



Dear Reader: *Salish Current* has been publishing for nearly eight 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. 23, 2020:

[Reporter's notebook: pursuing the story of the 'Freedom to Worship Protest'](#)



Expressions and interpretations of Constitutionally guaranteed rights — such as free speech, demonstrated in the mural above at Waypoint Park in Bellingham — have been a major theme nationally in 2020. In pursuit of information about a 'Freedom to Worship Protest', a reporter ran into issues around access to the event that left him troubled.

By Matt Benoit — In our state, organizations such as The Three Percent of Washington (WA3%) and Patriot Prayer have been seen in recent months protesting pandemic restrictions and countering civil protests.

The organizations publicly refute the “militia” and “anti-government” labels given to them. In fact, the WA3% website describes their group as “pro-government,” as long as government “follows the restrictions set forth in the Constitution.” ([Read more](#))

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[At age 83, Orcas Islander votes for first time in Presidential election](#)



Tony Ayer signals his satisfaction at the ballot box on Orcas Island. Early voter turnout is heavy around the region, in advance of the Nov. 3 election date. (Lin McNulty photo © 2020)

By Lin McNulty / [The Orcasonian](#)

Born in New York City, Tony Ayer moved to St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, at age eight. After going to school in the States, he returned to St. Croix where he spent 75 years. ([Read more](#))

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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:

Election

- As of Oct. 19, the four candidates running for state representative district 42 seats have reported receiving \$1,298,000 in donations in the hotly contested races. ([The Northern Light](#))

Health & Safety

- Canada has extended nonessential travel restrictions with the United States until Nov. 21. ([Bellingham Herald](#))

- B.C. Provincial Health Officer Bonnie Henry said Monday that B.C. is in the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, as she confirmed 499 new cases of COVID-19 and two more deaths over the weekend ([CBC](#)) and 274 new cases on Thursday. ([CBC](#))
- Four months of sewage testing for COVID in Lynden has found consistent correlation between COVID found in sewage and outbreaks 10 to 14 days later. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

Education

- Skagit County school athletic directors and county health officials have increased the allowable sizes of groups athletes can train and scrimmage in while following COVID-19 safety guidelines. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))
- Immaculate Conception Regional School teachers Colleen Wade and Sarah Rutherford have been awarded a William Dahlgren Award for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Government

City of Bellingham

- Special meetings of the Bellingham City Council to discuss the [2021-2022 preliminary budget](#) are scheduled for Oct. 26, Nov. 2 and Nov. 9. A public hearing on the preliminary budget is scheduled for Nov. 9. Special budget meetings can be viewed [online](#).
- The next regular meetings of the Bellingham City Council is scheduled for Oct. 26 at 1:35 p.m. (Committee of the Whole) and 7 p.m. (Regular Meeting)
- The Council at its regular meeting will hold a public hearing on the administration's proposal to increase property taxes by the statutorily allowed 1% for 2021. ([22786](#)).
- The Public Works and Natural Resources Committee will hear a presentation on the Nooksack River Fish Passage Project. ([Powerpoint](#))
- The Planning and Community Development Committee will consider renewal of an ordinance establishing a moratorium on development applications and permits relating to the redevelopment of manufactured home parks in Bellingham. ([22025](#))
- The Council of the Whole at 1:35 p.m. will hear a presentation concerning police officer certification and decertification processes in Washington State. Bellingham Police staff will also discuss local hiring processes that focus on avoiding the hire of problematic officers from other jurisdictions. ([22789](#))
- The Council will meet in executive session to review proposals for Bellingham Police Guild, Fraternal Order of Police and the Guild of Pacific NW Employees, Local 1937.
- The Bellingham City Council heard presentations on Oct. 12 from officials from community and economic development, housing and human services and the police about current services for people

experiencing homelessness, including increased shelter capacity, plans for severe weather shelters and an affordable-housing development. ([Western Front](#))

