

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

Port Townsend Council Member Neil Nelson reports that he has been cleared of allegations that he violated city ethics standards by hosting a constituency meeting at his private business. The case, which began with a complaint filed by Reverend Crystal Cox, was concluded March 17 by City Hearing Examiner Phil Olbrechts.

According to the *Leader*, Jefferson Healthcare Medical Center will pay a \$7500 settlement to Arthur West of Olympia, who alleged members violated the State's Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) by participating in private discussions about forming a new regional health entity known as the Peninsula Health Alliance. Jefferson Healthcare CEO Mike Glenn stated that while the board believed the allegations were unfounded, they voted to settle the claim in order to avoid further legal expense and staff time. The settlement agreement acknowledges that the allegations are disputed but contains no admission of liability or wrongdoing. But as a result of the litigation, hospital meeting procedures have been strengthened to ensure compliance with the OPMA and additional training has been provided for commissioners and staff.

Jefferson County Commissioners have put off the decision to close the Port Townsend Recreation Center, thanks to the scores of children, parents, coaches, and other interested community members who thronged the courthouse for the board's March 23 meeting to protest the center's closing. The *Leader* reports that after community members urged the board to give them time to raise funds in support of the center, the commissioners took no action but are expected to revisit the issue at a future session. Layoffs could begin in May and June if no solution is reached.

Thanks to a last-minute maneuver in the final days of the 2026 Washington legislative session, a 33-acre stand of old growth timber near Cape George, dubbed the "Quimper Lost Wilderness" will now be protected from future timber harvesting. Part of a 241-acre parcel of mostly forested uplands located seven miles west of downtown Port Townsend, the Lost Wilderness has been saved by \$3.6 million in funding passed to Jefferson County to purchase the property from the Department of Natural Resources.

Assuming Governor Ferguson doesn't eliminate the Cape George line item from the budget, the 241-acre parcel will be conserved through the DNR's Trust land Transfer program, which allows parcels unsuitable for logging or other income-generating activities be transferred out of the trust, allowing it to remain in public ownership while protecting its ecological value.

The *Leader* tells us that Jefferson County must agree to preserve the property as a biologically diverse, carbon-rich forest under the DNR's 1997 habitat conservation plan. It must also allow the DNR to conduct a pilot carbon offset program on the land. And additionally, the county must recognize that any carbon credits generated would belong to the state, with revenues distributed to trust beneficiaries as required by law.

The Friends of Fort Flagler will celebrate the grand reopening of the historic theater at Fort Flagler from 2 to 5pm this coming Sunday. The celebration will be at the WWII-era theater located at 10541 Flagler Road, Nordland, and will include the premiere of “The Turkey Farmer’s Daughter,” a one-act play written by Marrowstone Island playwright Judith Glass Collins. The renovation, a collaboration between Washington State Parks and the Friends of Fort Flagler, includes new sound and lighting systems, refinished floors, improved acoustics, and two furnished green rooms.

And finally, Spring has arrived, and the return of daytime low tides brings opportunities for recreational shellfish harvesting across hundreds of Washington’s public beaches. With so many options, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife encourages shellfish gatherers to visit less popular public beaches to spread out harvest pressure, which has increased in recent years. To learn about current shellfishing rules, bivalve shellfish identification, Puget Sound season guides, and more, visit <https://wdfw.wa.gov/newsroom/news-release/wdfw-urges-shellfish-harvesters-follow-rules-support-sustainability-state-clam-mussel-and-oyster>.

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.