

This is KPTZ FM 91.9 in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Rachel Perkins, bringing you news and commentary from the Jefferson County *Beacon* for Wednesday, November 5, 2025.

The City of Port Townsend's controversial November 3 closure of the Evans Vista encampment has drawn to a close with more of a whimper than a bang. A somber mood prevailed as several dozen people meandered in and around the encampment area for most of the day. Some were concerned citizens ready to offer assistance and support, and some were with provider and assistance programs, including the Port Townsend Police Department. When the 5pm deadline arrived, two Port Townsend police officers began posting No Trespassing signs stating that the area is closed. Two encampment residents remained, apparently intent on spending the night. Aaron Speer says that he has lived at the encampment for two years, and with six hours remaining before the 5pm closure deadline, he declares that the police announcement to move him or arrest him is a bluff, saying "If not, I'm gonna be prepared. I'm getting my stuff packed."

Port Townsend police chief Thomas Olson, standing a couple hundred feet away at the time, said, "Any campers here after 5 o'clock are subject to receiving a trespassing notice. Are we going to go out there and round them up? No. Anything after that, they shouldn't be here. We will give them a reasonable amount of time to leave. If we see that they are working to get their stuff organized to leave, we will let them."

Hopes that the City's announced Evans Vista homeless encampment closure date might be extended were dashed on Friday, when a Jefferson County Superior Court judge denied a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction filed by a former encampment resident. Michele Goodwin's stated intention for the October 23 lawsuit was, "to prevent the city from carrying out the closure until an adequate alternative replacement for residents was identified and made available."

"Removing the encampment at this time without a relocation plan for the residents would destabilize them and worsen their health," Goodwin told Judge Brandon Mack during the hearing. However, only six remained as of the October 31 court date out of the roughly 30 that resided there when the city announced its closure plan in mid-September.

Concern about the fate of these residents was expressed to the Council by attendees at the City Council's special session at the Evans Vista encampment on Monday, October 27. Mental health challenges among some of the residents was mentioned by some commenters. Several advocates and supporters of the camp residents had set up tables a couple hundred yards away from the tents to offer support and resources. Bayside Housing Services had several employees at the site. "We're here to offer relocation possibilities on our properties," said James Holthaus, Bayside's Director of Housing and Supportive Services.

The city has approved an application submitted by Bayside last week that will enable the organization to offer space for tents and RVs on its Port Townsend tiny home property for the unhoused, Pat's Place. Bayside strives to provide safe housing options to all who may need it on the few properties they have in and around the city. The organization requires residents to work with case managers and to not be disruptive or violent, according to Holthaus.

Alicia Reynolds of Gateway to Freedom, a law-enforcement assisted diversion program, and AJ Feit, a mental health professional recently hired by the police department, work together to address substance use disorder cases in order to keep people out of jail and on a path to recovery, resources, and a better life. Speer was one of two residents still on-site after the officers left, saying he was unsure whether he would spend the night. He doesn't know where he will go if he is forced to vacate. What lies ahead for the unhoused, those at risk of being unhoused, the providers and assistance programs, City, County, and many concerned citizens is uncertain. The

city's recent decision to expedite any permit that held promise for providing space for unhoused people offers a modicum of assistance, albeit insufficient in scope and very late in the game.

Reporting on this story by Scott France.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5 Tuesday through Thursday, partnering on Wednesdays to bring you stories from jeffcobeacon.com. This is Rachel Perkins. Thanks for listening.