Salish Current

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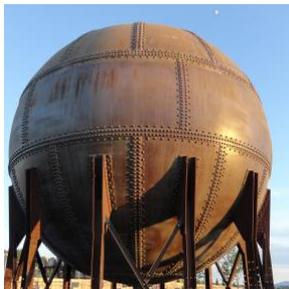
Dear Readers —

Like many of you, we are getting used to being out and about more these days and enjoying more social occasions — as well as coming to appreciate reacquainting ourselves with the lower halves of people's faces. The vaccine gold star goes to San Juan County with a 72% vaccination rate. Well done, islanders! We encourage you to help anyone in Whatcom and Skagit counties who has not been vaccinated to get vaccinated: we can do better than the 57% and 53% rates, respectively, we are at. Nobody can make anybody get a treatment that they don't want but if someone wants to be vaccinated, help them get the shot. And, while you're at it, welcome them to the *Salish Current* community and help them subscribe to this newsletter. Thank you for reading and for your support.

— **Amy Nelson, Publisher, and Mike Sato, Managing Editor**

News from the Salish Current, week of June 18, 2021

Efficiency, diversity, integrity: how many port commissioners to best serve Whatcom County?

The Acid Ball at Waypoint Park dwarfs the waxing moon on a summer evening. The waterfront park occupies land formerly used as an industrial site during much of the last 100 years and is one of many properties owned or managed by the Port of Bellingham. The port acquired the property in 2005, and dedicated a public easement for the park to the City of Bellingham in 2017.

By Alex Meacham — As Whatcom County voters prepare to assess candidates vying for two of three seats on the Port of Bellingham Board of Commissioners and four of seven county council positions, some are once again raising the question of whether the area would be better served by a larger port board. (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

Bill Blair, Canadian Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, announced today via Twitter that Canada is extending restrictions on nonessential international travel to the United States until July 21.

The San Juan County health order requiring the wearing of masks by customers indoors in businesses and other public spaces will end on June 27. (*Orcasonian*)

How well has Washington state's extreme risk protection order, commonly known as ERPO — a two-stage, civil legal process to remove guns from peoples' possession under certain circumstances and prevent them from purchasing or having access to new firearms for one year — been working? (*The News Tribune*) Also see: "As gun death rates rise in Whatcom, Skagit and San Juan counties, state refocuses to public health approach" (*Salish Current* June 11, 2021)

Whatcom County 5/21/21 COVID ActNow Medium risk; 5.5/100K; 57.4% vaccinated
San Juan County 5/21/21 COVID ActNow Low risk; 0.0/100K; 72.7% vaccinated
Skagit County 5/21/21 COVID ActNow Medium risk; 5.0/100K; 53.2% vaccinated

Education

The Swinomish Tribe and the La Conner School District will evaluate whether to continue using the "Braves" as the La Conner school mascot. (*Skagit Valley Herald*/paywall)

Government

San Juan County

The San Juan County Commissioners met on June 15. Agenda items included:

The Council discussed their concerns regarding costs and authority of a Charter Amendment Committee recommendation creating a new Office of Climate and Environment with an elected commissioner. The Council voted (3-0) to hold a public hearing on July 13 to discuss a possible charter amendment by the council. [1:43]

Bellingham

The City Council will meet on June 21. Agenda items include:

[23021] Public Hearing: Ordinance extending the moratorium on the processing of development applications and permits relating to the redevelopment of existing mobile home parks

[23023] Public Works & Natural Resources Committee: Report from the June 2 Lake Whatcom Policy Group Meeting

[23026] Public Works & Natural Resources Committee: Discussion about Renewing the Cascade Natural Gas and Olympic Pipeline Franchises to Operate and Maintain their Respective Pipeline Facilities within Bellingham Rights-of-Way and Public Property

[23032] Committee of the Whole: Ordinance to establish a new fund for the Affordable Housing Sales Tax, add revenues and expenditures for that fund, and add 1.0 FTE Contract Specialist to support new programming.

[23033] Committee of the Whole: Consideration of Proposals to Amend the City Charter Signature Requirements for Ballot Initiatives and Charter Amendments by the Petition Method: City Charter Section 13.02 and City Charter Section 10.02

[23015] Committee of the Whole: Discussion of Options for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement in Bellingham

[22953] Committee of the Whole: Review of an Ordinance Relating to Employment in Bellingham; Establishing Labor Standards Requirements for Additional Compensation for Certain Grocery Employees Working in Bellingham

The City Council is next scheduled to meet on July 12.

Whatcom County

The Council met on June 15. Agenda items included:

[AB2021-322] By consent agenda: Authorized (7-0) the County Executive to enter into a contract between the Whatcom County and the Executive Office of the President for a grant award for funding from the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) program in the amount of $205,073.

[AB2021-324] Authorized (7-0) the County Executive to enter into Local Agency Agreement Supplement No. 4 between Whatcom County and the Washington State Department of Transportation for the Birch Bay Drive and Pedestrian Facility Project in the amount of $1,100,000

[AB2021-331] Authorized (5-0-2, Browne and Frazey abstaining) the County Executive to award bid #21-26 and enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Tiger Construction LTD for the Plantation Indoor Range HVAC and Roof Replacement, in the amount of $1,032,352.54

[AB2021-330] Approved (7-0) to change the Economic Development Investment (EDI) funding request from the Port of Bellingham from $6 million to $2 million. Approved (7-0) that before they can accept the grant, the Port of Bellingham must come back to the Council with a plausible explanation of how they are going to do the last mile.

