

Salish Current

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

Dear Reader —

We've launched our two-month [NewsMatch Campaign](#) when your [reader donations](#) will be matched to ensure we continue in 2022 to bring you independent, local news that is free to read and free from advertising and outside influence. You can learn about it all this coming Wednesday when I'll be talking about what's happening in local news at a [Bellingham City Club forum](#). Register by Nov. 15 and join me online.

I'm also really happy to announce our NewsMatch 2021 Publisher's Circle donors who are encouraging readers to have their [donations online or by check](#) matched during the *Salish Current* November-December NewsMatch Campaign. Thank you to all!

Publisher's NewsMatch Circle (as of Nov. 12):

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— Amy Nelson, Publisher

**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 Nov. 12, 2021

[On the street and in the forum: Tackling homelessness with meaningful solutions](#)



The complex and urgent problem of homelessness has been the focus of academics and policy makers as well as people with a firsthand knowledge of the experience, in two separate gatherings recently in Bellingham.

By *Mallory Biggar* — Steeply rising home prices are identified as a major contributor to homelessness, impacting who can afford to buy or to rent, and where — and who will be unhoused. Discussions around solutions to the problem need to involve people who have experienced homelessness, activists say, and academics and policy makers underscore the need for a broad-based partnership approach. ([Read me.](#))

[Traveler beware: lack of food service at Lopez landing adds challenge to wait for a ferry](#)



Ticket office, portable toilets, space to stretch your legs, yes; but there is no food service at the Lopez Island ferry landing. Hungry travelers leaving the Friendly Isle by ferry have only a vending machine to meet their needs during waits that can last hours. The reason why is, well, complicated.

By Gretchen K. Wing — Remember to pack those snacks: cars leaving Lopez Island by ferry load on a first come, first served basis, and the wait can be hours-long when traffic is heavy and ferries are delayed or runs cancelled. The landing features a ticket office, waiting room and portable toilets ... but a lone vending machine is the only option for food. ([Read more.](#))

[Community Voices / East Whatcom parents say, 'We want our youth to stay drug-free!'](#)



Talking with teens does make a positive difference in attitudes about substance use, advises [materials provided online](#) by the Whatcom County Health Department and other local organizations. East Whatcom County organizations have engaged parents, teens, retailers and others in efforts to prevent drug and alcohol use by youth.

By Wa'Lynn Klein, Emma Giri, Kristi Slette and Matthew Thuney — East Whatcom County parents want their youth to stay drug- and alcohol-free. To that end, the Mount Baker Community Coalition engaged a local teen as a Summer Youth Prevention Fellow in a collaborative effort with alcohol and cannabis retailers, to increase safe storage and reduce youth access to those substances. ([Read more.](#))

[Letters to the Editor](#)

* Gross: Loving the Tesla experience

News from around the region

[Health and Safety](#)

State Sen. Doug Ericksen of Ferndale is reported to be suffering from COVID-19 in El Salvador and, unable to receive advanced treatment, has asked legislative colleagues for advice on how to receive monoclonal antibodies. His staff believes his messages to be true. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

After an early surge of Canadians crossing the Blaine border into Washington on Nov. 8, traffic dropped to a trickle. According to Blaine immigration attorney Len Saunders, his clients reported not being asked by U.S. Customs and Border Patrol officers if they were vaccinated or not. ([The Northern Light](#))

As the U.S. reopens its border to Canadian travelers, the country's health officials are requiring an expensive COVID-19 test to return home. That has deterred Canadian shoppers and tourists. ([KING](#))

Whatcom County 11/12//21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk; 23.9/100K; 70.8% vaccinated

San Juan County 11/12/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk; 12.7/100K; 79.0% vaccinated

Skagit County 11/12/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Very High risk; 46.7/100K; 66.0% vaccinated

Government

City of Bellingham

The Bellingham City Council Public Comment Sessions will be held on Nov. 15, 29 and Dec. 20. To participate, [click here](#). (Meeting ID: 923 0705 9297 Password: 018602)

The City Council met on Nov. 8. [Agenda items](#) included:

Mayor Fleetwood announced that Police Chief Flo Simon has extended her date of retirement until June 2022 and that the city will begin a police chief recruitment process in January.

Mayor Fleetwood announced hiring of Blake Lyon as the city's next Planning Director who will begin work on March 1, 2022.

Mayor Fleetwood informed the council that he would ask the council for funds at its Nov. 22 meeting to draft a voter-approved property tax ballot measure to pay for city programs to help fight climate change. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Public Works and Natural Resources Committee:

- **23137** No decisions were reached regarding a resolution and ordinance modifying parking fees and regulations in downtown and Fairhaven. Another work session will be scheduled. Prior to the work session, the Transportation Commission (a citizen advisory body) will also meet and provide recommendations. Prior to final approval, this item will return to the Committee of the Whole for a discussion.

Community and Economic Development Committee:

- **23160** The council approved (6-0, Knudson absent) an interlocal agreement between the City of Bellingham, Whatcom County and the Port of Bellingham regarding a coordinated approach to funding countywide economic development.
- **23161** The council approved (5-0, Hammill abstain, Knudson absent) the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee's 2022 budget recommendations.

Committee of the Whole

- **23162** The council accepted (6-0, Knudson absent) the legislative objectives of the City of Bellingham, the Port of Bellingham and Whatcom County for the 2022 legislative session and agreed to a shared approach in late 2021.
- **23150** The council was briefed during the budget work session of the proposed addition of 3.75 new Full Time Employees in Communications: 1 with BPD (Law enforcement member/Public Information), 1 in Planning (community relations and communications), and 1 in the Mayor's Office (Assistant Communications Director) and part-time in Public Works (outreach).

