

Local News – September 15, 2020: Air quality news; Political battles.

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, September 15, 2020.

Jefferson County reported its first COVID-19 case in September yesterday, a woman in her 70s. This brings the total case number to 71. Coincidentally, 71 people are now awaiting test results. Our positive percentage rate is .98.

The local air quality has improved, due to afternoon showers on Monday. As of this morning, the Washington State Department of Ecology rated the local air at 269, which is in the middle of the “very unhealthy” range. This represents an improvement over the hazardous rating over the weekend. We are better off than some others in the region, as Port Angeles and Bremerton are both rated as hazardous.

The Port Townsend data is gathered from a station located on the roof of the Blue Heron Middle School.

The National Weather Service has extended its smoke alert to at least Thursday.

As with COVID 19, Jefferson County is a little better off than other parts of the West. East Jefferson Fire Rescue Assistant Chief Pete Brummel told KPTZ that local citizens were never in any danger of being evacuated in the middle of the night. He advised people to stay tuned to local radio stations—that would be KPTZ—and subscribe to the NIXLE service through the local Department of Emergency Management, which sends out text messages that update emergency situations.

In addition to the current stay inside guidelines Brummel advises people to log onto the National Fire Protection Association website—[NFPA.ORG](https://www.nfpa.org)—for advice about protecting your home from any fire incident.

For the last ten days, a political battle has taken place in front of the Jefferson County Democratic Headquarters on Upper Sims Way. Jefferson County Republican Party member Mark Fuller has periodically parked his red Dodge Ram truck with a “Blue Lives Matter” sticker on the back and a large sign supporting the Republican candidate for governor in front of the Democrats’ office.

It all reached a higher level yesterday, when Fuller and several of his associates—some wearing bogus mask exemption badges—gathered on the street and hosed down a car dotted with Republican signs to remove an egg that was thrown onto the car over the weekend. Fuller filed a police report, charging malicious mischief. It is now under investigation by the Port Townsend Police Department.

Police were on the scene yesterday but did not intervene. During the standoff several Democrats waited inside the headquarters, with more arriving to provide support. While they did not respond to Fuller directly, the feeling was that he was guilty of harassment. He does not wear a

mask, and allegedly coughed on a mask-wearing Democrat outside the headquarters.

Fuller has his own accusations of harassment. He said that Democrats have threatened his life, run him off of the road and called his 10-year-old daughter an unprintable name. Democratic Chair Alise Moss Vetica said she was unaware of any Democrat involved in harassing Fuller, rather it was the other way around.

While the level of discussion wouldn't be out of place in grade school, both Vetica and Fuller say that the incident has galvanized their respective supporters. Vetica reports an increase in volunteers, while Fuller said his actions are convincing people to vote against Jay Inslee.

In voting news, Election Day is now seven weeks away. This year's election is different than years past, with the volatility of the contest and a controversy surrounding mail in ballots, which Washington voters are scheduled to receive in a little more than four weeks.

This week we received a mailer from the US Postal Service, urging people to become aware of their state's election process and to mail in their ballots at least a week before Election Day.

The mailer itself has generated some controversy. It urges people to request their mail in or so-called absentee ballots at least 15 days before the election. This has prompted local auditors to remind the public that such a request is not necessary as ballots are mailed automatically to every registered voter. And Washington voters don't need to worry about adding postage, since each ballot includes a prepaid envelope.

The best advice may be to skip the mail in process and deliver the ballot to one of six drop boxes throughout the county. Marrowstone Island residents may have noticed that the Nordland drop box is damaged, but it will be repaired in time to receive ballots.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon Monday through Saturday and at 5pm PM Monday through Thursday. You can contact us through news at [kptz.org](http://kptz.org).

This is Charlie Bermant. Thank you for listening.