

Salish Current

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

Dear Reader — We're into the holiday season and down to the last three weeks of our NewsMatch fundraising campaign. Our Publisher's Circle of donors has grown; read all about it in this week's [Editor's Desk column](#).

The good news is that we've nearly met our [NewsMatch](#) goal and have received an additional \$5,000 in matching funds from a group of [NewsMatch](#) partners who want to recognize service to communities of color and newsrooms led by people of color. If you help match this [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Partner Fund](#), we will be able to pay our freelancers and grow our partnerships and readership in 2022.

Enjoy this week's original news reporting by **Heather Spaulding** on eldercare in the San Juan Islands, a wild turkey story by **Gretchen K. Wing**, a story by **Mallory Biggar** about how a local restaurant and local workers are faring in pandemic times, and a letter to the editor about fully contained communities (FCCs). There's more to come next week — and the weeks after that. Please [donate](#) to support original fact-based news that's free to read and free from advertising.

— Amy Nelson, Publisher

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

News from the *Salish Current*, week of Dec. 10, 2021

[Eldercare crisis inspires 'life-changing' innovation on San Juan Island](#)



A new model for eldercare is envisioned for the Village at the Harbor when its new owner — San Juan County Hospital District 1 — takes over in February. The plan calls for both assisted-living and skilled care beds. It aims to keep island residents — such as this current "founding member" resident and former employee — in the community.

By Heather Spaulding — Faced with a looming crisis in long-term eldercare, voters approved a tax increase levy for San Juan Island Hospital District 1 to buy the Village at the Harbor, a privately owned assisted living center in Friday Harbor. The hospital district's innovative solution — one of few similar programs in the country — could provide a new model for assisted living. ([Read more.](#))

Talking turkey in the San Juans: strutting the line between welcome wildlife and pest



How to tame a wild turkey: find a youngster who will chase the bird until it is exhausted, then give it a hug. Maddie Anderson demonstrates that solution in this 10-year-old photo from Lopez Island, where, along with Orcas Island and other human-dominated neighborhoods across the country, wild turkeys are encroaching.

By Gretchen K. Wing — The American wild turkey, introduced for hunting in the San Juan Islands around 1980, seems to have learned well how to live near humans — to the extent of unwelcome encroachment in the minds of some. Given mixed responses in human-dominated environs, what makes a wild creature a charming neighbor to some and a pest to others? ([Read more.](#))

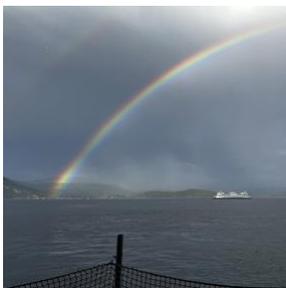
Businesses open but not 'as usual' as pandemic continues to affect restaurant staff, management



The COVID-19 pandemic shutdown hit restaurants hard, and continues to disrupt operations. Fairhaven's Mambo Italiano owner Dominic Toni wondered after the March 2020 shutdown whether he had tossed his last pizza; now he and others at the family-run business are still trying to navigate their way in a changed industry.

By Mallory Biggar — Restaurants are open for business but definitely not back to normal, as management and staff work their way through post-pandemic-shutdown changing realities. While federal support dollars helped many owners to carry on and stay in business, the industry is seeing a trend toward workers leaving, prompted by concerns for their physical and mental health as well as newly difficult social interactions in an already stressful work environment. ([Read more.](#))

Editor's desk: Readers respond to NewsMatch challenge; new match grant awarded



Thank you, donors! *Salish Current* is on the way to reaching our NewsMatch campaign goal and ensuring more original, fact-based news, a weekly newsletter of curated local news links, and lively commentary that affirms our commitment to work for truth, justice, equity and healing for all people. And last week we learned that we've been awarded an additional match from a group of NewsMatch partners who want to recognize service to communities of color and newsrooms led by people of color. We are grateful! ([Read more.](#))

— Managing Editor Mike Sato

Letter to the Editor

- Margery Hite: More on FCCs and affordable housing

News from around the region

Health and Safety

About 30 million gallons of sewage flowed into Bellingham Bay during heavy rainfall in November because Bellingham's sewer and stormwater systems are connected. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

As of Dec. 3, about 97.5% of the city's 924 employees had been fully vaccinated. Six workers resigned rather than comply with the city's vaccine mandate, including two firefighters; 17 were terminated for refusing the city's mandate, including eight police officers; and four were fired for refusing the state's mandate for vaccination, including two firefighters. ([KGMI](#))

The Sumas Medical Clinic will be closing on Dec. 22 because flood damage is too severe to rebuild. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