The City Council will meet again in regular session on Nov. 22.

Whatcom County

The county council met on Nov. 9. [Agenda items](#) included:

- **AB2021-653** The council authorized (6-0, Kershner absent) the County Executive to enter into a three-year interlocal agreement among Whatcom County and the Port of Bellingham and City of Bellingham to provide [economic development services and complete special projects](#) that promote beneficial outcomes for the parties, in the amount of \$2,084,322
- **AB2021-625** The council approved (4-2-0, Byrd and Elenbaas opposed, Kershner absent) a [resolution](#) approving the [2021 Whatcom County Climate Action Plan](#). See: Whatcom County Council members approved a Climate Action Plan that spells out the effects of global climate change locally and makes specific recommendations on how to address them. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

The County Council will meet again in regular session on Nov. 23.

Port of Bellingham

The Port of Bellingham Commission will meet on Nov. 16. [Agenda items](#) include:

The commission will take public comment on its [2022 strategic budget](#) and proposed property tax levy and adopt the budget.

Action Agenda: Motion to authorize the Port of Bellingham's Executive Director to execute [Indefeasible Right of Use \(IRU\)](#) between Sound Internet Services, LLC d/b/a PogoZone and the Port of Bellingham. The purpose of this partnership is to extend an open access fiber network that will provide affordable quality broadband service to underserved and unserved members in east Nooksack and north Mosquito Lake Road area.

The commission will hear a presentation on the use of the Fishermen's Pavilion.

Consent Agenda: Motion to authorize the Executive Director to sign a three-year [Service Agreement](#) between the Port of Bellingham and Western Washington University (WWU) to fund Small Business Development Center Services.

The commission is scheduled to meet next on Dec. 7.

Nature

To members of the Nooksack and Lummi tribes, the snows of Mount Baker aren't just a backdrop: They're a lifeblood. The extremely hot summer of 2021 foreshadowed how unchecked climate change could ravage the fish that depend on cold water and the people who depend on those fish. In Whatcom County, the tribes are taking steps to counteract the big melt and keep their salmon and their cultures alive. ([KUOW Part 1](#)) ([KUOW Part 2](#))

From the rocky beaches just off the entrance to the Tommy Thompson Trail at 35th Street and V Avenue, it's hard to see any visible signs that the Custom Plywood Mill used the site from 1984 to 1991, depositing wood waste and chemicals into the soil and water until it closed after a fire. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))

Business

New Port of Skagit director Sara Young has reorganized her leadership team during her first two months on the job and will be working with the Port Commission to develop goals for each port property, including Skagit Regional Airport, the La Conner Marina, the SWIFT Center and new industrial land the port recently purchased south of Peterson Road near the airport. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

The Port of Bellingham's 37-acre wastewater treatment basin originally planned to be a 600-boat marina after Georgia-Pacific exited the waterfront will be cleaned up and redeveloped to attract businesses with marine-related jobs such as boat repair, a shipping/unloading area or businesses related to aquaculture or fisheries. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

With a smaller labor force and a high number of job openings, many Skagit County employers — in industries from health care to manufacturing to nonprofits — have struggled to fill positions, with many employers raising wages and some offering bonuses. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#)) See: 4.4 million Americans quit jobs in September, breaking record that was set just a month earlier ([Washington Post/paywall](#))

Commentary

Michael Riordan in an opinion piece writes that the Zim Kingston cargo-ship fiasco put a fiery exclamation point on a long-standing argument of Washington environmental groups — that state, tribal and local governments should have more say in major Canadian development projects that can adversely impact our environment and livelihoods. ([Seattle Times](#))

Tim Johnson in The Gristle dissects the Whatcom County and Bellingham general election results. ([Cascadia Weekly](#))

Community

40th District state legislators discussed the San Juan Islands ferry situation on a [Facebook presentation](#) this week with state officials and local residents to address limited service and staffing shortages. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#)) Washington State Ferries announces plans to restore service, starting with the Anacortes-San Juan route. ([WSF](#))

The city of Bellingham has added three electric vans and additional hybrid police utility vehicles to its fleet of dozens of alternative fuel vehicles as part of its commitment to achieving the goals of the city's Climate Action Plan. ([City of Bellingham](#))

In 1975, Randy Bachman — lead singer, guitarist and songwriter for the popular Canadian rock band Bachman-Turner Overdrive — purchased nearly 30 acres of land off H Street Road, about a 10-mile drive from Lynden and roughly a half-mile from the United States-Canada border. There he built a three-story mansion that became a family home, today known as Gracewood Manor. ([Whatcom Talk](#))

Arts and Leisure

[Up Close & Personal: The Body in Contemporary Art](#). The exhibition examines the human body through the expressive lens of 60 artists. Curated by Amy Chaloupka from the Collection of Driek and Michael Zirinsk, Lightcatcher Building, Whatcom Art Museum, through Feb. 27, 2022.

Western Washington University [Music Department](#) returns with live performances:
Fifth Inversion in Concert: Trip the Light Fantastic on Nov. 16, 8 p.m.

Jump in!

San Juan County high school students are invited to join the Youth for Change Environmental Leadership Club, a program led by Friends of the San Juans. Attend weekly in-person meetings from January to May 2022 to plan and implement an action project that addresses important environmental needs in your community-- and earn a \$200 stipend. [Register by Dec. 8 here.](#)

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

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