

# City of Port Townsend

SEPTEMBER 2024 NEWSLETTER



## LET'S TALK ABOUT POTHOLES!

A message from Councilmember Libby Wennstrom



Ask any City Councilmember about the most common topic they hear from constituents, and the answer is always "Potholes

and Deer." While the City is still wrestling with options around deer, we're making some real progress on planning (and action!) on street repair, and I wanted to use this month's newsletter to share some highlights.

### Why are our streets so terrible?

In the past, Washington used funds from vehicle registration to help fund municipal street repair. Since 1999, a series of ballot initiatives (aka "\$30 Car Tabs") and related legislation eliminated state funding for street maintenance. Like many small cities, Port Townsend found itself

unable to cover even limited street maintenance. 25 years in, this has resulted in widespread street failures and an "epidemic" of potholes and drainage issues.

Unlike most cities our size, Port Townsend has over 80 miles of streets to maintain, about 8 miles per 1,000 people. With full rebuild costing a million dollars minimum per mile, that's a lot of funding shortfall.

### Why does the city keep doing <thing> instead of fixing the roads?

Like all Washington cities, Port Townsend's budget is in "buckets" reserved for specific things. We can't spend arts funding on street repair. We can't spend utility bill money on street repair. We can't spend library levy or most capital grant funding on street repair. Without a dedicated funding source, street repair and maintenance has languished.

## CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

**Tues, September 3, 6 p.m.:**  
**Regular Business Meeting**  
Joint County Resolution  
adopting Medium Growth  
Population Projection

**Mon, September 9, 6 p.m.:**  
**City Council Workshop Meeting**  
Deer and Parking Management

**Mon, September 16, 6 p.m.:**  
**Regular Business Meeting**  
Joint Board of County  
Commissioners / City Council  
Healthier Together briefing

Note that meetings are held on  
Tuesday when Monday is a holiday.  
Visit [cityofpt.us/calendar](http://cityofpt.us/calendar)  
for updates.

### What's changing? Why can't we fix them now?

In November 2023, city voters passed a Transportation Benefit District (TBD), dedicating 0.3% city sales tax dedicated to transportation improvements. We also adopted a Comprehensive Streets Program which identifies a need to invest an additional \$1.5 million a year to address our backlog.

TBD funds are already making a real difference in our ability to "claw back" our streets. 40-60% of the TBD funds go directly to pavement repair and preservation of the City's

*Continued on reverse*

## Councilmember letter, continued

streets. 20-40% go to grant match for grant-funded projects, helping us unlock roughly \$1.5 million a year in state and federal grants, enabling us to tackle major rebuilds for failing arterials like Lawrence Street.

For the past several years, the city has also used “banked capacity” from the Fire Department merger with East Jefferson Fire & Rescue for street repair, and we’ve re-tasked city crews onto street and drainage repair rather than focusing on mowing right-of-way. Per City Code, mowing the right of way is the property owner’s responsibility. We recognize that this change has been challenging for some residents, but having crews

address the underlying cause of street failure ensures we can preserve and repair our existing pavement before it fails completely and will save a lot of money over time.

### When is my street getting fixed?

Priority for use of TBD funds for street repair is:

- Preservation of existing streets (an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure);
- Geographic distribution of investments – all city neighborhoods;
- Solves a drainage issue (water management is key to preserving pavement!);

- Coordinates with planned underground utilities work;
- Eliminates an ongoing maintenance resource drain (potholes, roots in sewer etc.);
- Compliments Non-Motorized Plan & Transportation Improvement Plan;
- Supports infill and/or housing development.

### How can I learn more?

Find links to watch our videos about streets on our YouTube Channel and read about the Comprehensive Streets Program here: [cityofpt.us/engagept/page/infrastructure](http://cityofpt.us/engagept/page/infrastructure).

