



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

News of the week: June 10, 2022

Dear Reader —

Let's congratulate all this year's graduates who, with precaution, will be honored and celebrated without a pandemic hovering over us.

If I were to give a commencement message, it would be one urging graduates to engagement and action. We need all the heads and hearts we can muster to right this ship of state to sail forward.

This weekend we can rally on Saturday to March for Our Lives. On Sunday, we can join in to explore and learn about the customs and culture of our community's Black, Indigenous and People of Color.

Talk a walk outside your usual avenues and try to see and hear the world around you in all its wondrous and complex diversity.

Is this message only for the graduates? Not at all! Let's all step outside ourselves, listen and learn, and take action. Consider every day a commencement. Act to make a difference.

Thanks for reading and supporting [Salish Current](#) and nonprofit, local journalism.

Thank you!

— Amy Nelson, Publisher

Looking for more news? Check here:

[Salish Sea News Week in Review 6/10/22](#): King Kam Day, Tokitae, yelloweye, carbon credits, British Columbia bees, "Smellicopter," seafood labeling, Nootka Island, British Columbia kelp, Snake River dam removal

News from the *Salish Current*

[‘Not normal’ high prices, low availability challenge car shoppers](#)



It's not unusual to see empty space on new car lots along Bellingham's Iowa Street these days, as the auto industry deals with the effects of pandemic-shutdown factory issues.

By Chris O'Neill — In a semi-post-pandemic world, the automobile market is among many businesses suffering from factory shutdowns, computer chip shortages and inflation, leaving prices rising and inventory low. ([Read more.](#))

[Transformative power of uplifting diversity is at work in Whatcom](#)



Contributions across a full range of community life by Black, Indigenous and People of Color will be highlighted in a "Day of Uplifting" presented by the League of Women Voters of Bellingham/Whatcom County this Sunday.

By Mike Sato — Positive images of contributions made by BIPOC members of the community are needed to transform negative stereotypes, asserts the lead planner of an event designed to do just that. ([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

The Washington State Department of Health closed recreational shellfish harvesting for all species of molluscan shellfish in Blaine, Birch Bay and Point Roberts after biotoxins reached unsafe levels in the shellfish on June 9. ([The Northern Light](#))

COVID-19 Community Health Levels:

- [Whatcom County Community Level Health Risk:](#)
Medium
- [San Juan County Community Level Health Risk:](#)
Medium
- [Skagit County Community Level Health Risk:](#) Medium

Education

Student mental health. In the 2021 Washington State [Healthy Youth Survey](#), of the 994 12th-grade students surveyed in Whatcom County, 73% reported feeling nervous or anxious and 62% said they were unable to control worrying in the past two weeks. About 19% considered attempting suicide and 6% attempted suicide in the past year. Students who reported feelings of sadness and hopelessness increased from 27% in 2010 to 42% in 2021. ([CDN](#))

Government

San Juan County

The council met on June 7. Agenda items and video of discussion and decisions are [found here](#).

- Discussion: Seismic Assessment Report, San Juan County Courthouse
- Discussion: 2022 Planning Commission docket briefing
- Discussion/Action: Affordable Housing Grants
- Discussion/Action: Code of Conduct – Resolution Re-Adopting Code of Conduct

The council will meet again on June 14.

City of Bellingham

The council met on June 6. [Agenda items](#) included:

Mayor Seth Fleetwood introduced Rebecca Mertzig as the new Chief of the Bellingham Police Department.

Public Works and Natural Resources Committee:

The council unanimously approve a resolution to approve the 2023-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Committee of the Whole:

The council discussed the Climate Action Fund and scheduled a public hearing on the resolution on June 27. See: “Bellingham council revises climate action fund draft” ([CDN](#)) And: “This new Bellingham office will address climate change” ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#)) And: “City Council members express hesitation with this proposed climate tax ballot measure” ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

The council unanimously approved an ordinance extending a shelter protection area to the outer edges of H Street, Clinton Street, C Street and Roeder Avenue adjacent to a proposed interim housing facility located at 910 West Holly Street. See also: “Bellingham council approves expanded shelter protection zone” ([CDN](#))

The council will meet again on June 27.

Whatcom County

The council met on June 7. [Agenda items](#) included:

Public hearing:

The council approved (6-1-1, Elenbaas opposed, Byrd abstaining) an ordinance providing for the submission of a proposition to the qualified electors of Whatcom County authorizing the County to lift the limit on regular property taxes under Chapter 84.55 RCW for the purpose of funding for childcare, early learning programs and increased support for vulnerable children. [Ordinance.](#)

Withdrawn. Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Pyramid Communications for public

communications for the Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force in the amount of \$88,800.

The council will meet again on June 21.

Port of Bellingham

The commission met on June 7. [Agenda items](#) included:

The commission unanimously approved without discussion all items on its consent agenda.

The commission unanimously approved with discussion [[video @3:35](#)] a motion authorizing the Executive Director to execute a Personal Services Agreement with FLO Analytics to conduct an expansion of the I-5 corridor [infrastructure and utility study](#) not to exceed \$49,675.

