

# **Salish Current**

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

Dear Readers —

Our three featured stories this week are the kinds of stories you can count on *Salish Current* bringing to you when local elections are up and important issues are at stake. Reporter **Ralph Schwartz**, formerly of the *Bellingham Herald*, drills deep into Port of Bellingham candidates on major issues like waterfront development and broadband, and reporter **Stella Harvey** examines candidate views on police reform and public safety. **Ella Banken** updates the four People First Bellingham initiatives campaign and whether Bellingham voters are ready for major change. Good, solid reporting and more to come next week. This is what you can count on from *Salish Current* — and why we need your help financially to allow us to do our reporting and grow our readership. A [monthly or annual donation](#) today is a vote of confidence in community based, independent, open-access journalism in Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit counties. Thank you.

— 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 Oct. 8, 2021

### [Candidates vie to drive the engine of Whatcom County's economic development](#)



*While Port of Bellingham commissioners drive the county's economic engine, construction equipment has sat idle for much of this year in planned developments on the city's waterfront. Progress of plans for the site is just one among issues candidates have been discussing in advance of the election — along with explanations of what the Port commissioner job is.*

*By Ralph Schwartz — Two of three commissioner positions for the Port of Bellingham — the county's economic engine — are up for election on the Nov. 2 ballot. Along with speaking to the issues, candidates have found they need to explain the job's impact whenever they knock on voters' doors. ([Read more.](#))*

## [City, county candidates vary on police reform needs, approaches](#)



*Conversations as to what police reform should entail were sparked by calls last year including “defund, disarm the police,” as in one sign at a June 2020 rally in Bellingham’s Marine Heritage Park attended by thousands in support of Black Lives Matter.*

*By Stella Harvey — Status quo or systemic change? Calls from 2020 protests for police reforms have been met with action in Washington's legislature and local governments. Now voters get a say in what the direction should be by voting in or out local government representatives. ([Read more.](#))*

## [Grassroots effort puts four People First Bellingham initiatives before voters](#)



*Four initiatives sponsored by the left-leaning coalition People First Bellingham will be on the ballot in November in Bellingham, giving the city’s voters a chance to weigh in on proposed privacy, renter and worker protections.*

*By Ella Banken — Bellingham voters will determine in the November election whether they want to live in a city with expanded protection for renters' rights, where police can't use invasive technology, where the right to unionize is protected and where hourly workers' compensation is protected when they vote on four initiatives promoted by People First Bellingham. ([Read more.](#))*

## **News from around the region**

### **Health and Safety**

The Whatcom County Health Department reports that as of Oct. 2, the COVID-19 case rates among Whatcom County school ages 5-17 are higher than for any other age group and are much higher than during any earlier period — 5-10 year olds: 620/100K; 11-13 year olds: 631/100K; 14-17 year olds: 503/100K. ([Whatcom County](#))

Lynden Christian’s high school students returned to in-person classes seven days after the school was shut down due to a COVID-19 outbreak but preschool through eighth-grade students will continue remote learning for another week. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Whatcom County 10/1//21 [COVID ActNow](#) Very High risk; 30.5/100K; 69.1% vaccinated  
San Juan County 10/1/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Medium risk; 6.5/100K; 77.3% vaccinated  
Skagit County 9/24/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Very High risk; 42.9/100K; 63.9% vaccinated

## **Government**

### San Juan County

Oct. 15 [virtual public hearing](#) by the Planning Commission on establishing a vacation rental permit cap of 650 permits countywide based on the number of permits compliant as of July 31, 2021.

The County Council will meet on Oct. 12.

### City of Bellingham

The Council will meet on Oct. 11. [Agenda items](#) include:

Mayor's Appointment of Barbara Ryan to the Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Commission

Public Works and Natural Resources Committee:

- Pipeline Safety Program Presentation by Sean Mayo of the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC)
- Proposed Ordinance Renewing the Olympic Pipe Line Franchise ([Staff Report](#))
- Surface and Stormwater Comprehensive Plan [Overview](#)

Committee of the Whole:

- Review of Initiative 2021-01, [Renter Relocation Assistance](#)
- Review of Initiative 2021-02, [Restricting Use of Police Technologies](#)
- Review of Initiative 2021-03, [Neutrality in Labor Campaigns](#)
- Review of Initiative 2021-04, [Fair Treatment of Hourly Wage and Gig Workers](#)

The City Council is scheduled to meet next on Oct. 25.

### Whatcom County

The Whatcom County Council will meet on Oct. 12. [Agenda items](#) include:

Public Hearings:

- [AB2021-185](#) 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
- [AB2021-414](#) Ordinance granting Cascade Natural Gas Corporation a franchise for the transportation of natural gas in Whatcom County
- AB2021-209 [Resolution](#) regarding permanent affordability of child care in Whatcom County

The County Council is scheduled to meet next on Oct. 26.

