

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker, with your local news and commentary for Tuesday, November 18, 2025.

The City of Port Townsend has named Austin Watkins as Port Townsend's next City Attorney. From 2018 to 2021, Watkins lived and practiced law in Port Townsend, serving Jefferson County as Planning Manager and a Civil Deputy Prosecuting Attorney. In these roles, he advised the County on land use, environmental public health, public safety, and general municipal matters. He currently serves as Senior Counsel for Land Use and Installations to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy in the Pentagon, where he advises senior leadership on land use, real estate, and installation matters across Navy and Marine Corps installations worldwide. His other prior roles include Program Counsel for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Floodplain Management Division and Assistant City Attorney in the Land Use section at the Seattle City Attorney's Office.

Watkins holds a J.D. from the George Washington University Law School, a Masters of Law in Environmental, Natural Resources, and Energy Law from Lewis and Clark Law School, and is a member of the Washington, Virginia, and District of Columbia bars. Watkins will manage a team of two full-time staff and his work will span everything from handling insurance to drafting resolutions and ordinances, from assessing land use plans and legal risks to reviewing or drafting contracts, and to being on-hand for every City Council meeting.

The *Peninsula Daily News* reports that East Jefferson Fire Rescue's board of commissioners is likely to approve the district's 2026 budget today and will be asking voters next February for a levy lid lift. While expenses rise with inflation, state law limits what the fire department can collect in property taxes to a 1% increase per year. In February voters will decide whether to support the levy at a rate of \$1.40 per \$1,000 in property value. The increase would mean an annual increase of approximately \$150 a year for property owners who have an assessed value of \$600,000, starting in 2027.

Jefferson County Public Health warns us that HFMD – Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease – is on the rise in Jefferson County. HFMD is a common virus that affects children under 5, but is easily spread and can affect all ages, even those who've had it before. Though HFMD is uncomfortable and appears dramatic, most symptoms – fever over 100.4, mouth sores, and rash or blisters on hands, feet, or other areas – go away in 7 to 10 days. Unfortunately, the disease can continue to spread for weeks after the symptoms disappear, through coughing or through failure to clean contaminated surfaces. So, wash hands often, cover coughs and sneezes, clean objects and surfaces, and don't share cups or utensils.

Three people were transported to hospitals last Thursday afternoon following a three-car collision south of Quilcene. A 2016 Buick Verano traveling southbound on U.S. Highway 101 at Dutch Lane turned left in front of a 2007 Honda Ridgeline traveling northbound. The Buick struck the rear passenger side of the Ridgeline, then collided head-on with a 2005 Chevrolet Silverado pickup. The Buick driver was uninjured, but the Honda and Silverado drivers were transported to Jefferson Healthcare hospital, and a passenger riding in the Honda was severely injured and flown to Harborview. Both the Buick and the Honda Ridgeline were totaled, and the Chevy Silverado sustained reportable damage. All four individuals were wearing seat belts, and neither drugs nor alcohol were involved, but the Buick driver was cited for failure to yield, according to State Patrol.

Good news for those of you who plan to take to the air over the holidays: the FAA has lifted the order to have airlines cut domestic flights in major airports, as air traffic control staffing levels have pretty much returned to normal. According to the Washington State *Standard*, the warning banners at the tops of major airline websites have disappeared, and Southwest Air has even replaced its banner with a new message: “Good news, the US government shutdown has ended. Our full schedule resumed on November 17. Book your next trip with confidence today.”

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.