Councilmember Libby Wennstrom

# WE NEED YOUR INPUT ON TRADEOFFS

## Results from the mini-poll collected at the Comp Plan Studio July 22 through July 24, 2024

These results represent 75 respondents. Want to participate? **Take this survey online!**

Use the QR code or go to [PT2045planning.org/surveys](http://PT2045planning.org/surveys) to participate.



Concept	Choose the option that best reflects your priorities.					Concept
?						
Develop an economy focused on specific, larger-scale industries		1%	9%	20%	70%	Develop a diverse, entrepreneurial small business economy.
Strategically locate denser housing types to specific areas of the city.	15%	13%	13%	21%	37%	Incorporate a variety of housing types throughout the city to increase affordability.
Promote compatibility through separating residential and commercial/retail uses.	9%	13%	15%	32%	32%	Improve neighborhood connectivity through mixed-use developments or allowing commercial uses next to residential.
Enhance neighborhood parks with family-friendly activities.	20%	10%	32%	15%	23%	Create tranquil green space.
Employ “green” neighborhood and building design practices.	37%	23%	17%	4%	20%	Minimize development and construction costs.
Allow the market to determine the need and supply of affordable housing.	7%	3%	9%	21%	60%	Expand and enhance City participation in affordable housing development.

**VISIT US AT  
THE FARMER'S  
MARKET**

The third in a series of public engagement opportunities at the Port Townsend Farmer's Market - you can visit the City table to learn more about the Comprehensive Plan, provide input on a variety of topics, and meet City staff and Council Members. Learn about more ways to engage at [PT2045planning.org](http://PT2045planning.org).

# LET'S TALK ABOUT DEER AND PARKING

A message from City Manager John Mauro



A homemade riddle: what's furry, frustrating, and generates strong opinions all over? If we're talking about City-

related topics, it's deer and parking, of course.

These two issues have vexed our community for many decades and it's almost impossible to find someone who lives, works, or visits Port Townsend that isn't personally impacted by both. The City has attempted to take action on each of these in the past few years, but we were knocked back by Covid, and other issues took priority as we tried to keep pace with limited time and resources.

Queue the creepy horror film music: "they're back." **Each of them will get attention at a City Council workshop on September 9 at 6 p.m.** Join us and peer into the portal of possibilities!

But let me be clear: we're not necessarily going to "solve" deer or parking. For each complex issue, it'll be critically important to determine as a community what problem we're trying to solve, how many resources to dedicate, and what outcomes we desire. For deer, some people want to feed them, some want to eat them, some want more deer, some want fewer deer. Just getting to general agreement on which direction we want to go is going to be a challenge, no other community in Washington has solved or implemented deer management. This is where we can flex our civil civic dialogue muscles. Add to the complexity that the City has no legal authority to regulate deer – it's the State of Washington – and we need to check our expectations on quick solutions.

Surely parking is easier? While many agree that free, ample parking is a good idea – for them as individuals – it's a tough nut to crack as a community, especially in areas of high demand like Downtown. Back to identifying the problem and desired outcomes, do we as a community

want to prioritize parking for employees who work downtown over patrons who visit local businesses? Residents who live downtown over business owners who depend on visitors? Short stays or long stays? Daytime or after 5pm? More bike, walking, or transit trips? Implementing a policy solution without knowing where we want to end up would likely bring the issue back sooner than you can back-in angle park a Fiat 500.

When we developed our draft 2025 strategic workplan in July, it was clear that with our current budget and staffing levels, we can't do it all, do it well, and do it right now. Even with triple the budget and staff, we'd still have to make hard decisions on our priorities. So when City staff and City Council workshop deer and parking on September 9, you can expect us to sketch out realistic approaches to beginning the work on each of these issues. We ask for your patience and participation. Progress on deer and parking will take some time and effort and, just like that supernatural film, the portal to the other side may just manifest!

