

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with news and commentary for Tuesday, May 28, 2020.

As of this morning, the number of COVID-19 cases is unchanged from the 30 case total. Of 1549 tests 1472 were negative. Forty seven people are awaiting test results. As Jefferson Healthcare continues to test amid no new cases, the number of positives is now just 2% of those tested.

Fort Worden State Park is now open for day use, but it will take until April 1, 2021 before all services available before the COVID 19 emergency are back in place.

The Fort Worden Public Development Authority board yesterday examined a five-stage reopening and recovery plan at a two-hour meeting that included the input of former Port Townsend City Manager David Timmons, who has entered into a professional service contract with the PDA to assist and advise on designing a recovery strategy and plan for a resilient Fort Worden that supports the local community economy while preserving the assets of Washington State Parks.

The plan backdates to the beginning of 2020. We have passed through the response stage, and are now in the the third stage, pre-recovery, which includes a detailed examination of all services with regard to both practical and financial issues. The recovery stage kicks in on July 1, during which time the PDA will establish a skeleton crew to protect the Fort's assets and maintain minimum operations through the remainder of this year.

The third stage also includes securing financing for the glamping and Maker's Square portions of the park, although work could begin in June, according to PDA executive director Dave Robison.

The fourth stage, restoration of operations has a strong financial component, including the hiring of a project manager to bring all of the capital projects to completion. Throughout all the stages the PDA must separate operational and reopening funds, as the latter is eligible for FEMA reimbursement.

Stage five will include a series of retreats and workshops devoted to the reexamination of the PDA business model.

Hospitality and food services will take some time, with some aspects rolling out during stage 3. The major issue is to disinfect facilities that have been unoccupied for several months, requiring all systems to be flushed out, along with eliminating pools of stagnant water that have been unattended for several months. The Commons, which is the Fort's activity center, will remain closed, with any reservations and check-in handled at a different location. And one possible option will be to require facility visitors to provide their own bedding and household supplies.

Some issues are not exclusive to the PDA, such as the availability of personal protective equipment and hand washing facilities. Specific issues include the phased rehiring of staff and ordering of supplies. The PDA board's June meeting will determine whether to start the third stage in July, specifically addressing the limited reopening of food service. It will also determine whether it will push up the reopening schedule or wait until April 2021.

Optimistically, Centrum events, the Grand Old Fourth Celebration and the Thing Festival could take place in 2021. If so, it won't be like before, as many things will change.

As we struggle with the fine points of reopening, local residents are one step ahead of most Washingtonians. The Wheel In Motor Movie, one of just five drive in theaters operating in the state, opens up this weekend. To get people in the mood, the theater is screening a throw-back double feature of “Back to the Future” and “American Graffiti.”

According to the theater’s social media it may be several weeks before new product is released for first run theaters, so the Wheel In is offering a slate of greatest hits to get the party started. But it’s not about the movies, which we’ve all seen a million times. Rather, it has to do with getting out and participating in a familiar activity.

We aren’t quite back to normal, where we can decide to go to the Drive In on a whim. Capacity will be cut in half, limiting to only 70 cars per night. Tickets are only available in advance for a single carload rate, so don’t wait until the last minute.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon Monday through Saturday and at fivepm Monday through Thursday. You can contact us through news at kptz.org.

This is Charlie Bermant with some of today’s news. Thank you for listening.