

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, June 16, 2020.

Jefferson County reported another case of COVID-19 on Monday, bringing the in-county total to 32 cases. The newest case was an adult male believed to have caught the virus from an in-county exposure. Currently the health department is working to identify potential sources.

As of Monday afternoon, 2,404 local residents have been tested with 2,323 testing negative. Forty nine people are awaiting results. All but two local cases are listed as recovered, and the gender ratio is 56% male and 44% female.

During his weekly briefing to the Jefferson County Commissioners, Health Officer Dr. Thomas Locke said that the local masking directive could be in place for a year or longer. The good news, he said, is that people will have time to refine the mask wearing and social distancing processes. And while there is a directive, there is no punitive enforcement. Yet.

According to public comments, people have concerns about lack of enforcement and feel there should be some penalty if masks are not worn. There is no way to control other people's behavior, and such discussions could be dangerous. As for store employees not wearing masks, Locke suggests that customers talk to the store manager and then leave, stating they will not patronize their business if the employees aren't wearing masks.

The same strategy could work for other customers, as those concerned can tell the manager they will not visit the store until the mask directive is enforced.

Department of Emergency Management Director Willie Bence said a random survey revealed that 80-90% of grocery store shoppers are masking up. In other retail establishments, the count is around 60%. He said people from outside the county who are shopping locally are only at 20%. He said masks provided to stores are helping people understand the county health officer's directive.

Bence reported the community mask program has collected and distributed 5,000 masks made by community members and they are still soliciting donations. Mask drop-off points are changing due to libraries needing their drop boxes for books. They can be left at the Department of Emergency Management at the Sheriff's Office in Port Hadlock, the public health office near QFC or the Food Co-Op. More sites will be announced soon.

Both of our local libraries are moving toward normal, reopening book drops and instituting curbside service. Both the Port Townsend Public Library and the Jefferson County Library in Port Hadlock will begin curbside services next Tuesday, June 23, although the drop-off boxes are now in operation.

Curbside service hours will be from noon to 3pm Tuesday through Friday in Port Townsend and from 10am to 5pm Tuesday through Saturday in Port Hadlock. For specifics about the service visit the respective library's web site.

The Jefferson County Bookmobile will also return to service on Monday, reestablishing existing routes but operating on an abbreviated schedule.

The dog park, along with several other city parks and facilities, reopened on Monday, allowing dozens of cooped-up canines to hang out with their friends again. Social distancing measures are still in effect, but dogs are exempt from wearing masks or maintaining a six foot distance.

Also reopening are the Cotton Building public restroom, picnic shelters and the skate park. Playgrounds and the Mountain View Pool are still closed, and city facility rentals are not yet available.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon Monday through Saturday and at 5pm 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.