

Salish Current

Independent, fact-based news for Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit counties

News from the *Salish Current* for the week ending July 17, 2020:

[Fate of fall sports remains uncertain in haze of COVID-19 pandemic](#)



Spring sports in the fall? Athletic directors at area high schools say they have considered many options in the uncertainty introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic. If Washington Nationals pitcher [Sean Doolittle's comment](#) that "sports are like the reward of a functioning society," is on the mark, deeming playing fields safe for athletes to occupy this fall should be a hopeful sign for all. (Matt Benoit photo © 2020)

By Matt Benoit — After a spring of no sports for students across the region, summer is giving school districts a chance to plan for what may happen come fall. The trajectory of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, remains anyone's guess. Even if classroom learning resumes, what will be the fate of extracurricular activities such as sports? If they happen at all, what will they look like? [Read more here...](#)

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[Ballots in the mail July 15, primary vote Aug. 4](#)



Skagit County League of Women Voters moderator Wende Sanderson (upper left) interviews District 1 and District 2 county commission candidates in advance of the state primary election.

By Mike Sato — The primary election clock today started its three-week countdown to primary election day, Aug. 4. Washington voters are able to stay safe by voting by mail during COVID-19 times, as always, so there should be no excuse for not exercising one's most powerful citizen's right: voting. [Read more here...](#)

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Salish Current affirms its commitment to work for truth, justice, equality and healing for all people.

#SayTheirNames #BlackLivesMatter #NoJusticeNoPeace

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News from around the region ...

Health & Safety

- Prime Minister Justin Trudeau confirmed that Canadian and U.S. officials have agreed to keep the border between the two countries closed to non-essential travel until August 21. [\(CTV News\)](#)
- Nearly 800 people took advantage of a two-day, free COVID-19 testing pilot program in Bellingham last weekend, with fewer than 1% having positive test results. The pilot will again be offered at the Civic Field Complex this weekend July 17 and 18. [\(Whatcom Co. Health Dept./Whatcom Talk\)](#)

- The San Juan County Board of Health recommended that the county withdraw its application for Phase 3 but the county commissioners delayed final action until next Tuesday until more information was received from the state. ([Orcas Issues](#))

Education

- Western Washington University reports a \$25 million loss of funding due to housing refunds and expected decreased state funding, with unknowns looming for fall enrollment. ([Western Front](#))
- Budget cuts are coming down on all three Skagit Valley Community College campuses as a result of a \$4.8 million budget shortfall. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))
- In response to requests to remove police from schools, the Bellingham School District will discontinue having police, EMTs and firefighters eating lunch with students but will retain its district police resource officer. ([Bellingham Herald](#))
- Lynden Christian schools are planning a September 1 full opening of in-person classes. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))
- Students in the upcoming school year in Blaine will follow a hybrid plan that splits students into two groups that switch between in-person and remote classes on a weekly basis. ([The Northern Light](#))
- The Whatcom Coalition for Environmental Education, comprised of more than a dozen area nonprofits, businesses, agencies, and tribal institutions, works together to identify areas for increased collaboration and coordination among their organizations and with schools and to help the community re- envision learning, child care, and peer-to-peer connection. ([Wild Whatcom/Whatcom Talk](#))

Government

- Child care providers and small businesses in Whatcom County impacted by COVID-19 can apply for "Whatcom ReStart" grants from a pool of \$2.6 million in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) funds,

with an additional \$800,000 available for child care providers. ([My Ferndale News](#))

- Whatcom County Prosecuting Attorney Eric Richey, a representative to the Governor's policing task force, will hold several meetings with small groups that include people who identify as Black or African American, Native American, Latinx and Chicanx, LGBTQIA2-plus and people who are deaf and hard of hearing, homeless, farmworkers and undocumented. ([Bellingham Herald](#))

- City of Bellingham

- The City Council approved a budget amendment to allocate \$500,000 to businesses in Bellingham's commercial core, \$200,000 for child care businesses and \$200,000 to address food security from CARES Act funds. The Council earlier allocated \$500,000 for the refurbished Drop-In Center.
- The Bellingham City Council will discuss on July 20 a resolution adopting the [Lake Whatcom Management Program 2020-2024 Work Plan](#). The plan was adopted by the Whatcom County Council on July 7.
- The city council will meet on July 20 at 2 pm and 7 pm. To participate in City of Bellingham Council meetings, [click here](#).

