



News from the *Salish Current* for the week ending May 29, 2020:

[Busier-than-ever librarians connect people with books, job ads, even food during COVID shutdown: Community Voices](#)



A first! Middle schoolers across the county were treated to a Zoom-based author interview and book discussion organized by the youth services team (above) as part of the Whatcom County Library System's innovative approach to continuing services during the COVID-19 shutdown.
(Photo courtesy WCLS)

By Christine Perkins, Executive Director, Whatcom County Library System

Whatcom County libraries have been closed to the public for over two months now. Despite the closures, staff have been busier than ever, working from home and pitching in wherever possible to provide services to the public.

We're mindful that we are living through historic times and that it will one day be valuable to remember what happened, how we responded and what we learned. [Read more.](#)

[Government for the people: Whatcom, Port of Bellingham and Bellingham City news for the week of May 29](#)

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News from around the region...

Health & Safety

* British Columbia has 2,558 confirmed cases and 164 related deaths, according to Johns Hopkins, while the Washington State Department of Health reported 20,764 cases and 1,106 related deaths as of Wednesday night. In a national Canadian poll, only 19% supported opening the border on June 21; 42% said September would be a good target and 26% said to wait until 2021. ([Bellingham Herald](#))

* Now moving to Phase 2, San Juan County requires businesses to comply with all health and safety requirements outlined in the guidance to reopen and everyone must wear a face-covering mask inside businesses. The ban on transient lodging for non-essential travel remains in place as well as the ban on camping on ferry islands and transient moorage. ([San Juan County/San Juan Update](#))

* Orcas Island Health Care District commissioners discussed responses to their request for proposals for a medical provider to reshape the delivery of the island's health care to deliver "a single practice encompassing all healthcare providers on this island." ([Orcas Issues](#))

* Skagit County this week met the state's Safe Start requirement and is applying to move into Phase 2. ([Skagit Valley Herald](#))

* Emergency physician Dr. Ming Lin, represented by the American Civil Liberties Union, filed suit against PeaceHealth, a top administrator and a national medical staffing firm over his March dismissal after he raised concerns about hospital coronavirus prevention measures. ([Seattle Times](#))

Education

* A national survey found that four out of 10 of the poorest U.S. students are accessing remote learning as little as once a week or less, while in families making more than \$100,000 a year, 83% of kids are doing distance learning every day, with the majority engaged over two hours a day. ([National Public Radio](#))

Government

* The city of Burlington's reliance on sales tax revenues has resulted in an estimated \$1.5 to \$3 million revenue shortfall in 2020, with preliminary tax revenue for March showing a 35% drop. ([Skagit Valley Herald](#))

* The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act has granted \$16.3 million to Whatcom County and its seven incorporated cities. Western Washington University and the Whatcom Transportation Authority have received \$14.6 million in grants. ([Bellingham Herald](#))

* The city of Anacortes received about 19% less sales tax revenue than expected for the first half of March and received 37% less sales tax revenue for the second half of March. ([Anacortes American](#))

* Whatcom County property taxes which were due on April 30 and deferred due to pandemic are due June 1. ([The Northern Light](#))

Nature

* New rules for Washington's commercial whale-watching licensing program are being developed and will be shared and refined over the summer of 2020, with public comment in fall 2020 and expected adoption by Jan. 1, 2021. ([Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife](#))

* Here are the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife [proposed rules](#) for this year's recreational and commercial salmon fishing seasons and here is where you can [comment on the rules](#). ([Skagit Valley Herald](#))

* The rare gray orca Tl'uk and a pod of five transient orcas were seen on Tuesday in Bellingham Bay. ([Bellingham Herald](#))

* Washington agriculture officials confirmed that a dead Asian giant hornet was found near Custer in Whatcom County this week. ([Bellingham Herald](#))

* An Asian giant hornet was found in the city of Langley eight miles north of where two other hornets were discovered last year near Blaine, suggesting that the invasive insect has established itself in a broader territory than previously known. ([NY Times](#))

* The Bellingham Climate Action Task Force has begun vetting recommendations updating the city's Climate Protection Action Plan to reach 100% renewable energy goals by 2030 for municipal facilities and community electricity supply and 2035 for community heating and transportation. ([Western Front](#))

Business

* The state has provided additional guidelines to improve health and safety standards for farmworkers through physical distancing, increased handwashing, training and education. Those requirements apply to orchards, fields, dairies, fruit and vegetable-packing warehouses, as well as employer-provided transportation and housing. ([News Tribune](#))

Community

* The Guemes Island ferry will remain on a nonpeak schedule this summer making fewer trips due to coronavirus safety concerns. ([Anacortes American](#))

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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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