

Minutes

Island County 2% Committee

September 3, 2020

Zoom, due to COVID-19

The meeting started at 11:05 with guest presentations and was officially called to order at 11:45 am by Robyn Myers, Secretary due to the absence of Chair and Vice Chair.

Quorum: x=members present

Tim Callison/Bruce Allen	Com. Jill Johnson	Pat Powell X
Debra Bell	Gregg Lanza X	Mitch Richards
Dianne Binder	Joanne Lechner X	Tom Felvey X
Janae Cameron X	Jessica McCreedy	Chet Ross
Vicki Graham X	Inge Morascini X	Sharon Sappington, EDC X
Lynda Eccles x	Robyn Myers x	Erica Wasinger

In addition to the above members also in attendance this meeting were: Sherrye Wyatt, Whidbey Camano Islands Tourism Coordinator, Jack Penland, Computer PIX LLC, Laura Hilton, Is Co. Tourism Contractor.

Guests: Julia Gorton, Director of Government Affairs for Washington Hospitality Association, Amy Spain is the Territory Manager for NW Washington for Hospitality Association, John Lane, Senior Manager for Government Affairs with the Washington Hospitality Association

Adoption of the Agenda: No changes were made to the agenda. Unanimously via voice and visual hand raising.

Minutes from the August 6, 2020 meeting were presented via email Lynda Eccles motioned, and Janae Cameron seconded to approve the minutes from August 6, 2020 as presented. Motion approved unanimously via voice and visual hand raising.

No Treasurer's report due to absence. Invoices were paid at the Management Committee on August 24, 2020.

Old Business

None

New Business

Management Committee report: Robyn Myers reported that the Management Committee met and discussed utilizing more Digital vs Print marketing at this time and to have a

Mayoral Tour to update them on Tourism efforts during this time. Other discussions reflected in agenda items.

Monthly PR media Report

SHERRYE WYATT PUBLIC RELATIONS & WRITING

Special guests at the September 3 tourism committee meeting include representatives from the **Washington Hospitality Association (WHA)** <https://wahospitality.org/>:

- **Amy Spain** is with the Washington Hospitality Association. In her role as Territory Manager for all of northwest Washington, Amy works with the restaurant and hotel community and related hospitality industry professionals by providing support and resources for a successful business operation. Prior to joining the Association, Amy served the hospitality community in Snohomish County as the Executive Director at the Snohomish County Tourism Bureau for nearly 15 years, and the Group Sales Executive for nearly a decade.
- **Julia Gorton** is Director of State Government Affairs for the Washington Hospitality Association and has been with the association for more than a decade- overseeing the Association's state advocacy and political programs. She has been appointed to the state's Paid Family & Medical Leave Advisory Committee, the Unemployment Insurance Advisory Committee and the Keep Washington Working Work Group to represent the interests of the hospitality industry. Julia graduated from Western Washington University with a B.A. in political science and social studies. (main speaker on the call)
- **John Lane** is the association's Senior Manager of Local Government Affairs. He has a law degree from Seattle University and has extensive public policy experience, including serving as a Washington state assistant attorney general and as the Office of Financial Management's legislative and legal counsel. John has also served as a senior policy adviser to Gov. Jay Inslee on public safety and government operations and as an executive policy adviser to Gov. Christine Gregoire. (tentative to be on the call)

The **WHA** offers a lot of COVID-19 resources on its website. Sherrye has participated in a weekly **PR Council** Zoom meeting with representatives of the Northwest corner of the state organized in partnership with the **WHA** and **Washington Tourism Alliance (WTA)**.

Gayle the Whale continues to gain traction with Island Transit and Island County Public Health who are both incorporating the COVID Character into their outreach.

Our trusted partnerships with organizations and advertisers is resulting in bonus advertising opportunities. This has been showing up with **Cascade Loop**, **AAA** and **Northwest Travel & Life** this month.

Sherrye continues to pursue **SEE SOURCE** to include in the 2021 budget this consumer insight report designed for DMOs and supported by WTA who will pay 30% of our bill. Draft proposal is being distributed to the full committee.