Whatcom County

- The Whatcom County Council will meet on Oct. 27 at 6 p.m. To participate, [click here](#). Meeting [agenda](#) includes:
- The Council will hold a public hearing on an ordinance adopting interim zoning regulations for temporary homeless shelters. ([AB2020-373](#))
- The Council will hold a public hearing on a resolution adopting the 2021 Annual Road Construction Program ([AB2020-435](#))
- Whatcom County executive Satpal Sidhu released a proposed \$451.6 million budget for 2021-2022 with a roughly 17% decrease in total expenditures from the county's amended 2020 budget. The general fund, which funds most general government services, including law enforcement, public defense, health, parks, land use planning and building inspections, would get a 5.3% cut for 2021. The budget does include several new expenses, such as \$300,000 for child and family services, \$500,000 for water settlement negotiations and \$130,000 to establish a racial justice commission. ([The Northern Light](#))
- The next scheduled meeting of the Whatcom County Council is Nov. 10.

Port of Bellingham

- The Port's 2021 Preliminary Strategic Budget will be available electronically on Oct. 26 [online](#). The Port will have presentations and hold public hearings on the budget and the proposed 2021 property tax levy on Nov. 3 and Nov. 17 at 4 p.m. at Harbor Center Room and via Zoom. Written comments will be accepted through 5 p.m. Nov. 16. The Port is scheduled to formally adopt the budget Nov. 17, 4 p.m.

City of Blaine

- The City of Blaine is discussing a [draft general fund budget](#) for 2021 that maintains employee levels by reducing operating expenses in the face of [reduced revenues](#) due to COVID-19. ([The Northern Light](#))

Nature

- Washington Department of Agriculture officials have located the first Asian giant hornet nest in a tree east of Blaine and will eradicate it. ([My Ferndale News](#))
- A new study says the giant Asian hornet could spread throughout western North America unless coordinated mitigation efforts are implemented, but Paul van Westendorp, B.C.'s provincial apiculturist, is skeptical of the study's assumptions. ([CBC](#))
- Mining proposals around Anacortes, Marblemount and Sedro-Woolley are under review or up for public comment in Skagit County. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

- State Senator Doug Ericksen [R-Ferndale] blasted the state Ecology Department's proposal for a court review of water rights in the Nooksack River basin as launching “a years-long litigation nightmare” for thousands of Whatcom County property owners and threatening the area’s agricultural economy. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#)) Also see: Whose water is it in Whatcom County? Eric Hirst writes. ([Salish Current/Community Voices](#))
- Public comment is open until Nov. 10 on the legal agreement between the Port of Bellingham and the state Department of Ecology to clean up the Sea K Fish site in Blaine Harbor. ([The Northern Light](#))
- The state Department of Fish and Wildlife has released a draft proposal for commercial whale watching on which the public can [comment](#) until 5 p.m. Dec. 5. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))
- A petition signed by over 62,796 people and 41 organizations was sent to Washington Gov. Jay Inslee asking him to oppose a new shipping terminal at the Canadian border. ([San Juan Journal](#)) See also: Proposed Roberts Bank terminal will add cargo capacity — but at what cost ([Salish Current](#))
- The Department of Ecology has drafted for public review a plan to reduce the amount of bacterial pollution flowing into Padilla Bay. ([Department of Ecology](#))

Business

- The City of Burlington is providing free fiber optic hookups to businesses with a physical location in Burlington within 200 feet of the city’s fiber internet backbone. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))
- Robust first- and third-quarter real estate sales in San Juan County have totaled year-to-date 430 transactions for \$292,879,941, an increase of 41% in dollar volume and 34% in the number of transactions over last year. ([San Juan Update](#))

Community

- The City of Lynden's planning department cancelled four days of public hearings on the Cedarbrook development so the city can revise, modify or consider withdrawing the March 20, 2020, Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance for the project. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))
- Nominations to the San Juan Islands National Monument Advisory Committee to assist in the development of recommendations that address public land management issues is open until Nov. 13. ([San Juan Update](#))
- The Orcas Island Health Care District will contract with Island Hospital to operate a single medical clinic on the island beginning on March 1 next year. ([The Orcasonian](#))

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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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