# Salish Current

Independent, fact-based news for Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit counties

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.

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## News from the *Salish Current* for the week ending Oct. 30, 2020:

## Intalco's closure brings pain for now — what may the future bring?



What's next? Alcoa's Intalco Works near Ferndale moved into "care and maintenance" mode this year, as production was curtailed and several hundred employees were laid off. (Kimberly Cauvel photo © 2020)

*By Kimberly Cauvel* — After 54 years in operation, the Intalco smelter near Ferndale this summer stopped producing aluminum, put hundreds out of work and sent shock waves through the community. The pain cut deep but may point a way to cleaner, more competitive heavy industry. (Read more here.)

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# News from around the region:

**Election**

- Vote! — and use the ballot drop boxes, not USPS.

**Health & Safety**

- Local health officials encourage everyone to celebrate Hallowe'en safely to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by avoiding traditional door-to-door trick-or-treating and crowded house parties, and incorporating face masks and social distancing into Halloween activities. (City of Bellingham)

**Government**

- As a result of last weekend's election, the New Democratic Party will govern British Columbia with a majority for the first time since 1996. (CBC)

- City of Bellingham

- Special meetings of the Bellingham City Council to discuss the 2021-2022 preliminary budget are scheduled for Nov. 2 and Nov. 9.  A public hearing on the preliminary budget is scheduled for Nov. 9. Special budget meetings can be viewed here online.

- The Bellingham City Council met on Oct. 26. Among agenda items discussed and actions taken:

- Tara Sundin, Economic Development Manager, reported that under the Business Assistance Grant over $3.5 million has been distributed to 280 local businesses.  Nearly $700,000 has been granted to 26 childcare agencies countywide and $544,000 to 41 Fairhaven and City Center food and beverage businesses.

- Erika Lautenbach, Whatcom County Health Department Director, reported the Health Department received $4.5 million in CARES Act funding to spend by the end of the year on programs and services related to health support.

- The Council voted 6-0-1 (Vargas excused) to renew an ordinance establishing a moratorium on development applications and permits relating to the redevelopment of manufactured home parks in Bellingham. (22025)

- Councilmember Lilliquist reported that during committee, the Council agreed to add their support to any upcoming legislation in the next legislative session that would aid in closing a loophole for decertification of police officers convicted of misconduct that included excessive force. (22789)

- The Council met in executive session and ratified (6-0-1, Vargas excused) the 2021 collective bargaining agreement with the Bellingham Police Guild that increases base rate of pay by 2.5% effective Jan. 1, 2021, and increases employee's premium share for dependents to all benefit plans by 10%.

- The Council met in executive session and ratified (6-0-1, Vargas excused) the 2021 collective bargaining agreement with the Fraternal Order of Police that increases base rate of pay by 2.5% and deferred compensation contribution by 1% effective Jan. 1, 2021, and increases the City's contribution to medical health care by 6% in 2021.

- The next meeting of the Bellingham City Council is scheduled for Nov. 9.

- Whatcom County

- The Whatcom County Council met on Oct. 27 and discussed/acted on the following agenda items:

- A resolution affirming that racism is a public health crisis was held in council. (AB2020-431)

- The Council authorized (6-1, Elenbaas nay) the County Executive to enter into a contract amendment between Whatcom County and Mount Baker, Meridian, Ferndale, Blaine, Lynden and Nooksack Valley school districts to increase the CARES Act funding allocation by $100,000 in an amount not to exceed $230,000.

- The Council held a public hearing and approved (7-0) an ordinance adopting interim zoning regulations for the siting, establishment and operation of temporary homeless facilities. (AB2020-373)

- The next scheduled meeting of the Whatcom County Council is Nov. 10 at 6 p.m. To participate, click here.

- Port of Bellingham

- The Port's 2021 Preliminary Strategic Budget is available 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 on Nov. 17 at 4 p.m.

## Nature

- Scientists removed 98 so-called "murder hornets" from a nest discovered near the Canadian border in Washington state over the weekend, including 13 that were captured live in a net. (Associated Press)

- The Olympia oyster population in Fidalgo Bay waters was restored in 2015 and there are now estimated to be three million oysters. (Skagit Valley Herald/paywall)

- A draft report by the state Department of Ecology details the problem of fecal coliform bacteria in sloughs that flow into Padilla Bay and lists possible solutions. (Skagit Valley Herald/paywall)

- A Conservation Alliance grant of $45,000 to the Whatcom Land Trust will permanently protect 1,000 acres of maturing riparian forest and over two miles of upper Skookum Creek in the Nooksack River basin. (Lynden Tribune/paywall)

## Business

- Here's an update on how the redevelopment of Bellingham's waterfront progresses: condominiums, bike track, food campus, affordable housing, Western Washington University, office building, hotel/conference center, Waypoint Park and Cornwall Beach Park. (Bellingham Herald/paywall) See also: Downtown Bellingham waterfront site sprouts new signs of life (Salish Current)

- The City of Anacortes is investing $13 million to provide better backup and storage capacity by installing a new 1,950-foot water pipeline from the Skagit River to the city's water plant on River Bend Road near Mount Vernon. (Skagit Valley Herald/paywall)

- Meet Kaegan Gudmundson, fourth-generation fisher who crabs out of Blaine Harbor on his 25-foot boat *Njordor*.(Whatcom Talk)

- The Port of Skagit will spend $3.37 million of a loan/grant awarded by the state Public Works Board to extend its fiber-optic backbone south from Rockport to the Sauk-Suiattle Indian Reservation. (Skagit Valley Herald/paywall)

## Community

- Dr. Josh Cerretti, WWU history professor, presents a virtual tour highlighting the perspectives of people who were marginalized and excluded from local official history. "Bellingham History From Below" airs on Nov. 10 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Register here.

- An Anacortes voter-approved sales tax to support affordable-housing construction generated $55,492 in its first month, according to city Finance Director Steve Hoglund and, if sales tax revenue continues, construction of affordable housing could begin in the spring. (Anacortes American)

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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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