



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

News of the week: June 24, 2022

Dear Reader —

Salish Current's mission to inform you about what's going on in our three-county area got a big boost this week when our board of directors added new members: journalist Mary Lynn Lyke of Fidalgo Island, communications pro Riley Sweeney of Lynden and climate change and child welfare activist Betsy Gross of Bellingham.

These wise and enthusiastic supporters of local journalism join journalist, author and educator Bill Dietrich of Anacortes, social justice advocate Jill Bernstein of South Lake Whatcom, community organizer, radio announcer and humorist Matthew Thuney of South Fork Valley, and me — journalist, not-for-profit manager and advocate for fact-based journalism and news literacy.

We also said goodbye — with deep thanks for her excellent contributions to moving *Salish Current* forward — to retiring board member Cheryl Crooks, founder of the Cascadia International Women's Film Festival.

Our board has grown, as have our readership, advocates and donors. That's gratifying and tremendously energizing — as well as sobering. There is so much going on in our world that requires informed citizens to ensure that our leaders make balanced decisions based on facts and a commitment to justice for all.

We will affirm— as we hope you will, too— a commitment to work for truth, justice, equity and healing for all people.

Salish Current is here to research and report the facts, fairly and in context, that our communities need for civil

civic discussion, and to prevail over disinformation and misinformation.

We're so grateful to have [support](#) for that work from that the most important person in the mix: you, the reader. Thank you!

—Amy Nelson, Publisher

Wait! There's more:

[Salish Sea News Week in Review 6/24/22](#): UFO Friday, mic'ing orcas, floods, SEALs, BC climate change, 2021 heat wave study, green crabs, Duwamish suit, Elwha salmon DNA, Lummi suit, BC fish farms, TM pipe

News from the *Salish Current*

[Flood recovery continues in Sumas, seven months on](#)



Water damage to the walls of the Sumas police station give stark evidence of the deep and lingering flooding the town experienced late last year when the Nooksack River breached its banks. Much of the community is still working to rebuild and recover.

By Matt Benoit — With both optimism and anxiety about what may lie ahead, Sumas is still in recovery from November's devastating flooding. ([Read more.](#))

[New safe-space resource center would assist immigrants](#)



A welcome mat of flowers in Peach Arch Park greets travelers entering the United States at the Blaine U.S.-Canada border crossing. From there, for immigrants, finding essential services can become complicated.

By Kai Uyehara — Bellingham’s Immigration Advisory Board is considering setting up a resource center to assist immigrants in finding and accessing essential services. ([Read more.](#))

[Letters to the Editor](#)

- Gene Derig: Who is a mass shooter?
- John Dunne: In support of Lighthouse Mission expansion

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

News from around the region

(The links found here may have limited access for those who don’t subscribe to the source publication. Sorry for any inconvenience!)

Health and Safety

Hospitals. Capacity and staffing issues at the three hospitals in Skagit County have required patients transported by ambulance to be taken to a hospital that was not their original destination. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

COVID-19 Community Health Levels:

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

Government

San Juan County

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

- Discussion: Community Food Assessment and Economic Impact of Local Food
- Discussion: San Juan County Food System Housing Needs Study
- Discussion: Communications Plan and Activities Update
- Discussion: Community Development Update
- Discussion/Action: Transfer of Ownership of the County K9 Sucia; Schedule a Public Hearing for July 19

City of Bellingham

The council will meet on June 27. [Agenda items](#) include:

Public Works and Natural Resources:

- Report From the June 1, 2022, Lake Whatcom Policy Group Meeting. [Meeting minutes.](#)

Committee of the Whole:

- Consideration of a Draft Interlocal Agreement with Whatcom County Concerning Joint Planning, Development Review and Annexation in Bellingham Urban Growth Areas. [Staff memo.](#)
- Affirming that the Display of Flags on City Property is Government Speech. [Staff memo.](#)
- Approval of the 2022 EMS Levy Ballot Proposition. [Staff memo.](#)

The council will meet again on July 11.

Whatcom County

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

Public Hearing:

- The council unanimously adopted an ordinance adopting amendments to the Whatcom County Code

Title 20, Zoning to allow and regulate Battery Energy Storage Systems.

- The council authorized the County Executive to enter into Interlocal Agreements with the cities of Bellingham (Byrd, Elenbaas opposed), and Everson, Lynden, Nooksack, and Sumas concerning planning, annexation and development within urban growth areas (Elenbaas opposed).

Consent Agenda:

- The council authorized by consent (Byrd opposed) for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council to administer the Housing and Essential Needs Program, in the amount of \$2,530,694.
- The council authorized by consent (Bryd, Elenbaas opposed) the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council to support operations at the permanent supportive housing facility 22 North, in the amount of \$242,648.

Other Items:

- The council authorized (Bryd, Elenbaas opposed) 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.

Levy:

- The council seeks volunteers for the committees to write pro/con statement for the levy for childcare and early childhood programs. [Details.](#)

The council will meet again on July 12.

Port of Bellingham

The commission met on June 21. [Agenda items](#) included:

Consent agenda:

The commissioners unanimously approved without discussion all items on the consent agenda, including:

- Approval of a [lease agreement](#) between the Port of Bellingham and ABC Recycling Operations Corp for 6.00 acres of property located in the Log Pond area, plus rights to use the Bellingham Shipping Terminal on a nonexclusive basis.

