



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

News of the week: April 15, 2022

Dear Reader —

When those in the news media speak of transparency, it usually is to call for elected officials, government agencies and candidates to allow public examination of public records, public finances and meeting details.

We take seriously the Freedom of Information Act, public records requirements, open public meetings and conflict of interest rules, as do most public officials.

Transparency in the public square is not simply a matter of access to information: it is a cornerstone of trust in our institutions and in those we choose to lead and govern. There's no reason to trust an institution or a leader without transparency.

Transparency applies as well to those of us who are watchers and report on the affairs of the public square. We, too, are held accountable when dealing with unnamed news sources, reporters' conflicts of interest and financial influences on editorial positions.

Transparency is a cornerstone of a reader's trust. We disclose our sources, identify any reporter or editorial conflicts of interest and open our list of supports and donors. There are no millionaires or hedge funds behind the curtain at the *Salish Current*.

We'll stand this Earth Day and every day with the elected officials, activists and news media who champion transparency in principle and in actions. We work to gain your trust that way.

Thank you for your continuing support for independent, community news that's free to read and free from advertising. Please encourage others to read [Salish 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 4/15/22](#): Jackie Robinson Day, Washington wolves, floating toilets, floating wind farm, Pacific Northwest water. sewage tales, British Columbia log supply, Washington Blacks outdoors, French Creek eagles, salmon virus

— Amy Nelson, Publisher

News from the *Salish Current*

[Grant to fund collaboration plan for solutions to Nooksack Basin issues](#)



Declining fish populations, environmental health, water flow and temperature, and agricultural needs for irrigation are in the balance, as solutions are sought to Nooksack Basin water supply issues.

By Clifford Heberden — Interested parties hope Solutions Table funding approved this week will spark collaborative work toward holistic solutions for water availability in the Nooksack River basin. ([Read more.](#))

[Tech entrepreneur's path winds from solar cars to bleeding-edge art](#)

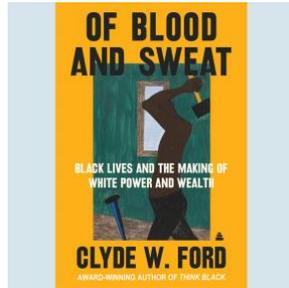


Shawn Kemp applies the finishing touches to one of his latest laser-cut artworks at his home studio in Bellingham.

By Chris O'Neill — Entrepreneur and artist Shawn Kemp's path has wound from designing and racing solar cars in high school to creating computer-generated art — with

loops through the worlds of gaming and social media. ([Read more.](#))

[‘Of Blood and Sweat’ traces role of Black labor in building white wealth](#)



"Of Blood and Sweat: Black Lives and the Making of White Power and Wealth," released by Amistad Press this month, holds a lens to the past, to better understand the realities of modern America.

By Mary Kinser — Bellingham author Clyde Ford meshes storytelling talents with meticulous skills as a historian in tracing how Black labor built the structures and systems creating white wealth and power. ([Read more.](#))

[Community Voices / Bellingham police chief hiring process — success or flop?](#)



A local civic action group is hoping Bellingham's next police chief will work to strengthen community cohesion and be transparent and accountable to the public.

By Riveters Collective

Justice System Committee — The City of Bellingham is expected to announce its final selection for a new police chief in May or June. ([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

San Juan Island Fire and Rescue, Town of Friday Harbor, and San Juan County Sheriff's Office announced yesterday that the April 7 fire was found to have originated on the deck behind the commercial structure housing Crystal Seas Kayaking and was determined to have been caused by arson. (News Release) The San Juan County Economic Development Council has set up a [PayPal donation account](#) to assist affected businesses.

Western Washington University staff and students will be required to show they have received COVID-19 booster vaccinations starting Sept. 1 to be eligible for in-person activities. ([The Front](#))

The Washington state Board of Health voted unanimously Wednesday against adding the COVID-19 vaccine to the list of required immunizations for kids in schools and childcare settings in the state. ([KUOW](#))

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

Anacortes School District Superintendent Justin Irish denied that race played any role in employment decisions involving the high school principal or the assessment and special projects coordinator who had also resigned. The School Board stood with superintendent Irish. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#)) See also: Principal resigns, alleges discrimination ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Government

San Juan County

The council will meet on April 19. Agenda items are listed [here](#).

