

Local News – October 20, 2020: Election wrap-up, COVID latest.

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Tuesday November 3, 2020.

As of yesterday, Jefferson County reported receiving 82 percent of the approximately 27,000 ballots sent three weeks ago. Jefferson's percentage is the highest in the state. In turn, Washington's voter percentage is the highest in the nation with a number equivalent to 105 percent of the 2016 vote received, according to media reports.

In 2016, Jefferson County received 65 percent of ballots mailed on the day before the election.

Voting continues until the last minute, which is at 8 pm today. Those who have not yet voted can do so at eight drop box locations throughout the county. Ballots postmarked no later than today will be counted, but a safer path is to use a drop box. And that is no disrespect to the United States Postal Service.

The auditor's office in the Jefferson County Courthouse will stay open until the aforementioned last minute, for voter registration and ballot acceptance. Those who want to register should call first. In person voters need to check in with security and could have to wait as the auditor is allowing no more than two people into its lobby at a time.

One local tradition that is on hold for the foreseeable future is the election night gathering of candidate supporters outside of the auditor's office, to hear the results first. This year everyone can be "first," as initial election night results are expected to be posted on the auditor's web site no later than 8:15.

The most exciting local race is for District 2 County Commissioner, where Democrats Heidi Eisenhour and Lorna Smith are competing to replace four term commissioner David Sullivan. KPTZ Election Central predicts this will be a close race, although since there is no formal polling this projection is based on the amount of yard signs and a random survey of our friends.

Incumbent District 1 Commissioner Kate Dean is unopposed on the ballot, although a Port Townsend woman started a write in campaign a few weeks ago. KPTZ Election Central predicts that this person will gather few votes, and scolds her for this feeble last minute effort. If she was serious she would have filed for the office in May or at least printed up some signs.

Aside from Dean, unopposed candidates to be elected by acclimation are Superior Court Judge Keith Harper and PUD Commissioner Ken Collins, for third and second

terms respectively. The entirely Democratic 23rd District Legislative Delegation, Senator Kevin Van De Wege and Representatives Steve Tharinger and Mike Chapman, are also up for reelection.

We'll repeat some of the recurring themes: Be sure to sign your ballot. Vote for unopposed candidates if you support them. Check your voting status at votewa.gov.

As for the results KPTZ will broadcast a special edition of Democracy Now from 6 pm to 9 pm on Tonight. I will be on the air from 9:30 am to 11 am tomorrow, reporting the latest local, state and national results along with some appropriately themed music. We also have Port Townsend Mayor Michelle Sandoval and US Representative Derek Kilmer scheduled to call in, but this is 2020. And anything can happen.

Now, to the other story that has obsessed us all year, the COVID 19 pandemic. Jefferson County reported two new recent cases, a female in her 80s and a man in his forties. Both cases are from mid-county. 1 new case from mid-county, a female in her 80's. This brings the case total to 89, with 58 people awaiting results. We have a positive result percentage of .83, or 25 positives per 100,000 tests.

According to County Health Officer Dr. Thomas Locke, Jefferson County has escaped the COVID-19 third wave that is drowning the country and the globe. As for the vaccine, such drugs usually take years for approval, but Locke feels that testing for a finished vaccine will be completed in less than 6 months. Pfizer and Moderna are in Phase 3 trials now. Locke expects the virus to slow in March or April, but then there may be a vaccine.

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.