

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for July 1st, 2020.

Jefferson County commissioners submitted an application to the state for Jefferson County to move to Phase 3 of Governor Jay Inslee's "Safe Start" reopening plan. This comes as Jefferson County Health Officer Dr. Thomas Locke reports the county now has 38 confirmed cases of coronavirus. Eight cases were reported in the month of June.

According to Locke, four of the recent cases were asymptomatic patients who were discovered through testing prior to non-COVID related medical procedures. Two patients were close contacts of known cases in the county. These two patients were in quarantine when they developed signs of infection. Two other patients were identified through regular testing at Jefferson Healthcare because they were experiencing mild symptoms such as a sore throat and nasal congestion.

At his weekly briefing, Locke said the public health department has not found any cases linked to restaurants, grocery stores, or public venues. Instead, he said, most cases were found to be linked to patients taking trips to Seattle or having out-of-town visitors who were asymptomatic.

After a three-hour meeting on June 29, county commissioners voted to submit the county's application for Phase 3 to the state. Commissioners Kate Dean and Greg Brotherton voted for submitting the application and commissioner David Sullivan was opposed, raising concerns about gatherings of up to 50 people and the new reported cases of coronavirus.

If the application is approved by the state health department, the county will move into Phase 3 which allows gatherings of 50 or fewer people, including sports; non-essential travel; restaurants at 75% capacity with a table size of ten; bars at 25% capacity. Gyms and movie theaters at 50% capacity. And retail, libraries, museums, and government buildings could open. Pools and recreation centers could open at 50% capacity.

Commissioners agreed that once the state approves the application, the Board of Health could reconvene to discuss whether some elements of Phase 3 need to be put on hold if the case count continues to increase. Public health director Vicki Kirkpatrick said that even though Phase 3 allows gatherings of up to 50 people, masking and 6-foot physical distancing are still required.

According to Dr. Locke, now that more counties in the state are eligible to move to Phases 2 and 3, it takes the state health department around two weeks to approve applications. Until it is approved, only Phase 2 activities are permitted in Jefferson County.

The Port Townsend City Council approved a resolution to create an ad hoc committee on public safety at their business meeting on June 29th. All seven city council members will sit on the committee. The goal is to better understand the role of law enforcement in Port Townsend and meet the community's expectations for law enforcement.

Twenty-two citizens submitted public comments, 20 of which were in support of resolution to create the committee, which will examine the current practices of the Port Townsend police department including the nature, frequency, and type of police calls in Port Townsend; the use of force policy, specifically the deadly

force policy; the nature and legal ramifications of qualified immunity and police bargaining; and alternatives to police response, including navigators and community service officers.

The committee will create a “workplan” with recommendations for the police department and other local governments and officials by December 31st, 2020.

Mayor Michelle Sandoval emphasized the need to go beyond the city’s police department and look at Jefferson County’s law and justice system as a whole. “We need to go further if we want to address the systemic nature of how the law and justice system works,” Sandoval said, adding that she hopes the committee will invite county commissioners, Sheriff Joe Nole, and prosecuting attorney James Kennedy to join in the conversation as well as other local leaders and officials.

Interim police chief Troy Surber, who attended the meeting, said he is looking forward to the next six months and the changes that could occur.

Local activists will be rallying for justice on July 3rd, the one-year anniversary of the death of Stonechild Chiefstick, a Native American man who was shot and killed by Poulsbo police officer Craig Keller. The shooting occurred in front of hundreds of people in Poulsbo during the city’s “Third of July” outdoor party last year. Chiefstick was 39 years old and a father of five.

After the Kitsap Critical Incident Response team completed an investigation of the incident, Kitsap County prosecutor Chad Enright announced in April that Keller was justified in shooting Chiefstick, who had a screwdriver when Keller and three other officers surrounded him at the party that day. Keller, who had been on administrative leave, returned to work after the investigation. The Suquamish Tribal Council released a statement on May 5th asking for further review of the case.

At 7pm on July 3rd, there will be a memorial caravan through the streets of Suquamish and Poulsbo which will begin a global day of action to call for justice for Chiefstick. Members of the Chimacum Creek Racial Justice Collective and volunteers with the Jefferson County Anti-Racist Fund, among other local organizations, have been spreading the word on how to help the cause.

These organizations have been handing out fliers and posting on social media about how to call the Poulsbo mayor and police chief and demand Keller be fired and the incident be investigated more thoroughly.

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