

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for September 23rd, 2020.

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The normal end of year budgeting process is underway at City Hall, but with some new challenges this year: budgeting amidst the financial uncertainty caused by a global pandemic.

At a city council meeting on September 14th, city finance director Nora Mitchell presented revenue projections for the rest of the year, while also discussing projections for the 2021 budget.

According to Mitchell, staff projections for COVID-19 impacts to 2020 revenues have so far been realistic, however the rate of recovery is largely unknown, since it depends on when Jefferson County might be allowed to move into Phase 3 of the governor's Safe Start reopening plan, and what affect reopening will have on revenue streams such as sales tax and lodging tax.

Mitchell said the city is trying to be realistic as there seems to be a lot of uncertainty about the timing of moving to Phase 3 and its impact on revenue.

Decreased economic activity will impact the city's budget in 2021 and 2022. The city receives funding from sales tax, business and occupational tax, as well as development service revenues, such as permitting and land use fees, all of which depend on economic activity.

Drops in these revenue sources will affect funds that already have structural issues, Mitchell said, including the General Fund, the roads fund, and the community services fund.

In the coming weeks, the city council will be discussing ways to address some of these issues in the 2021 budget. Members of the public are encouraged to take part in that discussion. The city council will be holding a public workshop on Oct. 12th to discuss the 2021 budget. Members of the public will be invited to give their own opinion on the budget at public hearings scheduled for November 2nd and November 16th. The final budget will be adopted at a meeting on December 7th. The budget must be adopted by the end of the calendar year.

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Riders on Port Townsend's own Puget Sound Express whale watching boat witnessed the newest member of the J-pod frolicking off of San Juan Island last weekend.

J57 is the newborn baby of J35, also called Tahlequah, whose story was heard around the world back in 2018, when she carried her dead calf for 17 days straight, covering about 1,000 miles.

But this summer, news of Tahlequah's pregnancy brought hope to the activists trying to preserve our Southern Resident Killer Whale population. J57 was born around September 6th this year and brings the population of Southern Resident Killer Whales up to 73.

In a blog post on their website, Puget Sound express posted about the experience of seeing the J-pod flocking in the waters. They were seen breaching, spyhopping, tail slapping and rolling

around each other in Haro Strait, near San Juan island. According to Puget Sound Express, the whales were even vocalizing loud enough to be heard above the surface of the water.

To see photos of this new orca whale, head to the Puget Sound Express blog, where there are several taken by photographer and naturalist Bart Rulon.

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The city is asking for your input on the future of the Port Townsend Golf Course.

Gabriel Tonan Golf Shops has leased the golf course property since 2013, but that lease is set to expire at the end of the year. Proposals for continued golf course management are due by the end of September, but the city council is also hoping for some new ideas from the public about how to use the golf course.

A survey on the city's "Engage PT" website, asks city residents to consider the funding challenges the city faces, and come up with creative ideas for the golf course property, whether that is turning it into a public park, using the land to build affordable housing, or keeping it as a golf course.

Take part in the discussion by going to [cityofpt.us](http://cityofpt.us), clicking on "Engage PT," and filling out the golf course survey.

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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 five PM Monday through Thursday. You can contact us through [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org). I'm Lily Haight. Thanks for listening.