

# Salish Current

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

News from the *Salish Current* for the week ending Aug. 14, 2020:

## [‘Defund the police’ movement drives Whatcom racial justice discussions](#)



“Defund the police” has been a key message in many of this year’s Black Lives Matter protests, including a march in downtown Bellingham on June 15. City officials and community activists are discussing just what that might mean in Whatcom County. (Mike Sato photo © 2020)

By Alex Meacham

Local activists are advocating for a 50% reduction in the Bellingham Police Department budget, even as BPD says it could use more resources for meeting the calls it routinely answers now — including a large number related to behavioral health and social welfare. Any major change in allocation of government money and resources involves time-consuming, complex conversations about policing, race, mental

health and drug use. While reformers would like to see change soon, community-wide conversations are just beginning, and the eventual direction and pace of change are as yet unknown. [Read more here...](#)

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

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## **News from around the region:**

### **Health & Safety**

- Border closure extended to Sept. 21 as is ban on recreational travel. ([CTV News](#))
- Whatcom County Behavioral Health Advisory Committee proposed a \$1 million cut to services in 2021 from a \$4.8 million 2019-20 level due to a 24% decrease in revenue. ([Western Front](#))
- Almost all Skagit County beaches are closed to recreational shellfish harvest because of a marine biotoxin that can cause paralytic shellfish poisoning. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

### **Education**

- Revised federal Title XI guidelines protecting students from discrimination, harassment and sexual violence go into effect this week but have been described as "very troubling" by Western Washington University president Sabah Randhawa. ([Western Front](#))

### **Government**

- Port of Bellingham commissioners voted unanimously at their Aug. 11 meeting to look into running a chartered ferry two times a day, twice a week between Point Roberts and Bellingham despite disagreements as to who might pay for the ferry service and the opposition of the Point Roberts fire chief. ([All Points Bulletin](#))
- U.S. Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell and U.S. Representatives Suzan DelBene and Rick Larsen have asked the U.S. Ambassador to Canada for a border exemption for Port Roberts residents. ([KING](#))
- Ferndale Mayor Greg Hansom told Senator Patty Murray and others on a [video conference call](#) that small cities in Washington were facing challenging financial situations resulting from reduced tax and fee revenues due to COVID-19 but the city's financial reports as of July 31 show black instead of red ink. ([My Ferndale News](#))

- City of Bellingham  
The next meetings of the Bellingham City Council are scheduled for Aug. 24 at 7 p.m. and Aug. 31 at 7 pm.
- Whatcom County  
The next Whatcom County Council meeting is scheduled for Sept. 15 at 7 pm. There will be a discussion on the budget. [Click here to participate.](#)

## **Nature**

- A low-flying helicopter carried logs near Terrell Creek near Blaine this week between Kickerville Road and Jackson Road as part of fish habitat improvements to the waterway. [\(Northern Light\)](#)
- San Juan County Land Bank is updating its Interim Stewardship and Management Plan for Zylstra Lake on San Juan Island and invites the public's comments by Aug. 21. [\(San Juan Update\)](#)
- Fifty mountain goats completed their relocation from the Olympic Mountains to the North Cascades this week. [\(Skagit Valley Herald/paywall\)](#)

## **Business**

- Ferndale city planners have requested a second six-month approval delay for three Ferndale "catalyst" multi-family/commercial business projects approved by the city to attract more businesses to downtown and given permit and tax exemptions. [\(My Ferndale News\)](#)
- The Port of Anacortes is moving ahead with its Curtis Wharf piling repairs, entering into bonds, updating mooring rates and continuing to implement safety measures to protect against COVID-19. [\(Anacortes American/paywall\)](#)

## **Community**

- Shelter Bay, a 420-unit planned residential development near La Conner with a current population of about 2,000, quietly celebrated its 50th anniversary. [\(La Conner Weekly News\)](#)
- Forty-five affordable rentals at April's Grove under construction by OPAL near Eastsound have had 120 island households applying. [\(Orcas Issues\)](#)
- Whatcom County households financially impacted by COVID-19 can apply for \$3.3 million in CARES Act housing assistance funding. [\(Whatcom County Health Dept/Whatcom Talk\)](#)
- Unemployment, lack of housing and a poverty rate already high in Whatcom County has been exacerbated by COVID-19. [\(Western Front\)](#)

- Ferndale police cited 63-year-old Robert Turner of Bellingham on suspicion of 4th degree assault on July 31 for pushing two people after crossing Main Street from a Support Ferndale Police rally into a Black Lives Matter supporters rally. ([My Ferndale News](#)) Chad A. Schmitt had been charged earlier by Ferndale Police with 3rd degree malicious mischief at the same rallies. ([My Ferndale News](#))
- Lou D'Amelio, who had joined the Swinomish Police Department as its chief after 25 years with the Anacortes Police Department, has resigned after three-and-a-half years. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))
- Bellingham holds the final two of four virtual "listening posts" examining systemic racism. Session 3 will be held from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Aug. 15; session 4 will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. on Aug. 18. To participate: [cob.org/listen0818](http://cob.org/listen0818), meeting ID 977 0880 4687, password 123. To watch or listen only, the meetings will be live on BTV television, Comcast channels 10 and 321, and on the city's [YouTube channel](#).

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*Salish Current is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, online local news organization serving Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit Counties. Salish Current exists to protect and improve democratic governance by reporting and curating local news with independence and strict journalistic integrity.*

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