

Salish Current

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

Dear Reader:

Happy new year!

The 2022 legislative session begins next week and we thank our 42nd and 40th District representatives for answering some questions about some big issues of concern. We'll keep track of progress on these issues during the next 60 days.

We also support the transparency of the Whatcom County Council's process of having 42nd District Senate position nominees make their views known on specific issues of concern to the all the district's voters. Find those questions answered after 4:30 p.m. today [here](#) and read more in the Government section below.

Wait, there's more: **Lauren Gallup** writes about whether adopting inclusionary zoning in city planning can help with creating more affordable housing in Bellingham, and **Rich Appel** writes a Community Voices column about steps that might be taken to deal with Nooksack flooding, water use and salmon.

And if you just can't get enough news: [Salish Sea News Week in Review 1/7/22](#) has more — Bobblehead day! WA WQ, BC climate proofing, sea star ESA, Snoqualmie Falls, refinery transition, China MPAs, Tulalip clam suit, EPA air pollutant, Duwamish cleanup

— 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 Jan. 7, 2022

[For the people: what local legislators plan for the 2022 session](#)



Concerns including children's mental health, Nooksack River Basin water rights, shelter for the unhoused, flood mitigation and more top the priority lists for local elected officials preparing for the start next Monday of the 2022 legislative session. Legislators shared their plans for the session with *Salish Current*. ([Read more.](#))

[Housing pressures spark new look at inclusionary zoning](#)



Facing an extremely low affordable housing inventory, Bellingham is looking at options including inclusionary zoning — an option dismissed previously and now back on the table for another look.

By Lauren Gallup — Inclusionary zoning policies that either incentivize or require developers to include some units in construction projects that qualify as affordable housing are being reexamined as a way to provide much-needed affordable housing in Bellingham. ([Read more.](#))

[Community Voices / Nooksack flood, water solutions to protect families, fish and farms will require collaboration](#)



The Nooksack River Basin experiences extremes in flow, from devastating flooding such as Whatcom County saw in November to salmon-endangering periods of low streamflow in summer. Finding solutions to those issues is crucial, and will require collaboration from throughout the community, farmers say.

By Rich Appel — Whatcom farmers are calling for communitywide collaboration in pursuing solutions to flooding and water supply issues in the Nooksack River Basin. ([Read more.](#))

News from around the region

Health and Safety

President Joe Biden declared the floods in November a major disaster on Jan. 5 and made federal funding available to Whatcom County, along with the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Indian Tribe. ([Whatcom News](#)) Skagit County residents and businesses impacted by major flooding in November now qualify for federal assistance. ([Skaqit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Whatcom County set a single-day record of 423 cases on Monday and over 960 cases have been confirmed this week. ([KGMI](#))

Whatcom County 1/7/22 [COVID ActNow](#) **Severe Risk**; 120.3/100K; 76.1% vaccinated
San Juan County 1/7/22 [COVID ActNow](#) **Very High Risk**; 49.6/100K; 84.7% vaccinated
Skagit County 1/7/22 [COVID ActNow](#) **Severe Risk**; 92.5/100K; 70.4% vaccinated

Government

San Juan County

Christine Minney was elected chair of the San Juan County Council and Cindy Wolf vice-chair at the council's Jan. 4 meeting.

City of Anacortes

Matt Miller has been sworn in as the mayor of Anacortes replacing Laurie Gere, who completed her second term last week. ([Anacortes American](#))

City of Sedro-Woolley

The Sedro-Woolley City Council unanimously passed a resolution Wednesday night opposing a proposed amendment to the county comprehensive plan that would allow for fully contained communities in Skagit County. The resolution was signed by Mayor Julia Johnson. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

City of Bellingham

Two newly elected Black representatives, four women and three men comprise the new city council. ([City of Bellingham](#))

The council will meet on Jan. 10. [Agenda items](#) include:

Public Works and Natural Resources Committee:

- 23220 Sanitary Services Company (SSC) Residential Single Stream Recycling [Pilot Program](#)
- 23137 An Ordinance Regarding Public Parking; Amending Bellingham Municipal Code Chapters 2.44, 11.33 and 11.36 [Staff memo](#).
- 23221 A [Resolution](#) Amending City Parking Rates

Final Consideration of Ordinances:

- 23180 An [Ordinance](#) of the City of Bellingham Amending Titles 20 And 21 of the Bellingham Municipal Code Regarding Infill Housing Provisions

The council will meet again on Jan. 24.

