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We're coming to the end of our [NewsMatch giving campaign](#) and want to thank all of you who have shown your support for local news — and ask others who are reading this for your support, too. We're open access, which means reading this news is free, but we pay the reporters who bring you this news. Your [donation](#) made before Dec. 31 is matched dollar-for-dollar and goes toward our 2021 budget to continue bringing you the news. Please help us move forward into 2021 with a [donation today](#). Thank you! And with that we wish you a Happy Winter Solstice, a Merry Christmas and a Happy Holiday Season. We'll be back on Monday, Dec. 28 with a year-end issue. — Amy Nelson, publisher, and Mike Sato, managing editor.

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News from the *Salish Current* for the week ending Dec. 18, 2020:

**[Bellingham police budget tweaked for near future;
equity advocates continue push for more](#)**



Through rallies outside City Hall, listening sessions, comments in public meetings and other input, city officials have heard from Bellingham residents this year about their desires for change in policing practices and funding. The City's budget for the next biennium reflects some of that discussion, while advocates continue to assert the need for more. (Mike Sato photo © 2020)

By Stella Harvey — As the City of Bellingham biennial budget came together, some hoped to see major funding reallocations to community-led initiatives supporting alternatives to police response. Others fought for specific line items to help continue the work around racial equity and justice. ([Read more here.](#))

Bellingham Herald news reporters opt to unionize, for the cause of 'robust local news'



The *Bellingham Herald* newsroom in 1954 was packed with desks of reporters and editors at work. These days, their numbers have dwindled but the paper's journalists have joined others in unionizing in an effort to have more influence on providing local news for their communities. (Photo by Jack Carver, courtesy Whatcom Museum)

By Mike Sato — Reporters at Washington state's McClatchy Company-owned newspapers, including those at the Bellingham Herald, have moved to unionize, saying they want a 'seat at the table' in order to ensure 'robust local news'. ([Read more here.](#))

Community Voices / COVID be damned — if you could be anywhere in the world on the Winter Solstice, where would you choose?



Watching the waves break on a Hawaiian beach is some people's idea of a good way to spend the Winter Solstice, but travel is out of the question for many this year thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, we can dream, and Salish Current readers sent in their thoughts on where they would like to be on what is the shortest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere. (Amy Nelson photo © 2011)

Readers were invited to share their ideal locations for marking December's Solstice this year ... if it weren't for COVID-19. Read on, for a travelogue of cherished spots around the globe (and please note, that as lovely as these are, the views expressed in the essays, analyses and opinions as Community Voices are those of the authors exclusively and not those of Salish Current.) ([Read more here.](#))

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Community Voices:

- **'We hold these truths to be self-evident'**

Elections are about voters, issues and the ongoing effort to "get it right" by local and state elections officials and workers, assert co-presidents of the League of Women Voters of Bellingham / Whatcom County in a Community Voices column.

- [Election reforms are key to restoring public confidence](#)

Doug Ericksen, state senator from the 42nd district, says he will introduce legislation for the 2021 legislative session "to restore basic security measures to the voting process in Washington state ... [and] bring back the voting booth."

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Letter to the Editor:

- ["Restore the original vision for the San Juan Islands National Monument"](#)

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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:

Elections

- A recount, requested by the Republican Party, of votes cast for governor in San Juan County's Orcas East precinct matched exactly the original vote count in the race. In the original tally, Gov. Jay Inslee, a Democrat, had received 711 votes in the Orcas East precinct to Republican opponent Loren Culp's 199. In addition, there were 13 undervotes (no vote cast) and five write-ins. In the recount, the results were unchanged. ([San Juan County Auditor/San Juan Journal](#))

Health & Safety

- A provision introduced by Sen. Maria Cantwell and Rep. Rick Larson to extend real-time noise monitoring of Growler activity for 12 more months has been included in the pending National Defense Authorization Act. ([Sen. Maria Cantwell/San Juan Journal](#))
- British Columbia reported on Thursday 673 new cases of COVID-19 and 21 additional deaths bringing this year's total cases to 44,776 and total deaths to 713. ([Vancouver Sun](#))
- The Lummi Nation received 300 doses of Pfizer's vaccine this week Tuesday and began vaccinating tribal members. ([Seattle Times](#))
- Sen. Doug Ericksen (R-Ferndale) will propose legislation that would prohibit employers, schools, state-regulated travel and public places from requiring COVID-19 vaccination. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Government

- The Skagit County Commissioners approved a 2021 county budget Tuesday that draws about \$9 million from general fund reserves to counter the impacts COVID-19 has had on the local economy. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))
- Anacortes will spend \$147 million on capital projects in nine city departments between 2021 and 2026, including replacement of aging water mains, wastewater treatment plant upgrades, road and sidewalk improvements, and completion of fiber installation for the city's broadband utility. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))
- City of Bellingham
- The Bellingham City Council met on Dec. 14. Its [agenda](#) included:
 - Drew Schmidt, Allison Farrar, Peter Frazier and Todd Elsworth were reappointed or appointed to the Tourism Commission Board.
 - The next meeting of the City Council is scheduled for Jan. 11, 2021.

Commentary

- *Seattle Times* columnist Danny Westneat wrote last week about state bonds being issued to aid in economic recovery like war bonds were once issued. Westneat writes: "It turns out there's an idea floating around at the state capital in Olympia ... called a 'recovery bond.' 'We're operating from the premise that the feds are not coming to our rescue,' state Sen. Liz Lovelett, D-Anacortes, told me. 'So what can we create here, in Washington, that can be our own economic rebuilding effort?' Lovelett and some other Democrats, along with the green group Carbon Washington, have come up with an idea to sell bonds to pay for a slew of infrastructure projects that could start up right away. It would jump-start local economies as well as "green" up the state." ([Seattle Times](#))

Nature

- After four years of construction, the Victoria Capital Regional District's \$775-million Wastewater Treatment Project has begun treating sewage at the McLoughlin Point plant. ([Vancouver Sun](#))

Community

- While the [sale of the Hospice of the Northwest](#) remains under consideration, the Hospice of the Northwest Foundation announced a 2020 [donation of half a million dollars](#) to the operation of the hospice. A [website](#) opposing the sale has been created and an [online petition](#) opposing the hospice's sale had about 3,300 signatures as of week ago. ([Skagit Valley Herald/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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