



News from the *Salish Current* for the week ending May 8, 2020:

Bellingham council retains single-family moratorium, hears COVID relief, shutdown updates

By Mike Sato

A moratorium on the processing of applications for detached single-family development in multi-family zones was upheld by the Bellingham City Council following a public hearing at their May 4 meeting. The moratorium was established by an emergency ordinance passed on March 9. A public hearing is required by state law within 60 days of passage of such an ordinance.

Tara Sundin, economic development manager, reported that in response to the pandemic the city increased contract funding with the Opportunity Council and Lydia Place by about \$400,000 for rental assistance.

The city will receive \$495,000 in a block grant through the Corona Relief Fund.

On June 8, Sundin is scheduled to present a budget and projects for the next year focused on housing security, food security, social services, and children.

Erika Lautenbach, director of the Whatcom County Health Department, discussed increasing testing capacity, contact tracing, business assistance, nonprofit organizations, faith communities, and preparations for Phases 2 to 4 of the state's "Safe Start" program. She explained that Whatcom County cannot ask for a variance to move to Phase 2 because its population is too high.

There were twice as many COVID-19 cases in the county in the most recent week as in the previous week, she noted. In accordance with CDC guidance, health care providers have been advised of additional symptoms to look for. Testing capacity is at 2,400 individuals a day in the county. PeaceHealth and Northwest Laboratory have opened for testing, primarily for symptomatic individuals. Asymptomatic testing is available if a person has had close contact with a positive case or a cluster community.

The University of Washington is working on an antibody test; however, there is no assurance that an individual testing positive for the antibody is immune to the virus or immune over time.

The council's next meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 18.

Compiled from the [summary](#) provided by deputy city clerk Elisabeth Oakes.

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News from around the region ...

EDITOR'S NOTE: Coronavirus news coverage in the [Bellingham Herald](#) can be accessed online without a subscription. The *Lynden Tribune*, the *Skagit Valley Herald* and the *Anacortes American* have paywalls.

Health & Safety

[Lummi Nation has its first coronavirus cases in weeks; outbreak attributed to kids playing together](#)

Sixteen new cases announced Wednesday through Saturday by the Lummi health department bring the tribe's total to 40 people infected. (Seattle Times)

[Summer events of Everson, Nooksack and Sumas all off](#)

The Everson-Nooksack Summer Festival, Sumas Community Days, Abbotsford International Airshow, and Oktoberfest in Bellingham have been cancelled due to COVID-19 precautions. (Lynden Tribune)

[Northern Whatcom County beaches closed to recreational shellfish harvest](#)

Paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) biotoxin has reached unsafe levels in molluscan shellfish in Drayton Harbor. (The Northern Light)

Education

[Ferndale School District announces distance learning grading system](#)

Ferndale School District will forego the traditional A-F grading system for middle and high school classes; students who remain engaged in learning activities assigned by their teachers will earn an "A" for their semester grade. (My Ferndale News)

Government

[County budget cuts won't affect Birch Bay berm construction](#)

The Birch Bay Drive and Pedestrian Facility Project aims to restore the beach to a natural state by replacing sea walls and other concrete structures with sand and gravel; protect Birch Bay Drive from storm surges; and improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure along the road. (The Northern Light)

[Bellingham City Council resolution: unfair or essential?](#)

The debate over Bellingham City Council's rent and mortgage relief resolution continues. (Western Front)

[What's been happening at the Port of Orcas?](#)

The Orcas Port Authority has been without an airport manager since the beginning of 2020. This month they will start interviewing candidates for the position. (Islands Sounder)

[40th District legislators author, cosponsor 113 laws in biennium](#)

The 40th Legislative District's state senator and representatives sponsored or co-sponsored 113 bills that were signed into law in the 2019-20 biennium. (Anacortes American) Paywall.

Nature

[Island butterfly earns endangered species listing](#)

The island marble butterfly found only in San Juan County will be recognized as an endangered species, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service announced Monday. The federal agency is designating 812 acres as critical habitat for the green and white butterfly. Most of that habitat is within the southern portion of San Juan Islands National Historical Park. (Skagit Valley Herald)

[Center for Whale Research photographically captures close encounter of a Stellar sea lion and SKRW](#)

Katie Jones and Dave Ellifrit photograph and describe the encounter. (Center for Whale Research)

['Murder hornet' risk and name overblown, says B.C.'s top bee expert](#)

B.C. bee experts, while concerned, don't expect swarms of Asian giant hornets this summer and say the threat is minimal and no reason to stay inside. (CBC) And: [WSDA plans to track and trap Asian giant hornets](#) (The Northern Light)

Commentary

[No oil-tanker storage on Puget Sound](#)

Puget Sound must not be used for floating oil storage, which increases the risk of a devastating spill. (Seattle Times)

Business

[Lawmakers blast Trump over Alcoa smelter closure in Ferndale, tariff war with China](#)

Local U.S. lawmakers sent a letter to President Trump (last) Friday describing the pending closure of the Alcoa aluminum smelter near Ferndale as a failure of his trade war with China and calling for a harder line on curbing that nation's overproduction. (Seattle Times)

[Field Studies Continue for Roberts Bank Terminal 2 Project](#)

The purpose of these studies is to determine the physical conditions (e.g., temperature

and salinity) influencing biofilm presence and distribution in the upper and mid intertidal zones north of the Roberts Bank causeway. (Dredging Today)

[Tulip Town launches virtual reality app](#)

The app, called Tulip Town 360 Tour, is available for free download on iPhone and is coming to Android soon. (Skagit Valley Herald)

[McClatchy says it has agreement with key creditors on procedure, timeline for potential sale](#)

The owner of the *Bellingham Herald* proceeds through bankruptcy court. (McClatchy)

[All American launches first of two 78' cats for Puget Sound](#)

All American Marine Inc. of Bellingham launched the first of two 80'x 27' aluminum catamarans for Great Western Attractions. The passenger excursion vessels will operate in Puget Sound. (Workboat)

Community

[Lynden parade of cars organizer wants Inslee's attention, Whatcom businesses to open](#)

Julie Anderson of Two Sisters Koffie in Lynden is organizing the Lynden Freedom Parade Saturday afternoon in hopes Gov. Jay Inslee will relax business restrictions in Whatcom County. (Bellingham Herald)

[Local organizations work to aid people experiencing homelessness during the pandemic](#)

Washington ranks 5th in the nation for the highest population of people experiencing homelessness after New York, Hawaii, California, and Oregon according to the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. Whatcom County made up 4.2% of the 13% of people who were homeless and unsheltered in Washington. (Western Front)

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