

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for February 3, 2021.

The COVID-19 case count holds steady at 307, with no new cases reported yesterday. So far this week, there have been four cases in total. For the most up to date numbers, visit the public health website, or the Jefferson County Facebook page.

The city council voted to allow city manager John Mauro to enter into a \$35,000 contract with an outside organization to manage the city pool at Mountain View so that it can reopen. The City of Port Townsend closed the swimming pool in March 2020 as part of the city's efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Since that time, the pool has remained closed.

Under Governor Jay Inslee's reopening plan, the city is allowed to reopen the pool with certain safety measures in place. But because the city has lost a few key staff members, including the Parks and Rec Director and Aquatics Program Supervisor, it has been impossible to reopen the pool because there is no staff available to manage pool operations. Public works director Steve King explained to city councilmembers that staff has been researching and negotiating with the YMCA of Sequim to manage the daily pool operations in the short term until the city can fill the positions needed to manage the pool. While no specific organization has been chosen yet to manage the pool, the authorization of the council will allow the city to immediately enter into an agreement once negotiations are finalized, so that the pool can open as soon as possible.

For many residents of Port Townsend, the pool is the best place to get exercise, especially in the cold, rainy winter months. This was evidenced by the continual letters of support for reopening the pool since the governor allowed pools to be open under his COVID-19 road to recovery plan.

The presentation on the Fort Worden PDA to the city council at their regular business meeting this Monday began with both PDA Board co-chairs Todd Hutton and Norm Tonina, who gave status reports. They explained the documented transition objectives to be implemented over the next weeks, for the PDA to restore its financial solvency and public confidence. The organization is now transitioning to restructure the PDA as a new, streamlined Board for asset and property management.

The PDA is under external accountability audit by the Washington State Auditor's Office, which will be addressed based upon the outcome. 2021 is expected to be a challenging year due to continued COVID-19 restrictions, therefore measures are taken to create a new hospitality LLC that will, as a startup, reboot the PDA's business for lodging, food and hospitality. The board expects soon to finish the Lifelong Learning Center Maker's Square project before transitioning to the new board – as well as implementing the Fort Worden recovery plan.

Former city manager and now PDA Interim Executive Director David Timmons presented a second status update document, explaining that the PDA is still in crisis mode. The organization, which once had up to 170 employees is down to about 25, and the \$6 million income is down to \$1 million. According to Timmons, the PDA has not received any state or federal assistance and is hanging on with a bridge loan, funds from the city and from the PUD, and renegotiation of bank credit. But as the board tries to make it from month to month, it is working to deal with what Timmons described as both an "internal crisis" and an "external crisis."

The internal crisis has to do with the issues that led to the PDA's current status, and the PDA board's intent to restructure in order to be more transparent and internally accountable. The external crisis affecting the PDA is a direct result of the impact that COVID-19 has had on the PDA – which was largely based on hospitality and the ability to host large events and in-person gatherings. To bring the PDA out of this crisis, Timmons gave details on why and how the board is going to be working on transitioning from its old configuration to a new, streamlined entity that will take into consideration the many legal responsibilities the organization has in place. He presented a set of objectives for the old board to complete in order to help the new board get started, without losing institutional knowledge. There are funding opportunities being developed to subsidize the transition, also involving the nonprofit Fort Worden Foundation.

The Intergovernmental Collaborative Group will meet this Thursday to discuss the economic issues that face Jefferson County during this pandemic. The ICG includes all elected officials in the county, with representatives from the Port, the city council, the county commissioners, and the PUD. This week's meeting will feature a presentation by Charles Marohn from Stronger Towns – who will share advice for rural communities to think outside the box when it comes to financing new infrastructure. The virtual meeting starts at 5pm on Feb. 4 on Zoom. For the link, go to the county's website. It will also be broadcast live on KPTZ 91.9 FM and streamed at kptz.org.

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.