

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker, with your local news and commentary for Tuesday, January 13, 2026.

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Ballots will be mailed out January 21 asking voters in the Port Townsend School District to consider a construction bond to fund total renovation of the Port Townsend High School and the Gael Stuart Building. The High School was built in 1928 and the Stuart Building in 1952. The 20-year bond will fund up to \$99 million of construction costs and requires at least 60% approval. For more information about the proposal, visit <https://www.ptschools.org/page/bond2026>.

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Co-sponsored by the City of Port Townsend and Rainshadow Bird Alliance, the Washington Conservation Corps will return to Kah Tai Lagoon Nature Park this week to remove invasive Lombardy poplars so that native plants have an opportunity to thrive. If you see the crew while walking the trails, say hello to learn about their work, and please stay on the trails and abide by all posted signage for safety.

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Several brands of grated pecorino romano cheese have been subjected to a highest-level recall by the FDA, due to a deadly listeria-causing bacteria that can cause severe illness, particularly among pregnant women, older adults, young children, and people with weakened immune systems. For a listing of affected brands, visit <https://www.fda.gov/safety/recalls-market-withdrawals-safety-alerts/ambriola-company-issues-recall-cheese-products-because-listeria-health-risk>.

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Jefferson County has announced a restructuring of the Public Works Department. The restructuring involves several leadership appointments within the organization, all designed to strengthen departmental performance, maximize the effective use of existing resources, and ensure that Jefferson County Public Works will continue to operate resourcefully and effectively.

- Eric Kuzma has been promoted to Public Works Director. Kuzma joined the Public Works Department as an Engineer III in June 2013. In November 2015, he was promoted to Engineering Services Manager and within a year was also assigned the Assistant Public Works Director role. During his tenure, Kuzma oversaw complex engineering projects and strengthened interdepartmental collaboration.
- Former Public Works Director Monte Reinders has taken on the duties of recently retired Roads Superintendent Dale Brownfield, overseeing and supporting the County Roads supervisory staff. Reinders will continue to serve as the County Engineer, a position he has held since 2003.
- In addition, Wastewater Project Manager Samantha Harper has accepted the new combined position of Engineering Services Manager/Wastewater Program Manager. Harper is currently the Wastewater Project Manager of the Port Hadlock Urban Growth Area Wastewater Treatment Plant and will additionally oversee the Public Works capital transportation program, which was previously managed by Kuzma.
- Due to the increasing scope and complexity of the Public Works Solid Waste Division, re-organization has also taken place in that department. Current Solid Waste Manager Al Cairns will become the Solid Waste

Program Manager, focusing on solid waste programs, regulatory compliance, and long-range solid waste planning for our growing community.

- Current Solid Waste Operations Coordinator Justin Miskell will step into a new Solid Waste Operations Manager position taking on increased responsibility for operational oversight of the transfer station, Quilcene drop facility, staffing, facility repair projects, vendor contracts, and all of the many complex systems that ensure solid waste is properly handled and transported out of our county to the regional landfill.

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Last week an underwater habitat was installed on the MV Tacoma ferry, sealing the hull around the propulsion shaft, which created dry conditions for crews to complete necessary repairs. The ferry completed successful sea trials over the weekend and returned to service on the Bainbridge route yesterday for the first time since January 3. The Walla Walla and Kittitas ferries, however, are still out of commission.

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According to the Port Townsend *Leader*, Washington's minimum wage has risen to \$17.13 an hour as of January 1. Fourteen and 15-year-olds will make \$14.56 an hour.

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And finally, please use caution getting around the sidewalk construction at the bottom of Washington Street. Directions for northbound traffic are clear, but southbound traffic needs to divert to Lawrence Street, often confusing drivers, especially around the courthouse.

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KPTZ 91.9 FM broadcasts your local news Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday at noon and 5pm. You can contact us at [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org). I'm Diane Walker. Thank you for listening.