

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for April 14, 2021.

Aislinn Diamanti, who currently serves as the interim director of operations at Fort Worden, announced today her decision to run for a seat on the Port Townsend City Council. Diamanti, who is 37, has lived in Port Townsend for about five years. She was first introduced to Port Townsend when she was invited to volunteer at the Wooden Boat Festival. Having been raised in a small town in Maine, she said she immediately felt connected to Port Townsend, and then moved here to work as the Operations and Events Manager at the Center for Wooden Boats. In 2016, she began working as the managing director at Bayside Housing, which operates the Old Alcohol Plant and the transitional housing services there. Then, in the summer of 2019, she began working at Fort Worden. A year later, when it was revealed that Fort Worden was in financial turmoil, and that the current leadership had potentially participated in mismanagement, Aislinn was promoted to the role of Director of Operations. She said she recognized at the time that there was a need for her to stay on and help the interim director – former city manager David Timmons – reorganize the PDA and work to pull the Fort out of its financial troubles. If she is elected to the city council, she plans to keep her job at the Fort, and says she recognizes that she may have to recuse herself from some conversations, if need be. In addition to working at the Fort, Diamanti has served on the city's planning commission for three years and has been the chair of that commission for the last year and a half.

Diamanti's announcement comes just a few days after city council member Ariel Speser announced that she will not be seeking another term on the city council. Speser said that the decision was "bittersweet," after spending a rewarding four years working for her constituents. She said she is particularly proud of her work on the Behavioral Health Advisory Board, which helps fund substance abuse and mental health services in Jefferson County, and during her time on the committee provided part-time funding for the City's Behavioral Health Navigator – a full-time case worker, specially trained in de-escalation, who works with the Port Townsend Police Department. Speser said she plans to focus more on her day job – working for Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson. She said that she is excited to advance her legal career with the Attorney General's office, where she works in both Jefferson and Clallam counties.

In a conversation with KPTZ News, Speser expressed her desire for a robust election season and says she is hoping that people will see her decision not to run as an exciting opportunity to have a diverse set of candidates vying for seats on the city council. Diamanti said she hopes her decision to run will encourage others to throw their hat in the ring. She said she is a believer in participatory politics and wants there to be plenty of choices for city voters. She also hopes more people will get involved in city committees, such as the planning commission, which has had an open seat since December.

Three seats are up for election on the city council. Mayor Michelle Sandoval – Jefferson County's longest-serving official with 20 years under her belt – will not be running for re-election, either. Council member Pam Adams' seat is up for election, but she has not yet announced whether she will be running again. Diamanti said she has not yet decided which seat she is running for. To qualify as a candidate for city council, you must show that you have lived in Port Townsend for at least one year. The filing period in Jefferson County is May 17-21. You can file online, by mail, or in person.

For first time candidates, the Jefferson County auditor's office provides a downloadable guide for candidates that includes all the information you need to know, including how to file, where you can place candidate signs, and how to file reports with the Public Disclosure Commission. Go to the county website and click "Elections" to learn more (<https://co.jefferson.wa.us/1268/For-Candidate-Filing>).

In a statement released to the press, Speser encouraged anyone interested in running for City Council to visit the Jefferson County League of Women Voters website (<https://www.lwvwa.org/Jefferson>), where you can view a recently produced and informative YouTube video on running for and serving on Port Townsend's City Council. The primary election will take place August 3, and the general election will take place November 2.

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.