

Local News – September 24, 2020: Census update; Former Port Townsend mayor joins fire commission,

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Thursday, September 24, 2020.

Here are today's vital statistics: Jefferson County's COVID 19 case number remains at 71, with 37 people awaiting test results. Port Townsend's air quality is still in the good range, with a rating of 13.

As the September 30 census deadline looms, county officials are scrambling to get those who haven't responded to participate while hoping that the deadline will be extended.

This will be decided by a federal judge's ruling, to determine if the census will in fact end in six days or whether the count can continue through October. That judge, Lucy Koh, previously issued a restraining order preventing the government from winding down the counting process. This order is challenged by the Trump administration.

According to CNN, the judge has expressed concern about the August decision by Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross to move up the end date from October 31. She pointed out that it is unlikely the Census Bureau will [reach its own 99% standard](#) for completion by the end of September.

The county is hoping for an extension. The census lost three months due to the pandemic, and the people who are undercounted are those who need the programs and services the most. So another month would be most helpful.

The intention is to count every person living in the United States, regardless of their citizenship status. Public funding is based on census numbers, so Jefferson County will miss out on funding for critical public services over the next 10 years unless everyone is counted.

Currently, the Port Townsend response rate is 76.4 percent, higher than both the 66.1 percent for the rest of the county and the 71.9 statewide percentage.

The homeless count is now in progress and is scheduled to end today.

Census enumerators are contacting those who have not responded to the census and have, according to some reports, gotten a little aggressive. If you haven't responded you can

circumvent such a visit by logging on to 2020census.gov, calling at 844-330-2020, or by completing and mailing back the paper questionnaire that has arrived through the US Mail.

All local enumerators live in Jefferson County, carry multiple forms of identification and do not ask any questions that are not on the census form. So if someone professing to be a census worker asks for your Social Security number, take their picture and close the door.

Otherwise, there is a census pop up event scheduled to take place from noon to 4 p.m. Tomorrow, Friday, at the Tyler Street Waterfront Plaza in Port Townsend.

Former Port Townsend Mayor Deborah Stinson was appointed to the East Jefferson Fire Rescue Board of Commissioners, taking over from Rich Stapf, who served on the board for over 20 years. Stinson received unanimous support from the four other commissioners to fill out the term, through the end of 2021.

According to the Port Townsend Leader, Stinson may not be able to run for the seat when it comes up before the voters, as commissioner boundaries are in the process of being redrawn.

Last year voters approved a measure to expand from three commissioners to five, following another vote that approved incorporating Port Townsend's fire service into East Jefferson Fire Rescue.

In addition to serving two terms on the council, one as mayor, Stinson has been essential in establishing Local 2020, Quimper Mercantile, and the annual community picnic.

On Wednesday The County Commissioners finalized a list of Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) allocations from six community groups during a special meeting and authorized staff to pursue agreements for the projects.

The County allocation of CRF is \$633,000; the City of Port Townsend's funding maximum is an additional \$144,000 for a total of \$777,000. The cost of selected proposals is \$846,920 - a difference of \$69,255 which will be managed by scaling some of the dollar allocations in the PUD and Culture and Events Grants.

According to a press release, the Culture and Events group revised its focus since Monday to emphasize a broader community use focusing on business, economic and public health.

Funding was cleared for the Farmer's Markets Association, Household Utility Assistance, Business Electric Utility Bill Assistance, and Childcare Support through the YMCA.

Also from the civic duty desk, the election is just 40 days away. Ballots will be mailed to voters during the week of October 14. Considering the political temperature you probably don't want to wait until the last minute, unless you are still undecided.

As you can vote early and the arguments about the election will drag on for several weeks, Election Day is neither the beginning nor the end of our 2020 political adventure.

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.

This is Charlie Bermant. Thank you for listening.