

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for January 20, 2021.

Joseph R. Biden was sworn in today as the 46th president of the United States. Speaking from the steps of the U.S. Capitol, Biden highlighted the importance of unity in the midst of the many challenges our country faces. And, in a historic moment, Kamala Harris was sworn in as the first woman to ever serve as Vice President of the United States. Celebrations are planned throughout Port Townsend today, including a socially distanced Inaugural Celebration at Pope Marine Park at noon.

Jefferson County now has had 273 cases of COVID-19, after the county public health department reported four new cases since last Friday. 34 people await test results. The Jefferson County Courthouse bell rang twice yesterday at 2:30pm to honor the two Jefferson County citizens who have died from COVID-19. The bell tower was lit up through the night to honor all the lives lost to the pandemic so far. The United States has now surpassed 400,000 deaths since the arrival of the virus in the country last January.

The bell ringing coincided with the start of a national COVID-19 memorial service at the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool in Washington, D.C. Cities across the country joined in the national memorial as local governments illuminated federal buildings and monuments from coast to coast.

For updates on our local case numbers, go to the Jefferson County Public Health website (<https://jeffersoncountypublichealth.org/1466/CaseInformation>) or the Jefferson County Facebook page.

Vaccination for the COVID-19 virus is now available for Jefferson County residents who are 80 years or older. To make an appointment, call 360-344-9791 between 9AM and 4PM, M-F. Jefferson Healthcare began vaccinations for the 85 and older age group yesterday in the parking lot at Manresa Castle, but for those who live in south county, vaccinations are also available through Tri-Area Pharmacy of Port Hadlock. To make an appointment, call 360-379-9800. The vaccination site will be at the Chimacum Grange Hall, at 9572 Rhody Drive.

City residents who may have been looking forward to seeing the rideshare company Uber operate within city limits will have to wait another year for the city council to bring the topic back up. At the city council business meeting yesterday, city council members voted to table their discussion on an operating agreement with Uber until next year.

After spending several months working on the operating agreement and researching the company, city councilmembers had too many concerns to be able to pass a resolution allowing the city to enter into the agreement, which would allow Uber to start operating within Port Townsend. Amy Howard was the first councilmember to bring up her concerns, citing the company's history of disregarding employee protections as a main concern. In addition, she said, a lot of data shows Uber rides most often replace biking, walking, and transit trips. She had concerns that this would take business away from Jefferson Transit.

Other city council members agreed with her – Owen Rowe and Monica MickHager brought up the issue of the city's Box Store ordinance, which prevents stores like Walmart and Costco from setting up shop in Port

Townsend. While Uber doesn't necessarily fall into that category, MickHager said it is still an international company and she was concerned about the impact of these companies on local businesses. The only competition to Uber in Port Townsend would be the Peninsula Taxi company.

Councilmembers Ariel Speser and David Faber spoke favorably about the idea of having a rideshare company in town in the hopes that it would prevent drunk driving, especially since it's difficult to reliably get a taxi ride at night downtown, and there are no bus routes that run late. But this was not enough reason to pass the resolution when many councilmembers had concerns about the way Uber operates. Eventually, MickHager motioned to table the resolution for a year to see what other options there might be for increasing shared transportation within the city.

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. I'm Lily Haight. Thanks for listening.