

News of the week: April 8, 2022

Dear Reader —

I add my congratulations to Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson on her confirmation to our United States Supreme Court — and agree with our Attorney General Bob Ferguson who remarked that the confirmation vote should have been unanimous.

The vote wasn't unanimous, but votes for judges whether by the people's representatives or by the people themselves are very seldom unanimous.

In this state we vote for judges. In other states and in the federal government, judges are appointed. There are pros and cons about either way, but in the end you have an individual elevated to a position to determine, in criminal or civil matters, the fates and fortunes of people.

Three lawyers have filed for the Whatcom County District Court Position 2, one that few voters, other than fellow lawyers, know much about unless they have been before that court. Of the three, two will win the primary and one will be voted into office in November.

What makes a good judge and what's a good judge for this court's position? What factors should we take into consideration in judging — and voting for — a candidate for judge?

Having just witnessed one way of choosing a judge that sometimes left me shaking my head, *Salish Current* intends to take a deeper dive into why and how we choose a judge by voting.

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[Current](#) and if you can, [support us with a donation](#) to pay our freelance reporters. And, if you'd like more news, here you are:

[Salish Sea News Week in Review 4/8/22](#): Feng shui, toilet paper, British Columbia herring, old-growth logging pause, Navy SEAL training, Washington EVs, stormwater map, Trump water rule, microplastics in lungs, tree carbon credits, GasLink funding

— Amy Nelson, Publisher

News from the *Salish Current*

[‘Treatment over punishment’: jail diversion programs show potential](#)



Data show reductions in jail bookings and the number of jail days for participants in drug abuse and mental health diversion programs, stakeholder advisors for Whatcom County's Justice Project heard this week.

By Matt Benoit — Amid calls to reform policing and criminal justice — and an aging, crowded jail — Whatcom officials, residents and law officers are looking to diversion programs for detainees with serious mental health or substance abuse issues. ([Read more.](#))

[Fire damages historic downtown Friday Harbor buildings](#)



Flames rage inside the building housing San Juan Island's oldest tavern, as firefighters from throughout the islands work to contain the blaze.

By Nancy DeVaux — No one was injured in an early-

morning blaze on lower Spring Street in Friday Harbor that was reported when it drew the attention of a passing driver at 3:43 am. At least four businesses sustained damage. ([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 testing patterns are changing as many individuals are choosing over-the-counter (OTC) COVID-19 tests across the county. The results from these OTC tests remain largely underreported, and therefore estimates of confirmed case counts and rates should be interpreted with caution. ([Whatcom County Health Department](#))

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

Education

Check out summaries of research being done by Western Washington University graduate students Erin Rosenkranz (biochemistry) and Heidi Stewart (environmental science) and professor Jeff Grimm (behavioral neuroscience). ([Western Today](#))

Anacortes High School Principal Daniel Williams will resign at the end of the school year and has filed formal accusations that he was subjected by the school district to racial discrimination, harassment and a hostile work environment. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Government

San Juan County

The county council met on April 5. [Agenda items](#) included:

- The council unanimously approved a resolution to dispose of surplus county personal property (the sheriff's boat) by direct sale. The boat will remain active during the summer and put up for sale after Sept. 1. A new boat will not have to be paid for until it is delivered.
- The council scheduled a public hearing on May 17 regarding a vacation rental permit cap.
- The council unanimously approved the membership of the Climate and Sustainability Advisory Committee: Vincent Dauciunas, Adrian Kilpatrick, Barbara Marrett, Jay Kimball, Michael Shanks, Janet Alderton, Chris Greacen, Oliver (Jerry) Whitfield, Renee Koplan, Luke Fincher (youth member), Kendra Smith (County Council approved representative).

The council will meet again on April 18 and 19.

City of Bellingham

The council will meet on April 11. [Agenda items](#) include:

Committee of the Whole

- Discussion of Post Point Resource Recovery Project. [Staff presentation slides.](#)
- Climate Action Fund: Areas of Investment. [Staff memo.](#) [Staff presentation.](#)
- Update on downtown service and safety initiatives.
- Resolution to increase Bayview Cemetery fees. [Proposed fees.](#)
- Resolution to establish disc golf fees for Lake Padden Golf Course. [Staff memo.](#)
- Discussion of in-person council meetings.

The council will meet again on April 25.

Whatcom County

The council will meet on April 12. [Agenda items](#) include:

- Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a grant agreement between Whatcom County and Washington Department of Ecology to develop and implement a

collaborative process to identify local solutions for water availability issues in the Nooksack Basin and supporting technical work in the amount of \$250,000. [Proposed agreement.](#)

The council will meet again on April 26.