Sherrye continues to participate in a number of weekly Zoom meetings including the **Island County Economic Recovery Task Force. Buxton/Scout** training sessions have been moved from a time that would conflict with the tourism committee monthly meetings. They will now be the first Thursday of each month at 2 p.m. The commissioners are meeting to discuss a grant to which gives priority to entities who have not benefited from CARES funding. The tourism committee creative team is reworking our original proposal and will resubmit in order to pursue the idea of a “think local” campaign that showcases local businesses with a video and experiential component where participants purchase products made by local all-star artisans and connect with what makes the islands unique. Taste of the Islands (working title) is a major focus for team members to give a much needed lift to the traditionally quiet winter months ahead.

Sherrye is also working to complete all contracted projects that we had on the 2020 schedule. One is the video showcase of Whidbey Island through “**Day Trips in WA**” and “**Northwest Travel Channel**” whose focus is on staycations. We’re working with the owner, Gayle Picken who lives in the Stanwood-Camano area. Last year a similar video was done at no charge other than lodging hosting for Camano Island. That in part led to our pay-to-play contract which includes hosting the crew during their shoot (tentatively Sept. 16 – 20). During the pandemic our messaging with this campaign has been more focused on inspiring future travel. We are scheduled to be the featured destination for the month of October and will fall under a campaign “30 Reasons We Love Whidbey and Camano Islands,” which is a smart way to spotlight our strengths,

WTA has invited Whidbey & Camano Islands Tourism to participate in a virtual trade show called the **Western States Virtual Expo** on October 14. Sherrye is on a demo call Sept. 2. More than 1,500 travel advisors from around the USA will be attending the expo. A booth cost is \$2,995 but WTA is offering a discount so the cost will be \$250 for Island County to be represented. Virtual trade shows are expected to be the norm for awhile so this is an opportunity to dip our toe into the water with little risk, and continue to keep Whidbey and Camano Islands top of mind for when travel resumes.

OSBORNE NORTHWEST PUBLIC RELATIONS

Coming up:

Taste of the Islands (working title) is a campaign under development; the goal of the campaign is threefold: support local businesses; encourage intercounty visitation and keep Island County top of mind with travelers of the islands for 2021 trip planning. The concept brings together island food and drinks packaged for pickup (and potentially mailing) in time for gift giving and holidays at home.

PR team would consult on the program; ease of ordering and development that will maximize publicity and awareness with both local and regional audiences. The media component would include a media send to our top 10 targets. Possible outlets for this include *Whidbey News Times*, *The Herald*, *Seattle Met*, *KING 5 Evening*, *425 Magazine* and other local/regional media.

Project Management

- Maintained awareness for current business operations and offerings on the island; pitched stories and connected with media on these topics resulting in several press hits, including coverage for the Whidbey Camano and Trust's Scavenger Hunt on KING 5 Evening (Aug. 19).
- KING 5 Evening; discussed story plans for possible shoot in late September to cover the new mural at the Allgire project. We will work to confirm the coverage and details as the date nears.
- Registered for the Society of American Travel Writers Convention (Oct. 14-17) and developed early strategy for participation; ON PR will attend the conference and participate in the Marketplace where we can connect with writers one on one to discuss story ideas and news from Whidbey and Camano Islands and the portfolio of ON PR tourism clients.

Upcoming Media Visits/Pending Press

- ***Seattleite*, September 5-7** - writer [Aakanksha Agarwal](#) will research and cover a weekend getaway story for *Seattleite*, and post to her social channels (reaching more than 6k viewers).
- ***USA Today Network*, Sept. 1-12 2021**; travel writer Jean Chen Smith is planning a visit, per our pitch to cover "Family Travel" on the islands. She's staying on Camano, South and Central/North Whidbey for an in depth research trip. Her outlet includes *USA Today* in addition to the syndicated network that can reach up to 1,000 daily newspapers around the country. (note: she will be covering 1/3 of her travel time as she is staying for an extended period).

Press Highlights include 11 pieces of coverage with an estimated 787 million impressions. To view the coverage in full [go here](#) or reference the pdf document that accompanies this report.

LAURA HILTON

Laura has been on a weekly call with the creative team as they strategize about messaging leading into fall/winter, and prepare for a new local campaign. She has been helping Jack to populate our social media and website by providing new photos and blog posts. Laura has been keeping up with industry trends via frequent webinars, attending all Buxton training sessions, and responding to film requests as needed. She also has advised organizations on how to navigate the new COVID regulations regarding film, stage, indoors entertainment.

