

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, December 1, 2020.

A local pharmacy is changing hands. Jefferson Community Pharmacy, which opened three and a half years ago in the spot formally occupied by the local liquor store, was purchased by QFC and will begin operating under the new banner on December 14.

Pharmacist Dave Koehmstedt said the store will operate in the same location for at least four months and nothing will change from a customer perspective.

The reason for the sale was the redesignation of approved plans by insurance companies. A year ago the pharmacy was approved on 160 prescription plans, that has now fallen in significant numbers. According to Koehmstedt, many plans require that pharmacies be part of a chain and the QFC purchase fulfills that requirement.

QFC has a pharmacy in its Port Hadlock store but not in Port Townsend. There are two other pharmacies in the city limits, Safeway and the independent Don's Pharmacy, which opened in 1957.

Don's Pharmacy owner Don Hogulund was not available for comment by air time.

The spike in COVID 19 cases continues, with Jefferson County now reporting 167 cases of the virus since the spring. At present 50 people are awaiting test results. While there was a sharp uptick in mid county cases a few weeks ago, Port Townsend has the highest number with 84, followed by 64 in mid county and 19 in the south, which includes Quilcene, Brinnon and the western part of the county.

There is certain to be another spike in a week or two, resulting from people visiting or hosting gatherings for the Thanksgiving holiday. It's easy to get angry at those who violated the suggested protocol but we should be used to it by now: people who misbehave causing punishment for the entire class.

We report the latest numbers here on KPTZ News during our regular broadcasts, but cases are increasing on a daily basis. For the latest numbers, including gender breakdown and cumulative percentages, visit the Jefferson County Public Health website or the Jefferson County Government Facebook page.

While more than a quarter million people have died across the country, Jefferson County reported its first death last week, a woman in her 90s who was under hospice care. According to the Port Townsend *Leader*, the county's first COVID fatality appears to have been a resident at Avamere at Port Townsend. While the facility declined to comment specifically on the recent death, the *Leader* reports that the death was reported on the company's website.

Currently, there are two other active cases among residents of Avamere's Port Townsend location. One staff member has also tested positive for the virus, according to the company's website, and 141 tests among residents and 85 tests among staff all showed negative results at the location.

Senior care facilities are said to be most vulnerable to COVID-19 outbreaks, with one of the first occurring in a Life Care Facility in Kirkland in the spring.

The Jefferson County Commissioners have scheduled a public hearing to take testimony on a proposed ordinance imposing a sales and use tax for affordable housing and supportive services. It will be held remotely on Monday, December 14 at 1:30pm.

A new special purpose sales tax of 1/10th of one percent, or a dollar for every 1,000 purchase could generate \$600,000 a year dedicated for affordable housing in Port Townsend and Jefferson County, which could be leveraged into six to 10 new units per year. If implemented soon, sales tax collection would begin by April 2021.

Instead of sprinkling the money on assorted projects, housing providers propose it be focused on creating entry-level housing. The goal is to break the logjam that prevents people from rising up the ladder from transitional and supportive housing into permanent housing, of which there is almost none available here for rent or purchase.

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.

This is Charlie Bermant. Thank you for listening.