- Authorized the Executive Director to 1) Accept a \$1.125 million Whatcom County Economic Development Investment Program Grant to modernize power and telecommunication utilities at the Bellingham Shipping Terminal; 2) Amend the Port's 2022 budget by combining capital projects 109-874 and 109-760, and moving 2023 budget for 109-760 forward to 2022, and add \$247,641 of new budget for a total cost of \$2,657,668 and total offsetting grant of \$1,125,000. The net cost to the Port is \$1,532,668 to complete these [infrastructure improvements](#).

Presentations:

- Aviation Noise Complaint Update (video 11:00); resident Bert Weber commented on resident safety, leaded-fuel dumps on Cliffside Community
- Blaine Sawtooth Pier Update (video 102:00)

The commission will meet again on July 12.

Nature

Flooding. There's one Big One that's talked about: a megathrust earthquake. The other is a major flood. Last in a special series. ([The Tyee](#))

Green crab. State wildlife officials say more than 60,000 European green crabs have been captured in Washington state waters so far in 2022, far more than what they captured and killed by this time last year. ([KUOW](#))

Business

"Food desert" in Bellingham's Birchwood neighborhood to continue despite resale of old grocery store property since property maintains non-compete clause of original sale. ([CDN](#))

Farmland. Eight of 10 respondents to a Skagit County survey favored preserving the county's rural character as the most important consideration when it comes to setting county agritourism code. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Soup. Japan-based Somi Foods Inc., producers of soups and seasonings, will expand its Blaine operations by purchasing an Odell Road factory and office building in Blaine for \$6.35 million. ([The Northern Light](#))

Ferries. Washington State Ferries will not run its Anacortes and Sidney, B.C., route until at least next summer. ([Skaqit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Mall. Burlington Investment Properties LLC acquired the Shops at Burlington outlet mall for \$9.5 million and plans a rebranding to make the mall a “nice place to go shopping, for dinner, and any other needs that locals may have.” ([Skaqit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Newspapers. Despite some success in the newspaper business with digital business models, overall circulation will continue falling through 2026, according to the U.S. Entertainment & Media Outlook released by PricewaterhouseCoopers. ([Seattle Times/paywall](#))

Commentary

Local author Clyde W. Ford writes about the true story of Juneteenth in “ ‘Oh, We Knewed What Was Goin’ On’: The Myths (and Lies) of Juneteenth.” ([History News Network](#))

Community

Climate tax. Due to a lack of community support, Bellingham's proposed Climate Action Fund tax to finance climate-change measures was paused and removed from a November vote. ([CDN](#))

Homeless. The Mount Vernon Seventh-Day Adventist Church seeks partners to test allowing the homeless to spend nights in their vehicles on church property. ([Skaqit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Nooksack. Despite a state Supreme Court extension of an injunction halting eviction of households on Nooksack tribal land, the Tribe continued eviction proceedings this week and claimed they were not bound by the Supreme Court ruling. ([CDN](#))

Mobile homes. In addition to development pressures, city mobile home owners and renters face rising rents as market forces change. [\(CDN\)](#)

Food bank. The East Whatcom food system has no large grocery store in the area, no transit to the biggest grocery store in the area and high prices at local, smaller grocery stores — and its one food bank doesn't have resources to serve its 600-square-mile service area. [\(CDN\)](#)

Food banks. Local food banks are seeking a combined \$1 million from Bellingham and Whatcom County governments to help with the sharply rising demand for groceries among the area's working poor. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Closure. Bellingham's Sylvia Center for the Arts announced this week that it will be ceasing operations on or before Oct. 31st after five years of operation due to significant financial concerns, the departure of its prior artistic and executive director, and difficulties in renewing its lease. ([Sylvia Center Facebook](#))

Arts and Leisure

Movie. "Back to the Future" is the Fairhaven Outdoor Cinema feature at the Fairhaven Village Green, June 25, 7 p.m. [Information.](#)

Talk. Salish Sea in 1792: European Explorers and the Coast Salish People, June 25, 7:30 p.m., Woodmen Hall, 4102 Fisherman Bay Rd., Lopez Island. Presented by The Lopez History Museum. By Donation.

Arts award. Recipients of Bellingham Mayor's Arts Awards for excellence in the arts for 2019-2021 will be honored on June 29 at the Mount Baker Theater. ([City of Bellingham](#))

Jump in!

Fun and work. Youth at the Park, June 25, 10 a.m. - Noon, Josh Vander Yacht Memorial Park, Van Zandt. Learn about native and invasive plants, explore nature, play games, enjoy a snack and be part of a project to

replace invasive plants at the park with wildlife-supporting, beautiful native plants. Work will continue with mulching on July 16, and planting on Sept 17 and Oct 15.

Guemes Is. San Juan Preservation Trust is looking for volunteers to take part in a work party at its Peach Preserve on Guemes Island next Friday, July 1, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. [Info.](#)

Race equity. Whatcom County residents are asked to take part in an online survey on the scope and structure of a proposed Whatcom Racial Equity Commission. [Survey deadline July 1.](#)

Candidate questions. Submit questions to the League of Women Voters of Bellingham/Whatcom County you'd like candidates running for office to answer [here](#) and watch the candidate forums on July 7, 13, 14. [Schedule here.](#)

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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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