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News from the *Salish Current* for the week ending Nov. 20, 2020:

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[Whatcom Arts Project brings local groups together — at a crucial time](#)



“Find your community,” invites a message in a window of downtown Bellingham’s Mount Baker Theatre. That is just what local organizations have done in forming the Whatcom Arts Project, and what numerous residents and visitors do, as participants and audience members. The COVID-19 pandemic has created challenges for all — and prompted new ideas for future sustainability. (Amy Nelson photo © 2020)

By Matt Benoit — Take a moment and think about your favorite local event. Maybe it’s a film, music or food-based festival. Maybe it’s a local theatre production, or an athletic competition, or a recurring recreational event. Many of these events were either cancelled or held virtually this year due to the pandemic. But next year

or the year after, some of these events may not happen for a different reason: because there's not enough money to properly fund them. [\(Read more here.\)](#)

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[New report details action plan for fixing Padilla Bay fecal coliform sources, urges participation](#)



Cattle along several sloughs feeding into Padilla Bay from the east can contribute to fecal coliform pollution. A new report includes an action plan to help cut down on contaminants. (Alex Meacham photo © 2020)

By Alex Meacham — Padilla Bay is polluted by fecal coliform bacteria. It makes people sick, it concentrates in shellfish and, as Rick Haley, a recently retired Skagit County water quality analyst puts it, “Fecal coliform in the water means you got s**t in the water and that’s not okay.” [\(Read more here.\)](#)

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Letter to the Editor:

[A call for caution when holiday socializing as COVID-19’s third wave hits](#)

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:

Election

- Local election results Nov. 20 as of 5 p.m. showed only the following significant changes: Skagit County Superior Court Position 3: Tom Seguine 49.49% Elizabeth Yost Neidzowski 50.11%
- 700 ballots remaining to be counted; next count Nov. 24.

Health & Safety

- The most recent U.S-Canada border closure expires this Saturday. Canadian ambassador to the U.S. Kirsten Hillman declined to speculate when the border might reopen, but it won't be soon. ([NW News Network](#))
- The Port of Bellingham will continue its ferry foot-passenger service between Point Roberts and Bellingham or Blaine until the border restrictions have been lifted or the port commission makes a change. ([Bellingham Herald](#))
- Customs and Border Patrol documents reveal agency coverup that more than 250 people of Iranian heritage, more than previously reported, were detained at the Wash.-B.C .border, some for more than nine hours, in January. ([Northern Light](#))

Education

- All in-person classes at Western Washington University have moved online due to the pandemic. ([Western Front](#))
- The Anacortes School District is returning to a fully remote model for all students because of rising COVID-19 cases in Anacortes and the surrounding areas. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))
- A May cyberattack on Western Washington University Foundation data stored by Blackbaud, Inc., resulted in theft of addresses, phone numbers and emails of alumni, students, parents and donors. The data, according to Blackbaud, was destroyed after a ransom was paid. ([Western Front](#))

Government

- The City of Mount Vernon adopted a \$71 million budget, an increase of 1.5% over its 2020 budget. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))
- Skagit County's preliminary budget will be [posted online](#) on Nov. 23. A public hearing is tentatively scheduled for Dec. 7.
- The City of Anacortes is proposing a \$73.3 million budget which includes a 1% property tax increase and leaving about a dozen positions unfilled. The budget anticipates filling three police officer positions; citizens asked that one officer position be an embedded social worker. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))
- The Ferndale City Council rejected Mayor Greg Hanson's proposed pay raise for eight senior staff. ([My Ferndale News](#))

City of Bellingham

- The Bellingham City Council will hold a second public hearing Nov. 23 on the [2021-2022 preliminary budget](#). To comment, use [this link](#) to pre-register or during the meeting to register and immediately join the meeting to testify. Pre-registration is encouraged.
- On the Nov. 23 Council [agenda](#) :
- Addition of 10 additional measures to the 2018 adopted [Climate Action Plan](#).
- 2021 [joint legislative agenda](#) of the City of Bellingham, the Port of Bellingham and Whatcom County.
- The next Council meeting is scheduled for Dec. 7.

Whatcom County

- At its Nov 10 meeting, the Whatcom County Council agreed to proceed with discussions on resolving Nooksack water resource issues as proposed by [county executive Satpal Sidhu](#). See draft discussion [concept paper](#).
- The Council will meet on Nov. 24 at 6 p.m. To participate, [click here](#). Council [agenda](#) includes:
 - Public hearing: Ordinance in the matter of the adoption of the final budget of Whatcom County for the Biennium 2021-2022 [\[AB2020-504\]](#)
- Public hearing: [Ordinance](#) imposing an interim moratorium on the acceptance and processing of applications and permits for new or expanded facilities in the Cherry Point urban growth area, the primary purpose of which would be the shipment of unrefined fossil fuels not to be processed at Cherry Point [\[AB2020-520\]](#)
- Also before the Council will be: Request authorization for the County Executive to enter into a Transfer Option Agreement between Whatcom County and Opportunity Council for the transfer of property located at 1000 North Forest Street for the purposes of developing 60 permanently affordable homes for seniors [\[AB2020-545\]](#)

Port of Bellingham

- The Port of Bellingham Commissioners met on Nov.17 to adopt the [2021 budget](#). Click [here](#) to view the meeting.

Business

- Whatcom County today has 68 commercial raspberry growers, down from over 100 in years past, and this year's yield in tonnage was 3% less than last year's, according to the Washington Red Raspberry Commission. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))
- City of Blaine has a new tourism marketing plan and a [new website](#). ([The Northern Light](#))
- Construction of Fidalgo Flats, which at five stories will be the tallest apartment building in Anacortes, could begin in spring and be completed 12 months later, according to a representative of owner Madrona Real Estate Services. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))

- San Juan County, the Washington State Department of Commerce and the Economic Development Council have awarded over \$300,000 in COVID-19 relief grant funds to locally owned and operated small businesses, community nonprofit organizations and childcare facilities in San Juan County. ([San Juan Update/EDC](#))

Community

- As tents of city homeless set up on Bellingham City Hall's front lawn, the City will use a Motel 6 for shelter and establish a public space for short-term emergency camping. ([Bellingham Herald](#))
- Bellingham's Lighthouse Mission will provide 39 additional beds at overflow homeless drop-in shelter on Holly Street in December when the Base Camp Shelter reaches its 190-bed capacity. ([Western Front](#))
- Fourth-grade students from Sunnyland and Birchwood Elementary Schools have hung murals in Bellingham's Fountain District highlighting their thoughts and concerns for viewing until October 2022. ([From A Child's Point of View/Whatcom Talk](#))
- The Bellingham City Council voted to authorize the city to enter into an agreement to provide upkeep and grant exclusive community garden use for 10 years at Happy Valley Community Garden and rename the garden to Sven Hoyt Community Garden. ([Western Front](#))
- The Orcas Economic Recovery and Resiliency Project has identified its fall and winter focus areas: inclusion and anti-racism, diversify local economy and increase autonomy, homes for all, health and well-being, support for children and families and community care. ([Orcas Community Foundation/Orcasonian](#))
- The Northwest Agriculture Business Center (NABC) in Mount Vernon will coordinate an 11-county food distribution project throughout the Puget Sound region aimed at supporting farmers, food hubs and increasing access to locally-grown foods. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))
- The North Cascades Highway has been closed for the season. ([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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