



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

News of the week: Aug. 12, 2022

Dear Reader —

Local journalism is here to help, in a world where much of the trouble and strife we see is so complex, so endemic, so massive that it can be hard to see how one might contribute to solutions.

As one of Salish Current's earliest and most ardent supporters noted this week on San Juan Island, local journalism — fact-based, context-rich, examine-all-sides, raise-up-the-marginalized-voices news — enhances our power to make changes in our own community.

Without reporters sitting in on meetings, asking questions, following up on leads, dogging policy makers for comments; without editors looking into facts, pushing for more explanation; without readers adding their knowledge and insights to keep the conversations going and on track — in other words, without the dynamic exercise of local journalism — how would we know what we can do?

With journalism, we're not dependent on rumor about what our elected officials said or did in public meetings.

We can know when the school board needs to hear our thoughts on how the First Amendment protects separation of church and state and religious freedom in public schools.

We will have insights into the challenges of frontline workers, as when the cashier who was there to see that we could get groceries and supplies during the pandemic shutdown was being harassed or attacked by a racially prejudiced customer.

We'll know what we can do in our own community to protect the beautiful forests, bountiful waters and clean air we love and need.

Claim your power, and use it for good: Support and read local journalism, of the sort we at Salish Current are privileged to bring you every week.

And if you're able, consider [donating to Salish Current](#) to help keep the news coming your way. Many thanks for your support and encouragement!

— Amy Nelson, Publisher

Wait! There's more: [Salish Sea News Week in Review 8/5/22](#): Oyster Friday! Fraser River dikes, Terry Williams, warming Columbia River basin, cleaner Duwamish River, Mount Polley mine, Columbia River salmon, Navy Growlers, Indigenous Council, Columbia salmon plan, whale rights

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

News from the *Salish Current*

[Will Kennedy decision change the religious landscape in public schools?](#)



Public school policies regarding religious practice based on First Amendment protections put schools in the position of maintaining separation between church and state — on the football field and elsewhere.

By Kai Uyehara: School officials in Whatcom County say policies regarding religious practices for all parties have not and will not change as a result of the Supreme Court's ruling in Kennedy v. Bremerton School District. [Read more ...](#)

Local unionization efforts aim to raise wages, lower burnout



Workers in a number of industries are looking to unionization to help improve pay and working conditions. Among them are Starbucks workers, who marched during an April 23 rally in Seattle and who have gone on strike in two Bellingham locations.

By Matt Benoit: Unionization efforts in retail, healthcare and journalism have become more frequent since the pandemic heightened awareness of risks and hazards for workers. [Read more ...](#)

News from around the Salish Sea

(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

Sex education. Vandals and protesters have targeted Bellingham's Wink Wink Boutique, a “woman-owned inclusive all-ages not creepy sex shop,” due to social media disinformation about the store's role in school health education. ([Bellingham 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](#): Low

Education

The Bellingham Public School board approved the coming year's budget of \$219,508,900 in general fund expenditures based on \$213,315,141 in anticipated

revenue from local, state and federal funding.
([CDN/paywall](#))

Government

San Juan County

On Aug. 2, the last day legally permitted to place county charter amendments on the November ballot, the county council in executive session voted unanimously to not place them on the ballot. ([San Juan Journal](#)) See also: “San Juan County (WA) Council Blocks Ranked Choice Voting and Other Charter Amendments from November Ballot”: In a setback for county residents and democracy reforms sprouting up across Cascadia, councilors claimed without explanation that the amendments did not comply with provisions of the Charter. ([Sightline Institute](#))

The council will meet in executive session on Monday, Aug. 15, to discuss litigation.

Postponed to Aug. 23 meeting:

- Discussion: Marine Program Update
- Discussion: Sustainable Tourism Management Plan Update
- Discussion: Overview of Current Use and Designated Forest Land Special Tax Programs

City of Bellingham

The council will meet again on Aug. 29.

Whatcom County

The council met on Aug. 9. [Agenda items](#) included:

Public Hearing

- The council unanimously approved an ordinance granting Cascade Natural Gas Corporation a franchise for the transportation of natural gas in Whatcom County.
- The council voted not to approve (3-4, Elenbaas, Frazey, Kershner, Byrd against) an ordinance temporarily banning flotation devices on the south fork of the Nooksack River to better protect ESA-listed

Chinook salmon. The council voted unanimously to withdraw an ordinance permanently banning flotation devices.

Consent Agenda

- The council authorized (6-1, Elenbaas against) the County Executive to enter into an Interlocal Agreement with Snohomish County for the use of up to 45 Snohomish County jail beds in the amount of \$1,200,000.00.
- The council authorized (6-1, Elenbaas against) the County Executive to enter into an Interagency Agreement Amendment with the Washington State Administrative Office of the Courts to increase reimbursements of Blake decision legal costs by \$787,751 for a total amended amount of \$2,578,372.
- The council authorized (6-1, Elenbaas against) the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement amendment with the Washington State Department of Health for the delivery and funding of various public health services in the amount of \$2,651,000, for a total amended agreement amount of \$9,430,654.
- The council authorized (6-1, Elenbaas against) the County Executive to enter into a contract with Kulshan Community Land Trust to support acquisition of land for affordable housing, in the amount of \$1,250,746.60.
- The council authorized (4-3, Elenbaas, Kershner, Byrd against) the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council to build a health, resource and service navigation system that will provide timely connection of parents and children, pre-natal to five years, to a range of protective and supportive services, in the amount of \$207,350 for a total amended contract amount of \$285,147.
- The council authorized (4-3, Elenbaas, Kershner, Byrd against) the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council to operate the Whatcom Homeless Service Center in the amount of \$282,239 for a total amended contract amount of \$2,507,248.