Port of Bellingham

The commission is scheduled to meet again on April 19.

Elections

[Public Disclosure Commission](#) Campaign Contributions as of April 8, 2022:

Whatcom County District Court Judge – Pos. 1

Angela Anderson: Raised \$0; Spent \$0

Whatcom County District Court Judge – Pos. 2

Jonathan Rands: Raised \$25,485.31; Spent \$4,018.32;

Loans \$10,000; Debt \$1,642.86

David Nelson: Raised \$5,200; Spent \$0

Gordon Jenkins: Raised \$369.64); Spent \$369.64

Nature

Salmon. Students at Lowell Elementary School in Bellingham released salmon fry in Whatcom Creek as part of the Salmon in the Classroom program organized by Bellingham resident Wendy Scherrer in 16 schools in Bellingham and Ferndale. ([CDN](#))

Swans. Populations of trumpeter and tundra swans returning to their Washington winter feeding grounds have stabilized to 17,000 birds but still face threats from ingesting lead shot and colliding with electric power lines. ([The Planet Magazine](#))

Tidepools. By the light of her headlamp, Western Washington University environmental science major Alyssa Tsukada picks her way across the rocky beaches of Bellingham Bay to the ecological treasure laid bare by the pull of the moon: tide pools. ([Klipsun Magazine](#))

Business

Housing. Whatcom County in consultation with local business leaders proposes using .09% of local sales tax revenue available to rural counties to provide grants and low-interest loans to developers of workforce and low-income designated housing. ([CDN](#))

Tulips. Washington Bulb Co. and Skagit tulip field workers reached agreement in improved working conditions, such as having gloves and hand cream to prevent rashes, compensating workers for time spent walking from their cars to the field, ensuring that all work is performed on company time, and workers being given an equal amount of hours and better trained supervisors. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Water. Skagit Valley Farm has been fined \$267,000 by the Dept. of Ecology for irrigating 348 acres in the lower Skagit and Samish watersheds in 2021 without having water rights. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Trees. The state Department of Natural Resources will preserve over 10,000 acres of state forests as a carbon offset project, including 46 acres of part of the “Bessie Sorts” stand in Whatcom County once marketed for logging. ([CDN](#))

Bus. Computer problems have plagued the two electric buses of Whatcom Transit Authority clouding the future conversion of the fleet to all-electric by 2040. ([CDN](#))

Community

Homelessness. Unity Care Northwest will convert the Whatcom County Health building into The Way Station, a Bellingham homeless support center, which has received \$2 million in federal funding to provide services to homeless people. ([CDN](#))

Trail. The city of Blaine and Beachwalker Villas Association on the Semiahmoo peninsula are in an easement disagreement about where the city can construct a trail in front of the condominium property. ([The Northern Light](#))

Growth. Latest census counts show the Blaine and Birch Bay area grew by 22% over the past decade and that together they are larger than either Ferndale or Lynden. ([The Northern Light](#))

Trail. A walking trail to connect Bellingham's King Mountain and Irongate neighborhoods with the Barkley Village area will cost an estimated \$2 million, and the city will seek grant funding from the state Recreation and Conservation Office. ([CDN](#))

On the streets. The Mount Vernon Police Department is seeking to add five more staff to its social worker program to serve as both social worker first responders and case managers. ([Skaqit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Point Roberts. A trail of tears and tales of woe tell the story of the isolated community of Point Roberts. ([CDN](#))

Arts and Leisure

[Bellingham Human Rights Film Festival](#) and the Pickford Theater partner to present the films: "Inhabitants" (April 14), "First Time Home" (April 16), and "Youth v Gov" (April 21). Attendance by donation.

The Orcas Island Film Festival concludes with the film, "A Matter of Life and Death," (1946) on April 17 at 4 p.m. [Tickets here.](#)

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!

The draft 2022-2026 Action Agenda for Puget Sound is now available for review. Check it out and [submit your comments](#) by April 15.

"It's Our Earth — Let's Save It": Kick off Earth Day with Heather Trim of Zero Waste Washington April 16, 10 a.m., in person (Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship Hall) or by Zoom. Hear about legislative successes on climate, learn why plastic is so much more than litter and take

away strategies to help our planet. [Registration required](#) by April 13, 9 p.m. Sponsored by League of Women Voters of Bellingham Whatcom County.

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