

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for January 13, 2021.

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First, the numbers: Jefferson County now has 258 cases of COVID-19, after a steep increase last week of 33 cases. Five new cases have been reported so far this week, and 72 people await test results. For updates on case numbers, go to the Jefferson County Public Health website (<https://jeffersoncountypublichealth.org/1466/Case-Information>) or the Jefferson County Facebook page.

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Four candidates for city police chief met members of the public at an online forum on Monday night. The four candidates were chosen from a pool of more than 30 applicants. The Zoom event on Monday allowed each candidate time to introduce themselves to small groups and answer questions from individual attendees.

While each candidate only had about 15 minutes to address attendees, they received a wide range of questions. Some questioned the applicant's training in implicit bias and de-escalation tactics. Others asked the applicant's opinion on the role of School Resource Officers. And others questioned applicants about best tactics for dealing with domestic violence cases and individuals with mental health issues.

Only two of the four candidates are Washingtonians – Joseph Harris is the current police chief of the Mattawa Police Department, east of the Cascades. In a June 2020 article, Harris spoke out about the police killing of George Floyd, which sparked protests across the country, including in the small town of Mattawa. He called Floyd's death "unacceptable." But he also noted the importance of police officers being allowed to use force in certain situations. Speaking with citizens at Monday night's event, Harris emphasized the importance of police officers having customer service skills to improve community relationships. He also answered questions about his experience dealing with undocumented citizens.

The other Washingtonian candidate, Thomas Olson, currently serves as deputy chief of the University of Washington Police Department, though he previously worked for the Washington State Patrol. Olson showed interest in current issues facing Port Townsend; explaining to attendees that he had been closely following the Port Townsend city council's ad hoc committee meetings on law enforcement, and was also staying up to date on the community issues with homeless individuals sheltering at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds.

The third candidate, Mark Daniel, is currently police chief in Mt. Angel, Oregon, which is a small town with a population of around 3,500. Daniel has the most law enforcement experience out of all the candidates – having started as a cadet when he was 15 years old. When asked about Oregon's new law decriminalizing drugs, Daniel expressed his support for the new law, as a way to help individuals suffering from addiction to seek treatment.

The final candidate is from across the country in Philadelphia. D.F. Pace, who serves as a police inspector with the Philadelphia Police Department, began his introduction to the community by explaining why he goes by two initials instead of his long and hard to pronounce Italian first name. Pace touted his involvement with the Rotary Peace Program in Philadelphia and spoke about the protests he witnessed this summer after the death of George Floyd. But he downplayed his involvement in a major police scandal that occurred in Philly, in which many officers in the department were found to be making racist remarks on Facebook. Pace himself had commented on one of these posts, but he said he was part of the disciplinary team that investigated the officers involved in the scandal.

After the event, city manager John Mauro asked participants to complete a survey to help the hiring committee narrow down their choices. Those interested can also send in comments, concerns and questions to [chief@cityofpt.us](mailto:chief@cityofpt.us).

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After the police chief meet and greet, city council members gathered Monday for a meeting of the ad hoc committee on law enforcement and public safety. This is the second-to-last meeting for the ad hoc committee, and they spent their time preparing a set of recommendations for city staff and the council itself to improve the local justice system.

In addition to planning on forming a public safety citizens advisory board, city council members also expressed their desire to broaden the scope of the committee's work in the future, to include county officials as well, including reaching out to the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office and Prosecuting Attorney's Office to ensure that those institutions have values that align with the city's. In addition, councilmember Ariel Speser brought up a recommendation to re-examine the city's contract with the Sheriff's Office in order to ask that all Sheriff's deputies who work within city limits be equipped with body cameras, just like city police officers are.

And, after receiving a flood of public comments asking for the decriminalization of entheogens – or natural psychedelics – councilmember David Faber brought up the idea of making all drug possession cases a low priority for police officers.

The ad hoc committee will meet again on January 25 to finalize their work plan.

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And that's it for today's local news. 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). I'm Lily Haight. Thanks for listening.