

Local News Thursday, June 11th, 2026:

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker with your local news and commentary for Thursday, June 11th, 2026.

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The Jefferson County Housing Fund Board has voted to keep the American Legion emergency shelter in Port Townsend operating through the end of 2026, but according to the Leader they are postponing a decision on a separate request for additional local funding.

Though the board unanimously approved using over \$186,000 in state homelessness funding to support shelter operations through the end of the year, county staff estimates the shelter is still likely to face a \$67,000 shortfall in 2026, and requested authorization for up to \$100,000 in additional housing funds to cover the projected gap and provide flexibility for potential cost increases later in the year. Board members decided to postpone the decision until staff can provide more information on the costs driving the proposed budget increase.

Bayside Housing & Services officials said the shelter has regularly housed about 40 people per night, above original expectations, increasing pressure on staff and resources. The proposed budget increase is attributed to staffing needs, higher food costs and a growing need for shelter services.

The funding discussion comes as the County continues to rely on the American Legion shelter, as the Caswell Brown Village shelter is not expected to open until early 2027, but several service providers expressed concern that additional funding for the shelter could reduce the amount of money available for other organizations competing for housing funds.

Beulah Kingsolver, executive director of Dove House Advocacy Services noted that the American Legion shelter does not meet the needs of all residents experiencing homelessness, including families and some domestic violence survivors. Commissioner Heather Dudley- Nollette agreed that the county's response to homelessness should include children and families.

The Housing Fund Board has directed staff to return with additional information on shelter demographics, staffing levels and service costs. The board is next scheduled to meet June 24.

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Several weeks into the newly reintroduced Sunday bus service, Jefferson Transit Authority (JTA) reports that the community has been incredibly receptive to the expanded service and that rider feedback so far has been overwhelmingly positive.

Though Sunday ridership numbers are naturally lower than Saturday figures, they have definitely exceeded initial projections, and riders are grateful for the expanded options for general weekend travel, shopping, transportation to religious services and out-of-county connections to surrounding cities and the Washington State Ferries.

To sustain the new service, JTA is now actively recruiting for several transit operators and a dispatcher.

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With several reported black bear sightings in the Port Townsend area, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is reminding folks to keep their distance.

According to the WDFW, black bears are common throughout much of Washington, both in suburban areas and in greenbelts

around cities and towns, and seeing one needn't be cause for concern. Black bears are naturally wary of humans, but can overcome their fear when they find high-calorie food sources.

By reducing backyard bear attractants, people can reduce the likelihood of bear encounters, but if you do run into a bear, the WDFW recommends that you stop, remain calm and assess the situation. If the bear seems unaware, move away quietly when it isn't looking.

And if a bear walks toward you, identify yourself by standing up, waving your hands above your head and talking to the bear in a low voice. If you can't safely move away from the bear or if it continues moving toward you, scare it away by clapping your hands, stomping your feet and yelling.

Urgent reports of bears or other potentially dangerous wildlife can be submitted to WDFW by calling 360-902-2936 or emailing [WILDCOMM@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:WILDCOMM@dfw.wa.gov).

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And finally, the pre-race Ruckus for this year's Race to Alaska begins at 3 pm this Saturday at the Northwest Maritime Center in Port Townsend, and the starting gun for this year's race will fire at 5 am Sunday morning. To learn more about this exciting event, visit [R2AK.com](http://R2AK.com).

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KPTZ 91.9 FM broadcasts your local news Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at noon and 5 PM. You can contact us at [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org). I'm Diane Walker; thank you for listening.