- Whatcom County

- On July 21, the Whatcom County Council will hold public hearings on two resolutions to authorize private negotiations for 20-year leases for cell towers on Lookout Mountain. One hearing concerns a renewal of an expiring lease to [Verizon Wireless for an existing tower](#); the second hearing concerns a new lease for a tower to [PI Tower Development LLC](#).
- The County Council on July 21 will discuss a resolution adopting the [Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District Comprehensive Sewer Plan 2020 Update](#) subject to sewer service provided is consistent with densities allowed in the Whatcom County Zoning Code and that providing sewer to land outside the Urban Growth Area shall not serve as the basis for rezoning properties.
- The Whatcom County Council meeting meets on July 21 at 6 pm. To participate, [click here](#).

- Port of Bellingham

- Port of Bellingham commissioners will hold a [special budget retreat](#) on July 23 beginning at 9 AM to discuss the Port's 2021 strategic budget.
- To participate in this Port of Bellingham commission meeting, go to: Zoom.com Webpage/App Meeting ID #942 9218 7233

Nature

- Sixteen miles of spawning and rearing habitat for salmon will be restored when a small diversion dam on the Middle Fork of the Nooksack River southeast of Deming is removed in September. ([Bellingham Herald](#))

Business

- With a 4-3 vote, the Burlington City Council approved a 0.1% business and occupation tax on the city's 138 retail businesses having revenues exceeding \$1 million a year, bringing in an estimated \$750,000 a year. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))
- Here's how the federal Small Business Administration Paycheck Protection Program's millions were distributed in Whatcom County. ([The Northern Light](#))
- San Juan County's Economic Development Council finds that the federal Paycheck Protection Program saved 1,949 jobs in the county. ([San Juan Update](#))
- The Paycheck Protection Program went to 1,800 Skagit County businesses and nonprofits and helped retain 12,355 county jobs. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))
- All American Marine Inc. launched the *ORCA II*, the second of two 78'x 27' aluminum catamarans for Great Western Attractions recently. The passenger excursion vessels will operate in Puget Sound. ([WorkBoat](#))
- Dead zones and poor, inconsistent Internet service plague Whatcom County households and businesses during COVID-19. ([Western Front](#))

- A new mural was completed on the side of a Ferndale building — painted by Matt French who, in the '90s was arrested by the Ferndale police and spent jail time and paid for damages. ([My Ferndale News](#))
- Commercial fishing — from the people catching the fish, the people processing the fish and the people buying the fish — are all affected this season by COVID-19. ([Western Front](#))
- Blaine's City Council gave preliminary plat approval to East Maple Ridge LLC, which proposed developing a mix of 353 single-family, cottage and multi-family housing units on an 88.45-acre forested area in east Blaine. The project also includes a neighborhood commercial center consisting of 24,000 square feet of commercial space, a park site, a playground and open space. ([The Northern Light](#))

Community

- Base Camp, the newly-relocated emergency shelter for the homeless opens today in downtown Bellingham. ([Bellingham Herald](#)) See also: Former Public Market on fast track for refit as emergency shelter ([Salish Current](#))
- Lopez islanders elevated Black voices by placing signs along Fisherman Bay Road with the names of victims of police brutality and white supremacy. The signs were vandalized but the islanders put them back up. ([Islands Sounder](#))
- Orcas Island Health Care District commissioners have decided to focus discussion exclusively with Island Hospital about its proposal to administer an Orcas Island Health Care District. ([Orcas Issues](#))
- Olivia Snell was hired Monday as chief of the Guemes Island Fire Department, the first woman to serve as chief in the department's history. She succeeds Gerry Francis, who retired. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))
- Profile of San Juan Island scientist and techno-guru Mark Anderson who co-founded The Whale Museum, founded Orca Relief Citizen Alliance and founded Strategic News Service and Future in Review. ([San Juan Islander](#))

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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 protect and improve democratic governance by reporting and curating local news with independence and strict journalistic integrity.

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