

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for August 12, 2020.

The City of Port Townsend is hoping to generate more community input despite the many obstacles of operating during the COVID-19 pandemic.

City manager John Mauro presented a new community engagement campaign – called Engage PT – to city councilors at a special business meeting on August 10. The goal of the engagement campaign is to get input from city residents on 10 major issues that require action from the city council by the end of the year.

These issues include the city budget, the comprehensive streets program, the Discovery Road bike and sidewalks project, the city golf course agreement, the library's strategic plan, the police department budget and priorities, COVID-19 economic recovery, the city's aging sewer system, the shoreline master program, and the city's water supply agreement with the Port Townsend paper mill.

Information about each of the 10 issues is available on the new Engage PT website, which can be found by going to cityofpt.us (<https://cityofpt.us/engagept>). This website includes financial information and a timeline for each of the city projects. There is also an online survey to help city councilors gauge the level of interest citizens have in each issue.

“We've had dozens of people take the survey already and we're hoping to get that number up into the thousands,” Mauro said at Monday's meeting.

For those who don't have computer or internet access, city employees will be hosting a booth at the Port Townsend Farmers market every Saturday with information and the opportunity to give feedback.

In the future, Mauro said, the city plans to create “ambassador toolkits” for citizens who might be interested in hosting small group neighborhood community conversations, either online or safely in-person.

The city council approved a resolution on August 10th, allowing the city manager to expend CARES Act funding to help cover some costs of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The City of Port Townsend is set to receive \$288,000 in coronavirus relief funding from the federal government. The money will not come as a lump sum, but as reimbursements for coronavirus-related costs incurred from March 1st through October 31st. It can be used to reimburse expenses for an array of things related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including public health expenses and payroll.

Local governments must show the reimbursements they request meet several criteria: The costs must be unanticipated and directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Reimbursements cannot be used to alleviate revenue shortfalls.

The resolution approved by the city council on Monday created a set of guiding principles for the city manager to use the funding on specific costs, including unemployment insurance costs from the COVID-19 closures and furloughs; upgrading the first floor of City Hall to safely reopen; reassignment city staff to address the public

health emergency; purchasing computer equipment for city employees to work from home; and paying for sanitary facilities for public use including portable restrooms and handwashing facilities.

The resolution allows Mauro to execute agreements and documents needed to claim the reimbursements for these outlined costs before the October 31st deadline.

\$288,000 is just a drop in the bucket, according to city manager Mauro, since the economic impact of the pandemic is likely to be in the millions.

Port Townsend School District held an online parent meeting on August 10 to discuss going back to school in September.

The first day of school is set for September 8, and the district plans to allow students to return despite the COVID-19 pandemic, with a “reopening plan” in place.

The plan, which will be finalized at a school board meeting on August 17th, includes a set of health rules for students and staff at school. All staff, students, volunteers, or guests must wear cloth face coverings at school. Staff and students will also be checked for signs of illness upon entering the school each day.

Students will stay in groups of 15 or fewer throughout the day, with limited mixing of groups. To maintain this, the district will blend online learning with in-person learning. At all levels, families will be able to choose to keep their students at home for online learning.

For those who choose to attend in person, they will rotate with other students to keep class sizes small: spending two days a week at school and the rest learning at home.

The schools will also follow CDC guidelines for increased sanitizing of school buildings. Students and staff will wash hands frequently, and ventilation will be used to maximize air flow in the building.

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. I’m Lily Haight. Thanks for listening.