

Salish Current

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

Dear Readers — As the end of March approaches so do the seasonal appeals for donations to support the many good causes that make our communities good places to live. Called “Spring fund drives” they come with the forsythia, the cherry blossoms, the daffodils and tulips. Whether you donate and how much you donate are, of course, entirely up to you and your circumstances—but when you donate, whether monthly or annually, you are in essence voting for what you deem important to you and your community. We would like to think that you find *Salish Current* important to you and your community by introducing us to others and by supporting us with a [donation](#). And we will do our best to live up to that trust and belief. Thank you — **Amy Nelson, Publisher, and Mike Sato, Managing Editor.**

News from the Salish Current, March 26, 2021

['Crazy' high school sports seasons arrive ... better late than never](#)



Emptied by the COVID-19 pandemic, high school stadiums throughout Whatcom County are beginning to welcome back spectators to the bleachers and athletes on the field, as public health restrictions ease.

By Matt Benoit — High school athletics have finally returned after being delayed through the first half of academic calendars by COVID-19 restrictions. ([Read more.](#))

[Community Voices / Clyde Ford on speaking up and raising eyebrows](#)

By Clyde W. Ford — I grew up in New York City, then moved to Whatcom County, just outside of Bellingham, in 1990. My East Coast friends cautioned me that the Pacific Northwest was not steeped in diversity — and, boy, were they right! ([Read more.](#))

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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

Whatcom health officials have traced a recent surge in COVID-19 cases among Western Washington University students to at least two large parties: one on March 10 and another on March 12. ([Western Front](#))

Whatcom County Health Department Director Erika Lautenbach reported that county COVID have declined in those over 60 years of age but 18- to 39-year-olds have the highest rates of infection.

As of March 20, Whatcom County Health Department's report by local school district cases per 100,000: Lynden (301), Nooksack (190), Ferndale (188), Meridian (111), Blaine (80), Bellingham (76) and Mount Baker (31). ([The Northern Light](#))

Katz! Coffee and Used Books in downtown Lynden, Z Recyclers on Guide Meridian Road and Fairway Café in Lynden have been fined by the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) for COVID-19-related violations. Other Lynden businesses have been given notice by the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board. Both Katz! and Z Recyclers face fines of just under \$20,000. L&I reports it fined Fairway Cafe \$91,473 in early January for eight different COVID-19-related violations. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

Dr. Frank James will serve as Medical Director for the Island Primary Care – Orcas clinic opening April 1. He will continue as San Juan County Health Officer, a position he's held since 1994. ([Island Hospital/San Juan Journal](#))

Whatcom County 3/26/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Very high risk 9.5/100K

San Juan County 3/26/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Medium risk 3.3/100K

Skagit County 3/26/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Medium risk 7.0/100K

Government

San Juan County

The San Juan County Charter Review Commission held two local community meetings on March 12 and 13. A list of topics discussed and videos are available on the [commission website](#). ([San Juan Journal](#))

City of Bellingham

The Bellingham City Council met on March 22. [Agenda items](#) included:

Alan Marriner was appointed City Attorney replacing Peter Ruffatto who has retired.

[\[22930\]](#) City staff briefed the Council on the Housing and Urban Development Action Plan with a PowerPoint presentation.

The city will receive approximately \$21 million dollars from the latest stimulus package.

[\[22942\]](#) The Council awarded a bid of \$1,219,714 to Faber Brothers Corporation for Squalicum Creek Phase 4 construction of a youth baseball field and infiltration facilities in Squalicum Creek Park, a community park located between the Birchwood and Columbia neighborhoods. (6-0-1, Vargas excused)

Councilmembers Lisa Anderson and Michael Lilliquist moved to direct staff to write an ordinance for grocery workers' hazard pay with changes and to bring changes back to the next council meeting on April 12 for a work session. (5-1-1, Knutson opposed, Vargas excused)

The council passed (Vargas excused) an ordinance imposing an additional sales and use tax of one-tenth of one percent for housing and related services.

The next council meeting is scheduled for April 12.

Whatcom County

The Whatcom County Council met on March 23. [Agenda items](#) included:

The Council adopted an additional sales and use tax of one-tenth of one percent for housing and related services. (4-3, Byrd, Elenbaas, Kirchner opposed)

[AB2021-165] The Council approved a [proposed charter](#) for the SWISS (Snohomish, Whatcom, Island, Skagit and San Juan) group. (4-2-1, Elenbaas and Kirchner oppose; Byrd abstain)

[AB2021-190] The Council approved for public hearing a [proposed ordinance](#) imposing an interim moratorium on the acceptance and processing of applications and permits for new or expanded outdoor recreational cannabis growing and/or processing facilities. (6-1, Elenbaas opposed)

[AB2021-171] The Council approved for public hearing an [ordinance](#) granting Trans Mountain Pipeline (Puget Sound) LLC, a non-exclusive franchise for pipeline facilities. (7-0)

The next council meeting is scheduled for April 6.

Nature

The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Program granted \$1 million to the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians for Port Susan Bay restoration and \$875,000 for a restoration project led by the Skagit Land Trust between Samish and Padilla bays. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Researchers, tribes and volunteers are working to fight the invasion of European green crabs on Washington shores. ([The Planet Magazine](#))

Seattle-based Oceans Initiative and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife are testing an underwater alarm to see if sound deters seals at Whatcom Creek from eating returning salmon. ([The Planet Magazine](#))

The Anacortes City Council will join other local governments to oppose a proposed copper mine in the headwaters of the Skagit River. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))

Business

Gerardo Rodarte, owner of Samish Gold Seafoods in Bow, received the Business Achievement Award at the annual Latino Legislative Day Civic Awards ceremony. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Suzanne Smith lives in British Columbia, owns Betty Be Good clothing stores in Lynden and Blaine, and has crossed the border up to twice a week as an essential traveler over the past year of pandemic shutdown. ([KNKX](#))

The once-moribund Port Townsend & Jefferson County Leader has begun to restore solid local journalism to a town where readers had begun to wonder if they would ever see news again in a community newspaper. ([Rainshadow Journal](#))

Ferry ridership in the San Juans has nearly returned to its pre-pandemic levels, but the service isn't expected to change much, even as Washington State Ferries switches to a new peak season schedule on May 9. ([San Juan Journal](#))

Contaminated property at Weeks Garage, which operated from the '40s on Lopez Island, will require cleanup and remediation as a toxic waste site after auction. ([San Juan Journal](#))

Community

Whatcom County closed bids for community outreach, research, and proposal development for the establishment of a countywide [Racial Equity Commission](#). The bids were not to exceed \$90,000 for a contract from May 1 – Dec. 31, 2021.

Take a look into the current state of the Bellingham affordable housing crisis and how local groups are helping those in need. ([Klipsun Magazine](#))

Check out what volunteers are doing to address the homeless crisis at the [Opportunity Council Whatcom Homeless Service Center](#) and learn how you can help.

[Register](#) for Racial Unity Now's presentations featuring Angela Tucker, who has been called "America's most recognizable voice in transracial adoption," in "Identity Belonging," online on April 1 (The first program was held on March 25.) ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

Jump In!

The Bellingham Food Bank is currently seeking Spanish-speaking candidates for a Distribution Assistant position. For details and an application, [go here](#).

Jump into the Salish Sea on four Monday evenings beginning April 12 from 7-9 p.m. by subscribing to the [Wonders of the Salish Sea](#), an environmental adult education program, presented for \$25 via Zoom.

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