

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for October 21, 2020.

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Now is the time to give your input on the city's budget for 2021. The city government is asking residents to weigh in on the city's decision to levy property tax increases in an online survey available on the city website.

In a meeting last week, city manager John Mauro discussed ways that different city departments are cutting costs in order to deal with a potential \$1 million deficit in 2021. But there is also the possibility of levying additional property taxes to help cover the increase in staffing costs, and maintain a fiscally balanced and sustainable budget.

In 2018, voters in Port Townsend decided to annex City fire services into the East Jefferson Fire District. Before, the city paid for EJFR fire services with money from the general levy. Now, property owners in the city have an additional fire levy to pay for fire service. The change freed up capacity for the city to levy up to \$300,000 in additional property taxes for specific purposes including street capital projects, park projects, contributions to the city's affordable housing trust fund, or a reduction of up to 2% of the city's utility tax for a one-year period.

Now, in the midst of a pandemic and its resulting financial crisis, the city council must decide whether or not to use the additional levy capacity and levy up to \$300,000 in extra property taxes.

But the council is not going to make this decision without input from city residents. In a survey on the city's website, residents can learn about how the additional tax money will be spent, on projects such as repaving city streets, investing in new infrastructure at city parks, and providing rental assistance for city residents in need. The survey takes about five minutes and asks residents whether or not they would approve of the additional tax, and what projects they consider most important.

To take the survey go to <https://cityofpt.us/>, click on the "Engage PT" button and follow the links to the budget and annexation page.

You can also hear from city manager John Mauro and finance director Nora Mitchell directly. On October 8, they spoke about the budgeting process on Brewocracy Now hosted by Mauro and KPTZ's Tim Quackenbush, and available as a podcast here.

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The city council voted unanimously Oct. 19 to extend the "Streeteries" program to help with social distancing at restaurants and cafes in Port Townsend.

Even with an increase in rain, wind and cooler temperatures, restaurant owners and diners in Port Townsend still want the option to dine outside. Public works director Steve King presented the results of a survey to the city council at their business meeting on Monday that showed overwhelming support for continuing the program that allows restaurants to apply for a special permit to place tables outdoors at appropriate social distances in order to help combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

While there is still concern about limiting the amount of parking downtown because the "Streeteries" take up some parallel parking spots, people feel safer dining outdoors. Restaurant owners are also looking into setting up tents and heaters to help diners enjoy their meal despite winter weather.

The program will remain in place until the state allows occupancy in restaurants to be 75% or higher, or until Jefferson County reaches Phase 4 of Governor Jay Inslee's reopening plan.

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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 5pm Monday through Thursday. You can contact us through [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org). I'm Lily Haight. Thanks for listening.