

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, March 2, 2021.

Jefferson County will pay a \$275,000 settlement to local businessman Joe D'Amico in order to end his constant litigation and public information requests. This includes several pending lawsuits, one asking for 100 million dollars.

Let that sit for a second.

In making the settlement, the County specifically denied liability for any of the plaintiffs' claims, declaring that the settlement is to secure peace and end further litigation. The settlement frees up county staff and resources, so they can address issues that actually matter. As part of the settlement, plaintiffs are also releasing and withdrawing all prior and pending public records requests, and agreeing to a five-year moratorium on filing any new public records act requests, including over 170 made in the past year. The released or withdrawn requests include 46 that are currently open, six of which are massive and difficult to fulfill and would monopolize staff time for years to come if not withdrawn, according to a press release.

The Settlement Agreement also includes several other provisions that benefit Jefferson County. First, D'Amico agreed to cease funding lawsuits by other individuals against Jefferson County. D'Amico had been advertising on Facebook, offering to fund other people's lawsuits against the County. Additionally, D'Amico's Fort Discovery Corporation enters into a voluntary compliance agreement to bring its Cedar Hills property into compliance with multiple code violations, including critical area ordinance violations, a stormwater permit violation, building permit violations, and the need to comply with zoning. In so doing, Fort Discovery Corporation accepted the County's prior findings of non-compliance, and those cannot be contested in future enforcement proceedings.

We did not attempt contact D'Amico for a comment. In the past he has been hostile and unresponsive to press inquiries, so calling him echoes a common definition of insanity, to expect different results from the same action.

Not too long ago, Jefferson County would report scads of COVID-19 cases on a Monday, reflecting those reported over the weekend. That has changed recently as the new case numbers decrease. There were no new cases reported this week, and the total remains at 335. Forty-eight people now await test results. The testing facility, located on the water side of the hospital, is booking people to come in at specific times, administering the test with no wait. That is, of course, different from the long vaccination lines across the street. County Health Officer Dr. Tom Locke said yesterday that the county has reported just six cases over the last two weeks. That drops our two-week case rate to 18.81%, the lowest in some time.

The hospital received new vaccine doses for the third consecutive week, an indication that vaccine supply lines are increasing and becoming more predictable. As more vaccines are pushed through the pipeline, along with the new Johnson & Johnson vaccine, it has strengthened the hospitals confidence in receiving allocations from the state. As this occurs, it allows the hospital to schedule more than one week at a time. The hospital emailed 1000 vaccination invitations on Friday, including people as young as 69 years old who registered through its website. Expectations are that people 65 and older will be accommodated in the next few weeks. Dr. Locke said

that 11,000 vaccine doses have been administered to Jefferson County residents, reporting that over 25% of the population has received at least one dose and 13.52% of the population is fully immunized. Additionally, over 80% of hospital personnel have received the vaccine.

While the default process for vaccine registry is on the hospital website (<https://jeffersonhealthcare.org/covid-19-vaccine/>), there is another option for those who do not have access to technology or just need help. The Department of Emergency Management is continuing to operate its call center and they are able to take calls from those who are 65+ who don't have an email address. They are able to fill out a form so you receive notification by phone to confirm their appointment. For this service call the dedicated line, 360-344-9791, between 9am and 4pm weekdays. If you missed the number, log on to kptz.org to see a transcript of today's 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.

This is Charlie Bermant. Thank you for listening.