Whatcom County 12/10/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Very High risk; 27.2/100K; 74.0% vaccinated
San Juan County 12/10/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Medium; 9.8/100K; 82.8% vaccinated
Skagit County 12/10/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk; 24.1/100K; 68.7% vaccinated

Government

City of Bellingham

The Bellingham City Council will meet on Dec. 13. [Agenda items](#) include:

- Public Hearing:
Consider Amendments to Bellingham Municipal Code [BMC] Chapter 17.10 and the Washington State Energy Code - Commercial, Requiring Electrification and Efficiency Standards for Certain Multi-Family and Commercial Buildings. ([Staff memo](#)) ([Draft ordinance](#))

Public Works and Natural Resources:

- **23202** Post Point Sludge Pumping System Replacement ([Staff memo](#))
- **23204** [Report](#) from the December 1, 2021 Lake Whatcom Policy Group Meeting
- **23069** Broadband Advisory Workgroup [Update #2](#)

Community and Economic Development:

- **23208** A Presentation of the Whatcom County Community & Economic Development Strategy
- **23209** Update on a New Pathway for Families with Children that are Experiencing Homelessness ([Staff memo](#))
- **233210** [Assessment](#) of Downtown Services and Description of New Initiatives Underway

Committee of the Whole:

- **23213** Adoption of the 2021 Whatcom County Multi-jurisdictional Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan ([Staff memo](#))

The council will hold public comment sessions at 7 p.m. on Dec. 20 and Dec. 27. These sessions may be accessed via [Zoom here](#). (Meeting ID: 923 0705 9297 Password: 018602)

The council will hold a swearing-in ceremony for Hollie Huthman, Michael Lilliquist, Skip Williams and Kristina Martens at 7 p.m. on Jan. 3, 2022.

No summary of council actions at its Dec. 6 meeting was available at press time.

Whatcom County

The Whatcom County Council met on Dec. 7. [Agenda items](#) included:

- **AB2021-722** The council unanimously approved the County Executive's appointment of Allison Hunt to serve as Whatcom County Medical Examiner

Public hearing:

- **AB2021-654** The council approved (4-3, Kershner, Byrd, Elenbaas opposed) a substitute resolution approving the Shoreline Management Program Periodic Update 2020
- **AB2021-733** The council approved (4-3, Kershner, Byrd, Elenbaas opposed) an ordinance authorizing the levy of taxes for conservation futures purposes for 2022

Consent Agenda:

- **AB2021-701** The council unanimously approved the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council to operate the Whatcom Homeless Service Center in the amount of \$1,650,248 for a total amended contract amount of \$4,158,271. ([Staff memo](#))

Other Items:

- **AB2021-747** The council unanimously voted to hold in committee a [resolution](#) eliminating the barriers to removing excess gravel from the Nooksack River
- **AB2021-734** The council unanimously approved (Byrd absent) the County Executive to enter into [an agreement](#) between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council for providing a 5,000-square-foot child care facility located in a qualified census tract in the amount of \$1,000,000
- **AB2021-735** The council unanimously approved (Byrd absent) the County Executive to enter into an [agreement](#) between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council for the development of affordable housing for low-income households in Whatcom County in the amount of \$3,000,000
- **AB2021-738** The council unanimously approved (Byrd absent) the County Executive to enter into a [substitute agreement](#) between Whatcom County and Allison Hunt, M.D., for fulfilling the duties of Whatcom County Medical Examiner in the amount of 2,463,153

The council will meet again on Dec. 21.

Port of Bellingham

The Port of Bellingham Commission met on Dec. 7. [Agenda](#) items included:

- **Boardmill Building Update:** Elliott Smith, Port real estate manager, discussed the request for proposal (RFP) in draft for Boardmill Building and site redevelopment. Eight parties have

indicated interest in responding to building a hotel and conference facility or an alternative creative use of the building and land. The RFP will be issued at the end of January 2022 and a project initiating construction by the end of 2022 with conclusion in two years. The 3.42-acre site may be sold for \$25/sf as other Port waterfront properties have been sold. The RFP will require building and site designs constant with a theme of a working waterfront, and encourage outside proposers to partner with local businesses.

- The commission unanimously approved the [Draft 2021 Port of Bellingham Districting Plan](#) for publication. The plan will also be used by the Public Utilities District in its 2022 election after public hearing after publication and before adoption.
- The commission unanimously authorized the Executive Director to accept a \$2 million [grant](#) from the Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB) for the construction of a 47.5 miles of broadband cable with middle and last mile segments in north Whatcom County along the U.S.-Canada border. The project has also received \$1 million from Whatcom County, and will initially make high-speed internet connections available to 450 residences and farms. Permitting is currently underway and construction will begin in spring 2022.

