

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker, with your local news and commentary for Tuesday, December 2, 2025.

The Chimacum School Board has been named the Washington State School Directors' Association's 2025 State Board of the Year for small school districts. Chimacum was also one of the 49 districts across the state honored as Boards of Distinction, an award that recognizes school boards that have demonstrated effective governance and improved student outcomes. Port Townsend was also recognized in the small-district category, and Sequim was recognized among medium-sized districts.

As Jefferson County officials consider ways to close the county's \$5.2 million general fund deficit, the Port Townsend *Leader* warns us that the Port Townsend Recreation Center, community development staff, and sheriff's deputies are among the proposed cuts to staff and services. Other proposals include cutting courthouse security, laying off staff, eliminating or reducing services such as the WSU Extension afterschool program in Brinnon and closing certain county parks or recreation services.

When the deficit was announced, Finance Director Judy Shepherd provided each county department with a dollar amount to cut from general fund budget requests. But Commissioner Greg Brotherton says this decentralized approach is causing interdepartmental strife and has urged County Administrator Josh Peters to manage the process, hold conversations with the departments, and come back with his own recommendations.

The good news is that, for the third year in a row, the county has received clean audits from the Washington State Auditor's Office for its financial statements, compliance with federal and state rules, and accountability practices.

The Washington State Department of Health has announced that a Grays Harbor County resident who was the first person ever confirmed to have the H5N5 strain of avian influenza has now died after developing severe symptoms in early November. Testing at the UW Medicine Clinical Virology Lab identified the virus as H5N5, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention later confirmed it – making this the first recorded infection with this variant in a person globally, health officials said.

But according to the Department of Health, the risk to the public remains low. Apparently the individual was an older adult with underlying health conditions and kept a mixed backyard flock of domestic poultry that had been exposed to wild birds. That said, people who work with or around birds, including poultry owners, farm workers and wildlife rehabilitators, should wear protective equipment such as gloves, masks, eye protection and fluid-resistant outerwear.

Last week, a Jefferson County backyard flock tested positive for the avian flu. So, to protect your poultry flock from avian influenza, do your best to prevent interactions between the birds you are raising and migratory birds. And if your birds do sicken or die, please report it to the Washington State Department of Agriculture at 1-800-606-3056.

Speaking of flu, while instances of Covid and RSV remain low, non-avian flu cases are on the rise on the peninsula, according to Dr. Allison Berry, public health officer for Clallam and Jefferson counties. Speaking with the Jefferson County Commissioners, she added that “We tend to see an earlier rise in cases and more severe outcomes in our region just because so many of our population are over 65.”

In addition, this year is expected to be a more serious flu season than previous seasons because the influenza subtype being detected – H3N2 – tends to pack a bigger punch, Berry said. To protect yourself and others, Jefferson County public health recommends that we get the flu vaccine, wash our hands frequently, cover coughs and sneezes, stay home if we are sick, and wear a mask, especially when in airports and on planes.

And finally, now that we've rounded the Thanksgiving corner and winter is here, Jeffco PUD is offering a few tips to help reduce your utility bill and stay comfy during the colder months.

#1: Set your thermostat wisely. Aim for 68°F when you're home, and a few degrees lower when you're sleeping or away.

#2: Let the sun work for you. Open curtains on south-facing windows during the day, and close them at night to keep warmth in.

#3: Stop heat from sneaking out. Add weather-stripping around drafty doors and windows for an easy efficiency boost.

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.