

# Salish Current

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

News from the *Salish Current* for the week ending July 24, 2020:

## [Port, County race to bridge Whatcom's digital divide](#)



Three cable routes to be constructed and available to independent service providers to access to provide internet service in areas of Whatcom County without connectivity or with marginal connectivity. Map by Port of Bellingham, for March 5, 2019, [Port Commission presentation](#).

By Mike Sato

— The COVID-19 shutdown of businesses and schools revealed a stark digital divide as many local businesses and households faced working, teaching and learning at home whether equipped and ready, or not.

Before the pandemic, missing or inconsistent internet service and even the lack of basic computer hardware and software were nuisances but had possible work-around solutions. When things shut down, the nuisance became a crippling disability for many. [Read more here.](#)

\*

## [No Whatcom vote this November on increasing Port commission members](#)

By Mike Sato

— Port of Bellingham commissioners took no action at their July 14 meeting on allowing Whatcom County voters to decide whether to expand the commission to five members from the current three, effectively closing the issue for now. To be on the ballot this November, the commission would need to have enacted a resolution by Aug. 4. The commission's next regular meeting is Aug. 11. [Read more here.](#)

\*

*Salish Current affirms its commitment to work for  
truth, justice, equality and healing for all people.  
#SayTheirNames #BlackLivesMatter #NoJusticeNoPeace*

\* \* \*

### News from around the region

#### Health & Safety

- Erika Lautenbach, Whatcom County Health Department Director, reported that over the past two weekends, 1,814 people were tested for COVID-19 using the Bellingham drive-thru facility, with Saturday, July 21, being the largest number of people. ([Bellingham City Council 7/20/20 meeting draft minutes](#)) According to the Health Department, the four days of free testing cost approximately \$126,000 and that cost was too much. ([Bellingham Herald](#))
- Retired BC boaters tracked as many as 100 US pleasure boats in June stopping at marinas, sometimes for days, in violation of COVID-19 restrictions. ([Vancouver Sun](#)) Two U.S. boaters in BC waters on July 10 were fined under the Quarantine Act — one person claiming to be en route to Alaska, another a whale watching vessel ([CBC](#)). As the USCG, RCMP get serious about enforcing border, whale watch boats are on notice ([Times Colonist](#))

#### Education

- Western Washington University plans to begin fall with a mix of online and in-person classes. Some students who signed rental leases in the spring are stuck with paying for housing they no longer need. ([KING](#))
- What will Western Washington University on-campus housing be like when fall quarter begins? It's uncertain. ([Western Front](#))

## Government

- Living in the border community of Point Roberts has been like likened to living under "house arrest" due to pandemic restrictions by Point Roberts' fire chief Christopher Carleton who has appealed to President Trump and Prime Minister Trudeau for relief. His plea has been supported in a letter signed by Whatcom County executive Satpal Sidhu and the mayors of Bellingham, Lynden, Ferndale, Blaine, Nooksack, Everson and Sumas and sent to Governor Jay Inslee, Senators Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray, and U.S. Representatives Suzan DelBene and Rick Larson. ([All Point Bulletin](#))
- The San Juan County Council will hold an online public hearing on July 25 at 9:15 am to take public testimony on the proposed marijuana production and processing development regulations. The public comment period is open from July 29 through August 25. ([Orcas Issues](#))
- City of Bellingham: Bellingham City Council will meet next on Aug. 24 at 7 pm.
- Whatcom County: Whatcom County Council will meet next on Aug. 5 at 7 pm.
- Port of Bellingham: Port of Bellingham Board of Commissioners will meet next on Aug. 11 at 4 pm.

## Nature

- After decades of debate and nearly four years of construction, the \$775 million Victoria Capital Region tertiary sewage treatment plant will be operating by December 31. ([CTV News](#))
- A large cougar, also called a mountain lion, was seen prowling a backyard in the city of Bellingham this past weekend and photographed by the folks who live there. ([Northwest Citizen](#))

## Business

- The Whatcom County border town of Blaine was on the rise until the pandemic hit. ([NY Times](#))
- Seeds Bistro & Bar, Whitey's BBQ & Catering, Pelindaba Lavender, Les Femmes, Indigo Stitch, Cottons, La Conner Sweet Shoppe, the LUX Art Center and Bears 'N Friends — these LaConner businesses close because of the pandemic. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

- Erika Lautenbach, Whatcom County Health Department Director, reported that 1,247 Whatcom County businesses have requested information posters and decals from the Safe & Stronger campaign developed by the department and the Employer Support Task Force for customers and employees. ([Bellingham City Council 7/20/20 meeting draft minutes](#))

## Community

- Blaine police chief Donnell Tanksley has suspended the use of the vascular neck restraint by Blaine police officers until further review of the technique. ([The Northern Light](#))
- Bellingham police officers agree that they need to improve many of the underlying problems that afflict U.S. law enforcement. But they disagree with the method of taking away funding from them to reallocate to other areas. ([Western Front](#))
- The City of Bellingham is partnering with Western Washington University, Whatcom County, Lummi Nation and others to scheduled virtual 'listening sessions' on systemic racism in Whatcom County. To participate, go to the Bellingham city link. To watch or listen only, the meetings will be live on BTV television, Comcast channels 10 and 321, and on the city's [YouTube channel](#). (Bellingham Herald)
  - 7-9 p.m. Tuesday, July 28. [cob.org/listen0728](http://cob.org/listen0728), meeting ID 958 0522 4763, password 123
  - 6-8 p.m. Monday, Aug. 10. [cob.org/listen0810](http://cob.org/listen0810), meeting ID 997 6322 7294, password 123
  - 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Aug. 15. [cob.org/listen0818](http://cob.org/listen0818), meeting ID 977 0880 4687, password 123
  - 5-7 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. [18.cob.org/listen0818](http://18.cob.org/listen0818), meeting ID 977 0880 4687, password 123

\* \* \*

*Like this newsletter? Share it. And it's easy to subscribe by reply mail. Your email address will never be shared — and you can unsubscribe at any time. Mike Sato.*

\* \* \*

*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.*

Facebook: [Salish Current](#)

Email: [SalishCurrent@gmail.com](mailto:SalishCurrent@gmail.com)

Twitter: [@currentsalish](#)

Website: [salish-current.org](http://salish-current.org)