

Salish Current

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

Dear Readers — This newsletter is posted every Friday afternoon but news needs to be reported when it happens. This week we used *Salish Current's* [Twitter feed](#) and its [Facebook page](#) to “break” **Alex Meacham's** story on Whatcom County vaccination rates reported by school districts for the first time, and **Stella Harvey's** story on what the community expects of a new Bellingham police chief, as soon as the nominees were announced. The stories by these fine freelancers are still newsworthy and can be read at your leisure. Also, take some time to read a thoughtful essay by **Allison Roberts** on an innovative local approach to carbon capture — the kind of Community Voices piece we welcome to these pages. These are the kinds of articles that help address the need for independent, local reporting for our community. We call it a public service, not a product, and hope you will encourage others to read *Salish Current* and to [support us](#). Thank you — **Amy Nelson**, Publisher, and **Mike Sato**, Managing Editor

News from the *Salish Current*, week of May 14, 2021

[Law and order, alternatives to jail: Bellingham compiles a wide-ranging priorities wish list for new police chief](#)



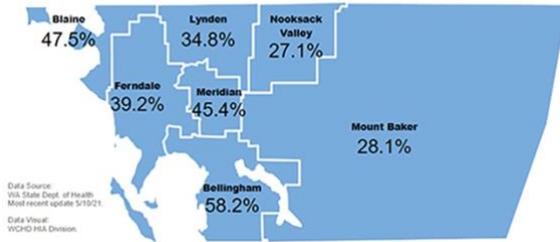
A Defund the Police march in mid-June 2020 (top image) and an encampment of people experiencing houselessness over the winter (lower image) brought two of the community's major issues to the steps of City Hall — issues that will likely land atop the priority list of Bellingham's new police chief.



By Stella Harvey — As Bellingham's search for a new police chief moves forward, the community has weighed in on what priorities should be under new leadership: some say law and order should top the list, others say it's time to reimagine policing. Four semifinalists were named this week and interviews begin next week. ([Read more.](#))

Who's getting their shots? Whatcom develops a new strategy for COVID-19 vaccinations

Whatcom County: Percent of Population who have Initiated COVID-19 Vaccination by Sub-County Area



Data on vaccination rates by school district is helping Whatcom County health officials fine-tune the strategy for reaching more people who want the COVID-19 vaccine. (Whatcom County Department of Health chart)

By Alex Meacham — Whatcom County health officials are now reporting COVID-19 vaccine

rates in the county by school district, enabling a new, more strategic approach to making vaccine opportunities available to reach the largest number of people and those with access problems. ([Read more.](#))

Community Voices / Local team launches innovative approach to help curb climate change



Acres of trees represent the promise of an innovative new approach to helping to curb climate change. Conceived by professors at Western Washington University, the idea for carbon conservation trusts borrows from the land trust model and could work in forested or other environments across the globe. (Allison Roberts photo © 2021)

By Allison Roberts with reporting by Kiahna White-Alcain — We

must act, not just worry, and use as many solutions to curb climate change as we can, say a team of professors, graduate fellows, student interns and sustainability professionals working on one solution for Whatcom County — a solution that can be replicated everywhere. ([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

Everyone who's 12 or older is now eligible for vaccine. Pfizer is currently the only vaccine available for anyone under 18. ([Whatcom County Health Department](#))

Whatcom County 5/14/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk 17.4/100K; 47% vaccinated
San Juan County 5/14/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Medium risk 3.3/100K; 65.8% vaccinated
Skagit County 5/14/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk 13.3/100K; 45.9% vaccinated

Government

San Juan County

The San Juan County Charter Review Commission has begun discussing and voting on recommendations from its subcommittees' proposed changes to the county's charter in advance of its next scheduled public town hall meetings on June 1 and 2 and presentation to the county council on June 8. ([San Juan Journal](#))

City of Bellingham

The Bellingham City Council met on May 10. [Agenda items](#) included:

The Council (7-0) directed city staff to partner with Puget Sound Energy (PSE) on the development of a [PSE community solar program](#).

The Council approved (7-0) an [ordinance](#) to reduce single-use plastic waste and encourage compostable or reusable alternatives.

The Council approved (7-0) final considerations of an ordinance to extend the moratorium on development of existing mobile home parks by six months; approved (7-0) an ordinance establishing a Bellingham-Whatcom County Tourism Promotion Area; and approved (5-2, Knutson and Vargas opposed) an ordinance establishing additional compensation for certain grocery workers.

The city of Bellingham's six-year draft [Transportation Improvement Program \(TIP\)](#) is available for public review in advance of a public hearing at the May 24 City Council meeting. The Council is scheduled to vote on the TIP on June 7.

Whatcom County

The Whatcom County Council will meet on May 18. [Agenda items](#) include:

[AB2021-227] The Council will hold a public hearing on 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.

