

This is KPTZ FM 91.9 in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Rachel Perkins, bringing you news and commentary from the Jefferson County *Beacon* for Wednesday, June 17, 2026.

The Port Townsend City Council convened on Monday, June 15, 2026, addressing a full agenda that included major renovations at Chetzemoka Park, the adoption of state-mandated housing regulations, and the authorization of multiple transportation grant applications.

The majority of the meeting was dedicated to a special presentation on a slate of projects at Chetzemoka Park. City staff provided a comprehensive update on the future of the "crown jewel of the park system," detailing plans that include demolishing aging structures, rebuilding key amenities, and improving accessibility. Staff announced the kitchen shelter rebuild is underway following the demolition of the old shelter due to rot and structural issues. Construction has begun on an in-kind replacement that will feature a timber frame, shake shingles, and similar architecture to the original. Site prep began on June 15 with concrete pouring scheduled for July and a ribbon-cutting anticipated in September.

The city is moving forward with the abatement by removal of the vacant caretaker's house and the Golden Age Club. Both buildings were deemed uninhabitable and beyond repair, with the Golden Age Club suffering a collapsed roof and floor holes. Asbestos was removed in 2025, and contractors are ready to complete the removal by the end of July.

Following the removals, the city plans to expand the Chetzemoka Dog Park into the area and install an RV caretaker site similar to the successful program at Kai Tai Park. A new universal playground and swing set replacement is scheduled for September, funded in part by an accessibility grant. The historic gazebo will also receive minor deck and roof repairs in August.

The Council voted to adopt Ordinance 3366, amending development regulations in Titles 12 and 17 to comply with House Bill 1757 (<https://app.leg.wa.gov/bills/summary?Year=2025&BillNumber=1757>).

The bill requires cities to allow the conversion of existing commercial buildings into residential units. Staff noted the legislation was complex, touching on energy codes, shoreline master programs, and commercial ground-floor requirements.

Key provisions of the new rules allow conversions in zones that permit multifamily housing, allowing 50 percent more units than the underlying zone currently permits. Ground-floor commercial space is required only if a building is located on a major pedestrian corridor, in a zone requiring commercial use, or if it already has a commercial tenant on the ground floor. New units must remain within the existing building envelope, though incidental features like ADA ramps are permitted. The city is prohibited from requiring traffic concurrency or environmental studies for these conversions. The Council thanked a team of interns from Western Washington University who helped draft the complex code amendments.

The Council authorized city staff to apply for several grants through the state's Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) for 2027 projects. With roughly \$600,000 in matching funds available, staff will apply for a suite of projects, acknowledging they are unlikely to receive funding for all of them.

The priority project list includes Discovery Road, a 3.6 million dollar large-scale project to add a sidewalk on the south side and bike lanes from San Juan to 19th Street. Staff noted this is a competitive but fundable project.

The application also includes finishing the sidewalk on Lawrence Street from Walker to Kearney, improvements at the Haynes and 12th Street intersection near Safeway and chip seal maintenance on 19th Street and Blaine Street. Deputy Public Works Director David Dinkuhn noted that the city has been highly successful with TIB funding recently, requiring careful budgeting to maximize taxpayer dollars.

During public comment, representatives from the Small Business Administration announced that federal disaster loans are now available for Jefferson County businesses impacted by the December 2025 storms.

The meeting concluded with an announcement from Mayor Howard that she has agreed to be the target of a cold dunk tank at Shrimpfest in Brinnon to raise money for the fire department. The Council also announced a strategic work plan retreat scheduled for July 13 at the Port Pavilion.

Reporting for this story by Rachael Nutting.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5 Tuesday through Thursday, partnering on Wednesday to bring you stories from jeffcobeacon.com. This is Rachel Perkins. Thanks for listening.