Nature

The relicensing of three Skagit River dams by Seattle City Light has brought together the issues of cheap, carbon-neutral hydropower, endangered salmon and steelhead, and treaty rights of tribes. ([Seattle Times](#))

The Skagit River Interpretive Center at Howard Miller Steelhead Park in Rockport is offering free one-and-a-half-hour guided nature walks Saturdays and Sundays through Jan. 30. Walks begin at 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

The overflowing Nooksack River played a big part in Abbotsford's devastating floods, but communities and researchers are still debating whether the river is more flood-prone than it used to be — and if so, why. ([Globe and Mail](#))

Invasive green crab trapping near Dakota Creek and Drayton Harbor this year has demonstrated progress in reducing the numbers of crabs in the area from previous years. ([The Northern Light](#))

Business

Canadian customers have returned to Blaine but businesses aren't sure what the future holds since the number of visitors is lower than before the border closed in March 2020. ([The Northern Light](#))

The Decatur Shores Community Association on the non-ferry island in San Juan County is charging an annual fee for use of its mail shed which has resulted in USPS mail no longer being delivered for free but held in Anacortes while the USPS is locked out. ([San Juan Journal/paywall](#))

Raspberry farmer Randy Honcoop has retired after 35 years growing raspberries and has turned over his 55 acres in commercial production at the corner of Northwood and Halverstick roads north of Lynden to neighbor Rader Farms. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

Vehicle reservations for travel on the Anacortes-San Juan Islands ferry routes after New Year's Day will be available on Dec. 17, provided the winter four-boat schedule remains in effect.

Community

Live performers will play at Whatcom Live Aid Dec. 10-11 to benefit relief flood efforts. Shows are scheduled at MBT's Walton Theater, Boundary Bay Brewery, The Honeymoon Meadery, Bellingham Arts Academy for Youth, The Firehouse Arts and Event Center, Sylvia Center for the Arts and the Everson Arts Center. Donations will go through the [Whatcom Community Foundation's Resilience Fund](#)

Whatcom County renters have rental assistance available to them to avoid evictions but there are uncertainty and confusion as to how much aid is available and how tenants will deal with eviction notices. [\(The Front\)](#)

A suspected Immigration and Customs Enforcement unmarked office in Ferndale at 1390 Commerce Place has drawn protesters voicing their opposition to the agency's secrecy and presence in the community. [\(The Front\)](#)

Arts and Leisure

[Comfort and Joy](#)

The San Juan Singers perform "Comfort and Joy," songs that celebrate Winter Solstice, Christmas and Hanukkah. Dec. 11 at 7:30 p.m. and Dec. 12 at 2 p.m., San Juan Community Theater. Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$10 for students. Tickets, please click [HERE](#). <https://www.sjctheatre.org/whats-happening/calendar/eventdetail/11391/san-juan-singers-comfort-and-joy>

[A Christmas Carol](#)

The greatest ghost story ever old. Produced by The Lincoln Theater, directed by Angela Marinella. Pre-show features The Devillies playing old Irish and English songs and old English Christmas carols by the Madrigal Singers. Dec. 3-5, 9-11. The Lincoln Theater, <https://lincolntheatre.org/film/christmas-carol> Mount Vernon.

Up Close and 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. 22, 2022.

Jump in!

Re-imagining: Connecting to Water, Food, and Shelter as Basic Human Right

Join the Whatcom Human Rights Task Force and Amnesty International Group 270 today at 7 p.m. on [Zoom](#) to honor and celebrate International Human Rights Day. Hear what Lisa Wilson, Lummi Nation Council Member, ESA manager; Ramon Torres, President of Familias Unidas por La Justicia; Whatcom community members and Humans 4 Housing have to say.

[24th annual MLK Human Rights Conference proposals due Dec. 15](#)

Submit your proposal to share your words, knowledge and experience with other community organizers, artists, activists, leaders, teachers and students at the upcoming Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Human Rights Conference.

[Virtual Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference 2022](#)

"Honoring our Ancestors: Visions for Future Generations and the Salish Sea," April 26-28, 2022. Early registration is now open.

[Deck the Old City Hall](#)

Whatcom Museum's Historic Old City Hall is decked out for the season with a variety of themed, decorated holiday trees in the Rotunda Room. Open Thurs.-Sun., donations accepted.

[The Whatcom County Library System](#) presents:

Botany of the Pacific Northwest, Dec. 11, 7-8 p.m.

There are over 3,000 native plant species in Washington state yet many people can't tell a fir from a hemlock or a calyx from a corolla. By putting names to these plants, we can begin to understand the important role each one plays in keeping our planet healthy and well fed.

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, Managing Editor

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

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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