City of Bellingham

The council met on April 11. [Agenda items](#) included:

- Mayor Fleetwood announced that the City has extended the lease to Wood's coffee at Boulevard Park for five years.
- [Post Point Resource Recovery Project](#)
- Council will be asked at its April 25 meeting to authorize submittal of the project plan to the Department of Ecology and to finalize the loan application with the US EPA. See: "Post Point's biosludge: Coming to a garden near you?" ([CDN](#))
- [Climate Action Fund- Areas of Investment Discussion](#)
- The four main areas of proposed investment discussion during the presentation included: securing renewable electricity for the community, electrification and energy efficiency of existing buildings, low carbon transportation, and adaptation to climate change. Draft resolution, public hearing and more council deliberation in May and June. See: "Proposed areas of investment for Climate Action Fund presented to city council" ([CDN](#))
- The council unanimously approved a resolution to increase [Bayview Cemetery fees](#).
- The council unanimously approved a resolution to establish [disc golf fees](#) for Lake Padden Golf Course.
- The council unanimously agreed to continue discussion of [in-person council meetings](#) at its April 25 meeting and to invite Whatcom County Health Department Director Erika Lautenbach and Health Officer Dr. Greg Thompson.
- The council unanimously approved purchase for \$351,000 a 131-acre property in the city's [Lake Whatcom watershed](#). The land is zoned commercial forestry and has no potential development units.

The council will meet again on April 25.

Whatcom County

The council met on April 12. [Agenda items](#) included:

- The council unanimously authorized 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.
- In a remarkable show of unanimity, the council agreed on every actionable agenda item.

The council will meet again on April 26.

Port of Bellingham

The commission will meet on April 19. [Agenda items](#) include:

Presentations:

- Working Waterfront Coalition Apprenticeship Program Update
- Q1 Financials Update
- Legislative Update

Action Items:

- Authorize the Executive Director to execute an Authorization to Proceed for Harcourt's proposed Projects No. 3 and 4 within the Waterfront District Master Development Area.
- "According to Harcourt's Project Concept Design, Projects 3 and 4 include the development of two six-story mixed-use buildings over a common above-grade parking structure. The projects anticipate a mix of commercial and retail on ground floor, with upper floors as multifamily residential. The proposed projects will provide approximately 135 residential units and approximately 11,000 square feet of commercial space. The preliminary designs also include retention of the digester tanks located within the project footprint in their existing location, public open plazas and pedestrian access, and integrating design elements highlighting the area's industrial past while incorporating sustainable building systems such as solar and connection to the district energy system. No affordable housing units are proposed as part of this concept." [See staff recommendation to proceed.](#)

The commission will meet again on May 3.

Elections

Jane Fuller of Lopez Island announced her candidacy for County Council, District 3. ([Lopez Rocks](#))

[Public Disclosure Commission](#) Campaign Contributions as of April 14, 2022:

LD 42 Senate Campaign

Ben Elenbaas (R) - Raised \$72,214.40; Spent \$11,904.27

Russ Działo (Other) - Raised \$0.00; Spent \$0.00

Sharon Shewmake (D) - Raised \$75,621.31; Spent \$9,455.22

Simon Sefzik (R) - Raised \$65,219.91; Spent \$8,532.64

Whatcom County District Court Judge – Pos. 2

Jonathan Rands - Raised \$26,260.01; Spent \$4,849.04; Loans \$10,000; Debt \$3,642.86

David Nelson - Raised \$5,200; Spent \$750.00

Gordon Jenkins - Raised \$382.70; Spent \$429.80; Loans \$5,000

Nature

Parasite. Scientists have discovered a mystery parasite—what will it mean for the future of Washington’s oysters? ([High County News/Hakai Magazine](#))

Derelict gear. An estimated 117,000 lost and abandoned traps and nets — “ghost” fishing equipment — entangles and traps thousands of marine organisms until they eventually decompose, out of sight. ([The Planet Magazine](#))

