

3/05

INTRO :

You're listening to KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. This is Lily Haight telling you what's new in this week's Port Townsend Leader.

There have been 10 deaths in Washington from the Coronavirus and the state's health department reports 39 confirmed cases in the state. The majority of cases are in King County, with eight in Snohomish County. No schools have been exposed to the coronavirus as of March 3rd, according to Public Health Officer Tom Locke, despite a press release from the Chimacum School District stating otherwise.

In the press release sent to parents on March 2nd, followed by another on March 3rd, school officials said two students at Chimacum High School had been in close proximity to someone with the coronavirus, COVID-19. But Locke, who is a doctor and the county's health officer, said this press release was premature and "inaccurate."

The school later said "it was determined that the students had no infection and no symptoms of the virus." On Tuesday, 239 Chimacum students were absent from school, according to assistant superintendent Art Clarke. Chimacum School District has a total student population of 836.

Today, the district sent out another press release confirming that none of the students have had direct exposure to the Coronavirus.

A contentious proposal to move a Port Townsend-based cannabis production plant to the Coyle Peninsula is being considered after a hearing examiner reviewed the project's land-use application last week.

To move their cannabis business to 9790 Coyle Road from Eisenbeis Avenue in Port Townsend, sibling owners Luke and Jessie Williamson must prove their business meets the "cottage-industry" criteria to be operated in a residential zone.

The proposed facility in Coyle would include the construction of two steel 5,000 square-foot buildings for producing and processing cannabis on a 5.48-acre property.

To meet the cottage industry standard to operate the business, the owners must live on the property and prove their plan meets the criteria of a "harmonious and appropriate in design, character and appearance," consistent with the surrounding area.

Opponents who spoke at the hearing examiner meeting said the project will lower property values, increase crime and disrupt the rural character.

The hearing examiner will likely make a decision on the application by the end of the month.

It could be months before we see any construction on the Admiralty Apartment building downtown Port Townsend. The owners of the building, which is located on Taylor and Water Streets, have begun discussions with the city to replace the crumbling back building with a four-story apartment building that has retail spaces on the ground floor, according to public documents acquired by the Leader.

Six units in the building were condemned last May after storm damage occurred on December 27th. According to building manager Marilyn Kurka, all displaced residents were housed within three months after being displaced.

The building is owned by Erickson Partnership, a company based out of Bainbridge Island. The owners plan to offer the same number of subsidized apartments as before, Kurka said.

First they will need approval from the city, the US Army Corps of Engineers and the state Department of Ecology. It is unknown how long the process will take.

The city's pre-application conference report states that the owners intend to demolish and redevelop the back section of the building into a four-story building up to 50 feet in height.

The building would have 19 apartments, with two ground-floor retail spaces and a utility room fronting Tyler Street. All the street level and second floor residential units would remain federally subsidized.

This year could see the youngest team in history sailing the Race to Alaska.

Port Townsend High School junior Odin Smith has put together a five-person team of fellow high schoolers called Team FAST (which stands for Freaking Awesome Sailing Teens.) The group is currently working on fixing up their Santa Cruz 27 sailboat at the Port Townsend Boat Haven in preparation for the race in June. The Race To Alaska is North America's longest human and wind powered race. Competitors must sail or paddle from Port Townsend to Ketchikan without the aid of an engine.

Smith was the youngest person to ever compete in the race when he joined Team Ziska last year. This year, he said he hopes to win.

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