



News from the *Salish Current* for the week ending Aug. 21, 2020:

[Back to learning, back to school to happen
in the shadow of COVID-19](#)



Buses will stay in the garage as school begins — online — this year for public school students and teachers across the region. (Amy Nelson photo © 2020)

By Genevieve Iverson

Coronavirus has this fall replaced the excitement of starting a new school year — new books and pens, new lesson plans, and, most of all, classes and classmates — with an air of uncertainty. Parents, teachers and students are taking things day by day, waiting for more information about how the school year will look. After COVID-19 shutdowns last spring forced schools to remote learning, many district teachers are still planning curriculums. [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

- A new fence of metal posts and four strands of cable has been installed along Boundary Road on the American side of the international border to deal with "binational safety concerns" according to the US Border Patrol, and to keep vehicles from crashing across the border accidentally or on purpose. ([Vancouver Sun](#))

Education

- British Columbia will ban about 30 Point Roberts students who go to school from home and back in Canada from entry because they cannot comply with the country's 14-day quarantine rule. ([All Point Bulletin](#))
- A union representing Blaine school district service employees announced to its members in an Aug. 18 letter that the district plans major layoffs that could affect dozens of employees, including bus drivers and food service employees. ([Northern Light](#))

Elections

- Final election certification has determined that Skagit County commissioner Ken Dahlstedt who has represented District 2 for 20 years has lost in the primary race to Peter Browning and Mary Hudson who will advance to the general election. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Government

- "What Policing Costs: A Look at Spending in America's Biggest Cities," a report by the Vera Institute of Justice, doesn't include Bellingham as one of America's biggest cities but provides a way of looking at how to spend less on policing and more on communities. ([Vera Institute of Justice](#))
- Skagit County commissioners began discussing this week changes to the county code that range from whether to enforce restrictions on the digging of new wells on Guemes Island to whether to protect great blue heron nesting sites. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))
- City of Bellingham
The next meeting of the Bellingham City Council is scheduled for Aug. 24 at 2 pm and 7 pm. ([Agenda](#))

- (22007) Bellingham Municipal Broadband: Access, Equity and Affordability: Draft [resolution](#) for discussing a study and a workgroup to advise the Council on policy questions regarding using the city's broadband resources to help businesses.
- (22723) Discussion of 24/7 Crisis Response for Mental Health, Substance Use, and Other Public Health Needs. The Committee for Public Health, Safety, and Justice discusses the community need for 24/7 crisis response and 911 call center functionality with examples from Eugene, OR, Albuquerque, NM, Denver, CO, and Portland, OR. [Memorandum](#).
- (22726) Discussion of a Police Civilian Oversight Board. The council will begin discussion of whether a civilian oversight board that oversees certain aspects of police activity or increase police accountability would be appropriate for Bellingham. [Report: Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement](#)
- (22728) Discussion of Local Listening Series on Race and Justice and Next Steps. All sessions were open to the public and aired live on BTV and the City's [YouTube channel](#).
- Council meetings are streamed live via the City's website at [meetings.cob.org](#) and on the City's YouTube channel. Meetings are broadcast in high definition on BTV on Comcast channel 321, and in standard definition on Comcast channel 10.
- Whatcom County
The next Whatcom County Council meeting is scheduled for Sept. 15 at 7 pm. There will be a discussion on the budget. [Click here to participate](#).

Nature

- On Thursday, the Washington Department of Agriculture reported two more Asian giant hornets in the Birch Bay area in addition to the [seventh hornet found](#) earlier this week near Custer. One hornet was trapped and another was photographed but flew off before it could be collected. [\(My Ferndale News\)](#)

Business

- The Joint Transportation Committee of the Washington State Legislature is conducting a [study](#) exploring privatization of the Sidney ferry run which currently connects Sidney, BC and Anacortes, WA, with a stop in Friday Harbor, WA via Washington State Ferries.
- Whatcom County and Petrogas Energy Corp. will head to court to settle a dispute worth \$10 million or more over property Values at Cherry Point from 2016 to 2019. [\(Bellingham Herald\)](#)

Community

- Point Roberts residents might find some relief from their border isolation when the Port of Bellingham and Whatcom Transit begin a once weekly free shuttle on Aug. 25 connecting Point Roberts with Blaine by ferry shuttle and Blaine Marina with Cordata Station in Bellingham by bus. Reservations required. [\(Whatcom Talk\)](#) Meanwhile, Governor Jay Inslee has sent a [letter](#) to Canada's premier Justin Trudeau asking for cooperation in solving the Point Roberts border dilemma.

- Laverne Dwight Lewis, 78, of Lopez, has been charged with two counts of assault in the second degree; two counts of reckless endangerment; one count of malicious mischief in the third degree; and one count of harassment in an attempt to destroy a Black Lives Matter memorial in retaliation for repeated vandalization done to his Trump 2020 sign. ([Islands Weekly](#))
- The city of Burlington will use a grant of \$250,000 from Skagit County to assist city businesses to connect to the city's high-speed municipal internet. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))
- Western Washington University's student newspaper, *The Front*, addresses its biases in its reporting and the ethnic diversity of its newsroom staff. ([Western Front](#))
- Lynden's Northwest Washington Fair will expand to 10 days in 2021 despite protests from Skagit County Fair organizers and supporters that the resulting conflict will damage the Skagit fair. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))
- 2020 county census response rate for Whatcom County is 71.4%, of which 62.8% were done by internet. As of last Saturday, Whatcom County was in eighth place among Washington countries for level of response. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))
- The city of Bellingham has extended cancellation of all city and city-permitted events, activities, and facility reservations through the end of this year to continue efforts to reduce the spread of COVID-19. ([Whatcom Talk](#))

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