

## **Local News – November 10, 2020: COVID uptick, holiday celebration plans.**

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Thursday, November 10, 2020.

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As the rest of the country reports a sharp uptick in COVID-19 cases, Jefferson County weathered its own mini surge, with nine new cases reported in the past week for a total of 97. Fifty-eight people are awaiting test results. Seven of the new cases originate from the mid-county area, with one each from Port Townsend and South County.

County Health Officer Dr. Tom Locke told the Commissioners during his Monday briefing that the latest transmissions stem from a variety of factors: parties, travel out of county, and visitors from out of county.

He noted that there was a party over Halloween and as a result, "a lot of people are in quarantine."

He said transmission is directly linked to behavior. Adhering to masking, distancing and hand washing are best ways to tamp down the virus, along with curtailing travel and hosting out-of-area visitors.

The Jefferson County Department of Public Health is working quickly to contact anyone who has been exposed to the positive cases, according to a statement.

The good news, there are no reported cases of influenza in Washington State.

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The election of Joe Biden to the presidency last week prompted Port Townsend Mayor Michelle Sandoval to post a recollection about the president elect to her Facebook Page.

In 2009, when Sandoval was serving her first stint as mayor, she received an invitation to the Vice President's house at the Naval Observatory for a party in celebration of Hispanic Heritage month. She recalls it as "an electric experience. Being in the Vice President's residence was pretty darn cool, for a small party- their first official gathering- (about 50 people) even better, and the Bidens were so very gracious and real."

After Biden's speech people lined up for individual photo opportunities, which Sandoval and her husband Marty Gay declined to do. After the line had thinned the couple walked up to Biden and asked to trade the photo opp for a chance to tell Biden a story about the watch Sandoval inherited from her father, an immigrant, speculating that her father "would be so blown away that his daughter and his watch are here in the Vice President's house." Biden then spoke of his own immigrant lineage, saying "We are all immigrants."

We all hugged," she recalled. "By then we were all crying. "

She continued her post: "While people said derogatory things about his hugging, I understood what kind of guy he was. Empathetic, a crier, a hugger. Just what our country needs now."

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Thanksgiving is just two weeks away, with many people breaking that holiday's tradition by opting for smaller gatherings. But the Tri Area Community Center's annual free Thanksgiving feast will go on, but with accommodations to the pandemic. The Tri-Area Community Meals Organization is preparing a dinner with turkey, vegetables, potatoes, a roll and a cookie for pickup only, as indoor dining will not be available.

Anyone desiring a free dinner needs to call 360-379-4228 and follow the instructions. Deliveries are also available, but only to those who do not have transportation or are home bound.

Again, the reservation number is 360-379-4228. Leave a message and the sponsors will follow up. Prospective volunteers or those who want to donate food should call the same number.

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And the pandemic will not shut down local Christmas celebrations. While there are no Choo Choo rides for the kids this year, the large toy train will roll through town on three Saturdays in December, playing Christmas carols and adding a festive touch. The Port Townsend tree lighting ceremony will also be a virtual event this year.

The Port Townsend Main Street Program is lighting up Port Townsend through Uptown and Downtown decorations. Sparkling white lights will hang from trees in the downtown historic district. A winter lights campaign runs through February and is funded by the City of Port Townsend Lodging Tax Advisory Committee and participating property owners.

According to a statement from the Main Street program, additional plans are in the works to be announced in the near future. Those scheduled are the Merchant Winter Window Contest, with judging on November 27 and winners announced the following day, the Winter Window Wander and Aldrich's Gingerbread House Contest.

The purpose is to bring Christmas cheer to the downtown and uptown areas, while encouraging people to support local businesses.

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