**John Mauro, City Manager**

## LIBRARY PROGRAMS

### **Paddling the Salish Sea** with author Rob Casey

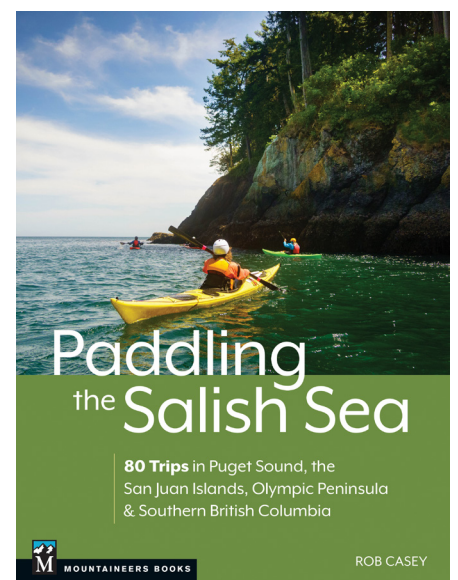
*6 p.m., Thursday, September 12*  
Carnegie Room

This updated guide covers everything from gear and safety, to amazing locations, like the quiet inlets of South Sound, fjords, waterfalls, and local waterways around Vancouver, B.C. Casey's advice on navigating this area comes from 20 years of experience as a professional kayaker, stand up paddleboarder, and coach.

### **Living with Deer** with WDFW and City of PT

*6 p.m., Thursday, September 26*  
Carnegie Room

Join Cole Janowski, Wildlife Conflict Specialist with the WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife and KT LaBadie, Code Compliance Officer with City of PT to learn about deer species, general biology, issues and prevention methods, and what people and communities can do to coexist with wildlife.





It's never too late to get a library card! Shown here Parks and Facilities Manager Michael Todd receives his new library card from Library Director Melody Sky Weaver.

## HAPPY LIBRARY CARD SIGN-UP MONTH!

A Port Townsend Public Library card offers a universe of possibilities and stories. Did you know that with a Port Townsend Public Library card you can check out a telescope that comes with a stargazing kit that lets you look up to the night sky this fall? Get your library card today as your passport to the universe! Kit includes: telescope, guide, headlamp, flashlight, reflex sight manual, star target object finder, and moon map.



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## AN OPENING ON THE PLANNING COMMISSION

Are you passionate about your community and intrigued by the details that shape our city social life, economy, demographics, and built environment? Dive into the world of land use and city planning with the Planning Commission! Planning Commission is a gateway to understanding local government and offers a unique opportunity to engage

with essential issues like the 2045 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update.

If selected, you'll be a crucial conduit for resident input, working to ensure that the community's voice is heard in City Council recommendations. You'll collaborate with fellow members, engage in thoughtful debates, and contribute to decisions that influence the future of our city.

If you're detail-oriented, fair-minded, and eager to make a difference, this is your chance to participate deeply in civic engagement and contribute to shaping a vibrant community. Get involved and make an impact! Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until appointment. Visit [cityofpt.us/bc/page/boards-and-commissions](http://cityofpt.us/bc/page/boards-and-commissions) to learn more.

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## NOTICE OF STREETS & STORMWATER WORK

Stormwater management is imperative to preservation of the street surface. City Street Crews will be doing stormwater work on 22nd Street this fall. They started at the Sheridan Street intersection adding a catch basin and pipe, and will be adding swales along 22nd Street into September. Learn more about streets maintenance on our website, including the latest How Your City Works video: *How Streets Are Built*. Visit [cityofpt.us/publicworks/page/streets-maintenance-and-collections](http://cityofpt.us/publicworks/page/streets-maintenance-and-collections).



**Civic Pay - sign up today to view and pay your utility bill online!**

Our new utility bill payment system means easier access to your account and fewer delays in receiving your bill. Visit [cityofpt.us/finance/page/pay-your-utility-bill](http://cityofpt.us/finance/page/pay-your-utility-bill) to learn more about this new service and switch over to Civic Pay from your Doxo account by September 30.