

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. I'm Charlie Bermant, with news and commentary for Tuesday March 24, 2020.

The Port Townsend Farmer's Market is expected to open on Saturday, April 4, after a decision yesterday by the Jefferson County Department of Public Health to treat it with the same rules as a supermarket.

This designation exempts the market from Governor Jay Inslee's shelter in place order, announced last night.

The decision was made after market director Amanda Millholland presented a plan that will allow local farmers to sell their fresh produce while embracing the social distancing process. This plan includes eliminating the center row of the market and extending a few blocks to allow vendors in between space. It is likely that no craft vendors will participate. Prepared food will be packaged to go with on site consumption not allowed. So when it opens, the market will have a very different look.

The market's regular character as a place to meet and greet our neighbors will be eliminated for the time being.

Millholland said that her proposal to open the market met with passionate reactions from both sides, those who thought opening was a terrible idea and others who felt it was a necessary move for both the farmers and the public.

In addition to the nutritional and economic benefit of the open market, Millholland said the food at a farmer's market is handled by fewer people than produce purchased in a supermarket.

The Wednesday and Sunday markets open in June and will presumably fall in the same category.

Washington Governor Jay Inslee issued a two-week stay in place order on Monday night, ordering people to stay in their homes and for non-essential businesses to close. One of these essential businesses, it turns out, is cannabis. Inslee's office told KPTZ this morning that marijuana production, processing and retail will remain open during the duration of the shutdown.

According to today's *New York Times*, some states are allowing medical cannabis stores to stay open while shutting down recreational retail outlets. This would be impossible in Washington commingles medical and recreational.

Local Cannabis businesses have already instituted best practices, like curbside pickups at Chimacum Cannabis and forced distancing at Choice Cannabis in Port Townsend.

The *Times* reported that to some, cannabis is as much of a necessity milk or bread, although not as necessary as toilet paper. So those hoarding cannabis might follow the advice dispensed over toilet paper: Get what you need, but save enough for everybody else.

A shortage of protective face masks has evolved into a call for volunteers with any level of sewing skill to manufacture masks in their homes for distribution to people affected by the COVID-19 virus. To accomplish this, patterns for effective masks are available online.

Local quilters want to get involved, according to three who spoke to KPTZ. They would gladly kick in, but were unaware of any organized effort to manufacture and distribute the mask. This could change, as the Jefferson County Department of Emergency Management is developing a form on its website that would connect volunteers to facilities and families in need of the masks.

Jefferson County Public Health Director Vicki Kirkpatrick said that homemade masks would be most effective, unsurprisingly, at home – where an infected person would wear a mask while in contact with an uninfected person who was bringing them soup or supplies – to protect them from sneeze and coughing residue.

While the Port Townsend Film Festival cancelled next month's Women in Film festival, there is still hope that the regular yearly festival, scheduled for September, will still go on. PTFE Executive Director Janette Force told KPTZ there is a belief that the emergency will not go on forever, and there will be some way that the festival will continue. She said a deciding factor will be the reopening of the Rose Theater, but the festival has maintained its else agreements with all the other downtown venues.

Force said there could be some great things in store for the Fall although securing a special guest at this time is tricky because most people don't want to make long-range plans.

KPTZ 91.9 FM Port Townsend brings you local news and information Monday through Saturday at Noon, and at 5 PM Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. News coverage will increase in response to the COVID-19 emergency. If you have any news or information for this program please send a message to news@kptz.org.

This is Charlie Bermant with today's news, reminding you that everything could change tomorrow.