

This is KPTZ FM 91.9 in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Nhatt Nichols, bringing you news and commentary from the Jefferson County *Beacon* for Wednesday, October 8, 2025.

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Water has always been a primary concern for our human needs, and with our rapidly changing times, we are in need of great consideration and conversation around this precious resource. Those living in the Quilcene watershed know this better than anyone as they witness drastic changes on the frontline of drought. The Quilcene Campground water spigot broke in August. There was 200 feet of underground piping that was overdue for repair, and a spigot overhaul was needed. The repairs were completed in September and cost approximately \$16,000. While the campground spigot was in need of general maintenance, it had also had many years of heavy use by residents for drinking, cleaning, and gardening. With the spigot down, people were unable to meet their basic needs, and the county had to declare a need for access to municipal water.

The Department of Ecology has restricted surface water in the area, and local people who have used the campground spigot have reported their own raincatch systems and wells are at all-time lows. The proposed solution comes from the PUD offering to build and monitor a public water kiosk near the Quilcene Community Center.

At the October 3rd Public Infrastructure Fund Special Meeting, José Escalera, the PUD Water Superintendent, presented the board and citizens with a proposal for a new kiosk that would serve residential, recreational, and construction use, with anticipated use by logging operations as well. Escalera used the Skagit PUD Minkler Roadsides kiosk as an example of the technology they intend to install, which would require users to pay for their water with a credit card.

Citizens raised concerns about the system being exclusionary for people without credit cards, fragile when the internet and the power go out, and transactional rather than human-centered. Guy Dobbins, a Quilcene resident and advocate for water access, said, "Last year, the campground paid \$3,000 for water use by the public. This solution would cost \$100,000 to \$200,000. At that rate, this investment would take 33 to 66 years to recoup its costs. Why are we so committed to the idea of charging people for water that we're willing to lose public money for decades in order to do that?"

Dan Toepper, Commissioner for Jefferson PUD District 3, stated that if there are funds to subsidize residential water usage, they would be willing to include subsidy payment methods in the design. The Skagit PUD Communications Lead Kevin Tate told the *Beacon* that he hasn't received any pushback on the payment system they installed on their kiosk, and that the prepaid card system has worked well because it's available 24/7. Tate said that they built three fill stations to serve property owners whose wells run dry and to serve contractors who needed water in bulk.

A motion was made at the meeting to recommend a \$180,000 grant from the county to the PUD for the filling station and kiosk system. Next steps include finalizing the design, engineering, permitting, equipment purchase, site work, and installation. The next opportunity to share input and see the water kiosk plans will be at the next PUD public meeting this month. They have not yet set a date, so please check their website for updates.

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In other news, Logan Hollarsmith, a timber framing expert who was the lead builder on the Longhouse for the People project, is one of the activists who was released by the Israeli Government this week. Hollarsmith was one of the 437 activists who were part of the Global Sumud Flotilla, a coalition of more than 40 vessels carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza, whose population is being starved by Israel. Hollarsmith was aboard the *Ohwayla*, a

vessel carrying U.S. veterans and civilians that was trying to deliver aid. The flotilla planned to breach the Israeli government's 16-year water blockade of Gaza. The Israeli military intercepted the *Ohwayla* on Wednesday, October 1 and its passengers were taken into custody, according to a post on X by Israel's foreign ministry. Participants in the Global Sumud Flotilla were bringing food and other supplies – and proving to the world that ordinary citizens aren't powerless to stand up to genocide. Though the flotilla may have been prevented from bringing lifesaving supplies to Gaza, the message they send to the world is clear.

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