

This is KPTZ 91.9FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Nigel O'Shea bringing you news and commentary from the Jefferson County *Beacon* for Wednesday, March 18, 2026.

The Port Townsend Creative District has awarded a competitive capital projects grant from the Washington State Arts Commission to fund a site-specific mural at the Seamus Sims Skatepark. The \$30,000 award contributes to a total project budget of \$49,550 to support the creation of a permanent painted artwork at the. It will be the first public art commissioned by the city since 2014. The project includes both the mural installation, created by a selected artist or artist team, and a community engagement process involving park users and residents. It is intended to build on the momentum of the Creative District, which recently marked its first year under City management.

Located at 250 Monroe Street, the one third acre Seamus Sims Skatepark was originally built by the city in 2006 following years of youth advocacy for a designated skateboarding space. In 2024, the park was renamed in honor of Seamus Sims, a longtime advocate who led early efforts to establish it. Most recently, in 2025, solar-powered lighting was added after local high school student Samantha Stromberg campaigned to extend the park's hours of use. With its prominent location along a main downtown corridor and adjacent to a public parking lot, the site offers high visibility. The mural is expected to become a signature visual landmark for both the Creative District and the broader community.

In addition to the \$30,000 State Arts Commission grant, project funding includes support from the City's Municipal Arts Fund, in-kind contributions from Parks and Facilities staff, and private donations. The skatepark remains part of the City's park system and is maintained by City staff.

The Benji Project is a nonprofit organization offering mindfulness education for young people. The intensive begins March 26 and culminates in an interactive public event in May with Thaddeus Jurczynski, the well-known Port Townsend sculptor and teaching artist, serving as the guide. He and the participating students will build their own adventure: maybe a big, joyous puppet, perhaps a flock of handcrafted masks, maybe original skits, maybe something yet to be imagined. Along the way, the kids – ages 12 to 18 – will have time to tap into their creative voices, said Benji Project Executive Director Heather McRae-Woolf. The Spring Arts Intensive uses art-making to support young people's mental health, she added, while giving the students a way to connect with the community.

Funding for the intensive comes from a two-year \$20,000 grant from the Washington State Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts – which means it is offered at no cost to the youths and their families. The first three sessions on March 26, April 2 and April 9, will be held at Port Townsend High School; then the project will move into the Jefferson County Fairgrounds 4-H Building. That building will also be the venue for the Spring Arts Intensive's public event at 6pm on May 8. The time to sign up is now at <https://www.thebenjiproject.org/>.

A dual exhibition is opening this Thursday, March 19: "New Work by Randy Sturgis and Peter Koronakos," presenting more than 40 works at Jeanette Best Gallery, 701 Water Street. The venue is open to the public from noon to 5pm Thursdays through Mondays, while more information is found at <https://northwindart.org/>.

A celebration of the show will happen at the gallery during first-Saturday Art Walk on April 4, when the artists will be on hand and refreshments served from 5pm to 8pm. “New Work” will stay on view through May 4. Koronakos has shown his sculptures in Northwind Art’s “Small Expressions” and “Showcase 2025” exhibits – and this new exhibition will bring a much larger herd of them. Koronakian creatures, which include mammals, birds and a multi-species school of fish, are made of vintage odds and ends. The artist uses these ingredients, from sports equipment to household hardware, to give his animals character.

Sturgis, an alumnus of the Rocky Mountain College of Art & Design, said he wanted to be an artist ever since he discovered the art room at his public school in Colorado. Northwind Art Executive Director Martha Worthley says of Sturgis’ work, “Randy’s paintings take the viewer on a journey, your eye is constantly moving, landing on new, intriguing details.”

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and five Tuesday through Thursday partnering on Wednesday to bring you stories from the Jefferson County *Beacon*. This is Nigel O’Shea, thanks for listening.