

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker with your local news and commentary for Tuesday, July 14, 2026.

This evening the Bainbridge Island City Council will consider an employment agreement with Port Townsend John Mauro to be Bainbridge's new city manager. If approved, Mauro is scheduled to start his tenure in early September. Like Port Townsend, Bainbridge Island operates under a council-city manager form of government, meaning, as city manager, Mauro would serve as CEO, overseeing staff and reporting to the city council.

A traffic collision occurred late Sunday evening at the intersection of Highway 20 and Highway 101. A vehicle went over the center line and struck another vehicle head on, leaving one person injured and two deceased.

Ballots for the next primary election are being mailed out this week. To see if you are registered to vote and if your current address is correct, you can check your personal voter status at www.votewa.gov. If your information is incorrect, or if you are not registered to vote, you can register or update online until July 27. After that date you can register or update at the County Assessor's office, County Courthouse in Port Townsend until election day, August 4.

In related news, the Washington State *Standard* reports that federal authorities have threatened Washington state election officials with criminal prosecution if they fail to prevent noncitizens from voting in this year's federal elections.

Washington is also the subject of an ongoing US Department of Justice lawsuit for access to the state's voter list, including sensitive personal information such as birth dates, driver's license numbers, etc. Washington Secretary of State Steve Hobbs has repeatedly refused to provide the Trump administration with the protected information included in voter data. A hearing on Washington's request to dismiss the case here is set for August.

A fire sparked by lightning in the Mount Tom Creek Basin of the Olympic Peninsula on June 23 continues to smolder and creep on an extremely steep, densely forested slope approximately five miles west-northwest of Mount Olympus. Estimated at 68 acres, the fire is still 0% contained, but Hoh Rain Forest facilities – including the visitor center, campground and trail system – remain open to the public, and there are no fire-related closures of any backcountry facilities or trails.

Despite recent rainfall, the fire continues to burn because the dense tree canopy prevents sufficient rainfall from reaching the forest floor to extinguish the fire. Firefighters are monitoring the area with cameras and helicopters, but so far cool wet weather and persistent cloud cover have moderated the fire and limited its growth.

Meanwhile, Olympic National Forest officials have re-opened the Staircase area to visitors. That area has been closed to visitors since last July, due to the Bear Gulch fire, which consumed over 20,000 acres before being officially declared 100% contained last November.

Following containment, repair and stabilization work was conducted to address severe rockfall, hazardous trees and landslide risks within the burn scar, and visitors can now access the Staircase ranger station, Rapids Loop Trail, and other developed sites along FS-24 and within the Staircase, including Mt. Rose Trail, Mildred Lakes Trail, and Dry Creek East Trailhead, and reservations are now being accepted for the Staircase Campground.

Copper Creek Trail, FS-2451 and wilderness trails beyond the developed area of Staircase will remain closed while crews complete hazard assessments and repair damaged backcountry infrastructure, including bridges and privies. Area closures may change as recovery efforts continue.

After a yearlong fundraising campaign that sent the Chimacum High School band from the Olympic Peninsula to Washington, DC many community members were disappointed to learn that the band did not get to perform in DC because the National Independence Day parade was canceled due to extreme heat. In response to the cancelation, Chimacum students and staff helped to organize an impromptu concert at the National Museum of the United States Army at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, convincing the museum to open its doors to more than 300 musicians from bands representing Washington, California, Florida, and Wisconsin, who then all performed together.

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.