[AB2021-185, AB2021-186] The Council will hold public hearings on an [ordinance](#) amending Whatcom County Code 9.32, Unlawful Discharge of Firearms, to establish a no-shooting zone in the Drayton Harbor area of Whatcom County and on an [ordinance](#) amending Whatcom County Code 9.32, Unlawful Discharge of Firearms, to establish a no-shooting zone to be known as the Dearborn No Shooting Zone.

Port of Bellingham

The Port of Bellingham Commissioners will meet on May 18. [Agenda items](#) include:

Commission approval of a one-year [contract renewal option](#) with SP Plus Corporation (SP+) for Bellingham Airport parking with no increase in management fees for a total contract amount of \$476,766.

Commission approval to amend the [Professional Services Agreement](#) with Landau Associates to perform the remedial design and permitting for the Central Waterfront cleanup site in the amount of \$419,500 for a total authorized budget of \$969,170.

Commission approval to amend the [Professional Services Agreement](#) with Landau Associates for consulting support at the Blaine Marina Inc. cleanup site in the amount of \$155,200 for a total authorized budget of \$1,767,340.

Commission approval of a [rental rate](#) of \$50 per day for each of two dedicated food truck pads at the Port's Waterfront District.

Elections

Candidate filing week is May 17-21; information is available at county auditor offices.

Nature

The Lummi Nation's appeal of Whatcom County's permit to dredge the entrance to the privately owned Sandy Point Marina will be heard by the hearing examiner on June 15. ([Whatcom News](#))

Peter Cavanagh of Lopez Island has taken 600,000 photos in the past 13 years of birds all over the world. ([Seattle Times](#))

The 89-year-old 70-foot wooden-hulled yacht Norwester went aground in the San Juan islands in April and by May 8 the vessel was adrift and sinking. ([San Juan Islander](#))

Investigation by the state Fish and Wildlife department attributes the cause of death of 10 deer

in the Spring Point Road area of Orcas Island as ingestion of fertilizer or yard-care spray. ([Orcasonian](#))

Business

Seattle City Light's expanded study plan for the relicensing of its Skagit River dams drew negative and dissatisfied responses from government agencies, tribes and nonprofits. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

A "container village" of businesses spawned from an idea Port of Bellingham commissioner Ken Bell learned about when visiting New Zealand will begin serving customers at the Port's waterfront development site. ([KGMI](#))

The Blaine City Council was undeterred by strong opposition to its 5-acre annexation in the H Street neighborhood and voted 6-0 to proceed. ([Northern Light](#))

State legislators on April 24 approved a \$6.3 billion capital construction budget for 2021-23, allocating \$411 million for local broadband infrastructure projects — more money for broadband than ever before. The funding is expected to expand fiber-optic infrastructure and speed up delivery of high-speed internet to areas with limited service. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Commentary

Two Western Washington University Huxley College professors argue on behalf of Thomas Huxley in the "cancel-culture" campaign against the college's namesake. ([Seattle Times](#))

Jump in!

Whatcom County elected officials and local and regional service organization representatives will hold an online community visioning summit for the newly established Racial Equity Commission on May 22. ([Chuckanut Health Foundation](#))

Sign in and download the Northwest Straits Foundation's Passport to Marine Adventure travel game and explore the beautiful shores and bays of the Salish Sea. ([NW Straits Foundation](#))

Help support the Birchwood Food Desert Fighters who are working to create accessible, affordable, sustainable, and culturally appropriate food access in the Birchwood neighborhood "food desert." Get more info and donate on their [GoFundMe page](#).

Community

Skagit County commissioners approved studies of potential policies that would allow what is called “fully-contained urban communities” on rural land. ([Skagit valley Herald/paywall](#))

The Blaine Senior Center will begin gym activities on May 17 in a first step to reopening its doors. ([Northern Light](#))

Anacortes City Council members unanimously approved a proposal to give some land at the end of 11th Street to property owners Wynns and Ortman in exchange for an easement allowing for a future expansion of the Guemes Island Trail. ([Anacortes American](#))

Arts & Leisure

Western Washington University Associate Professor of Journalism Maria McLeod has won the 2020 WaterSedge Poetry Chapbook Contest which will publish her first book, “Mother Want.” Another chapbook of McLeod’s poetry, “Skin. Hair. Bones.”, will be in print this fall. ([Western Today](#))

The Bellingham Festival of Music will resume live concerts at the WWU Performing Arts Center July 10 through 18, with three orchestral and two chamber music programs under the artistic direction of conductor Michael Palmer. ([Festival of Music](#))

The fifth annual Cascadia International Women’s Film Festival is being held online May 13 through 22. Festival passes are \$60 (\$35 for students), feature films can be viewed for \$12 each. Find program and ticket information [here](#).

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.

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