

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for May 19, 2021.

The Board of County Commissioners voted unanimously Monday morning to approve a letter of intent to purchase a 14-and-a-half acre parcel of land adjacent to the DSHS building on Sims Way in Port Townsend. The land will serve as the location for a housing hub – which Commissioner Brotherton described as a new permanent home for the emergency housing shelter in Port Townsend. Right now, the main emergency housing shelter in Port Townsend is operated by OlyCAP out of the American Legion with help from the Community Outreach Association Shelter Team. It has temporary beds for a total of 34 people, 18 and older, with 12 women's beds, 20 men's beds and two sick rooms. The purpose of the Housing Hub is to double the size of the shelter – with more beds for women, as well as providing some more permanent supportive housing in addition to the emergency beds. Brotherton said the Housing Task Force also envisions space on this property for trailers and RVs – as a landing pad for some of the folks who do not wish to live in a congregate setting. The hope is that the Housing Hub will be able to house 140 people in one way or another.

Since last summer, people have been living in trailers and RVs at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds. Because of the eviction moratorium, the fairgrounds board has let folks stay there all year. While neighbors in the area have raised complaints about noise and trash, as well as unfounded fears of a rise in neighborhood crime, Brotherton described the situation at the fairgrounds as somewhat of a blessing in disguise. Having folks struggling to find housing all living in one area has made it easier for service providers such as Dove House, OlyCAP, St. Vincent de Paul, and Bayside Housing to reach out to folks in need and provide food, housing help and more. The governor's eviction moratorium is set to end June 30. Brotherton expressed concern that when that happens, there could be an increase in people struggling to find housing.

In addition to providing emergency housing, permanent supportive housing, and places to park trailers, Brotherton said the Housing Task Force also plans to have some office spaces at the Housing Hub so that organizations like OlyCAP can be on the ground providing services. There may also be space for some other businesses, such as a laundromat. And the Hub will be right next to the DSHS building. At the city council meeting Monday night, Brotherton presented the plan to the council in the hopes that there can be a partnership between the city and the county to make this happen. The county plans to use federal dollars received from the American Rescue Plan to pay for purchase of the land. The asking price is \$1.495 million. The Letter of Intent approved by the Commissioners will secure the property for 60 days, which will allow the county time to get an appraisal and work on community partnerships, including discussing with city building officials to learn more about zoning and permitting in that area.

City council members reviewed a new ordinance Monday night that will ban smoking and vaping in city parks. The county Board of Health passed a similar ordinance back in September 2019, prohibiting smoking and vaping in public places, places of employment, and outdoor places where children can congregate. While the board of health's ordinance does apply within city limits, it can only be enforced by the public health officer. By passing a city ordinance, the city council will change code so that city parks employees can enforce the no smoking rule. The council voted unanimously to pass the first reading of the new ordinance.

Twenty-one individuals submitted comments to the city council at their meeting on Monday night – ranging from a variety of topics, including housing insecurity and parking issues. Most of the comments, however, – 19 in total – were on the subject of decriminalizing natural psychedelic drugs such as mushrooms. Members of the

public have been lobbying the city council to bring this issue onto their agenda for almost six months now. But instead of giving each citizen the normally allotted three minutes for their comments, city clerk Joanna Sanders just summarized each one in a sentence or two. Mayor Michelle Sandoval explained at the beginning of the meeting that many of the comments were similar, and she was certain that all city council members had read the comments, and that given the long agenda at Monday's meeting they would not read them in full to save time. This makes clear one of the many downsides of operating government business during a pandemic. Had all of the members of the public who sent in written comments been able to participate in person, they would have had the opportunity to share their thoughts aloud with the city council and with citizens watching the meeting.

Jefferson County's total COVID case count remains at 412 for now, as Jefferson County Public Health reported no new COVID-19 cases yesterday. There are 62 test results pending and six active cases in isolation. For the most up to date numbers, as always, visit the Jefferson County Public Health website or the Jefferson County Facebook page.

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.