

Salish Current

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

Dear Readers —

If there are any readers of [Salish Current](#) who have by chance *not* voted in next week's primary election or by chance *not* taken the opportunity to get vaccinated against COVID, tell us right now and we'll come on over like a good community member would and help you do both or either. Voting, COVID and the variants, fires and smoke are on our minds and we'd like to hear your thoughts so email or call us. In the meantime, **Elisa Claassen** has written about groundwater on Guemes Island, a place with a lot of history as well as being a great place to live and visit. **Ella Banken** gives an update on the People First initiatives going to Bellingham voters in November. **Kimberly Cauvel** reports on the big decision reached after many years on the future of the Cherry Point urban growth area. And remember to vote: Read the candidate forum summaries and make your choices. It's our community and [Salish Current](#) is a community service. Thank you for reading and check out [this place](#) where you can show your [support](#).

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

News from the *Salish Current*, week of July 30, 2021

[Water supply on Guemes: an island paradise faces challenges](#)



Guemes Island lies a short ferry ride away from Anacortes yet a world apart in some ways. Residents are facing the challenge of ensuring a supply of water for their island paradise, even as demands for water increase along with the numbers of residents and visitors.

By Elisa Claassen — More people and rising sea levels mean continuously increasing freshwater challenges on Guemes Island, compelling action on the part of individuals — and possibly government — to ensure enough water supply to meet demand. ([Read more.](#))

Years in the making, amendments ban new fossil fuel industries, new shipping terminals at Cherry Point



Along with a ban on new fossil fuel-based industries and shipping terminals at the waterfront Cherry Point industrial site, significant changes sought by industries already operating there will also require more intensive permitting. The changes are the result of amendments to the county's Comprehensive Plan approved unanimously by the Whatcom County Council.

By Kimberly Cauvel — No new oil, natural gas or coal-based industries will be allowed at Cherry Point west of Ferndale under Whatcom County's latest — and groundbreaking — Comprehensive Plan amendments, following a unanimous vote by the county council. ([Read more.](#))

People's choice: renter protections, police tech, workers' rights initiatives make November ballot



Grassroots support has paved the way for general election votes in Bellingham on four initiatives on renter protections, police tech and workers' rights.

By Ella Banken — After a major volunteer-led effort, four initiatives presented by People First Bellingham received enough verified signatures to be on November's ballot, even as some city council members expressed concern potential legal challenges the initiatives may present. ([Read more.](#))

Homelessness, fossil fuels, food deserts: primary candidates face the issues in Bellingham, Whatcom forums



With the 2021 primary election just around the corner, the League of Women Voters of Bellingham-Whatcom County has posted recordings from their recent candidate forums. (Salish Current photo © 2020)

By Mike Sato — Candidates in the 2021 primary election for Bellingham city and Whatcom county council positions answered questions on topics from homelessness to fossil fuel in forums hosted by the League of Women Voters of Bellingham-Whatcom County. ([Read more.](#))

Letters to the Editor

- 'Water Watcher' series details groundwater status on Lummi Island
- *Salish Current* makes for good Sunday reading

***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 and Safety

Proof of vaccination will be required for students to attend Western this fall. ([The Front](#)) All Washington state K-12 staff and students must continue to wear face coverings/masks, regardless of vaccination status. ([Dept. of Health](#))

San Juan County is among the nine state counties recommending mask-wearing in indoor public spaces regardless of vaccine status ([San Juan Journal](#)) Whatcom County Health Department chooses to emphasize vaccinations rather than masking. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#)) Skagit County health officer says vaccines are key, but masks offer extra protection ([Skaagit County Herald/paywall](#))

Whatcom County 7/30/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk; 9.8/100K; 69.8% vaccinated
San Juan County 7/30/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Medium risk; 2.4/100K; 74.8% vaccinated
Skagit County 7/30/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk; 9.8/100K; 59.1% vaccinated

Canadian border guards and customs officials voted on Tuesday to go on strike just days before fully vaccinated U.S. citizens and permanent residents will be allowed into Canada, but a spokesperson for the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) said 90% of the front-line border services officers have been identified as "essential" so will continue to work in the event of a strike. ([Reuters](#))

Education

Western Washington University's Legacy Review Task Force has unanimously recommended that the Board of Trustees remove T. H. Huxley's name from the College of the Environment in a report submitted to Western's President Sabah Randhawa and the Board of Trustees on June 14. The majority of the task force also recommended the removal of Edward T. Mathes and William Wade Haggard from their respective halls as well as the name "Viking" from Viking Union. ([The Front](#))

The Green Team Network program has been launched to support Whatcom County's elementary and middle schools in forming green teams, or groups of students advocating to make their schools and communities more sustainable. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Government

San Juan County

Four members of the San Juan County Charter Review Commission — Bill Appel, Paul Dossett, Tony Ghazel and Tom Starr — presented a [minority report](#) to the county commissioners detailing their objection to creating a Climate and Environmental Commission and to reducing the percentage of signatures for an initiative from 15% to 8% of the voters in the most recent gubernatorial election. The minority also did not support three recommended charter amendments and neither supported nor opposed one proposed amendment. ([San Juan Journal](#))

Bellingham

The Bellingham City Council met on July 26. [Agenda items](#) included:

The public comment period was suspended for the time being.

Mayor Seth Fleetwood spoke regarding new policing legislation. (See City of Bellingham [news release](#).)

[23059] Public Works and Natural Resources Committee: Proposed ordinance renewing the Cascade Natural Gas franchise. Staff ordinance will be revised and discussed at Aug. 2 meeting.

