

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Thursday, December 31, 2020.

The instances of COVID-19 in Jefferson County are increasing gradually, with one new case added each day this week. The latest count is 220, with 33 people awaiting test results. After a week off, Health Officer Dr. Thomas Locke will brief the new slate of county commissioners at 9:45 am this coming Monday. You can listen in here on KPTZ.

The death of a 23 year old transient woman at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds was not a homicide, according to reports in the *Peninsula Daily News* and *The Port Townsend Leader*. Her cause of death is as yet undetermined pending the results of toxicology screenings, which can take several months to complete due to a lab backlog, according to County Coroner James Kennedy. Her autopsy was conducted by the King County Medical Examiner. Anyone with information about the deceased or circumstances of her death is asked to contact Detective Jon Stuart at the Port Townsend Police Department at 360-344-9752. Ironically, the story in the *Peninsula Daily News* noted that Stuart could not be reached for comment on Wednesday.

The Race to Alaska is cancelled this year, although the sponsoring Northwest Maritime Center is offering an acceptable, socially distanced substitute. In a web posting, Race Boss Daniel Evans announced the establishment of the Washington360 race, a 360-mile course between what he calls the best and worst conditions that Washington waters have to offer. Even if it's half the distance of the Race to Alaska, it's the longest race of its kind in Washington and – much like its Alaskan counterpart – does not allow engines and relies on human and wind power to run the course, which begins and ends in Port Townsend: counterclockwise along the edges of COVID-allowable travel, from Port Townsend through Port Ludlow, Olympia, Tacoma, Seattle, Oak Harbor, Anacortes, Bellingham, Point Roberts, and back to Port Townsend.

Participants have two weeks to complete the course. They are allowed to stop, as long as they stay COVID-safe. They can carry an onboard engine but will be disqualified if they start it up. The COVID path is unpredictable, with no way to know where things will stand during the regular June race time. It certainly won't be back to normal, and chances are that travel between the United States and Canada will not be an option. That the majority of the race takes place in Canadian waters was a factor in the cancellation. Accordingly, Canadians may not participate in this year's race.

Washington360 takes place on June 17. Registration begins on January 15. For more information visit <https://nwmaritime.org/wa360/>.

Gov. Jay Inslee today announced a one-week extension of the "Stay Safe–Stay Healthy" proclamation along with the statewide restrictions imposed. The extension of the statewide restrictions now expires on January 11, 2021. No changes were made in the proclamation other than the expiration date. This proclamation forbids indoor dining, movie theatres, museums, fitness centers, and any other so called non-essential indoor businesses remain prohibited. An updated reopening plan is under development and will be announced when it's complete. Washington State has been under a state of emergency since February 29.

The State Fire Marshal's Office has issued a reminder about the legal discharge of fireworks as we head into the New Year's Holiday. Per statute, fireworks may now be legally purchased before 11 pm today. You will need to check your local listings for availability.

Fireworks are prohibited within the Port Townsend City limits. In the rest of the county they may only be discharged from 6pm tonight until 1am Friday, one hour into the New Year. So it's like a lot of things in 2020, where the hassle might not be worth the reward.

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.