[AB2021-279] Ordinance submitting to the qualified voters of Whatcom County a proposal to amend Whatcom County Charter Section 8.22 to align requirements for amending the Charter by citizen initiative with Washington State norms failed to receive a supermajority vote. (Browne, Buchanan, Donovan, and Frazey aye; Byrd, Elenbaas, and Kershner nay)

The Council is next scheduled to meet on June 29.

Port of Bellingham

The Port Commission is next scheduled to meet on July 13.

State Legislature

The confusion created by Gov. Jay Inslee simultaneously signing two broadband funding bills passed by the state House and Senate was resolved this week by Secretary of State Kim Wyman who followed a court decision and entered SB5383 first and HB1336 second into the legislative record, giving precedence to HB1336, the newer bill entered. HB1336 gives the state's public utility and port districts "unrestricted authority" to offer broadband internet service. See also: "Major funding, new policies aim to provide 'basic necessity' of broadband" (*Salish Current,* May 26, 2021)

Elections

The Whatcom County-Bellingham League of Women Voters will be holding online candidate forums on July 7 from 6:30 to 8:15 p.m. (Whatcom Council District 3 and Port of Bellingham District 2) and on July 8 from 6 to 8:45 p.m. (Whatcom Council-At Large, Whatcom Council District 1, and Bellingham Council-At Large). The virtual forums can be seen live on the League's website, on the Bellingham City Channel and on YouTube and will be recorded for later viewing.

Nature

Four European green crabs were found for the first time in Bellingham's Squalicum Harbor in June. (*Bellingham Herald*/paywall)

The Skagit Watershed Council has released a story map about the Skagit River watershed. It explores how the watershed is unique and how people can celebrate and protect this special place for generations to come. (Skagit Watershed Council)

The hunt is on in Whatcom County for American bullfrogs which threaten smaller native frogs, waterfowl hatchlings such as mallard and wood ducks, and anything else they can fit into their big mouths. (*Bellingham Herald*/paywall)

A team of volunteers analyzing Anacortes stormwater system found that discharges from 8% of the city's 1,200 outfalls exceed state toxic thresholds. (*Anacortes American*/paywall)

Excavating and clearing the blockage in McCormick Creek, a tributary of Squalicum Creek in Whatcom County, opened up three additional kilometers of habitat for fish spawning upstream. (*The Planet)*

Whatcom County is scheduled to award a bid on June 22 for construction of a 4.6 hiking-only trail [EH1] connecting the Lake Whatcom Hertz Trail and the upland Chanterelle Trail.

Business

Southwest Airlines will begin flights out of Bellingham International Airport on Nov. 7 twice daily to Oakland and once daily to Las Vegas. (*Northern Light)*

The rental eviction moratorium is scheduled to end on June 30. [Renter](#) assistance is available, as is [landlord](#) assistance.

Here are the local, regional, national and international reasons for the increases in lumber prices. (*Lynden Tribune*/paywall)

Commentary

Marking June 15, the 162nd anniversary of the starting incident of the Pig War, Jean Godden explains why that is her favorite war. ([Post Alley](#))

Retired Lynden dairy farmer Marius "Mick" Vander Griend writes about the empty barn and the decline of the family dairy farm in Whatcom County due to financial income, the affordability of technology and government regulation. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

Community

The Skagit First Step Center in Burlington is now housing up to 20 people in small, free-standing shelter units and making mental health, substance abuse and homelessness services available. (*Skagit Valley Herald*/paywall)

People First Bellingham is collecting signatures for a slate of four ballot initiatives addressing renter protection, policing, right to organize and worker rights in the city of Bellingham. (*The Front*)

Lummi Nation tribal members are fighting for the return of Sk'aliCh'elh-tenaut, an orca who was stolen from the Salish Sea over 50 years ago. (*The Planet*)

Jump in!

Juneteenth Celebration 3-7 p.m. at Bellingham's Maritime Heritage Park: entertainment, dancing, community tables. Sponsored by Chuckanut Health Foundation, Community Food Coop, Whatcom Human Rights Task Force. [(Bellingham Unity Committee)](#)

Ambassador James F. Collins discusses "Can a Divided America Produce a 21st Century Foreign Policy?" at a free online City Club presentation at 12:10 p.m. on June 23. [Register](#) by midnight, Monday, June 21.

Check out the free online crabbing workshop presented by the Northwest Straits Foundation from 6-7 p.m. on June 30. [Register here.](#)

Summer's here at the Whatcom Community Library System and there's a full menu of events and programs to keep your mind and spirits hopping. [Check them out here.](#)

Bellingham Public Library's summer [reading program](#) kicked off June 1 for kids, teens and adults throughout Bellingham and Whatcom County. Make your summer reading cards with a steppingstone design and record your reading experiences.

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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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