

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for September 2, 2020.

\*\*\*

Jefferson County is up to 70 total cases of coronavirus as of Monday. That's nine new cases over the past two weeks, according to County Health Officer Dr. Tom Locke. While the county's percent positive rate is less than 2%, Locke said he is concerned about the upcoming holiday weekend. "The 4th of July set off outbreaks," he said. "This [Labor Day] is not the holiday to have big gatherings." Gatherings outside of household members are limited to 5 people per-week. Even when outdoors, it is important to maintain social distancing, he said.

\*\*\*

City officials are considering allowing the transportation service, Uber, to operate in Port Townsend again. At a transportation committee meeting, city council members discussed the possibility of amending the city municipal code to allow for transportation network companies, such as Uber and Lyft, to operate within city limits. Transportation network companies use phone apps to connect customers with drivers who act as independent contractors. Right now, there is only one taxi-service in Port Townsend, Peninsula Taxi, which slimmed down service during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the meeting on August 19th, city attorney Heidi Greenwood suggested the possibility of creating a memorandum of understanding with Uber, which would allow individual drivers to get business licenses to operate in Port Townsend. The memorandum would require Uber to do background inspections of drivers, a vehicle inspection, and carry the insurance for the drivers. Members of the transportation committee were cautiously supportive of the idea; however some members brought up concerns about increased traffic and the environmental impact of having more cars on the road.

But committee members also saw the benefit of adding new business opportunities for city residents, who could make extra money by becoming Uber drivers, as well as providing transportation for those who have transportation limitations. The reintroduction of Uber could also ease the parking problem downtown.

"I see a lot of ways this would complement public transport," said city council member Owen Rowe. "We have a very sprawling community and it's a problem for transit on their fixed route buses to serve all of the community." The transportation service can also increase road safety, noted deputy mayor David Faber, especially when people who have been drinking at a bar opt to take an Uber instead of driving home.

The transportation committee will discuss the idea further at their next meeting, before bringing it before the entire city council.

\*\*\*

A helicopter crew from Naval Air Station Whidbey Island rescued a fallen hiker near the top of Mount Townsend on August 30. Jefferson Search and Rescue, a team of all volunteers, reported they were first alerted around 5pm on Sunday that a hiker had fallen. The subject was unconscious and not breathing properly.

EMTs from Quilcene Fire Rescue were the first to head up the trail with medical gear, followed by Search and Rescue volunteers. Meanwhile, the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office requested helicopter support in hopes of reaching the subject before clouds covered the mountain top.

A helicopter from Naval Air Station Whidbey Island responded to the call and was able to find the fallen hiker, who was seen by a Navy paramedic and then flown to Harborview Medical Center.

The helicopter team reported later that the quick rescue was due to a well-timed parting of clouds. Apparently at the time, there were cloud layers around 5,000 feet and 8,000 feet of elevation. Luckily, the two peaks of Mount Townsend are between 6,200 and 6,300 feet – making it possible for the team to find the fallen hiker.

\*\*\*

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.