

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker, with your local news and commentary for Tuesday, December 16, 2025.

High winds forced a lengthy closure of the Hood Canal Bridge starting shortly after noon yesterday. WSDOT closed the bridge because the wind was driving waves up over the bridge, creating unsafe driving conditions. The closure, which lasted almost four hours, caused significant backups on both sides of the bridge and proved a challenge for school bus drivers attempting to deliver students on both sides of the highway. WSDOT cautions that conditions could still change, so if you're planning travel across the bridge, be sure to check bridge status and continue to drive cautiously as weather conditions may remain challenging.

Leadership from Jefferson County and City of Port Townsend met this week to discuss Jefferson County's current budget challenges and to understand and explore options for addressing the need to reduce County parks and recreation reliance on the County's General Fund, including the possibility of having to close the County-operated Rec Center next year within the County-managed Community Center in uptown Port Townsend.

While spurred by the County's near-term budget challenge, this week's meeting helped County and City officials share and better understand the current operational and funding constraints in supporting the parks and recreation amenities and programs beloved by community members. The meeting was also an opportunity to reflect on and learn from the history of similar challenges faced by both agencies.

With limited time, implementation of an immediate partnership solution is not practical prior to County budget adoption, but the County and City have committed to working together over the coming few months to explore longer-term solutions, partnerships, and efficiencies to deliver the services the public desires as represented in the Jefferson County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan and the forthcoming update to the City's open space plan. Residents of unincorporated Jefferson County and incorporated Jefferson County (i.e., within City limits) have been clear over many years that community centers, parks, recreation, and open space are deeply valued. County and City officials aim to develop a fiscally sustainable model that supports a regional vision.

City Manager John Mauro says: "My team and I are committed to working with our Jefferson County colleagues to think beyond our own City parks system and consider the regional nature of our wider system and how working together can create efficiencies, stability, and benefits for generations of residents. It's an all-hands-on-deck opportunity for our community as well, given how so many of us value, love, and use both City and County parks systems."

Jefferson County and City of Port Townsend officials will be meeting over the next few months to draw together the most recent data and information regarding assets and cost of service to help elected officials and the public better understand the challenges ahead and to size up the overall goal of fiscal sustainability for the City and County parks and recreation systems.

Jefferson County PUD has been working hard to restore power in all the places impacted by downed trees and have asked that customers who spot a downed tree in the roadway NOT attempt to remove it if any lines appear to be involved. Downed lines, even if they are not sparking, can carry 12,000+ volts unseen and could quite literally cancel your Christmas in an instant.

According to Jefferson County Public Health, Winter weather increases the chances of carbon monoxide poisonings. Carbon monoxide is known as the silent killer because it is an odorless, colorless, poisonous gas. Protect your family by:

1. Installing CO alarms on every level and near bedrooms.
2. Never run cars/generators in the garage, and
3. Get your heating systems checked annually.

Symptoms of Carbon Monoxide poisoning include: Headache, dizziness, and nausea. If you suspect that's the case, get fresh air and call 911 for assistance.

And finally, the Jefferson County MASH free clinic on Chimacum Road in Port Hadlock is now offering a free clothing and food pantry to support individuals and families in the community. Hours are Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays from 3 to 5 pm.

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,