

Local News – October 27, 2020: Voter turnout, new fire chief.

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, October 27, 2020.

First the numbers. Jefferson County added two new cases of COVID 19 yesterday, bringing the total number to 87. Both cases were males from mid county, one under 19 years old and the other in his forties. Sixty-one people are awaiting test results. Our positive testing percentage remains stable at .85 percent.

And Election Day is just one week—seven days away. Voter response has shattered all expectations, with many jurisdictions gathering more votes than during the entire 2016 election. In Jefferson County, 57 percent of the 27,000 ballots mailed are already received. This compares with 19 percent on October 26, 2016. That election day the county reported an 84 percent participation number.

If you have not yet received your ballot it is past time to get a replacement. Do that today. If you have not yet voted the best advice is to take the ballot to one of eight drop boxes throughout the county instead of mailing it in, although any properly prepared ballot postmarked on or before November third will eventually be counted.

To determine if your ballot is approved go to votewa.gov.

During his regular Monday briefing to the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners, Health officer Dr. Thomas Locke provided some ancillary details about COVID 19.

People don't need to scrub down your grocery items. Just focus on good hand hygiene. The virus does not stay on surfaces like library books. And the old standby, Wearing masks help stop the spread of the virus.

He warned of a third wave of COVID-19. Hospitalizations have increased 40 percent and death rates are climbing, although there are no reported deaths in Jefferson County. Cases are also surging internationally.

Locke also stressed the importance of getting a flu shot. He believes the flu season will be mild this year given the masking and other protocols the community is following. He notes there is no shortage of vaccine at this time.

The Olympic Discovery Trail's connection to Discovery Bay took another step yesterday as the Commissioners approved a deal with the Jefferson PUD. The County will get an important right-of-way through a parcel and the PUD will get property on which to construct a storm water facility.

The trail currently ends at Four Corners, forcing bikers and hikers to use the crowded, narrow Discovery Road to connect with the trail at Discovery Bay. These land swaps are the next step in building this essential portion of the trail.

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The East Jefferson Fire Rescue Board of Commissioners confirmed Bret Black, a 27-year firefighting veteran as its new chief.

Black is currently serving as the Fire Chief in Piedmont, California. He began his career with the Skywalker Ranch Fire Department, a private department that protects filmmaker George Lucas' property, in 1997. At the same time he remained active in the local community teaching first aid & CPR as a member of the neighboring volunteer fire department.

He relocated to Clovis, California where he worked for 19 years before moving to his current position.

Black was selected over 20 other candidates. He is slated to begin at EFJR on December 1st.

And a belated report, since we lose track of time these days: October is "Residents' Rights Month," an annual event designated to honor residents living in all long-term care facilities. It is an opportunity to focus on and celebrate awareness of dignity, respect, and the rights of each resident and to raise awareness of these rights.

There are four long term care facilities in the Port Townsend City Limits, all facing new challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

For more information go to the Washington State Long Term Ombudsman web site, www.waombudsman.org

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.