

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with with local news and commentary for Tuesday, April 27, 2021.

\*\*\*

Jefferson County added two new cases of COVID-19 on Monday, bringing the county's total to 382. This is an increase of 36 cases since April 1, compared to just 11 cases reported in March. We have logged 22,071 negative results since testing began last spring, with 58 people now awaiting test results. In his weekly briefing to the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners, County Health Officer Dr. Tom Locke said the West Coast is now seeing a fourth wave spike in COVID-19 cases. Oregon has the most rapidly increasing case rates in the US, up 51% in the last two weeks. Washington has had a 26% increase in cases, with hospitalizations rising 42%. He said this is a concerning trend due to the infection among people in the 30-59 age group. Even so, Jefferson County positive rates have dropped a bit, with our case rate now at 60 per 100,000. Vaccinations in Jefferson continue to lead the state. Over 57% have initiated the vaccination protocol; 45% are fully immunized.

\*\*\*

Locke, predictably, said that people should continue to wear masks and practice social distancing, but there is one area where we can relax a little. The Center for Disease Control announced today that fully vaccinated people can go without masks while walking, jogging or biking outdoors or dining with friends in outdoor restaurants. Locally, it means that we can set our masks aside while walking the Larry Scott Trail, Fort Worden State Park, or other outdoor areas. We no longer need to scowl at unmasked folks we pass on these trails. Or we can just keep wearing the masks, just to be safe since it's all on the honor system. There is no relaxation on mask guidelines for public spaces and businesses, so you can still get tossed out for ditching a face covering there.

\*\*\*

Another ray of sunlight, at least for those who miss visiting government buildings. Jefferson County operations at the Courthouse, Castle Hill properties, and the Sheriff's Office will add walk-in services June 1, even as the public is encouraged to use remote services to reduce in-office traffic and exposures. Strict capacity screening and compliance with all state requirements will be enforced. If COVID-19 trends change, the June date for launch may be postponed.

\*\*\*

Local businessman and security expert Joe D'Amico received a patent for a phone app that allows users to customize their location and interest, issuing real-time alerts when a subscriber comes in proximity of a threat area. Users have a customized choice of categories, including high crime areas, active shooter alerts, terrorist threats, weather emergencies, and more. Data can be viewed individually, as lists, and using a map feature. There is also a "report it" function so a subscriber may anonymously contribute information, including photos, according to information on D'Amico's Facebook page. In that post, D'Amico said that Shepherd Shield, as it is called, has the potential of bringing hundreds of high tech jobs to the area to support the app's continued development. And yes, it is now available for download from the Apple App Store.

\*\*\*

The first half of Jefferson County property taxes is due on April 30, Friday. Mailed payments must be postmarked, put in a drop box, or paid online by the end of that day in order to avoid penalty and interest

charges. Taxpayers should write their property tax account number on their check or money order. Cash should not be sent through the mail. Taxpayers do not need to include a tax statement or coupon with the payment as long as the property tax account number is on the check or money order and payment is for the exact amount due. Taxpayers needing a receipt should include their email address to have a receipt emailed to them, or they must include a self-addressed stamped envelope with their payment to receive a hard copy receipt mailed to them. Electronic checks may be used to make payments, and the \$2.00 service fee charged by the provider has been temporarily reduced to \$0.50 during the pandemic. For more information and dropbox locations visit the Jefferson County Treasurer's webpage, <http://www.co.jefferson.wa.us/329/Treasurer>.

\*\*\*

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).

This is Charlie Bermant. Thank you for listening.