[23061] Planning Committee: Report on the status of the City's accessory dwelling unit ordinance. The Council voted on various motions directing the Planning Commission to consider changes that would improve ADU standards, permitting process, affordability and consistency with state legislation.

[23064] Committee of the Whole: The Council voted 7-0 to support the new proposed opiate addiction treatment facility as recommended by the Health Department.

[23051] Committee of the Whole: The Council voted 7-0 to direct staff to bring forth an ordinance for consideration that would amend the timeline at which the date of the initiative is due and would provide Council time to review.

The Council voted on a motion by Michael Lilliquist and Lisa Anderson to request the City administration, along with the Police leadership, develop a written document, providing information describing current practices and policies regarding the City's non-use of facial recognition software, as well as the Police department's concern with such technology issues and policies they seem related to. The motion passed 7-0.

The Council voted on a motion by Michael Lilliquist and Lisa Anderson to direct staff to provide an alternative to the initiative concerning gig workers and strike section 10 of the initiative. The motion failed 1-6. (Dan Hammill, Gene Knutson, Pinky Vargas, Lisa Anderson, Hollie Huthman, and Hannah Stone opposed.)

The Council voted on a motion by Michael Lilliquist and Lisa Anderson to draft an alternative initiative concerning the neutrality in labor campaigns initiative that would differ solely by amending the definition for "city funds" and the definition for "received funds" to restrict to "contracted services." The motion failed 2-5. (Dan Hammill, Gene Knutson, Pinky Vargas, Hollie Huthman, Hannah Stone opposed.)

The Council voted to direct the Legislative Assistant to finish a draft of a letter for Council's review to both the State Attorney General's office as well as to State elected officials to request a delay in implementation of the recently passed [HB 1310](#) until the Attorney General's guidelines become available.

The Council will next meet on Aug. 2. [Agenda items](#) include:

[23059] Public Works and Natural Resources Committee: Ordinance Renewing the Cascade Natural Gas Franchise

[23069] Public Works and Natural Resources Committee: Broadband Advisory Workgroup [Update](#)

[23045] Committee of the Whole: A [Resolution](#) Related to Initiative 2021-01, Which Expands Tenant Rights to Include Rental Relocation Assistance

[23047] Committee of the Whole: A Resolution Related to Initiative 2021-02, Which Concerns the Use of Facial Recognition Technology and Predictive Policing Technology

[23048] Committee of the Whole: A [Resolution](#) Related to Initiative 2021-03, Which Concerns Recipients Using City Funds to Discourage Unionization Efforts

[23049] Committee of the Whole: A [Resolution](#) Related to Initiative 2021-04, Which Concerns Employee Rights for Hourly-Wage Employees and Gig Workers

[23072] Committee of the Whole: [Letter](#) to State Officials in Response to House Bill 1310

Whatcom County

The County Council met on July 27. [Agenda items](#) included:

[[AB2021-403](#)] The Council adopted 7-0 an ordinance adopting amendments to the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan and Whatcom County Code relating to the Cherry Point UGA fossil fuel facilities, renewable fuel facilities, piers, SEPA, greenhouse gas emissions, and other matters.

The Council will next meet on Aug 10.

Ferndale

Ferndale grew by a third (15,270 residents) since 2010, making it the second largest city in Whatcom County and the fastest growing city in Skagit and Whatcom counties. ([KGMI](#))

Port of Bellingham

The Port Commissioners will next meet on Aug 10.

Nature

Read about how dams on the Skagit River impact the survival of salmon and the whales that eat them. ([High Country News/Hakai Magazine](#))

Water Watchers take a deep dive into the precious resource of fresh water on Lummi Island with a series of articles and resources to help us appreciate and manage access to safe drinking water. ([Welcome to Lummi Island](#))

The state Fish and Wildlife Department confirms that at least one deer in Anacortes has died as a result of the viral infection known as adenovirus hemorrhagic disease (AHD), the same virus that killed deer in the San Juan islands in June. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

After four years of work, the Anacortes City Council on Monday passed an update to rules regulating development in and around five environmentally critical areas: wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, critical aquifer recharge areas, frequently flooded areas, and geologically hazardous areas. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Business

The Northwest Clean Air Agency slapped Shell with a \$60,000 penalty July 26, after its Puget Sound Refinery in Anacortes spewed odorous black smoke into the air in August and September. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Oprah Winfrey has sold her 43-acre waterfront estate known as Madroneagle on Orcas Island's Catspaw Lane for \$14 million, the highest price ever paid for an Orcas Island property, according to some familiar with the purchase. ([Puget Sound Business Journal](#))

After over a year of providing to-go orders, running at half-capacity or shutting down completely, Bellingham restaurants emerging from COVID-19 restrictions aren't in the clear yet. ([The Front](#))

Community

A 25-foot totem pole, intricately hand-carved and painted by Native Americans, arrived in the nation's capital Wednesday afternoon after a two-week cross-country journey from Washington state, as part of a campaign to protect sacred tribal lands. ([Washington Post](#))

The Whatcom County Library System was one of eight winners of a \$10,000 grant from the H.W. Wilson Foundation for its 2020 Library Card Sign-Up Month campaign, a strategic, whimsical outreach effort that featured Sasquatch and friends exploring legendary library services. ([Whatcom Talk](#))

Arts and Leisure

Washington state poet laureate and Lhaq'temish (Lummi) Nation member Rena Priest will be at the Lopez Island Library on Aug. 9 at 3 p.m.

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.

Facebook — Follow and engage: [Salish Current](#) Twitter — Follow and engage: [@currentsalish](#)
Say something: SalishCurrent@gmail.com Check out what's new: [Salish Current](#)