

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, June 23, 2020.

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Jefferson County added two new COVID-19 cases this week, bringing the total to 35 over the weekend, now reporting a total of 33. While people over 60 are thought to be of the highest risk, those newly reported are younger. Both of the new cases are female – one in her thirties and another in her forties.

With three new Jefferson County cases reported in the last week, this is the largest weekly increase since March. This isn't a drastic increase, and it was expected after the county moved to Phase 2 earlier this month.

The latest posted data reports that 2,810 local residents have been tested with 2,712 testing negative.

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As of tomorrow, June 26, all Washington State residents will be required to wear a protective masks while in public. This includes anyone who enters a business, either as a customer or an employee. Outside, the requirement covers any situation where a six-foot social distance is not feasible.

Previous to the governor's declaration, Jefferson County Health Officer Dr. Thomas Locke said that the local mask directive could be in place for a year or longer. And a recent informal survey by the Department of Emergency Management reported that 80-90% of grocery store shoppers are masking up. In other retail establishments, the count is around 60%. People from outside the county who are shopping locally are only at 20%.

This will all change tomorrow, when we will presumably see a higher compliance in downtown Port Townsend, where tourists still venture. In our own informal survey, it appears that unmasked people are tourists, as you can tell them apart by the way they move and drive.

Enforcement is still a nebulous factor. Civil and non-civil penalties exist for the non-compliers, ranging in the thousands of dollars. In a statement, Governor Jay Inslee said that penalties and enforcement were infrequent during the pandemic's first wave, and he hopes people will continue to voluntarily comply. As for police, he said, "it is not our desire to have hard-working officers following people around on mask issues. They have other things to deal with."

Also undetermined is how to address those who do not comply in public. Unless the childhood tattletale gene has followed you into adulthood, you won't embrace the idea of correcting someone else's behavior. On the street, our best advice is to protect yourself and not engage. Businesses are different, as it is acceptable to report or boycott any business that does not follow protocol.

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To lighten things up, the Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring the first – but maybe not the last – "Maskie" awards, where people can submit pictures of creative mask designs. Submissions are accepted by email to [director@jeffcountychamber.org](mailto:director@jeffcountychamber.org) from June 26 to July 27. Entries will be posted on social networking sites, allowing people to vote on their favorites. Winners will receive a trophy, gift certificates and those elusive bragging rights. This is an offshoot of this year's virtual Wearable Art Show, which modeled high fashion protective gear.

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The first meeting for Jefferson County's Intergovernmental Coordinating Committee begins at noon today – that's right now, if you are listening to this broadcast live – to develop a long term strategy for reopening services and businesses with regard to COVID-19. The new committee is expected to operate through December with meetings scheduled for the last Thursday of every month, with the November meeting delayed a week to accommodate Thanksgiving.

No in-person attendance will be allowed, although it will be broadcast and archived on the county's web page.

The committee includes one representative from each of six boards and executive staff. Specifically, County Commissioner Kate Dean, City Council Deputy Mayor David Faber, Port Commissioner Pete Hanke, PUD Commissioner Jeff Randall; County Administrator Philip Morley, City Manager John Mauro, Port Executive Director Eron Berg and PUD Executive Director Kevin Streett will focus on six sectors, identified as those that have been greatly impacted by the pandemic: Culture and Events, Businesses, Children and Families, Human Services, Food System Security and Broadband. Different agencies will take the lead on specific topics.

The committee's final report is due on December 16.

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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@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org).

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