## Port of Bellingham

The Port Commission will meet next on Oct. 19.

On Oct. 25, the Port's 2022 strategy budget will be available at the port office and [online here](#). Public hearings will be held on Nov. 2 and 16 and public comment taken on the budget and proposed property tax levy until Nov. 16. The budget will be adopted by the Port Commission on Nov. 16 at 4 p.m.

## Elections

The Bellingham-Whatcom County League of Women Voters will host [virtual candidate forums](#) on Oct. 13 (Lynden City Council, Lynden School District, Blaine School District), Oct. 14 (Blaine City Council) and Oct. 16 (City of Bellingham Citizen Initiatives 1-4).

"No on 4" has raised \$93,300 in cash from businesses to oppose People First Bellingham's Initiative 4 ensuring worker's rights. ([Public Disclosure Commission](#))

The San Juan County League of Women Voters will hold a virtual forum on Oct. 12 at 5:30 p.m. on six proposed county charter amendment proposed by the Charter Review Commission. To register, email [charterreview.forum@gmail.com](mailto:charterreview.forum@gmail.com)

## Nature

Don Striker will be taking over leadership of the North Cascades National Park Service Complex and Bea Detrich is now leading the North Cascades Institute. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Swinomish Indian Tribal Community researchers Sarah Grossman and Claire Cook have been conducting Dungeness crab surveys on beaches near Deception Pass State Park since 2018 with hopes to predict what the crab harvest will look like in four years. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))

Scott Schuyler of the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe and Richard Brocksmith of the Skagit Watershed Council were honored by Washington Wild for their efforts to protect the Skagit River headwaters in British Columbia from logging and mining. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

## Business

Workers no longer tethered to company offices have taken to buying houses farther from Seattle, driving up outlying area prices from Spanaway to Poulsbo to Orcas Island — and even Whatcom County and Bellingham. ([Seattle Times/paywall](#))

Washington State Ferries continues to reduce ferry service and suspend reservations to and from the San Juan Islands in response to a system-wide attrition of crew which may worsen as the Oct. 18 deadline nears requiring all vessel personnel to be fully vaccinated. ([Seattle Times/paywall](#))

## **Commentary**

David Brewster at *Post Alley* writes about what has proven to be the successful non-cash acquisition of the nonprofit news platform *Crosscut* by *KCTS-9* in 2015 which now employs as Cascade Public Media 31 editorial staff for the combined *Crosscut/KCTS* newsroom (some of which are support producers and videographers). Mergers of public broadcast and other media are actively being explored around the country. ([Post Alley](#))

## **Community**

Bellingham Public Works Environmental Education Coordinator Emily Hegarty estimates that dogs deposit about 16,000 pounds of poop a day in Bellingham. Pick it up. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

The Ferndale Police Department this week placed on administrative leave an officer whose email message to the Oath Keepers group was made public as a result of a hack of a dark web server. Named in the email is Scott Langton who has a record of having been sued at least twice for allegedly committing civil rights and use of force abuses while in uniform. One of those cases was settled, and the other is currently pending in federal court. ([Whatcom News](#)) and ([BuzzFeed News](#))

The Whatcom Peace and Justice Center on Sept. 19 — the International Day of Peace — named Western Washington University Professor of Anthropology Emeritus James Loucky recipient of the Howard and Rosemary Harris Lifetime Peacemaker Award. ([Western Today](#))

Whatcom County residents can tell the county how they've participated in public process decision-making by completing a [short online survey](#) as part of a larger effort to review the County's public engagement process and identify areas for improvement. ([Whatcom County](#))

The Opportunity Council will be buying the county's property at North Forest Street and East Laurel in downtown Bellingham to create affordable housing for seniors and a facility for childcare. ([KGMI](#))

## **Arts and Leisure**

"Future Artifacts" at the [Museum of Northwest Art](#) features work by Lummi Nation glass artist Dan Friday, who draws from cultural themes and uses modern processes — while still maintaining basic Native American qualities. Through Oct. 10.

## **Jump in!**

The Nooksack Tribe hosts a Zoom public climate action forum on Oct. 14 featuring Harriet Morgan from the University of Washington Climate Impacts Group speaking on climate adaptation actions and ways the community can help. Get more information on the [Nooksack Tribe's Climate Adaptation Plan](#) and [register for the forum](#).

Orca Recovery Day is celebrated Oct. 16 with a beach cleanup on Lummi Island hosted by the Lummi Island Heritage Trust, with virtual and "hands-on" restoration events hosted by the San Juan Islands

Conservation District and San Juan County Land Bank, with a riparian restoration on the Samish River hosted by the Skagit Land Trust, and with a planting at Presenting Park hosted by the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group. ([Better Ground/Puget Sound Conservation Districts](#))

**Nonprofit *Salish Current* is Women and Minority Led.**

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