

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, July 8, 2026.

The City Council convened July 6 for a meeting packed with significant agenda items, ranging from rideshare services to major progress on the Evans Vista housing development and a regional discussion on emergency management preparedness. The meeting also approved a new mural project for the local skate park, a transportation plan, and a housekeeping measure to update the city's fund structure.

Jefferson County Administrator Josh Peters and District 1 County Commissioner Heather Dudley-Nolette presented an update on the county's Department of Emergency Management (DEM). They noted that the recent budget cycle had strained the department, which is currently a small operation. The discussion centered on a "white paper" exploring potential governance models to strengthen the system. Several options were presented, including maintaining the status quo, forming an advisory committee, or potentially integrating DEM with the Jeff Comm 911 dispatch center.

A major milestone was reached for the Evans Vista housing development, a planned 320-unit mixed-affordability neighborhood. Housing Grants Coordinator Renata Munfrada announced that the city has chosen two development firms to advance to the Request for Proposals (RFP) round: Related Northwest and Edlen & Company. The project, which will require at least 25% of units to be income-restricted at 80% of the area median income, is a key component of the city's housing strategy. Council members expressed a desire to see more than the minimum 25% of units set aside for affordable housing and to ensure the project includes a mix of workforce and middle-income housing.

In a more celebratory item, the council unanimously approved the Arts Commission's recommendation to award the skate park mural project to local artist Jesse Joshua Watson. Watson's concept features an underwater, futuristic theme that incorporates local landmarks and has been the top candidate throughout the selection process. The project, funded by a Creative District Capital Grant and matching funds, will see Watson collaborate with the community, including the skaters themselves, to refine the design.

A major topic of conversation was the availability of rideshare services in Port Townsend. City Manager John Mauro explained that, while state law has preempted local regulation of transportation network companies (TNCs) like Uber and Lyft since 2022, a technical glitch had prevented the apps from operating in the area. The city attorney's office had recently reached out to the companies, and Uber subsequently corrected the issue. One of the "cons" of TNCs identified by city staff was a potentially negative impact on the local taxi service.

Ivan Anderson, manager of The Taxi Company, told the *Beacon* that the business is operating with only four to five drivers and two vehicles, one of which is in the mechanic's shop. The company's phone line was also down throughout the Fourth of July weekend, compounding the service gaps in the community. The Taxi Company and TNC models are similar; drivers are compensated through commissions that often do not provide a livable wage in the area.

In other business, the council held a public hearing for the 2027-2032 Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program, which was subsequently approved. The program outlines 49 projects, many of which are grant-funded, including the upcoming construction of the 19th and Discovery Shared Intersection.

The council also approved a housekeeping ordinance to update the city's municipal code fund structure, removing inactive funds and adding previously authorized funds, such as the Transportation Benefit District and the 1% Arts Program.

Finally, the council discussed succession planning in light of City Manager Mauro being a finalist for a position in another city. Councilmembers agreed to hold a workshop to develop a plan for a potential transition, emphasizing the importance of stability for staff and the community. This proactive approach was seen as a valuable exercise regardless of Mauro's decision, echoing the city's ethos of talent development and gap-filling.

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.