

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Taylor Clark, with your local news and commentary for Thursday, September 25, 2025.

Both the Bear Gulch Fire and the Tunnel Creek Fire have grown this week, but Brinnon Fire department personnel are now home and taking a much deserved rest after 12 weeks on the front lines. Also back home is Rigoberto Hernandez of Oregon, one of the men arrested by ICE on the front lines of the fire. The *Peninsula Daily News* reports Hernandez has been released after nearly four weeks in the Tacoma Detention Center. According to Matt Adams, legal director with the Northwest Immigration Rights Project, which is representing him, the government has dismissed its proceedings to remove Hernandez from the country and has acknowledged that there's no justification for targeting people who are on the front lines working to keep our community safe.

The Jefferson County PUD has announced that, due to rising costs, the Sims Gateway and Boatyard Expansion Project cannot be completed as originally visualized in 2020. Joe Wilson, PUD's new general manager, has directed staff to reevaluate the project and explore a scaled-back design. Ultimately, he anticipates the project will break ground in 2026; that the poplar trees on the south side of the street will still be removed, but that PUD would keep the power lines above ground rather than burying them, repositioning them further away from the port, in keeping with the project's prioritization of safety. Wilson says the PUD expects to receive the alternative designs in approximately eight weeks. He says, "My commitment is to have the design far enough along that the public can give us feedback on the preferred alternative before we begin work on the project, which means cutting the poplars down." He noted that tree removal will likely occur in the spring.

As noted in Tuesday's news, the Port Townsend City Council has voted to close the homeless encampment currently occupying space near the DSHS building in November. Unfortunately, one of the alternatives that's been available for the last two decades or more has announced plans to dissolve. The Community Outreach Association Team (COAST) was formed to provide shelter and outreach for Jefferson County's unhoused population, and has coordinated thousands of volunteers and services for the unhoused. COAST also founded the shelter in the basement of the American Legion. COAST donated \$52,385 to Jefferson County for the operation of the emergency shelter and \$15,000 to Reach Out. COAST Co-Chair Stephen Evans has said "The dissolution of COAST is sad, but it is heartening to see that the County and several newer organizations like Bayside Housing and Reach Out are stepping forward to fill the gap."

Controversy continues to brew over the parking regulations at the Quimper Mercantile Plaza. The city has insisted that three organizations sharing responsibility for the lot obtain Port Townsend business license endorsement. The licensing issue came to light after many shoppers shared frustrations around \$102 penalties under a system that many have described as confusing. Tenants of the building have reported receiving consistent complaints from customers who believe they were unfairly ticketed. Licensing requirements are not just bureaucratic paperwork to file; they are a measure to ensure businesses follow local laws. With a city endorsement on a state license, the city can track and enforce compliance with local code. At the moment, Parking Revenue Recovery Services is the only company of the three to obtain the endorsement. Hall Equities' application is awaiting departmental review, which may take longer than normal, and HONK Mobile is disputing the requirement. The matter has been referred to the city attorney. With one company now compliant,

another pending review, and a third in dispute, the Port Townsend parking system remains under the spotlight as the city tries to bring all operators at the plaza into compliance with local requirements.

And finally, this weekend, law enforcement officers from Washington and surrounding states will be conducting extra patrols in search of impaired drivers. The emphasis, titled “One More Stop” will be in honor of Washington State Trooper Christopher Gadd, who was in his parked patrol car in search of “One More Stop”, when he was struck and killed by an impaired motorist who was traveling over 100 mph. The Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office, who will be participating in the emphasis, wants to remind motorists to keep themselves and others safe by driving sober and obeying speed limits.

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 Taylor Clark; thank you for listening.