

You're listening to KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. This is Lily Haight with what's new in this week's Port Townsend *Leader* for May 20, 2020.

County commissioners are expected to vote May 22nd on the public health officer's recommendation to move to Phase 2 of the governor's "Safe Start" reopening plan. Commissioners Kate Dean, Greg Brotherton and David Sullivan will meet virtually at 2:30pm to vote. The meeting will be streamed on the county website with results reported on KPTZ.

The commissioners can only approve or deny the recommendations; they cannot make any changes.

If the commissioners approve these recommendations, the county will send an application to the state Department of Health asking for a variance to the "Safe Start" plan. It will have to be approved by Health Secretary John Weisman.

Ten counties have already moved to Phase 2, and Gov. Jay Inslee announced May 19th another 10 counties qualified to apply for the Phase 2 variance.

The now eligible counties are Spokane, Adams, Mason, Thurston, Lewis, Clark, Clallam, Kitsap, Island, and San Juan.

The state is currently in Phase 1 of the governor's "Safe Start" plan, which requires most businesses remain closed unless they are deemed "essential."

The county now has had 30 coronavirus cases, but the last two were confirmed to have been infected in March and early April.

The latest, confirmed on May 18, was a Jefferson County resident who was living in Arizona at the time of infection, according to public health officer Tom Locke.

The new case does not affect the county's eligibility for Phase 2, he added.

The United States now has more than 1.5 million cases of the coronavirus. More than 93,000 people have died. In Washington state, there are now more than 18,000 confirmed cases and 1,002 deaths.

Around 50 people lined Sims Way at noon on March 19th for a "reopening rally" protesting the governor's "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order.

The rally was organized via Facebook through an event page titled "Freedom Rally Reopen Jefferson County."

It was created by Danielle Galmukoff, owner of the Glamour Girl Salon in Port Townsend.

It was advertised as a nonpartisan event and attendees were asked to not bring campaign signs.

Participants cheered for honking cars and one woman sang the national anthem. Candidates for state elections passed out flyers and shook ungloved hands. Attendees did not wear masks, nor did they stand six feet apart from each other. Several attendees commuted from Port Angeles.

Madison Guthrie, who grew up in Jefferson County, said she attended the rally because she believes the "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order violates the U.S. Constitution. This comes as state supreme courts across the nation are overturning similar orders.

A lawsuit in federal court was filed this month alleging the same charges against Gov. Jay Inlsee.

Guthrie said she doesn't believe the hype surrounding coronavirus and feels that people are scared for no reason. The shutdown has put her out of work and she wants Jefferson County to reopen restaurants so she may have a job again.

Melisa Hostler of Port Ludlow attended the rally with her two daughters Arabella, 11, and Zalea 9. Hostler said she was protesting government overreach. She said she feels the people of Washington have done what was asked of them already and that the continued extension of the stay-home with no end in sight is not sustainable.

Scores of meatpacking plants throughout the United States have reported thousands of positive COVID-19 cases among their employees, reducing their ranks and in many cases last month, forcing them to close altogether.

But on April 29, President Trump ordered them back to work, saying the processors are “essential.” As meat-packing ramped up, so did COVID-19 cases.

A meat shortage has restaurant-owners worried about the coming months.

Mike Harbin, co-owner of Mo-Chilli BBQ and Catering, said when restaurants reopen later in the summer, the already thin supply of meat could be decimated.

Friday, Mo-Chilli’s mobile food trailer ran out of pulled pork earlier than expected – and some grocery stores are limiting the amount of meat people can buy.

The shortage has also caused a spike in price.

Grass-fed beef has gone from \$5 to \$8 a pound in recent weeks. The Harbins used to buy pork for \$1.60 to \$2 a pound; now it’s \$7 to \$8 a pound. Safeway’s Signature ground beef was \$6.99 a pound last week.

The Harbins, like many other restaurant owners and caterers, are having to get creative to deal with the impacts of the coronavirus. They’ve come up with a plan for if the meat shortage worsens.

Some elements of that plan could mean more breakfast tacos that require less meat, or stuffed baked potatoes.

Items that might have been wrapped in bacon might be sprinkled with it now.

The couple plans to add specialty meats, such as goat and duck, when they open a second venue.

For these stories and more, check out this week’s edition of the *Leader* on newsstands and online now. This is *Leader* news reporter Lily Haight, on KPTZ 91.9 FM.