

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, July 14, 2020.

Jefferson County reported two additional cases of COVID-19 this week, bringing the total to 43. These two cases were attributable to-out-of county exposure, according to health officer Dr. Thomas Locke. The new numbers reflect one patient in their 30s and another in their 50s.

According to the latest numbers, 3,800 local residents have been tested with 3,703 testing negative. Fifty four people are awaiting results. Ten of the 43 cases have not yet recovered from the virus. The gender ratio is 53% male and 47% female.

Our numbers are more favorable than many areas of the country, with 1.1% of those tested showing up positive. And Jefferson County is one of seventeen Washington Counties without a reported COVID-19 death.

And according to Dr. Locke, we still need some guidance with regard to masks. In order for them to work they must cover the mouth and nose completely. It's a strong temptation to pull the mask down from your nose because – surprise – it can be difficult to breathe. But to do so defeats the purpose of the mask.

At Monday's regular meeting, the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners received the results of a recent survey, reporting that 97.3% of people in downtown Port Townsend stores were wearing masks. In unincorporated areas, the total was 64.8%. And many of those not wearing masks were from out of town, according to the survey.

Masks have become a political issue, to the point where pointing out another person's errant mask behavior never ends well. The best advice is still to follow the protocol, and steer clear of those who choose not to do so.

The construction of two controversial roundabouts on the west end of the Hood Canal Bridge and at the intersection of Beaver Valley Road and State Road 104 is proceeding but will be delayed to 2023, according to the Jefferson County Washington Facebook news page.

The Department of Transportation reports the proposed location of the first roundabout is the most dangerous intersection in Jefferson County.. It has chosen the roundabout as the best way statewide to resolve the safety issue and eliminate high-speed, T-bone collisions. This is meant to reduce crashes, and won't necessarily relieve traffic congestion. A proposal for an overpass was rejected by the DOT as it is more expensive than a roundabout.

While an intervention by the county failed to change the DOT's plans, there still exists substantial opposition to the proposal by Port Ludlow residents. This opposition welcomed the delay in construction, as it gives them more time to challenge this decision, according to the report.

Fort Worden State Park is looking toward reopening services, perhaps as soon as July 23rd. To this end, Public Development Authority Executive Director Dave Robison is connecting with state sources in order to make that happen.

In the meantime, locals can again directly support the park by purchasing their Discover Passes on location. The \$30 a year park access pass is now available from the gift shop in building 200 and at the iron ranger station across from the canteen.

As part of the agreement to suspend the pass requirement on the PDA campus, the Fort is required to sell \$250,000 worth of Discover passes. The closure of the park has caused many of us to allow our passes to expire until the passes are available locally, choosing to not purchase the passes along with our car registration.

And like other KPTZ news reports, when I say “many of us”, I mean me.

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.