



News from the *Salish Current* for the week ending Sept. 11, 2020:

## [Are you better off now than you were four years ago?](#)



Somewhere, over the rainbow ... presidential-election years evoke the question of whether we and our world are better off than the last time around. We want to hear what you think. One take: Our Salish Current managing editor misses the "foolish ease" of travel to destinations such as the Mānoa Valley on Oahu (above) and has concerns about how power subverts justice. (Amy Nelson photo © 2020)

By *Mike Sato* — "Are you better off now than you were four years ago?" is the quadrennial question asked when presidential-election years roll around.

I've been thinking about the question and about an answer not only because it is an election year but also because we are living through the COVID-19 pandemic, social and economic unrest, and forest fires raging up and down the West Coast.

I thought it would be interesting to hear how the readers of *Salish Current* would answer the question, and to share those answers. [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

- About 400 people attended the Skagit County annual Lincoln/Reagan Day Fundraising Gala on Aug. 29 where County Commissioner Ron Wesen, commissioner candidate Peter Browning, state Rep. Carolyn Eslick, state Sen. Ron Muzzall and county party chair Bill Bruch spoke. The gathering violated public health guidelines aimed at reducing the spread of COVID-19, and County Health Officer Howard Leibrand said a gathering of this size is unsafe, regardless of what is done to mitigate the risk. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

### Education

- The Skagit STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Network began in 2015 as a partnership between the City of Sedro-Woolley and the Sedro-Woolley School District, and now serves every Skagit County school district. It is now expanding to include school districts in Whatcom, San Juan and Island counties, and while keeping its Skagit focus will be renamed Northwest Washington STEM Network. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

### Government

- The [San Juan County Council](#) unanimously agreed on Aug. 25 to lift the moratorium on marijuana production and processing which has been in place for a year and a half. ([San Juan Journal](#))
- [City of Bellingham](#)  
The next meeting of the Bellingham City Council is scheduled for Sept. 14, 7 pm. Agenda and information on how to view and participate can be found [here](#).

The City Council's Committee of the Whole meets on Sept. 14 at 3 pm. [Agenda](#) includes:

- City Council Training Proposal - Multicultural Organization Development and Integrating Diversity & Inclusiveness into Your Systems: City Councilmember Hannah Stone has been working with Kimberly Harris, Founder and CEO of Distinctive Voice Consulting in Bellingham, to develop a training for City Councilmembers and City Council Staff. The purpose of this training is to help the Council identify structural policies that create bias. The proposed training is being presented to Council for formal consideration. ([22753](#))

- Overview of Citywide Complaint Policies: Staff will present an overview of the City's complaint process. The presentation will include a review of the City's complaint policies (PRA 03.08.01 and PER 11.02.01 - PRO 01). These policies articulate how complaints are addressed both internally and externally. Additionally, staff will provide an update on the Safe Spaces Program, a secondary complaint process contracted with the Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center. ([22357](#))
- An Update on the Partnership with Lighthouse Mission Ministries Base Camp Program and the City of Bellingham: Lighthouse Mission Ministries (LMM) and City staff will brief Council on the current status of the Base Camp COVID Emergency Shelter. Specific emphasis will be on strategies being implemented to address identified on- and off-site issues. ([22665](#))
- Whatcom County  
The next meeting of the Whatcom County Council is scheduled for Sept. 15, 6 pm. How to participate, click [here](#). [Agenda](#) includes:
- Public hearing on an ordinance granting Cellco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless, a non-exclusive franchise for the provision of wireless telecommunications services. ([AB2020-086](#))
- Consent Agenda items AB200-335 -- AB2020-343: Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into interlocal agreements between Whatcom County and the Skagit County Sheriff's Office, the Marysville Police Department, the Bellingham Police Department, the Anacortes Police Department, the Sedro-Wooley Police Department, the Mount Vernon Police Department, and Skagit Valley College for the use of the Plantation Rifle Range to train personnel, in various contract amounts.
- Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Washington State Department of Commerce for funding to develop and expand shelter programs, in the amount of \$1,194,211 ([AB2020-376](#))
- Port of Bellingham  
The Sept. 1 meeting of the Port Commission can be viewed on YouTube [here](#).

The next meeting of the Port of Bellingham commissioners is scheduled for Sept. 15. Agenda and ways to participate are found. Scheduled is a centennial presentation on port history.

### Nature

- The bat-killing disease white-nose syndrome is edging closer to Skagit County, with infected bats recently found in Snohomish and Chelan counties, according to state and federal wildlife agencies. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))
- As of Sept. 4, 145 green crabs were caught this summer in the Blaine area. Scientists trapped 33 European green crabs last week, 28 of which were in the mouth of Dakota Creek – one of the highest week's capture since trapping for the invasive species began in late May. ([The Northern Light](#))

## **Business**

- Transient lodging in San Juan County is now allowed to operate at 100% capacity instead of 50%. The closure order of all public playgrounds and playground equipment is also lifted. ([San Juan County/San Juan Journal](#))
- The Whatcom ReStart business grant program chose 264 applicants out of 628 to receive more than \$2.5 million in COVID-19 economic recovery grants. ([City of Bellingham/Whatcom Talk](#))
- San Juan County has two grant programs to help local businesses: the Small Business Relief Grant program and the second round of the Working Washington program. ([Islands Weekly](#))
- The public can comment on Cooke Aquaculture's water quality permit for its steelhead net pen proposal by going to the Washington state Department of Ecology [information site](#) for public meeting information, project information and comment instructions. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

## **Community**

- The Port of Bellingham is increasing the frequency of free, emergency ferry service from Point Roberts to the mainland to two days a week, effective Sept. 8. [Reservations required.](#) ([All Point Bulletin](#))
- Over 900 donors contributed \$139,000 to the San Juan Island Community Foundation's annual County Fair Matching Grant campaign. ([San Juan Island Community Foundation/SJ Journal](#))

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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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