

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, July 28, 2020.

Jefferson County's COVID-19 case number his unchanged, remaining at 50. As of Wednesday, 4,662 local residents have been tested with 4,365 testing negative. Forty nine people are awaiting results. This represents a positive rate of 1.1%. Eleven patients have not yet recovered from the virus.

People are getting the message about masks, even if it has taken a statewide mandate for them to do so. At Monday's commissioner meeting Director of Emergency Operations Willie Bence Monday said that a so-called semi-formal masking survey in the County, 96 of 96 people counted were properly masked. Bence said this is the first time we have seen 100% compliance.

The periodic surveys are – wait for it – said to be a way to take the temperature of the community. To accomplish this, a survey team goes into public places and makes observations. They don't make contact with anyone; they don't ask questions. (There was a concern voiced about surveys being done by someone asking personal questions of people.)

Bence said that about 2,000 children's masks will arrive in Jefferson in a couple weeks, along with an additional shipment of masks for low-income individuals. The masks are to be distributed through OlyCAP and other sources.

Services at Fort Worden are set to open this Saturday, August 1, but the Public Development Authority is facing a budget crisis. In response, the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners voted to sign a letter that urges Washington State Parks and Recreation to postpone its revenue sharing agreement for a period of four years.

The Fort Worden PDA was formed 5 years ago and has been a successful landlord to lifelong learning non-profits that have grown and prospered. Due to COVID-19, the PDA shut down lodging, which made up a significant revenue source. There is an agreement with the State to manage the campus and to begin revenue sharing. The PDA says that at this time, revenue sharing will endanger its future viability.

They are asking State Parks that revenue sharing be delayed until 2024. That will give them time to get through the pandemic and re-stabilize funding. It could also allow them to begin long-term financial sharing or negotiate with State Parks to change terms of the agreement.

The long percolating Wild Olympics Bill, which would permanently protect more than 126,000 acres and 464 river miles of forest took another step toward ratification last week as it was approved by the US House of Representatives as an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act.

The next step is for committees from both houses of Congress to reconcile differences and agree on a final bill. This will most likely not occur until after the election, according to local Wild Olympics Advocate Connie Gallant.

The bill arrives after years of development by United States Representative Derek Kilmer and Senator Patty Murray who, according to a statement, spent years gathering extensive community input on the Olympic Peninsula to craft the carefully balanced legislation. When approved, the act will permanently preserve ancient and mature forests, critical salmon habitat, and sources of clean drinking water for local communities, while also protecting and expanding world-class outdoor recreation opportunities like hiking, camping, boating, hunting, and fishing.

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. Thank you for listening.