

# Salish Current

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

Dear Readers —

News of more news: This week brought the announcement of the launch of a new local news outlet in Bellingham. Owned by real estate developer and artist David Syre's Cascadia Newspaper Company, publisher of *Cascadia Weekly*, the outlet will be funded through advertising and subscription revenues, with publication beginning in January. Long-time *Seattle Times* columnist Ron Judd has been hired as executive editor. *Salish Current* welcomes any and all fact-based reporting of our area. We know who we are: Our paywall-free website, subscription-free content and advertising-free business model allows us to present important local news impartially and independently, without fear or favor. You make this possible by helping pay for professional journalists to do the reporting (our [editors, board members and community advisors](#) all volunteer.) It's our community and *Salish Current* is a community service. Thank you for reading and thank you for your [support](#).

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

Salish Current affirms its commitment to work for truth, justice, equality and healing for all people.  
#SayTheirNames #BlackLivesMatter #NoJusticeNoPeace

## News from the Salish Current, week of Aug. 13, 2021



### [Whatcom director among public health leaders stressed by threats, resistance re pandemic management](#)

*Whatcom County Health Department Director Erika Lautenbach is among public health leaders across the state who have met with resistance and even harassment as they have worked to fight the COVID-19 pandemic; at left, early in the shutdown last year Lautenbach appeared in "[We're in this Together](#)," a video presented by Whatcom Unified Command to outline how individuals might help and how researchers and others were assessing community needs.*

By Stephen S. Howie / [Crosscut.com](#) — Email threats, irate officials and dealing with misinformation have become part of the job for stress-filled public health workers. ([Read more.](#))

## [Community Voices / San Juan County to vote on climate, environment, equity, justice amendments to county charter](#)



*Establishment of a Justice, Equity and Inclusion Commission to provide advice and support to San Juan County government is among the first issues the San Juan Charter Commission is putting before voters; at left, a set of signs posted on Lopez Island in 2020 memorialized Black men and women who died in police custody.*

*By Kevin Ranker* — Priority for climate and environment; justice, equity and inclusion; and an emphasis on citizen engagement are driving proposals the San Juan County Charter Review Commission has advanced for the November ballot. The commission is continuing its work and plans to submit additional propositions for the 2022 ballot. ([Read more.](#))

### **News from around the region**

#### **Health and Safety**

Surging COVID-19 cases have prompted regional hospitals to ask those with non-emergency medical needs to stay away from the Emergency Room. ([KGMI](#))

Bellingham city council member Hollie Huthman, owner of The Skakedown, says that more than a dozen Bellingham establishments are requiring patrons to be vaccinated. Establishments currently requiring proof of vaccination include Bayou on Bay, L&L Libations, Redlight, The Cabin, Temple Bar, Pepper Sisters, Uisce Irish Pub, Black Sheep, Lorikeet, The Mount Bakery, Grand Ave Alehouse, Wild Buffalo, The Skakedown, The Racket – Bar & Pinball Lounge. ([KGMI](#))

Whatcom County 8/13/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Very High risk; 20.1/100K; 71.2% vaccinated  
San Juan County 8/13/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk; 14.6/100K; 75.5% vaccinated  
Skagit County 8/13/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Very High risk; 34.9/100K; 60.6% vaccinated

#### **Government**

##### **Blaine**

The Blaine City Council met for the first time in-person on Aug. 9 since spring of 2020. ([Northern Light](#))

##### **Bellingham**

The City Council will meet again on Aug. 30.

## Whatcom County

The Council met on Aug 10. [Agenda items](#) included:

[\[AB2021-452\]](#) Authorized by consent (7-0) the county executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Washington State Department of Ecology for solid waste management compliance and litter and/or illegal dumping enforcement activities, in the amount of \$236,340.

[\[AB2021-478\]](#) Authorized by consent (7-0) for the county executive to enter into a contract for a three-year subscription to KnowBe4 for cyber security awareness training and simulated phishing software platform with SHI International Corporation, using the Washington State Contract #06016, in an amount not to exceed \$50,409.22.

[\[AB2021-390\]](#) Authorized (5-2, Byrd and Elenbaas opposed) the county executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and the Bellingham Housing Authority for the purposes of funding an EDI loan for phase 3 of the Samish Commons redevelopment project in the amount of \$750,000.

[\[AB2021-430\]](#) Authorized (5-3, Byrd, Elenbaas and Kershner opposed) the county executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Housing Authority of the City of Bellingham to receive American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in the amount of \$525,000 to construct phase 3 of the Samish Commons Project.

[\[AB2021-458\]](#) Authorized (7-0) the county executive to enter into an interlocal agreement amendment between Whatcom County, the City of Bellingham Fire Department and Fire Protection District No. 7 for costs associated with the implementation of the fifth medic unit in the amount of \$1,917,500.

