

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker, with your local news and commentary for Tuesday, May 19, 2026.

As the risk of wildfire increases, East Jefferson Fire Rescue will provide wildfire prevention information for Jefferson County residents this coming Thursday, May 21, from 10:30-12:30 at the Jefferson County Library in Port Hadlock. EJFR's Community Risk Manager and JeffCo Public Health Environmental Health Specialist will explain how wildfires move and grow, how to create defensible space around your home, and how to protect your household from smoke and poor air quality. Register to save your spot at <https://www.jclibrary.info/>.

As the unofficial start of summer, Memorial Day Weekend tends to generate a significant increase in travel across Washington State. To help people plan ahead, WSDOT has released holiday [travel charts](#) showing the best and worst times to travel on major corridors statewide. The charts include key routes such as Interstate 5, I-90, US 2, and the I-5/Canada border crossing, where congestion is expected to be heaviest during peak travel periods. Travelers are encouraged to review the charts and build extra time into their trips.

Whether traveling across town or statewide, prepare for your trip by visiting the links provided in the transcript of this broadcast, including the [WSDOT mobile app](#), [traffic cameras](#) and [email alerts](#), [online traveler information](#) for traffic, weather, and ferry schedules, a [real-time travel map](#), and a map of potential [safety rest areas](#) to ensure enough breaks to avoid drowsy driving. WSDOT also recommends having a backup outdoor destination, as parks and other outdoor recreation sites tend to fill up quickly on holiday weekends.

The *Leader* reports that Jefferson Healthcare may lose from \$4 to \$6 million in Medicaid funding due to the recent federal spending cuts. Though the number of patients will not decline, the money available through Medicaid to serve them will drop significantly in 2027. In order to compensate for the impending losses while maintaining its independence and continuing to serve those in need, the hospital is considering its first levy lid lift in 30 years. Fortunately, in a climate where 85% of the hospitals in Washington are underwater, hospital officials say that Jefferson Healthcare remains financially stable, and that the district's current rate is one of the lowest public hospital levy rates in Washington at \$0.05 per \$1,000 per property valuation.

Jefferson County is considering a new agreement to use the Jefferson County jail to house inmates from Bremerton, adding a new revenue stream as officials work to address a budget gap and potential fiscal cliff approaching in 2027. Under the agreement, the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office would house inmates from Bremerton at a rate of roughly \$45,000 per inmate annually. Officials said that with the addition of 20 Bremerton inmates, the move could generate significant revenue while adding minimal costs.

According to County Administrator Josh Peters, the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office manages a 57-bed jail, which of late has had a daily average population of 17 inmates, but the staffing requirement for corrections officers remains the same whether there are 17 inmates or 50 inmates. Food, water use, and transports are the only additional expenses over what they already pay. So with the costs largely fixed, housing additional inmates can generate revenue without requiring any significant new spending. The jail agreement is one of several approaches under consideration as county leaders continue to weigh how to stabilize funding without cutting

facilities and services. County officials have also discussed other long-term funding options, including a potential levy lid lift to support parks and recreation and to reduce reliance on the general fund.

The Port Townsend Arts Commission will be making another \$9000 in grants available for art projects that have a recognized quality and significant connection to the City. The deadline for this round of applications is this coming Thursday, May 21. For more info and to apply, visit <https://cityofpt.us/bc-ac/page/arts-grants>.

And, once again, a reminder from WSDOT that the Hood Canal Bridge will be closed from 10pm tonight until 5am tomorrow, and will be closed again for those hours Wednesday and Thursday of this week

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.