

# **Salish Current**

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

Dear Readers —

Looks like it will be hot, unseasonably hot, for the next few days and we're going to do our best to be sure to hydrate and to stay as cool as possible. We hope you'll spend some time indoors so we're sending your way a story by **Stella Harvey** about Bellingham's police chief hiring process and some questions and concerns raised about transparency and public involvement. **Ella Banken** reports on activists racing the clock to gather sufficient petition signatures to put four initiatives on the City of Bellingham's November ballot. And we're proud to share a Juneteenth photo gallery by our summer intern **Teya Heidenreich**, a Western Washington University journalism school major. Lots to read so take a moment to stay cool and enjoy the stories, share them with others who value real news, and encourage others to subscribe to this newsletter. It's our community and [Salish Current](#) is a community service. Thank you for reading and for your [support](#).

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

News from the *Salish Current*, week of June 25, 2021

## [Search for new police chief surfaces questions about transparency and the public's role](#)



*While the City of Bellingham continues its search for a new police chief, questions about the level of transparency in the process have arisen for some in the community.*

*By Stella Harvey — As the City of Bellingham, city council and the newly formed Racial Equity Commission seek to address systemic racism in and out of policing, some community members looking to engage in the selection process for a new police chief in good faith have raised questions about the city's commitment to transparency. ([Read more.](#))*

## [Down to the wire, petitioners seek signatures to put initiatives on city ballot](#)



*With just a few more days to gather signatures from Bellingham voters, People First volunteers have devoted many hours to seeking signatures for four proposed initiatives around renter protections, workers' rights and restrictions on technology used by law enforcement; at left, one of a team sharing information with shoppers at the Lakeway Center.*

*By Ella Banken — Days away from a June 25 deadline, People First Bellingham is racing to collect signatures from Bellingham voters in order to get their slate of initiatives on November's ballot. ([Read more.](#))*

## [Local Juneteenth event celebrates diversity, freedom, challenge](#)



*Ebony and Miles Harris generated loud cheers with their vocals and Miles' guitar at Bellingham's Juneteenth celebration Saturday, June 19. The duo were among local and regional musicians who performed throughout the afternoon and evening.*

*By Teya Heidenreich — Black Lives Matter signs waved over the Maritime Heritage Park amphitheater and booths lined the concrete walkway on Saturday, June 19 — the fourth annual Juneteenth celebration in Bellingham. ([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**

Pressure is rising on both sides of the U.S./Canada border for Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and President Joe Biden to crack it open — even a little — or to provide something, anything, about what a reopening plan might look like. ([Washington Post](#))

Gov. Jay Inslee on Thursday blasted the continued closure of the border between the United States and Canada and the toll it is taking on the Washington community of Point Roberts. ([Seattle Times](#))

The owner of the only grocery store in the exclave of Point Roberts said she is tapped out and will have to close around July 15 unless the international border fully reopens or her business receives an emergency government bailout. ([NW News Network](#))

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

## **Government**

### San Juan County

Prompted by the Charter Review Commission proposal to create an Office of Climate and Environment headed by an independently elected director, the San Juan County Council showed support on June 15 for a new Environment and Climate Department having overall responsibility for managing and enforcing environmental regulations and responding to changing climate. ([San Juan Journal](#))

### Bellingham

The city council met on June 21. [Agenda items](#) included:

The council approved (7-0) the mayor's reappointment of Ada Rumford and Liz Darrow to their first full terms on the Immigration Advisory Board.

[23023] Public Works and Natural Resources Committee reviewed and discussed the 2021 city and county stormwater projects, an update on forest practices, the annual Lake Whatcom build-out report, Bloedel Donovan boat access issues, and topics for the next meeting.

[23026] Public Works and Natural Resources Committee: Staff provided information on renewing the Cascade Natural Gas and Olympic Pipeline franchises to operate and maintain on city property and rights-of-ways and will return with responses to Council questions.

[23030] Climate Action: Staff discussed progress on renewable energy, energy efficiency and conservation, transportation, green buildings, land use and waste reduction. The city has proposed discussion with the PUD regarding a large solar project.

[23033] Committee of the Whole: The council approved (6-1, Hammill opposed) directing staff to draft a resolution that would send a ballot proposal to Bellingham voters amending the city charter that removes existing language about extension of deadlines and reduces the required signature percentage down to 10% (instead of the proposed 8%) from the original 20% for ballot initiatives by the petition method.

[23015] Committee of the Whole: Staff presented options for civilian oversight of law enforcement in Bellingham and were directed to reach out to stakeholders and work with staff and the mayor's office on a timeline, then bring back to council for further consideration.

Council member Stone reported that Immigration Advisory Board drafted an ordinance that creates an Immigrant and Refugee Resource Center. After feedback and review from the legal department, the ordinance would be presented to administration and council for consideration and review.

The Council voted (6-1, Stone opposed) to negotiate with Whatcom County on an interlocal agreement for costs associated with prosecution, adjudication, and sentencing in criminal cases filed in district court if city council terminates the Bellingham Municipal Court.

The city council is next scheduled to meet on July 12.

### Whatcom County

The council will meet on June 29. [Agenda items](#) include:

The health department will present the Behavior Health Program Fund 2020 [Annual Report](#).

Consent Agenda: Authorize contacts to provide housing case management services with agencies: Opportunity Council, Catholic Community Services, Lydia Place, Northwest Youth Services and Cascade Connections.

Consent Agenda: Authorize contracts to provide services for individuals with developmental disabilities with Kulshan Supported Employment, Washington Vocational Services and Work Opportunities in the amounts of \$1,150,942, \$268,910 and \$686,136, respectively.

[\[AB2021-366\]](#) Natural Resources Committee: Discuss and vote on county Mineral Resource Lands inventory and designations.

[\[AB2021-303\]](#) Appoint Starck Follis and Carolyn Mason to the Criminal Justice Treatment Account panel.

The Council is next scheduled to meet on July 13.

### Port of Bellingham

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

### 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

Aimee Frazier and husband Peter have been stewards of Chuckanut Island at the Nature Conservancy's Cyrus Gates Memorial Preserve since 1996. They have seen the island change over time and worry about increasing human impact. [\(The Planet\)](#)

Barnaby Slough, a horseshoe-shaped side channel of the Skagit River near Rockport, has long been identified as important spawning and rearing habitat for salmon and is slated for restoration in early July. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

The Skagit Land Trust plans to expand the March Point heronry from its present 12.2-acre site with 700-plus nests by adding another 3.4 acres. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

### **Business**

Lynden Tribune editor Cal Bratt retires after four decades in the newspaper business. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

Bellingham International Airport will receive a \$4.5 million FAA Airport Rescue Grant as economic relief from impacts due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ([Whatcom News](#))

Port of Olympia Commissioners on Monday voted 2-1 to put to the voters on the November ballot a resolution to expand port districts and commission seats from three to five. ([The Olympian](#)) See also: Efficiency, diversity, integrity: how many port commissioners to best serve Whatcom County? ([Salish Current](#), 6/17/21)

### **Community**

The city of Anacortes is asking the community for donations to fund a \$140,000 display of the Tommy Thompson Train after the nonprofit Anacortes Railway Group withdrew its support of the project. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

### **Arts and Leisure**

Poems by 74 Whatcom County teenagers are collected in *A Forest of Words: 2021 Whatcom County Teen Poetry Anthology*, an annual publication of poems selected based on their strength, content and originality. ([Whatcom County Library System](#))

### **Jump in!**

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

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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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