Whatcom County

The county council in a special session on Jan. 4 adopted (6-0, Elenbaas recused) a [questionnaire](#) to be filled out by the three candidates nominated by the county Republican party to fill the vacant position of 42nd District senator. The council voted (4-2, Kershner and Byrd opposed, Elenbaas recused) to meet to select a replacement on Jan. 11 after nominees Ben Elenbaas, Tawsha Dykstra Thompson and Simon Sefzik return completed questionnaires to the county by Jan. 7 and answers are made public on the council's [Legislative Information Center](#). ([Whatcom County Council](#))

The council will hold a virtual oath of office ceremony for Kaylee Galloway, Tyler Byrd, Barry Buchanan and Todd Donovan at 1 p.m. on Jan, 10. To join, [click here](#).

The Whatcom Council will meet on Jan. 11 in special session at 9:30 a.m. [Agenda items](#) include:

- Reorganization of the Whatcom County Council for 2022
- Resolution affirming the Whatcom County Council's appointment to fill 42nd Legislative District vacancy

The Whatcom County Council will meet in regular session on Jan. 11. [Agenda items](#) include:

- [AB2021-741](#) Request authorization for the county executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Washington State University to continue the jointly shared costs for faculty positions and program support for WSU Extension in the amount of \$240,071 for a total amended contract amount of \$2,731,428.90
- [AB2022-001](#) Request authorization for the county executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Lewis Publishing Company, Inc. to publish COVID-19-related advertisements, in the amount of \$27,000 for a total amended contract amount of \$67,000
- [AB2022-002](#) Request authorization for the county executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Cascade Radio Group to provide radio commercial spots for COVID-19-related advertisements in the amount of \$20,000 for a total amended contract amount of \$60,000

The council will meet again on Jan. 25.

Port of Bellingham

The Port of Bellingham commission met on Jan. 4. [Agenda items](#) included:

The port commission elected Bobby Briscoe to be president of the board and Ken Bell to be vice-president.

Port staff Mike Hogan briefed the commissioners on the Port's strategic priorities.

Lobbyists Tom McBride and Ben Buchholz briefed the commissioners on the 2022 legislative session.

A public hearing was held on the [Port's Draft Redistricting Plan](#). A resolution for adoption will be presented at an upcoming meeting,

The commission voted unanimously to deny approval of a modification to [Point Roberts Press Inc.'s Harbor Land Lease](#) in Blaine Harbor.

The commission will meet again on Jan. 18.

For the people

The state House of Representatives will begin its Jan. 10 legislative session remotely due to the Omicron variant of COVID-19. ([NW News Network](#))

The state Supreme Court has unanimously accepted the state's redistricting maps by declining two lawsuits seeking to void the redistricting process because decisions were made in violation of the state's open meetings law. ([Everett Herald](#))

40th District representative Debra Lekanoff, Washington's only Native American lawmaker, is prime sponsor of a Green Amendment which would add "healthy environment" to constitutional rights in Washington. ([KNKX](#))

Nature

Red foxes on San Juan Island are not a native species, but they've been here long enough that they've carved a niche into the ecosystem and are now a celebrated component of the island's phenomenal wildlife. ([Daily Kos](#))

Bellingham beavers at sites like Willow Springs are building dams to control their territories but their dams may conflict with their human neighbors. ([The Planet Magazine](#))

Business

For more than two decades, the state's ferry system has been chronically underfunded, and staffing efforts are lagging. ([Crosscut](#))

A recent investigation by the Northwest Clean Air Agency uncovered that Petrogas West has made changes to its Ferndale facility in violation of a permit issued five years ago to replace old compressors. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

The Skagit County Farmland Legacy Program has permanently protected a 103-acre farm in Conway from development. ([GoSkagit/playwall](#))

Commentary

Ferry rider Tom Owen in the San Juan Islands suggests the governor replace those who can't run the Washington State Ferries system in the islands with those who can. ([The Orcsonian](#))

What's the future of local oil refineries? If local leaders start planning now, communities like Anacortes and Ferndale could not merely avoid the economic hardship typical when a major employer leaves town, but plan ahead to shape the kind of healthy, vibrant and prosperous future they deserve. ([Sightline](#))

Community

More than 300 people who are being disowned by the Nooksack Tribe were on the losing end of a bitter disenrollment battle that has torn apart families and left dozens of people facing eviction in the middle of the coldest Washington winter in years. The outcast Nooksack members are petitioning the federal government to intervene. ([NY Times/paywall](#))

Arts and Leisure

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.

Jump in!

The 2022 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Human Rights Conference theme is “An Inescapable Network of Mutuality: Creative Extremism for the Cause of Justice.” To learn more about the three-day event and to register, [click here](#). (Jan. 13, 14, 15)

Mountaineer Lisa Amatangel talks about conquering the Seven Summits Challenge — climbing the highest mountain on each of the seven continents. This virtual presentation is sponsored by the Anacortes branch of the American Association of University Women. Request the link to this Zoom program by sending an email to aauw.meeting@gmail.com. Jan. 13, 7 p.m.

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

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