Glaciers. Puget Sound's glaciers are melting rapidly due to climate change. The North Cascades mountains have lost about 56% of their glacial ice while estimates show that glaciers in the Olympics could be gone within the next 50 years. Scientists say salmon and other species could be hard hit as the region loses its “giant storage tank” of ice. ([Salish Sea Current Magazine](#))

Business

Water. Skagit Valley Farms will contest the \$267,000 fine issued by the Department of Ecology for watering crops without a water permit. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Semiahmoo. Multi-family housing slated for Horizon at Semiahmoo will nearly double the subdivision's residences to over 400 single-family, triplexes and fourplexes. The subdivision will have about 140 single-family homes and 300 multi-family units, and anywhere from 417 and 477 residences could be built. ([The Northern Light](#))

Real estate. Dollar volume for first quarter San Juan County real estate sales was \$87,735,644 with a total of 88 transactions, a 7% increase in dollar volume and a 34% decrease in the number of transactions as compared to the same period in 2021. ([San Juan Update](#))

Community

Border. The Canada Border Services Agency says there is a backlog of over 270,000 NEXUS applicants currently waiting for an interview. Individuals who re-apply online before their membership expires are given a two-year extension to the original five-year term. ([The Northern Light](#))

Parking. Increased paid parking fees in downtown Bellingham and parking meters in the Fairhaven district will go into effect of May 1. ([City of Bellingham/Whatcom Talk](#))

Mental health. The Mount Vernon City Council approved a \$325,000 amendment to the 2022 budget to help fund five new full-time staff focused on helping people get care for mental health or substance use issues. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Terramation. The Lopez Union Cemetery Association board invites island residents to meet at the cemetery at 2 p.m. on April 22 with representatives from Return Home to discuss terramation at the cemetery. ([LopezRocks](#))

Arts and Leisure

[Bellingham Human Rights Film Festival](#) and the Pickford Theater partner to present the films "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.](#)

[Salish Sea Early Music Festival](#) presents "Concerti: Frederick the Great" performed by Schrader & Cohan & Phelps & Kuroda & Strand-Polyak & Shirley
April 20, 7 p.m.; Fir-Conway Lutheran Church
April 22, 7 p.m.; St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Bellingham
April 23, 12 noon; Grace Church, Lopez Island
April 23, 7 p.m.; Brickworks, Friday Harbor
April 26, 7 p.m.; Orcas Adventist Fellowship Church/Orcas Christian School Gym
Masks and vaccination required • \$20 or \$25 suggested donation • youth 18 and under always free

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!

"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.](#) Sponsored by League of Women Voters of Bellingham Whatcom County.

The [Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference registration deadline is April 20](#) for the April 26-28 virtual gathering.

Evergreen Land Trust presents a Zoom talk on April 21 at 6 p.m. by hydrologist Susan Dickerson-Lange about how forest management can improve water quality and water quantity in the South Fork Nooksack Watershed. [Register here.](#)

[Mother Earth Day](#) April 22, 4 p.m. at Bellingham's Maritime Heritage Park presents booths, youth speakers and music by a Lummi song and dance group. Hosted by Children of the Setting Sun Productions

The Great Islands Clean-up will begin on San Juan Island on April 23, 10 a.m. at San Juan Island Brewing Co. parking lot and on Lopez Island at 10 a.m. at Lopez Village Park.

Bellingham's "[Invest In Our Planet](#)" Earth Day event on April 23 begins at 9 a.m. to improve habitat throughout Padden Creek and Fairhaven Park.

[Skagit Earth Day](#) is at the [Utopia Conservation Area](#) near Sedro-Woolley, April 25, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Join Skagit Land Trust and Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group in restoring riparian habitat.

The [Whatcom Farm Expo](#) is on April 23 at the Northwest Washington Fairgrounds in Lynden, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Admission free.

[Bellingham City Club](#) presents Bellingham Mayor Seth Fleetwood and Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu in discussion at the halfway points in their current administrations April 27, 12 noon. [Register by April 25.](#)

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Mike Sato, Managing Editor**

Salish Current is a nonprofit online newsroom serving Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit Counties. Founded in 2020, *Salish Current* exists to protect and improve democratic governance by reporting and curating local news — freely accessible to all — with independence and strict journalistic integrity.

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