

## **Local News – October 20, 2020: Ballots collected, roundabouts proposed.**

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, October 20, 2020.

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First, the numbers. Jefferson County reported an additional case of COVID 19 yesterday, a man in his 30s. This brings the total case number to 81. 79 people are now awaiting test results. And it is 14 days—two weeks—until the polls close for this year's long and winding general election.

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Jefferson County mailed out 27,337 ballots last Wednesday. Ballots returned have hit unprecedented levels across the country, with our neighboring Clallam County needing to close drop boxes over the weekend when they exceeded their capacity. The Jefferson County Auditor's staff spent all of Monday collecting from eight drop boxes throughout the county, gathering 28 trays of ballots. While they are not yet processing the ballots to determine an exact number, elections supervisor Quinn Grewell estimated that the office has about 7,000 ballots on hand. This reflects a voter turnout of around 25 percent, already.

If you have not received your ballot by now, please contact the county auditor's office to arrange a replacement. In those cases, people should make arrangements to pick up the replacement ballot in person, rather than trusting the mail to get it to you by Election Day.

The ballots will go through a signature verification process before they are removed from their envelopes and prepared for processing. Beginning this afternoon, the auditor will report ballot statistics on its website as the ballots are processed. These numbers will be accessible on the elections portion on the website. This is a change from previous elections, when emails reflecting the latest statistics were emailed to media on a daily basis.

Locally, but people are making a big show about their involvement by posting selfies of themselves voting. According to some Facebook posts this has caused a slight delay in voting. And yesterday, a voter was photographed at the drop box at the county courthouse on horseback as they dismounted to submit their ballot.

The most contentious local race is for District 2 county commissioner, a close contest between Heidi Eisenhour and Lorna Smith. Three local races drew no declared opponents during filing week, Superior Court Judge Keith Harper, PUD Commissioner Ken Collins and District 1 County Commissioner Kate Dean.

Dean, however, drew opposition yesterday when a local woman, who shall not be named, declared herself as a write-in candidate.

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As news reporters strive to remain objective, they often strive to hide their own biases. I'm not going to do that here. I get irritated when someone declines to declare for an office for inclusion on the ballot, and decides to jump in at the last minute. This shows a lack of respect for public process, along with a lack of commitment to the office. Dean's opponent doesn't expect to win, rather she just wants to give people a choice. Dean draws plenty of criticism from her political opponents, but no one stepped forward to run against her during the regular election season.

Some voters don't weigh in on unopposed races but that can be a mistake, especially in cases where a last-minute candidate emerges. So, if you support an unopposed candidate it makes sense to support them with your vote. If you oppose them, write in anyone you want, but don't expect the media to give them equal time.

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People are invited to provide comment on two proposed roundabouts along State Route 20 approaching the Washington State Ferries terminal in Jefferson County. The roundabouts would replace outdated signal systems on SR 20 at Discovery Road and Kearney Street in Port Townsend.

The Washington State Department of Transportation has created an [online open house](#) for people to learn about the roundabouts and provide comments. Comments on the proposal will be accepted until noon on Monday, Nov. 2.

According to a press release the existing signals have reached the end of their useful life and a new intersection control is necessary to keep people and goods moving. After [evaluating the intersections](#), WSDOT traffic engineers recommend compact [roundabouts](#) for improved mobility for all travelers, safety, and reduced maintenance costs year over year to taxpayers. The existing signals cost \$10,000 annually on average to maintain.

There are several ways to respond, including email, [Debbie.Clemen@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:Debbie.Clemen@wsdot.wa.gov), letter: P.O. Box 47440 Olympia, WA 98504-7440 and phone, 360-704-3204. If you missed that, visit the [KPTZ.org](#) news page to copy them down or got to the Washington DOT web site and follow the signs.

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This is Charlie Bermant. Thank you for listening.