

Local News – October 22, 2020: Ballot avalanche, census wrap up.

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Thursday, October 22, 2020.

First, the numbers: There are no newly reported cases of COVID-19 in Jefferson County, the total count remains at 81. Coincidentally, 81 people are awaiting test results. And it is now 12 days until the polls close for this year's general election.

The Jefferson County Auditor began processing the ballots received over the weekend, reporting Wednesday afternoon that 13 percent of local voters are now counted. The auditor expects to post an updated percentage report every day on its website, so voters can keep track. Additionally, voters can determine the status of their own ballot by searching for "track my vote Washington State," and then filling in their name and birthdate.

Voting patterns are significantly heavier than in the last presidential election. While we are yet unable to report the Jefferson County comparative statistics, the Washington Voter Center reports that 848,465 voters cast their ballots as of two weeks before Election Day, compared to 265,726 during the same period in 2016.

The latest reported Jefferson County Ballot posting reflects a 13 percent voter turnout.

The census tally has ended, with both Washington State and Jefferson County boasting high response numbers.

Washington State ranked second in the nation in self-response with 72.4 percent, and it exceeded its 2010 mail-back response rate by 5.2 percent. Minnesota ranked first with 75.1 percent.

Locally, Jefferson County ranked 18th county overall with a self-response rate of 66.4 percent; in 2010, we ranked 28th out of 39 counties. Clark County ranked first with 76.7 percent. Clallam was 13th with 70.6 percent.

Many Jefferson county residents chimed in early. Jefferson was the first county to reach its 2010 response rate of 55.1 percent on May 1, and exceeded the response by 10.7 percent, the largest margin recorded in the state, with Kitsap ranking second with an increase of 8.8 percent.

While Census data collection ended last Friday, the Census Bureau is still accepting paper forms mailed by October 15 and received by October 22. And while the count has finished controversy continues. It wouldn't be 2020 otherwise, right?

Throughout the census process the Trump administration has gone to court in an effort to control the census. It first argued timing, seeking to speed up the census count in time for filing a complete report by the end of 2020. The United States Supreme Court ruled in favor of the administration, ending the count two weeks earlier than the original deadline.

After a favorable ruling on the "when," the administration now seeks to control who is included. The Trump administration has petitioned the Supreme Court to exclude undocumented resident data, with a ruling expected in late November.

Most Jefferson County property owners will soon receive change of value postcards, establishing the 2020 valuation for property that is the foundation for levy and tax calculations to be collected in 2021. receive change of value notices, establishing the 2020 valuation for property that is the foundation for levy and tax calculations to be collected in 2021.

According to a statement from county assessor Jeff Chapman, these values represent the market value for property as of January 1, 2020 except where adjustments have been made for exemptions and current use programs. Exemptions include income based senior citizen and disabled person qualifying residential homeowners.

Property owners disagreeing with their new appraisal should contact the assessors office immediately and discuss their valuation with one of the appraisers. If an agreement is not reached any property owner may file an appeal of their value to the Jefferson County Board of Equalization by November 16th.

Chapman said his office is eager to provide clarity to appraisals, but asks that any concerned property owner call ahead before they drop in. For an appointment call 360-385-9105.

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.