

Salish Current

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

Dear Readers — We sincerely apologize for screwing up the name of reporter **Heather Spaulding** in last week's newsletter. If you haven't read [her story on opioid addiction](#) in this time of COVID, please do so. This week we feature a story about the ups and downs of the town of Sumas on the northern border of Whatcom County. It's written by one of our steady-on freelancers, **Matt Benoit**, who's written a wide range of stories for us and knows the neighborhood well. Please share these stories with others to help build our readership, and please make a [donation](#) to help pay our freelancers for their work. Thank you — **Amy Nelson, Publisher, and Mike Sato, Managing Editor**

News from the *Salish Current*, April 23, 2021

[Sumas, border town of boom and bust, stays hopeful](#)



Sumas keeps its welcome mat out, with plans to restart major community events this year. The town has seen both boom and bust over the last 130 years.

By Matt Benoit — The main thoroughfare through Sumas on its way to the Canadian border isn't seeing much traffic since the COVID-19 pandemic forced closure of the crossing to all but essential traffic. Although home to 1,700 people and growing, "closed" signs and empty storefronts give the impression of a town in decline. ([Read more.](#))

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

The U.S./Canada border remains closed except for essential traffic until May 21.

Whatcom County 4/23/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk 15.9/100K
San Juan County 4/23/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Medium risk 6.5/100K
Skagit County 4/23/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk 18.1/100K

Education

New student enrollment for the fall 2021 quarter at Western Washington University, not fully known until May, is a major factor in determining the institution's operating budget. ([Western Front](#))

Government

City of Lynden

Sales tax revenue for the city in March totaled \$323,000, the largest March amount ever. Analysis indicates that two-thirds of sales are made online for products from outside Lynden, and increased sales can be attributed to federal stimulus checks that have injected about \$20 million into Lynden. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

City of Everson

The West Everson Flint Annexation by the City of Everson is proceeding for 103 acres west of the city extending west of the existing Sable Terrace development and south of Everson-Goshen Road (State Route 544) and Van Dyk Road. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

City of Bellingham

The Bellingham City Council will meet on April 26. [Agenda items](#) include:

[22599] Public Hearing on an Emergency Ordinance Imposing and Extending a Moratorium on the Processing of Applications for Detached Single-Family Development in Multi-Family Zones

[22929] Public Hearing to Consider Forming a Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism Promotion Area

[22953] Public Hearing to Consider a Hazard Pay Ordinance for Grocery Workers

[22971] The Public Health, Safety and Justice Committee will be briefed on the [Fire Department Strategic Plan](#)

[22972] The Committee of the Whole will discuss and vote on an Interlocal Agreement with Whatcom County to Support, Develop and Fund a Process to Create Recommendations on the Establishment of a [Countywide Racial Equity Commission](#)

[22198] Consider an Interlocal Agreement with Whatcom County for Ground Level Response and Coordinated Engagement ([GRACE](#))

[22025] Vote on Extension and Renewal of an [Ordinance](#) Establishing a Moratorium on Development Applications and Permits Relating to the Redevelopment of the Manufactured Home Parks in Bellingham

Whatcom County

The Whatcom County Council met on April 20. [Agenda items](#) included:

[20221-171] The Council adopted (6-1, Donovan opposed) a substitute [ordinance](#) granting Trans Mountain Pipeline (Puget Sound) LLC, a nonexclusive franchise for pipeline facilities

[2021-230] The Council adopted (5-2, Kershner and Elenbaas opposed) a substitute [ordinance](#) imposing an interim moratorium on the acceptance and processing of permit applications for new or expanded recreational cannabis growing and/or processing facilities which are proposed to operate outdoors or in greenhouses

[2021-246] Authorized (7-0) the County Executive to enter into a [contract](#) between Whatcom County and Chuckanut Health Foundation to create recommendations on the establishment of a countywide Racial Equity Commission in the amount of \$90,000

[2021-247] Authorized (7-0) the County Executive to enter into an [interlocal agreement](#) with the City of Bellingham to support, develop and fund a process to create recommendations on the establishment of a countywide Racial Equity Commission in an amount not to exceed \$45,000

[2021-227] The Council approved (5-2, Kershner and Elenbaas opposed) introduction for public hearing an [ordinance](#) imposing an interim moratorium on the acceptance and processing of applications and permits for new or expanded facilities in the Cherry Point urban growth area, the primary purpose of which would be the shipment of unrefined fossil fuels not to be processed at Cherry Point

Port of Bellingham

The Port of Bellingham met on April 20. [Agenda items](#) included:

Approved (3-0) a motion to write off the [delinquent account balances](#) for Bellhaven Inc. in the amount of \$26,775.26 and Seafarms International in the amount of \$17,365.74. Bellhaven Inc. was a charter company owing for two months of moorage space. Seafarms International was a commercial vessel being charged recreational rates for moorage; it ran up a balance and then departed.

