

News of the week: March 25, 2022

Dear Reader —

We're still in awe of the amazing numbers of viewers who joined in on March 17 to see and hear Attorney General Bob Ferguson and journalists Margaret Sullivan and Hedrick Smith bring a powerful and empowering message to our community, via the online forum "Trust 2022: Why Independent Local News is Important to a Strong Democracy."

We've posted [a video recording](#) of the event, and we welcome you to view and share it as you see fit.

This week we bid farewell to our Western Washington University journalism intern **Chris O'Neill** who finishes off his taste of "real world" reporting with a story about permaculture and art. Chris has also done stories about hummingbirds in winter, snow clearing, broadband internet and a profile of artist Chris Moench. Good work, Chris!

Our feature story by **Matt Benoit** on the past, present and future of shopping malls picked up a news hook at the last minute with the loan default by Bellis Fair owners. Matt smoothly incorporated the news into his story and made deadline.

Reporter **Lauren Gallup** has worked on several aspects of the housing crisis and dove deep this time into what's going on in Skagit County. This kind of deep dive gives readers some context to understand some of the forces that shape our futures.

And we thank essayist **Terri Thayer** for helping us reflect on this past month's celebration of International Women's Day and Women's History Month. Thanks, Terri, for reminding us that every day is women's day.

Thank you for reading and for your support of fact-based, independent local news. Tell others about *Salish Current* and, if you can, make a [donation](#) to pay our reporters.

And, if you'd like more news, here you are:

[Salish Sea News Week in Review 3/25/22](#): Pecans, Squaxin Park, Nooksack logging, Trans Mountain costs, return Tokitae, B.C. oil gas, Washington sea grass protection, B.C. ecosystem grant, B.C. forest protection, Snake River dams, Nooksack flood control, Russian research ship.

— Amy Nelson, Publisher

News from the *Salish Current*

[Affordable housing is in short supply in Skagit County](#)



Change from the ground up: Martha's Place, under construction on College Way in Mount Vernon, is the result of code and zoning changes to allow for permanent housing providing residents with medical and other supportive services; one of many ways Skagit County jurisdictions are addressing the need for more affordable housing—of all types.

By Lauren Gallup — Everyone's versions of "affordable" housing are in high demand—and short supply—in steadily growing Skagit County. ([Read more.](#))

Reuse, repurpose, re-imagine: mall properties are in transition



Footsteps may echo today in areas such as this unoccupied section of Bellis Fair mall— but other areas are humming with a new variety of business, as schools, community crafts workshops and other noncommercial activities take over spaces

once filled by stores and shoppers.

By Matt Benoit — What's next for once-major shopping malls in Skagit and Whatcom counties that are among others nationwide seeing vacant storefronts on the rise? Some are empty shells possibly facing demolition, while others seem to be in the process of reinventing their roles in real-life brick-and-mortar. ([Read more.](#))

Farmer-artist counters food, fuel uncertainty — via permaculture



Permaculturist Brian Kerkvliet is a practitioner and teacher of the concept of building a self-reliant lifestyle based on systems and patterns observed in nature.

Everything on family-run Inspiration Farm is "an element with multiple

functions" — including his steer Button.

By Chris O'Neil — The past two years since the outbreak of COVID-19 have been turbulent and uncertain times for many. As fuel and food prices rise, the drive to become more self-reliant is also on the increase. A Whatcom farmer and glass artist suggests the path to that is permaculture. ([Read more.](#))

Community Voices / Reflecting on International Women's Day



Observances such as International Women's Day provoke a reckoning with the human behaviors that create the need for such observances. But the day also is an opportunity for celebration and recognition; a women's march in

Bellingham in 2017 reflected those same perspectives.

By Terri Thayer — Much change has happened since 1910 when the idea of an International Women's Day was proposed by Clara Zetkin at the International Conference of Working Women. A lot still needs to change, notes a Community Voices contributor. ([Read more.](#))

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

News from around the region

Health and Safety

COVID-19 infection and vaccination rates for Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit counties [are found here.](#)

Education

Superintendents: Karin "Kristi" Dominguez has been hired as the new Ferndale School district superintendent. The Lynden School District is scheduled to name its new superintendent on March 31. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

Government

San Juan County

The county council met on March 21. [Agenda items](#) included:

Discussion:

- Washington State Ferries. Jim Corenman and Ken Burtness of the Ferry Advisory Committee discussed current and future issues with crews, vessels and schedules affecting island service. (2:29-35:25)
- MacKay Harbor Road Relocation. Kendra Smith, director of environmental stewardship, and staff discussed managed retreat as applied to relocation of the eroding roadway on south Lopez Island. (1:13:18-1:30:00)

The county council met on March 22. [Agenda items](#) included:

Public hearing:

- Resolution to dispose of Surplus County Personal Property (Sheriff's Boat) by Direct Sale. The council will continue the public hearing until its meeting of April 5. (12:00-27:00)

City of Bellingham

The city council held via Zoom a town hall meeting on March 21 on Climate Action. The video of the meeting is [found here](#).

