

News from the *Salish Current* for the week ending May 1, 2020:

[San Juan, Skagit and Whatcom nonprofits refocus to meet basic needs, uncertain future](#)



The Bellingham Food Bank has updated its operations to serve clients during the COVID-19 pandemic, including providing pre-packed food boxes via a no-contact car queue and participating in a home-delivery program coordinated by the Whatcom Unified Command. Above, volunteers load pre-packed boxes to be delivered from locations around the city. (Carlos Rexach photo © 2020)

By Matt Benoit — For the 375,000 people living in San Juan, Skagit and Whatcom counties, community foundations and other nonprofits are adapting to provide the most essential services to people affected by COVID-19 and unemployment. Throughout the region, many organizations are seeing dramatic increases in demand. People need help ranging from mortgage and rent relief to mental health support to deliveries of food and medicine. [Read more...](#)

[In-person comment is out, for now: local governments adapt to life under COVID](#)

By Stella Harvey — City and county councils and commissions across Washington state are finding new ways to conduct their public meetings since Gov. Jay Inslee issued the Stay Home, Stay Healthy order March 23, requiring local governing bodies to temporarily halt their in-person meetings.

In Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit counties, meetings have moved online, their agendas stripped down to the most pressing business — including addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has put public comment periods in flux as officials struggle to find the best way to hear from their constituents. [Read more...](#)

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News from around the region...

EDITOR'S NOTE: Coronavirus news coverage in the [Bellingham Herald](#) can be accessed online without a subscription. *The Lynden Tribune*, the *Skagit Valley Herald* and the *Anacortes American* have paywalls.

Health & Safety

[Locals only, please. Reopening of some Washington state parks greeted by concern](#)

San Juan County Councilmember Bill Watson expects the state parks in the islands to open next week, but said they should be for locals only. (NW News Network)

[Seattle entrepreneur touting coronavirus vaccine caused uproar when San Juan Island mayor invited him to visit](#)

Friday Harbor mayor Farhad Ghatan invited Seattle entrepreneur Johnny Stine to visit him during a restricted travel period and perhaps have him try the unauthorized vaccine. (Seattle Times)

Education

[COVID-19 disrupts faculty hiring and review](#)

A possible decrease in enrollment and funding caused by COVID-19 has disrupted the faculty review and contract allocation process, and prompted Western to temporarily suspend hiring of new full-time staff. (Western Front)

[Remote learning moves into next phase, with grades](#)

As of Monday, students are now required to actively engage in their online school work as part of a continuous learning model rather than enrichment activities. (Anacortes American)

[Here's how Bellingham schools will grade students for coronavirus semester's classes](#)

Students will either get an A grade or an incomplete for the second semester, Bellingham Schools Superintendent Greg Baker said. (Bellingham Herald)

[Referendum 90 effort begins locally](#)

The campaign aims to put the Comprehensive Sex Education in public schools measure the state Legislature passed and Gov. Inslee signed to a vote of the people. (Lynden Tribune)

Government

[Bellingham mayor cancels all citywide events through end of August to curb coronavirus](#)

Applications for special events or facility reservations will also not be accepted or approved through Aug. 30. Picnic shelters and sports fields will not be available to be rented or reserved. (Bellingham Herald)

[Budget cuts possible from coronavirus pandemic measures, Bellingham mayor says](#)

Budget cuts are likely because of a recession caused by measures aimed at slowing the spread of COVID-19 disease. (Bellingham Herald)

[Bellingham City Council](#), May 4, 7 p.m.: Public hearing on an emergency moratorium on permits for single-family detached development in multi-family zones (22599). The city council enacted an emergency moratorium on March 9; state law requires a public hearing within 60 days of adoption of an emergency ordinance. (City of Bellingham)

[Whatcom County Council](#), May 5, 1 p.m.: Vote on ordinance supporting a [thoughtful approach to doing business](#) in Whatcom County during the COVID-19 pandemic (AB2020-188). The ordinance, proposed by Ben Elenbaas, supports businesses such as big box stores or any construction projects including residential construction of any kind that practices actions to mitigate the spread of the virus. (Whatcom County)

[Port of Bellingham Board of Commissioners](#), May 5, 4 p.m.: Vote on approval to [accept \\$5 million from the CARES Act](#). The commission will convene in open session to approve a consent agenda and address other business following an executive session at 3 p.m. (Port of Bellingham)

[Staffing changes underway at Blaine's public works department](#)

The city of Blaine is looking for a new public works director. (The Northern Light)

Nature

[New Forage Fish Spawning Beaches Found!](#)

Six new Pacific sand lance spawning beaches and two previously unknown surf smelt spawning sites were discovered this winter. (San Juan Update)

[Whatcom County 2020 Road Shoulder Herbicide Spraying](#)

Property owners who do not wish to have their adjoining right-of-way treated should contact the Road Department. (Whatcom County)

[WA Invasive Species Council looks to get rid of Scotch broom plants](#)

The Council asks the public to report the location of Scotch broom throughout the state. (My Ferndale News)

Commentary

[Opinion: Roberts Bank: Ottawa should reject a terminal expansion that puts human and environmental health at risk](#)

A massive container terminal proposed for British Columbia's Fraser River Delta is set to be a litmus test for the federal government's commitment to tackling the unfolding biodiversity crisis. (The Narwhal)

Business

[Economic Impacts of COVID-19 on Whatcom County Businesses](#)

The Port of Bellingham's Regional Economic Partnership reports its findings based on surveys of Whatcom businesses. (Port of Bellingham)

[Hexcel lays off 128 at Skagit County plant](#)

Aerospace manufacturing company Hexcel Corporation laid off 128 people at its Port of Skagit location, citing as reasons the COVID-19 pandemic and grounding of the Boeing 737 Max. (Skagit Valley Herald)

[Whatcom changes restaurant, tavern permits to aid in coronavirus recovery](#)

Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu issued an executive order allowing restaurants and taverns in Whatcom County to continue operating with expired permits until July 1. (Bellingham Herald)

Community

[Lydia Place Announces Transition to Virtual 'Art for Housing' Event and Online Auction, May 8](#)

Bellingham-based nonprofit Lydia Place will hold a virtual event and online auction, a spin-off of its annual Art for Housing which raises funds for its programs and services. (Whatcom Talk)

[When family reunions are '6 feet of space, and an international border!'](#)

What to do when your family lives on both sides of the U.S.-Canadian border, but the border is closed for non-essential travel? (KOMO)

[Lynden fair cancelled for 2020](#)

That tough decision of surrender to the COVID-19 virus was a unanimous call by the fair's 12-member board of directors at a meeting Monday. (Lynden Tribune)

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Salish Current is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, online local news organization serving Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit Counties. Salish Current exists to strengthen democratic governance by reporting and curating local news with independence and strict journalistic integrity.

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