges Chimacum Superintendent Scott Mauk mentioned going into the school year, as well as uncertainty with federal funding and the state budget not keeping up with education expenses. Port Townsend Superintendent Linda Rosenbury agrees that the uncertainty with federal funding has made it difficult for the district to plan at a local level.

But Mauk is looking forward to welcoming 9 new teachers, and Rosenbury is pleased to report that the district has doubled the opportunities for high school students to earn college credit, with the launch of Anatomy and Physiology classes in partnership with Jefferson Healthcare and advanced placement classes in Environmental Science and English. A business law class has also been added to the school's Career and Technical Education program.

And finally, after finding high levels of Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning toxin, the Washington Department of Health has closed Port Ludlow and Mats Mats Bay for recreational harvest of all species of shellfish. Crab and shrimp are not included in the closure, but toxins can accumulate in crab gut and butter, so clean crab thoroughly and avoid eating the butter and guts. Danger signs have been posted at public access points in the area.

KPTZ 91.9 FM broadcasts your local news Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday at noon and 5pm. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. I'm Diane Walker. Thank you for listening. And enjoy your long Labor Day weekend.