Approved (3-0) a [resolution](#) authorizing the Executive Director to purchase a used LHM 420 Harbour Crane from the U.S. General Services Administration (via Washington State Office of Enterprise Services) at a "tax-free" price of \$ 151,000 plus funds of \$843,515 (including a 10% contingency) to partially disassemble, load and transport the crane from its current location to the Bellingham Shipping Terminal.

Approved (3-0) a motion authorizing the Executive Director to enter into a \$100,000 [grant agreement](#) with the U.S. Department of Agriculture for funding the Whatcom County Rural Energy Audit Program to develop a local program called Energize Whatcom which will deliver education and energy audits to small businesses throughout rural areas of the county.

Approved (3-0) appropriating \$75,738.51 that was donated to the Port to construct the [Peter Paulson Stage](#) near the digesters in the Waterfront District.

Elections

Blaine mayor Bonnie Onyon who has served eight years as mayor will not be running for reelection. ([The Northern Light](#))

Nature

Bellingham Technical College biology students are working at the fish hatchery at the mouth of Whatcom Creek to increase salmon runs to help save endangered Salish Sea orca whales. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Business

The Northwest Clean Air Agency Tuesday issued a violation notice against the Shell Puget Sound Refinery on Skagit County's March Point near Anacortes for the release of emissions which impacted the surrounding community, including the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, in August and September. ([Associated Press](#))

Local boat retailers report that boat sales have increased sharply since the start of the pandemic, causing new boats and engines to go on back-order for months. ([The Northern Light](#))

Will the visitors this month to the Skagit Valley tulip farms help the businesses in downtown Mount Vernon which has struggled during the pandemic? ([KUOW](#))

Commentary

According to David Buerge, "the Salish Sea is a misnomer. The geographic term was put forward in 1988 by Bellingham marine biologist [Bert] Webber who, to focus popular attention on environmental issues confronting the region, believed that a single name would be more effective than having to separately identify the Georgia Strait, the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Puget Sound (which extends southward from Port Townsend). The idea is sound; the use of the term is not." ([Post Alley](#))

Community

Lummi Nation House of Tears Carvers, led by Master Carver Jewell Praying Wolf James, have started out on the West Coast Tour of the Red Road to D.C. journey to highlight the need to protect and restore sacred lands, landscapes and waterways. The National Journey will begin in July and cross the country to deliver a totem pole to President Biden. Follow the [Red Road to DC](#) and follow on [Facebook](#).

Anacortes Police Chief John Small will retire on July 1 after four years of service. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

A \$1 surcharge on most ferry trips on the *Whatcom Chief* to Lummi Island will begin May 17 to build a \$35 million dedicated fund to help pay for a new ferry and modifications to the ferry. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

The Northwest Washington Fair will be held this year and follow state guidelines by limiting attendance to 9,000. ([Whatcom Talk](#))

Founder Saul Weisberg is retiring in June after 35 years of leading the North Cascades Institute. His retirement and NCI's journey will be celebrated as part of NCI's [Nature of Writing Speakers Series](#). ([Cascadia Weekly](#))

Jump In!

The Whale Museum hosts a zoom workshop at 6 p.m. on April 28 featuring Julie Watson from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife who will discuss progress since the governor's Orca Task Force delivered their 2019 report containing 49 recommendations for Southern Resident killer whale recovery. ([San Juan Update](#))

Arts & Leisure

Christine Perkins reviews Charles Yu's book *Interior Chinatown* which she describes as "a karate chop to the gut — an unexpected, powerful jab at stereotypes and anti-Asian racism that manages to be hilarious as well as heartbreaking." ([Cascadia Weekly](#))

"[Seeds of Culture: The Portraits and Stories of Native American Women](#)," a collection of 28 photographs and narratives by Tulalip-Swinomish artist [Matika Wilbur](#) can be seen through June 13 at the Whatcom Art Museum's Lightcatcher Building. ([Whatcom Talk](#))

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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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