The city council will meet on March 28. [Agenda items](#) include:

Climate Action Committee:

- Proposed Climate Action Fund: Part 1- Overview and Revenue Source. [Staff memo](#). [Presentation](#).

Whatcom County

The county council met on March 22. [Agenda items](#) included:

Public hearing:

- The council approved 4-3 (Byrd, Elenbaas, Kershner opposed) an ordinance repealing Ordinance 2022-005, temporary closure of Gulf Road. The council action reverses an earlier action and reopens Gulf Road south of Henry Road providing access to the shoreline. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#)) The council

unanimously approved the ordinance with the inclusion of the statement: "Whereas, Council recognizes private property rights and repealing Ordinance 2022-005 only affects the County right-of-way and does not invite trespass on adjacent private lands..."

Consent agenda:

- The council approved by consent authorizing the County Executive to enter into a lease agreement between Whatcom County and SpectraSite Communications to lease tower access at the Blaine-Harvey Road Water Tower Site for seven years for a total of \$189,559.07. [Staff memo.](#)

Other actions:

- Councilmember Kaylee Galloway was appointed to the Climate Action Committee.
- Charles Baily was appointed to fill a vacancy on the Climate Impact Advisory Committee.

The council will meet again on April 5.

Port of Bellingham

The commission has postponed its meeting of April 5.

For the people

Ammo and guns: Washington Gov. Jay Inslee signed into law a ban on the manufacture, distribution and sale of firearm magazines that hold more than 10 rounds and a ban on bringing firearms to certain public settings.

[\(Associated Press\)](#)

Elections

Tribe: RoseMary LaClair was elected chair of the Nooksack Indian Tribe over incumbent Roswell Cline, Jr.

[\(CDN\)](#)

Nature

Big boom: Seismologists located the source of an unexplained boom felt March 7 near Crescent Beach Preserve, in the northern part of Orcas Island near Ship Bay. [\(Bellingham Herald/paywall\)](#)

Tree harvest: Commercial forestry could reduce late-summer stream flows in the Nooksack River's South Fork by as much as 25%, said Oliver Grah, the Nooksack Indian Tribe's water resources program manager.

[\(Bellingham Herald/paywall\)](#)

What's in a name? Chris Looney contemplates renaming of the world's largest hornet species after its name brought anti-Asian hate and confusion in entomology.

[\(Crosscut\)](#)

Nooksack flood: Can restoring the natural balance of the Nooksack River also reduce flood risks?

[\(Salish Sea Currents Magazine\)](#)

Mussel dogs: The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is taking steps to combat the issue of the mussels with Mussel Dogs, a company that trains dogs to sniff out quagga and zebra mussels on boats to keep them out of waterways. [\(The Front\)](#)

Business

Tulip strike: The farmworker strike against Washington Bulb Co. has ended after striking workers and employers agreed to talks. [\(KGMI\)](#)

Aluminum power: The Bonneville Power Administration has dampened enthusiasm over quick reopening of the shuttered Intalco aluminum plant by saying it could not deliver the amount of power required or could not sell power at a rate that would make the plant profitable.

[\(CDN\)](#)

Shipping news: Cargo volumes had a small increase last year at the Port of Vancouver despite the pandemic, supply chain and weather challengers. [\(Canadian Press\)](#)

Community

Child care: The Bellingham city council voted on March 14 to use \$1 million from President Biden's American Rescue Plan Act to fund child-care centers through programs being administered by the Opportunity Council, part of a proposed \$3 million effort between

the city and Whatcom County. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Native goods: The city of Seattle will return hundreds of historic artifacts uncovered in Seattle City Light excavation work at the Gorge Dam site to the Upper Skagit Tribe. ([KUOW](#))

Orca prayer: Lummi Tribal members Ellie Kinley and Raynell Morris led prayers last Sunday at Cherry Point for return of Sk'aliCh'elh-tenaut from the Miami Seaquarium. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Arts and Leisure

RARE: Recycled Arts Resource Expo. Opening April 1, 6-9 p.m., 1418 Cornwall Ave. RARE highlights creative reuse in the form of art through an exhibit at the Allied Arts Gallery and at its [virtual gallery](#) April 1-30.

Jump in!

Eager: The Surprising, Secret Life of Beavers and Why They Matter, March 29, 7 p.m. North Cascades Audubon Society presents environmental journalist Ben Goldfarb. [Register here.](#)

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Mike Sato, Managing Editor**

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