

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with news and commentary for Thursday, June 11, 2020.

\*\*\*

The Jefferson County COVID-19 case count is still 31. Currently 2,225 local residents have been tested, with 2,150 testing negative. Forty-four people are awaiting results. As Jefferson Healthcare continues to test amid no new cases, the number of positives is now just 1.4% of those tested. Of those, 55% are male while 45% are female.

\*\*\*

Local demonstrations have drawn hundreds of people, and they are expected to continue during these fractious times. This political activity has eclipsed concerns about COVID-19.

According to Jefferson County Health Officer Dr. Thomas Locke, peaceful protest is an important constitutional right and the Black Lives Matter protests are a historic opportunity to express opposition to institutional racism and police misconduct. Unfortunately, this does not lessen the risk of COVID-19 transmission in situations where large crowds gather, unmasked, speaking loudly, and being subjected to tear gas attacks (which causes intense coughing) and are in close proximity to each other.

All of these factors make the recent Seattle demonstrations a high risk exposure for COVID-19. Testing will allow those with the infection to be appropriately treated and to take the actions necessary to prevent further spread of the infection.

Locke recommended that Jefferson County residents who have attended out of town demonstrations carefully monitor themselves for symptoms once they return home. These symptoms can include cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, fever, shaking chills, headache, fatigue, body aches or sudden loss of the sense of smell or taste.

This self-monitoring should occur for at least 14 days since their last exposure. This is the longest period of time it may take for symptoms to show if you have been exposed and infected. If any of these symptoms develop, testing for COVID-19 should be done.

Area residents who also take care of people at high risk for COVID-19 complications (i.e. elderly parents, nursing home residents, individuals with chronic heart or lung disease or immunosuppression) – these individuals should consider being tested one week after their last exposure to a large crowd to screen for asymptomatic infection that may be spread to others.

You may wonder, how large these demonstrations would be if those of us who are kept home with concerns about COVID-19 took to the streets.

\*\*\*

Jefferson Healthcare Commissioner Matt Ready has reestablished an organization with the purpose of counteracting the influence of lawyers and corporations on healthcare. Ready formed the Association of Washington Public Hospital Commissioners several years ago, which seeks to help these officials collaborate or receive independent legal support.

According to a press release, Ready seeks to fund the creation of a network of competent legal researchers and lawyers to support public hospital districts. This new organization could replace Municipal Research and Service Center (MRSC), which Ready feels is too aligned with corporate interests.

Ready has weathered a 6-year dispute with fellow commissioners over the basic right of a person to record an open public meeting of hospital commissioners, where he was forbidden from making his own recording of commissioner meetings, according to the release.

\*\*\*

Two of Jefferson County's elected officials have created a YouTube video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ny1LE9o917U>) that explains the new Jefferson County Mask Directive. Superior Court Clerk Ruth Gordon and Treasurer Stacie Prada filmed the two-and-a-half-minute spot at the county courthouse, where they underscore the importance of wearing masks in public place and maintaining a six foot distance when you are not wearing a mask.

Some of us are irritated when others aren't wearing a mask in public, but Prada said that 100% mask compliance is not needed. If 75% of people wear masks it will control the spread of COVID-19. Gordon added that you can never tell why someone else isn't wearing a mask, but people should focus on their own masking choices.

The directive requires individuals who do not meet one of its five exemptions to wear a face covering when in indoor public settings or outdoor public locations when a 6-foot physical separation cannot be maintained. It also give business owners the authority to exclude unmasked individuals from publicly accessible places unless they meet one of the directive's exemptions.

Many local businesses have posted signs requiring masks for entry. Local supermarkets have also posted signs with personnel encouraging those who are not wearing masks to do so, and supplying a mask if they don't have their own. This is a suggestion without enforcement, as supermarket checkers do not have combat training.

\*\*\*

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon Monday through Saturday and at five PM Monday through Thursday. You can contact us through news at [kptz.org](http://kptz.org).

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