[\[AB2021-477\]](#) Authorized (7-0) the county executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Washington State Department of Social and Health Services to provide an advance in funding for DSHS-funded Developmental Disabilities Administration Programs, in an amount authorized of up to \$470,230.

[\[AB2021-483\]](#) Authorized (7-0) the county executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Lydia Place to provide funding for additional motel rooms for families experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the amount of \$236,470 for a total amended contract amount of \$354,922.

The County Council will meet again on Sept. 14.

## Port of Bellingham

The Port Commissioners met on Aug 9. [Agenda items](#) included:

Allegations made at the [July 13 commission meeting](#) by commissioners Bell and Briscoe that Whatcom PUD commissioners Deshmane and Murphy lie and misrepresent local broadband issues were addressed by citizen Natalie McClendon and commissioner Deshmane in the public comment session. McClendon said she was shocked and dismayed by personal attacks on other elected officials and encouraged the

commission to review its code of ethics. Deshmane said the comments by the commissioners were not good for the port, the PUD or the community and encouraged all to work together.

The commissioners by consent agenda authorized acceptance of [American Rescue Plan Act](#) funds totaling \$4,466,863 for airport losses and approved an operating agreement <https://www.portofbellingham.com/DocumentCenter/View/10311/E> with Southwest Airlines.

Staff member Gina Stark briefed the commissioners on the multiple aspects of providing broadband service to underserved Whatcom County areas and the port now having funding and applying for funding to build both fiber infrastructure and fiber access for “last mile” residential customers.

The commissioners approved an [amended Master Development Agreement](#) with Harcourt as a result of default and nonperformance. The new agreement reduces Harcourt's development area from 18.8 acres to 7.7 acres with acreage reverting to the port to develop; requires all future permits to be approved before any port transfer of property to Harcourt; requires a letter of credit for all projects with a 20% cash bond payable to the port for nonperformance; and requires completion of Harcourt's A & B high-end condominiums no later than 24 months from the signing of the amended agreement.

The commissioners authorized accepting a [\\$1.5 million grant](#) from the Department of Ecology to restore and improve marine habitat enhancement at Little Squalicum Beach. Construction, pending permit approvals, could begin in 2022.

The commissioners were briefed on the expansion of the Container Village at Waterfront Park.

The commission will meet again on Sept. 7.

### Elections

The Bellingham City Club will host on Aug. 24 a free, online election forum with Port of Bellingham candidates vying for the District 1 position (Michael Shepard, incumbent, and John Huntley) and the District 2 position (Ken Bell, incumbent, and Kelly Krieger). [Register by midnight Aug. 23.](#)

### Nature

Explore Puget Sound's kelp forest in a [story map presentation](#) that takes you below the surface to explore how kelp forests are a vital part of our marine waters.

On Aug. 11 the first live Asian giant hornet seen in 2021 was photographed preying on a paper wasp nest near Blaine. ([Northern Light](#))

### Business

The Canadian Border Service Agency reached a contract agreement with the Canadian government on Aug. 6 averting further massive delays on border crossings. ([Northern Light](#))

The Swinomish Tribe is filing another amicus brief this week, in support of a lawsuit against the state Department of Fish and Wildlife. Environmental groups want to stop Cooke Aquaculture's plans to continue fish farming in Washington waters. ([KNKX](#))

The Skagit Land Trust has purchased an additional 3.5 acres to add to the March Point Heronry which will now total 15.5 acres protecting great blue heron nesting. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Washington State Ferries announced this week it will delay resumption of service to Sidney, B.C., until 2022 due to the uncertainty of the reopening of the maritime border between the United States and Canada, along with continued significant crewing and vessel availability challenges. ([WSF Bulletin](#))

### **Commentary**

Floyd McKay, Bellingham resident and emeritus professor of journalism at Western Washington University, bids "So long, Henry!: Perhaps it was inevitable, Oregon struggling as it is right now—but really, no more Henry Weinhard beer, after 45 years?" ([Post Alley](#))

### **Community**

Lorraine Loomis, longtime tribal fisheries advocate of the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, died Tuesday at the age of 81. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

The history of the town of Custer just north of Ferndale in Whatcom County is preserved by Steve Russell, curator of the Custer Historical Museum. ([Whatcom Talk](#))

### **Jump in!**

Visit the [Skagit County Fair](#) Aug. 11-14 at the Mount Vernon Fairgrounds. [Skagit County Fair returns amid excessive heat, Delta variant ([KING](#))]

The [Northwest Washington Fair](#) is in full swing Aug. 12-21 in Lynden. "Statewide outdoor events have resumed at 100% capacity and without social distancing effective June 30. Masks remain recommended for those who are not fully vaccinated."

The [San Juan County Fair](#) Aug. 18-21 is virtual this year but it remains where the islands come together for four summer days and celebrate the traditions and talents of their communities; with plenty of fun for the whole family.

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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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