

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for July 29, 2020.

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The Port Townsend city council held its first committee meeting on public safety and law enforcement on Monday, July 27.

The committee was formed after nationwide protests began in early June, sparked by the death of George Floyd, a black man from Minneapolis who was killed by police. Members of the public called for Port Townsend to "defund" the police department, echoing calls across the country to redistribute public money from law enforcement agencies to other public services, like affordable housing and education.

Protests against police brutality and racial inequality continued last weekend, as people hit the streets in Seattle, Portland, Minneapolis, Louisville, Austin and many other major cities in the United States.

During this first committee meeting, city council members heard an overview presentation from interim Police Chief Troy Surber on the city's police department functions. The presentation included a briefing on the police department's use of force policy and statistics on calls for service.

According to Surber, the Port Townsend Police Department responded to 11,488 calls for service in 2019. The data showed that police officers deal with traffic incidents the most. More than 3,000 calls were related to traffic incidents such as collisions and traffic stops. Surber said 86% of traffic stops result in warnings rather than tickets.

Surber also noted the low violent crime rate in Port Townsend. Last year, the department responded to 78 violent crime calls, 67 domestic violence calls, and 23 sex offense calls.

Broken down by race, the jail bookings in Port Townsend are more or less consistent with the city's population demographics, Surber said. Over the past three years, 90% of people booked in jail have been white. Approximately 93 percent of Port Townsend's population is white, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Black people represent approximately 1% of the city's population, however 3.4% of people booked in jail over the past three years were Black.

City council members asked Surber questions about use of force policies, the citizen complaint process, and more. They also worked with city staff members to determine a working plan for the committee, which is set to meet once a month through the end of the year.

The council will continue to discuss alternatives to law enforcement response at the next meeting, which will take place on August 24. This topic will be closely related to the city's budgeting process, which begins in the Fall and will determine how much money goes to fund the police department. The 2021 budget will be finalized at the beginning of December.

In addition, the committee will address topics such as the department's use of force policy, and policies on collective bargaining and qualified immunity.

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The conversation on police brutality, use of force, and racial equality in Jefferson County does not end with this committee. On Thursday, July 30, Jefferson County Sheriff Joe Nole will join in conversation with local Black, Indigenous, and People of Color representatives in a live broadcast on KPTZ. He will speak with panelists Sean

Vinson, Paris Jade and Sabrina Hill in a conversation moderated by Darrell Thomas. Opening remarks will be made by commissioner Kate Dean. The panel will air live on KPTZ 91.9 FM at 7pm. It can also be streamed live at [kptz.org](http://kptz.org).

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Researchers with the Seattle-based Sealife Response, Rehab and Research organization have recorded several pregnant orca whales among the Southern Resident killer whales native to the Puget Sound area.

According to a post on the organization's website, two researchers, Dr. Holly Fearnback and Dr. John Durban, have been able to collect aerial images of the majority of the endangered Southern Resident killer whale population. Several of these images show obvious shape changes in a number of whales from all three pods, indicating they are pregnant.

The *Seattle Times* reported that one of the pregnant whales is J-35, also known as Tahlequah, from the J-pod. This whale gained public sympathy in the summer of 2018, when she carried her dead calf for 17 days for more than 1,000 miles.

While the new pregnancies could boost the declining population of the Southern Resident killer whales, many recent pregnancies have not resulted in successful births. According to the Center for Whale Research, the failed births are linked to lack of food for the whales, whose diet consists mainly of Chinook salmon. The Center reports there are 73 Southern Resident killer whales left.

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And that's it for today's local news. 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@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org). I'm Lily Haight. Thanks for listening.