The commissioners will meet again on June 21.

For the people

Elections

The League of Women Voters of Bellingham-Whatcom County will conduct televised [candidate forums](#) in July and invites voters to [submit issues/questions for candidates](#).

July 7

6:00 – 6:45 pm U.S. Congress Representative District 2 Program co-sponsored by LWV Bellingham Whatcom, LWV Skagit County, LWV Snohomish County, and LWV Whidbey Island

July 13

5:00 – 5:35 pm 42nd District Representative 1
6:15 – 6:45 pm 42nd District Representative 2

July 14

5:00 – 5:35 pm Whatcom District Court Judge
6:15 – 6:35 pm 42nd District State Senator

Nature

Dr. Michael Weiss has been named the new Research Director of the Center for Whale Research on San Juan Island. ([Center for Whale Research/San Juan Journal](#))

Presentin Park in Marblemount will be reopened by the Skagit County Parks and Recreation after years of work by the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group to restore a historic side channel through the park which maximizes salmon habitat while providing for recreational opportunities. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

The lower part of Bellingham's Little Squalicum Park will be closed through December 2022 for the construction of an estuary and beach restoration project that will restore 4.85 total acres of “essential” coastal habitat that has been lost to development. ([The Front](#))

Forest Initiative. The Bellingham City Council approved contributing \$1.5 million towards purchase of 550 acres of forestland for the planned 5,500-acre Stewart Mountain Community Forest Initiative. ([CDN](#))

Business

Revenue. The Washington State Department of Revenue reports retail sales of goods like furniture, clothing and cars in Whatcom County totaled \$2.6 billion in 2021, a 15% increase over 2020. Bellingham had \$1.8 billion in sales, Lynden and Ferndale \$146 million and \$141 million respectively. ([KGMI](#))

Commentary

“Pink slime.” *Washington Post* media columnist Margaret Sullivan explains why you should ask more questions before posting that enraging story on social media ([Washington Post](#))

Community

Nooksack Tribe. The Washington State Supreme Court has temporarily halted evictions by the Nooksack Tribe.

The Nooksack had already started issuing eviction notices to people it says were mistakenly enrolled in the tribe. The residents threatened with eviction appealed all the way up to the state Supreme Court. After discussing the matter Tuesday, a panel of justices ruled that the tribe must pause the evictions immediately. Next week, the court will consider whether it will take up the case. ([KNKX](#))

Centennial. The Washington State University Skagit County Extension is celebrating its 100th anniversary using science from WSU to help farmers. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Gathering Place. Blaine resident Joe Zaccaria founded The Gathering Place to help Blaine and north Whatcom County residents connect with various social services. ([The Northern Light](#))

North Star. Skagit County last month launched the North Star Project, which aims to address homelessness and behavioral health by encouraging collaboration between multiple levels of government. ([CDN](#))

Gun. Dozens of Moms Demand Action members and supporters demonstrated last week despite heavy rain in Anacortes for common-sense gun legislation. ([Anacortes American](#))

Docket items. Skagit County commissioners will decide June 14 which planning docket items such as saltwater intrusion on Guemes Island and fully contained communities will be analyzed in the coming year. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Celebrating Juneteenth, a production of the Juneteenth Video Project, will be launched on June 13 and made available to K-12 schools in Whatcom County as well as to the community to deepen understanding of the celebratory holiday. ([Connect Ferndale/Ferndale Community Services](#))

Arts and Leisure

"Alaska's Great Race" is film about Susan Butcher and her dog team at the 1985 Iditarod, the most demanding sled dog race of all, from Anchorage to Nome. Virtual

showings begin June 3. (Friday Harbor Film Festival's Director's Choice) [Tickets](#).

Jump in!

March For Our Lives rally will take place on Saturday, June 11 at 2 p.m. at Bellingham City Hall. The event urges the House and Senate to act swiftly to pass robust national standards for gun regulations, background checks, high-capacity magazines, red flag laws, and other actions to stem the pandemic of gun violence in America. Organized by Julia Ban with assistance by [Indivisible Bellingham](#).

BIPOC gathering. Come explore and learn about the customs and culture of members of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) residents of Whatcom County at an event featuring music, dance, art, stories and food from our BIPOC citizens. June 12, 2-6 p.m., Bellingham Market Depot Square. ([Racial Equity/Healthy Democracy Committee of the League of Women Voters, Bellingham & Whatcom County](#))

Whatcom County Library System's annual Summer Reading program for kids, teens and adults is underway at local public libraries. Pick up a Summer Reading card at Bellingham Public Library or Whatcom County Library System branches or download a card at the library systems' websites. ([WCLS/Whatcom Talk](#))

Lopez Library announces its summer programs and events. [Click here](#).

Washington State Ferries holds virtual community meetings to hear an update on WSF, ask questions, and learn about upcoming summer service, hiring challenges and successes, and continued COVID-19 response. June 14, 1 p.m.; June 15, 6 p.m. ([WSF](#))

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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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