

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, December 15, 2020.

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First, the numbers: Jefferson County now reports 195 cases of COVID-19, an increase of 16 cases over the last two weeks. Forty-eight people are now awaiting test results.

On Monday, County Health Officer Dr. Tom Locke told the County Commissioners that Jefferson has the third lowest number of COVID-19 cases in the state, following San Juan and Garfield. He also said that 900 doses of the vaccine are scheduled to arrive in the county this week, and will be directly administered by Jefferson Healthcare.

According to the Washington State Department of Health, the Pfizer vaccine is a two-stage inoculation given 21 days apart. Clinical trial data shows the vaccine is 95 percent effective at preventing the virus starting 7 days after the second dose. Individuals will not be considered fully protected until 1 to 2 weeks after they receive the second dose.

The national plan is to vaccinate about 20 million people this month, and then an additional 100 million in the months of January and February, and that's based on these both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine availability.

Locke characterized the current time as one of great hope, but also of great peril, saying we we are going through what we will look back on as the worst period of the pandemic. One in 10 Americans live in an area where the hospitals have no ICU beds available, where the ICUs are at capacity.

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A pair of our public servants are moving on up.

Governor Jay Inslee has appointed Jefferson County Prosecutor James Kennedy as a member of the 12-person Forensic Investigations Council. His nomination was as a county prosecutor.

The Council oversees the Bureau of Forensic Laboratory Services and, in consultation with the chief of the Washington state patrol or the Chief's designee, controls the operation and establishes policies of the bureau of forensic laboratory services. The Council also studies and recommends cost-efficient improvements to the death investigation system in Washington and reports its findings to the legislature. Kennedy was first elected as prosecutor in 2018. His term on the Forensic Council runs from December 4, 2020 to August 10, 2022. He is up for re-election on 2022.

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And our State Rep. Mike Chapman, D-Port Angeles, has been elected chair of the state House Committee on Rural Development, Agriculture and Natural Resources. Chapman was elected by House Democrats on Thursday (Dec. 10) during organizational sessions preceding the 2021 legislative session. The chairmanship is for two years. Democrats control the House and state Senate. Chapman takes a special interest in issues involving natural resources, access to public lands and increasing sustainable, family-wage jobs on the Olympic Peninsula and other rural areas. Chairing the committee allows him control over policy and legislation in these areas.

Chapman was re-elected in November to his third two-year term in the House. He represents the 24th District -- Clallam and Jefferson counties and about half of Grays Harbor County -- along with state Rep. Steve Tharinger and state Sen. Kevin Van De Wege.

The 24th District is the only one in the Legislature with its three members serving as committee chairs. In addition to Chapman, Tharinger is chair of the House's Capital Budget Committee, and Van De Wege chairs the Senate's Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources and Parks.

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Port Townsend is used to getting "best small town" awards from random places, but a local business received an award that is a bit more consequential. *Conde Nast Traveler*, an international travel guide for the posh set, named the Finn River Cidery to its Gold List as one of the best bars and restaurants in the world. Finn River is one of just 22 restaurants, on a list along with restaurants from Thailand, South Africa and Sri Lanka, among other places. The review characterizes the Chimacum spot as the loveliest organic orchard and cidery about two hours northwest of Seattle on the verdant Olympic Peninsula, that is an absolutely stunning location to spend a long, lazy afternoon."

Finn River is one of many local business that give Jefferson County its unique character, and many of us live here because we'd rather hang out at the unpretentious cider garden than live in a spot where you need to book a table a month in advance. We don't know what the long term effect of a "best in the world" designation will be, especially during these times, and hope that the recognition will lift all our local boats, so to speak.

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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).

This is Charlie Bermant. Thank you for listening.