



Dear Reader: *Salish Current* has been publishing for over six months, since our soft launch in February. To increase our readership, we ask if you would share this newsletter with friends and associates who share our mission and ask them to send us at SalishCurrent@gmail.com their names and emails if they'd like to receive the next newsletter. (Names and emails are never sold nor traded.) Thanks! Amy Nelson, publisher, and Mike Sato, managing editor.

News from the *Salish Current* for the week ending Oct. 9, 2020:

[San Juan council candidates outline positions on vacation rentals, COVID rules and more](#)



San Juan County voters in next month's general election will choose representatives from two of three residency districts composing the county council; at left, the county courthouse in Friday Harbor.

(Konrad Roeder / CC BY-SA)

Special to the Salish Current — With issues ranging from strengthening the county's economic base to balancing vacation rental inventory in an area inhabited year-round by tourists and second-home owners — not to

mention year-round residents — two of three seats on the San Juan County Council are up for election next month. The incumbent faces a challenger in one race, and two first-timers are vying for another. [Read more.](#)

Also:

40th and 42nd district candidates tell where they stand on policing, COVID, more [\(Salish Current\)](#)

San Juan County Council District 2 candidates respond to questions about growth in the islands. [\(The Orcasonian\)](#)

San Juan County Council District 1 and 2 candidates respond to questions about local issues. [\(Community Rights San Juan Islands, Friends of the San Juans, the Madrona Institute\)](#)

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[Whose water is it in Whatcom County? / Community Voices](#)



From headwaters around Mount Baker, the Nooksack River flows 75 miles into its delta on Bellingham Bay. With increasing competition for water rights and decreasing water levels resulting from climate change, some say water rights adjudication is needed now.

(Washington State Department of Ecology photo)

By Eric Hirst — This may surprise you: Water, even in wet Whatcom County, is a scarce resource. Although we get lots of rain and snow in the winter, summer flows in the three forks and mainstem of the Nooksack River and in its many tributaries are often too low to support healthy salmon populations. [Read more here.](#)

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

News from around the region:

Health & Safety

- Skagit County's COVID-19 14-day averages have been rising to 32.5 cases per 100,000 residents with the trend predicted to continue rising. [\(Skagit Valley Herald/paywall\)](#)

Education

- All Whatcom County school districts, except Meridian, reported fewer enrollments this year compared to last year, in large part due to the coronavirus. ([Bellingham Herald](#))
- In-person classes for kindergarteners and special-needs students begin in the [Meridian School District](#) Oct. 19, followed by first- and second-graders Oct. 26. Ferndale School District kindergarten and individual-needs students will begin in-person learning Oct. 19, followed on Oct. 26 by first graders who opt for the hybrid program. ([My Ferndale News](#))
- The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction announced that it is using CARES Act funding to contract with internet service providers — Zply, Presidio and Comcast — to connect up to 60,000 students and their families to their online learning from home through the end of the 2020–21 school year at no cost. Congress provided \$195 million to Washington’s school districts and \$21 million to OSPI for statewide coordination and support. ([News Tribune](#))
- The Samish Indian Nation and Anacortes School District are working to integrate tribal history and culture into subjects taught at various grade levels in the district. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Government

City of Bellingham

- The City of Bellingham continues deliberating in special session Oct. 12 at 10 a.m. on the mayor's proposed \$664 million [2021-2022 budget](#). The special session on [Oct. 5](#) included a workshop on the police budget.
- Proceedings of the Oct. 12 special meeting will be accessible [here](#). More special budget workshop meetings will be held Oct. 19, 26, and Nov. 2.
- The Bellingham City Council regular meeting on Oct. 12 at 7 p.m. includes the following [agenda](#) items:
- The Council will hold a public hearing on a resolution in support of renewal of the Bellingham Transportation Fund in the November 2020 general election. ([22767](#))
- The Council will discuss a presentation regarding the public-private partnership to redevelop the former Aloha Motel at 315 N. Samish Way into a mixed-use, mixed-income affordable housing development known as Samish Commons. ([22776](#))
- The Council will discuss an overview of current and proposed shelters, facilities and programs available to serve those unsheltered community members currently in unapproved encampments. ([22573](#))

Whatcom County

- The next meeting of the Whatcom County Council is scheduled for Oct. 13 at 6 p.m. To participate, [click here](#). The [agenda items](#) include:

- The Council will discuss and approve the [Public Participation Plan](#) for Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulation Amendments, Comprehensive Plan Amendment, Growth Management Act, Public Participation Plan, Zoning ([AB2020-421](#))
- The Council will consider the appointment to the Climate Impact Advisory Committee of applicants Stevan Harrel, Sue Gunn, Hunter Hassig ([AB2020-362](#))
- The next scheduled meeting of the Whatcom County Council is Oct. 27.

Port of Bellingham

- The Port of Bellingham Commission met on Oct. 6. Here is the [agenda](#) and the [video](#) of the proceedings.
- The Port announced that its 2021 Preliminary Strategic Budget will be available electronically on Oct. 26 [online](#). On Nov. 3 and Nov. 17 at 4 p.m. at Harbor Center Room and via Zoom, the Port will have presentations and hold public hearings on the budget and the proposed 2021 property tax levy. Written comments will be accepted through 5 p.m. Nov. 16. The Port is scheduled to formally adopt the budget on Nov. 17 at 4 p.m.

Nature

- In response to a 2019 directive from the state legislature, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has issued a draft Environmental Impact Statement outlining options to license the whale watch industry to prevent the extinction of Southern Resident killer whales. Details on the proposal are [here](#); comments are open until COB Oct. 23 online [here](#). ([Seattle Times](#))
- The Nooksack River watershed is one of two areas recommended by the state Department of Ecology for adjudication of water rights, a court process likely taking several years to play out. The recommendation goes to the governor and state Legislature for consideration. In general, farmers have been opposed to the adjudication step while tribes have been in favor. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

Commentary

- Whose water is it in Whatcom County? From headwaters around Mount Baker, the Nooksack River flows 75 miles into its delta on Bellingham Bay. With increasing competition for water rights and decreasing water levels resulting from climate change, some say water rights adjudication is needed now. Eric Hirst writes. ([Salish Current/Community Voices](#))

Business

- The Port of Anacortes revenue projection for its 2021 budget was reduced to \$15.2 million due to anticipated losses from continuation of the pandemic. ([Anacortes American](#))
- The San Juan County Lodging Tax Committee will not call for funding proposal this year because the pandemic severely reduced tax revenue available for new tourism-related projects next year. ([San Juan Update](#))

Community

- The Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center launched Safe Spaces, a program for community members to bring complaints to the City of Bellingham, anonymously if they choose. ([Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center](#)) See also: Local law enforcement complaint procedures under scrutiny amid new calls for accountability ([Salish Current](#))
- Local Skagit nonprofit organizations bought produce from four Latino-owned farms in the county and distributed the produce to 50 Latino and Mexican farmworker families. ([Skagit Valley News/paywall](#))

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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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