Other Items

- The council unanimously approved the motion: "The Whatcom County Council has reviewed the City of Bellingham's Umbrella Mitigation Bank Prospectus and finds it complete, technically accurate, and consistent with the purpose and intent of WCC Chapter 16.16

(Critical Areas). Furthermore, the proposed bank involves no conversion of agricultural land to nonagricultural uses. We therefore grant the City of Bellingham notice to proceed in applying for a Major Project Permit for the project."
Port of Bellingham

The commission met on Aug. 9. [Agenda items \(video recording\)](#) included:

Consent Agenda: The commission unanimously approved the consent agenda.

Presentation: Waterfront Update (video 18.55)

Action Items:

- The council unanimously authorizes executive director to execute an Environmental Agreement with Mercy Housing Northwest and to enter into a Consent Decree Amendment with the Dept. of Ecology to perform cleanup actions at Lignin property. (52-102)
- The council unanimously authorizes the Port to enter into an [Exclusive Negotiating Agreement](#) between The Boardmill Group LLC and the Port of Bellingham for a 3.42 acre parcel in the Waterfront District. See: Port of Bellingham commissioners will begin negotiations with the Boardmill Group which will convert the brick Boardmill building on the waterfront into a three-story, 74-room hotel with a convention center that could accommodate up to 668 people and include a new building with 80 apartments or condominiums. [\(CDN/paywall\)](#)

The commission will meet again on Sept. 6.

Nature

Restoration. San Juan County is restoring spawning habitats for surf smelt and sand lance by removing shoreline armoring and restoring sandy habitat at the MacKaye Harbor boat ramp on Lopez Island. ([San Juan County](#))

Fish move. In late July, members of the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, Skagit County Conservation Corps and Washington Conservation Corps worked in a side channel of the south fork of the Skagit River to move

chinook salmon that use the channel as rearing habitat into buckets of fresh, cold water. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Business

Strike. Workers at two local Starbucks stores went on strike early Friday morning, picketing outside Bellingham's Iowa and King drive-through and the Cordata Center store where employees had previously voted to unionize. ([CDN/paywall](#)) See: "Local unionization efforts aim to raise wages, lower burnout" ([Salish Current, Aug. 12](#))

Mining. Brandon Black, planning manager at Skagit County Planning and Development Services, is prepared to move forward with permitting a long-pending proposal to log and later mine for gravel 51-acres in rural Skagit County. The project will result in 23 truckloads a day for the next 25 years on a small rural road. ([CDN/paywall](#))

Lummi ferry. Whatcom County received \$25 million from a federal Rebuild American Infrastructure grant that, when coupled with \$10 million in state funding, will go towards building a new \$35 million Lummi Island ferry and \$30 million for the ferry dock. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

New storage. Seaview Boatyard North recently submitted building permit applications to construct a 42,000-square-foot boat repair/storage warehouse at its Squalicum Harbor facility. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Conversion. Developers are converting the aging Islands Inn on Commercial Avenue in Anacortes into 38 rental units, mainly studio and one-bedroom apartments, suitable for single people working in the area. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))

Electric bus. President Biden's Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act has granted Whatcom Transportation Authority an \$8.86 million grant to purchase eight electric buses. The WTA board meets next week to discuss changing its previous decision to purchase eight diesel busses to electric busses. ([CDN/paywall](#))

Community

Clean bay. Around 20 volunteer paddlers helped collect 80 pounds of trash out of Bellingham Bay Sunday during a kayak cleanup organized by the Community Boating Center (CBC) and RE Sources. ([CDN/paywall](#))

Fire codes. Skagit County will impose new fire codes for construction and homeowners in some rural areas requiring management of a property's landscape and vegetation; requirements for ignition-resistant construction for new construction, additions and alterations to buildings and structures; requirements for access to water supply; and more. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Jail meds. Settlement of a lawsuit brought by the American Civil Liberties Union and the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office now allows expanded use of medication for prisoners that blunts the cravings and suppresses the euphoric effects of drugs like fentanyl and heroin. ([CDN/paywall](#))

City cam. The Anacortes city council this week voted to begin a pilot project using a mobile public safety camera that can be deployed by law enforcement in areas posing risks to public safety. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))

Arts and Leisure

Grants of up to \$2,000 from the Skagit Community Foundation are now available for not-for-profit arts organizations in Skagit County through Sept. 20. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Movie. Fairhaven Outdoor Cinema. "The Goonies," Aug. 20, 7 p.m. [Tickets at the event.](#)

Patrick Swayze. Pickford Cinema's rooftop series concludes on Aug. 19 with "Road House," at the Downtown Bellingham Parkade, 7–11 p.m. [Information.](#)

Exhibit: "Looking Forward, Facing Back" features the work of Jessica Silver, Lyz Staman, Susan Cohen Raphael and Erin Libby, and will send you on a time traveling journey through the whimsical and surreal dream

worlds of these evocative creators. Exhibit Aug. 5–27, 11 a.m.–4 p.m., [Allied Arts Gallery](#), Bellingham.

Jump in!

Clean up. Ferndale VanderYacht Park salmon habitat restoration by removing invasive vegetation. Aug.13, 9 a.m.–Noon. NSEA, [registration](#).

SummerFest! The South Fork Valley Community Association invites the public to join in the celebration at Josh VanderYacht Memorial Park, behind the Van Zandt Community Hall, Aug. 20, 1–6 p.m. Info: matthew@southforkvalley.org or 360-305-6939.

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Mike Sato, Managing Editor**

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