ROSENKRANZ PRODUCTIONS

Rosenkranz continues to help with the development and creation of a new campaign aimed at local, on island travel with some overflow into off island channels. Off island channels will not be encouraging travel under the current restrictions, but will help to keep our islands top of mind for daydreaming and booking of future travel with overnight stays. Rosenkranz will also be creating digital graphic and advertising and other creative materials as needed. Some recent ads and design elements are shown here.

COMPUTERPIX

Engage, but don't sell.

That was the advice given by national travel marketing experts in March. And, for the last five months, we have followed it.

Now, months later, that advice still appears sound as we look ahead to how we handle our digital messaging for the next few months. With nearly all events cancelled or moved online, our topics are directed more to the activities and general ambiance of our islands, essentially "celebrating" Whidbey and Camano Islands and sharing our celebration with our various online audiences.

One of the key elements of that ambiance is, of course, food. And, in the spirit of seasonal sharing, we hope to assemble a representative package of goodies that islanders (anybody, really) can send to family and friends.

That project then gives us something new to discuss digitally. More than just marketing the goodie basket, we'll spotlight the producers, and explain why the contents are so special. This will be done in social media, both organic and paid, our email, and our website.

This won't replace our #EscapeItAll messaging but augment it.

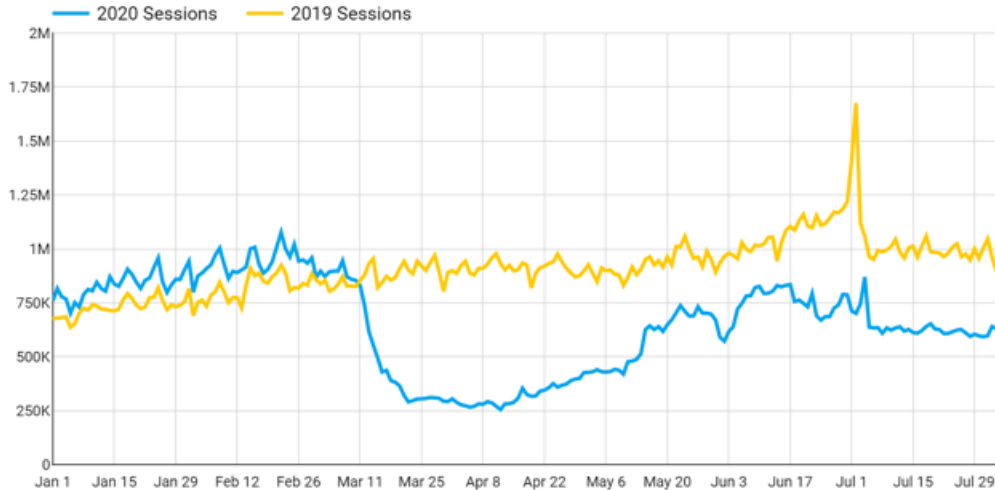
Website



As noted in the last meeting, according to Google, we set a new record for website visitors in a month, with more than 40-thousand visitors in July, beating the previous monthly record, held by July 2018. It's also an 11% increase over 2019. August will see more than 35-thousand visitors a 6% increase over 2019.

These numbers are most certainly lower than the actual number of visitors. Analytics direct from the server put the July number at more than 50-thousand visitors.

Not all destinations are experiencing this increase in website traffic. Simpleview, which manages marketing for many destinations, shows total website traffic for all of their clients well *behind* 2019.



Chamber Roundtable:

The Chambers are worried about the coming changing of seasons and how to keep our businesses alive through the winter. There is a lot of interest in shop local and how Tourism might have a role in helping with messaging to virtually shop our rural businesses from off island and at home.

Oak Harbor is still finding ways of connecting. Doing drive throughs for Halloween etc. Coupeville has cancelled festivals but looking to keep Haunting theme for fall alive with non-gathering activities. Working on how to celebrate the Holidays without a parade or activities that focus on people gathering in crowds.

Langley Chamber has cancelled Mystery Weekend. Holidays we are still trying to figure out. Exploring the concept of a Concierge or personal shopper.

Clinton will be doing a shop, plan and eat like a local campaign for fall. Shop Hop planned for the first week in December.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 12:50 pm.

Next regular meeting is October 1, 2020, location TBD, from 11am-1pm.

Meeting recorded by Joanne Lechner, alternate Secretary and reviewed for submission by Robyn Myers.