

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker, with your local news and commentary for Thursday, February 26, 2026.

A new community-led project is being developed in partnership with the American Geophysical Union's Thriving Earth Exchange (TEE). Led by Port Townsend residents Derek Firenze and Jaime Duyck, the project aims to better understand sulfur emissions from the Port Townsend Paper Corporation. The group is seeking one or two scientists with experience in atmospheric science, sulfur emissions, industrial air pollution, air-quality regulation, or community monitoring to help residents understand and apply findings from an air study conducted by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). TEE will manage the project and handle scientist outreach, coordination, and vetting.

The ATSDR study was released in 2024 and concluded that, while individual sulfur compounds were generally measured at levels unlikely to cause harm, simultaneous spikes in multiple sulfur compounds could create occasional acute respiratory effects. Though asthma hospitalization rates in Port Townsend were not statistically higher than Jefferson County or state averages, it is the frequency of these spikes that Firenze believes to be a point of community concern. About 2,463 residents lived within 1 mile of the mill as of 2020, according to the ATSDR report, but that number will clearly increase with the advent of the Evans Vista project and the Caswell Brown emergency shelter nearby.

And, according to Washington's Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act, low-income communities such as these tend to have higher rates of asthma, heart disease and other health risks. The ATSDR report recommended continued odor complaint monitoring and additional efforts to reduce emissions.

Community members may report odors to the state Department of Ecology by phone at 360-628-3250. Reports should include the date, time, location, odor description and any health impacts experienced.

After 11 years at the helm of Jefferson Land Trust, director Richard Tucker has announced plans to retire. Tucker, who advanced the organization's 100-year Conservation Plan, not only saw the organization protect roughly 8000 additional acres, but also strengthened relationships with Tribal partners, neighboring land trusts, and community organizations; completed the group's first major capital campaign; and led the Land Trust through national reaccreditation.

According to the Port Townsend *Leader*, Tucker will remain in his current role until a new director is hired. That nationwide search is being handled by the Potrero Group – a national executive search and leadership consulting firm specializing in conservation and social impact organizations.

The Port of Port Townsend is gearing up for a multimillion dollar project to reroof nine buildings in Point Hudson, including the Shanghai Chinese Restaurant, the Point Hudson Café, and Salish Grill. Because the buildings slated to be re-roofed were part of the original 1935-built national quarantine station for the U.S. government, asbestos abatement will also be required. The Port hopes to complete the project before the Wooden Boat Festival in September.

Current estimates suggest the project could cost from \$1.85 million to \$2.15 million. Of that money, \$1 million will come from the Washington State Historical Society, \$500,000 will be on loan from the Environmental

Protection Agency for the asbestos abatement portion of the project, and the Port will cover the bid-dependent remainder of the cost.

Aliera Leonard, a sixth grader at Chimacum Elementary School, has won her school's spelling championship, and will be the first Chimacum student to have ever participated in the Scripps Regional Spelling Bee, which will be held virtually on March 7. Her winning word? Democracy.

Julia Franz, the school's speech-language pathologist, says Chimacum students were actively quizzing each other in the hallways and at lunch prior to the event, which was held in the school auditorium in front of the entire student body, staff, and the spellers' families.

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.