

Minutes
 Island County 2% Committee
 January 7, 2021
 Zoom, due to COVID-19

Quorum: x=members present

Tim Callison	Com. Jill Johnson	Pat Powell x
Debra Bell x	Gregg Lanza x	Mitch Richards
Dianne Binder x	Joanne Lechner x	Tom Felvey x
Janae Cameron x	Jessica McCready x	Chet Ross x
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, Scott Rosenkranz, Rosenkranz Productions Laura Hilton, Is Co. Tourism Contractor.

Guests: None

The meeting was called to order at 11:02 am by Chet Ross.

Adoption of the Agenda: No changes were made to the agenda. Inge Morascini motioned, and Lynda Eccles seconded to approve the agenda as presented. Motion approved unanimously via voice.

Minutes from the December 3, 2020 meeting were presented via email. Lynda Eccles motioned, and Janae Cameron seconded to approve the minutes from December 3, 2020 as presented. Motion approved unanimously via voice.

Treasurer’s report was presented by Dianne Binder. The December invoices were approved at the management committee on January 4, 2021.

Old Business

None

New Business

1. Management Committee Report – Chet reported that elections for board executive positions will be postponed until February 2021. This allows the committee to know which Commissioner will function as the chair.
2. Spring Campaign
 - i. Discover Your Islands is the theme to encourage supporting the people and places you love. They are looking to launch April 5. Chamber directors are asked to connect directly with the Spring Campaign Team to discuss their preferred story ideas and products. All contracted vendors are working on this project.

3. PR & Media Report

SHERRYE WYATT PUBLIC RELATIONS & WRITING

Economic Recovery Campaigns during COVID-19

The **Home for the Holidays** campaign which tourism partnered with the **Chambers of Commerce** to roll out in November, was successful overall. While some data is still being collected, we've heard a lot of positive feedback that resulted in increased activity for businesses from local residents. We've also received recommendations and considerations to improve the process and product next time. There is recap information about the campaign in both of the following reports by ComputerPIX and Osborne Northwest Public Relations. They also mention the substantial boost in website activity and media coverage generated by our collective efforts.

Following on that success as the pandemic continues, together with the **Economic Development Council for Island County**, we presented a concept to the **Island County Commissioners** to fund another campaign, focused again on shop/eat/stay/explore local in order to help slow the spread of the virus and to support our Island County businesses during this extremely difficult time.

The county informed us in late December that the spring "support local" campaign will be funded. **Island Transit** is climbing aboard as a more visible partner for this campaign and we are very excited about this opportunity.

One challenge with this project... it does not hit during a "natural shopping season" like the fall/winter holidays. It will need to have more depth and sense of place, with more compelling design/storytelling /photography which drives participants to support our local businesses, producers and experiences. It will need to be more "evergreen" so that when it rolls out in April, it will make sense going into the summer. We're in the early stages of conceptualization, but are very excited about the initial discussions and will be seeking input from the committee on the January tourism meeting call.

Misc.

We drew the winning name for the **Island Getaway** prize package on December 31(it was a Langley package). Getaway packages planned for 2020 so far include First Quarter: Oak Harbor; and Second Quarter: Camano Island.

You may view the short movie filmed here in 2018 **The Hour After Westerly** right now online until January 17. There is also the trailer and a short documentary about the making of the film which are also very fun to view. You will find them all here: <https://whidbeycamanoislands.com/the-hour-after-westerly/>

Upcoming Meetings and Presentations

Sherrye continues in 2021 to participate in weekly Zoom calls with the **Island County Economic Recovery Task Force** (Mon), **Northwest PR Council** (Thurs) and **Washington State Destination Marketing Organization** (Fri). Sherrye also participates

in weekly **Destination Analysts, US Travel and Miles Partnership webinars** when possible. **Miles** continues to produce some outstanding online content which is free to everyone [Insights - COVID-19 \(milespartnership.com\)](https://milespartnership.com)

Upcoming meetings this month are **Port of Seattle** (Jan 12), **Washington Filmworks** (Jan 13), **Cascade Loop Annual Meeting** (Jan 13), **IRTPO TAC** (Jan 14), and **Maritime Washington National Heritage Area** (Jan 19). The **Whidbey & Camano Islands Tourism** creative team have also been meeting regularly and will continue to in the new year. Future presentations by Sherrye on the schedule so far include **Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce** (Mar), **Leadership Whidbey** (Mar), **Camano Island Chamber of Commerce** (Apr) and **International Food, Wine and Travel Writers Assn.** (Apr).

COMPUTERPIX

December Digital Report

Summary

- ROI - Based on best data available, the Whidbey and Camano Tourism website in 2020 returned a value of more than \$10.5 million.
- Bragging Rights - Alexa.com ranked the WCI website ahead of visitseattle.org, experiencewa.com, and scenicwa.com for a large portion of 2020.
- The newly created holiday shopping section was well-received, generating significant website traffic.
- The jets schedule page was surprisingly popular in December, due mostly to an email sent by a Victoria, B.C. news website.
- There was an electronic attack on the website, which was discovered and stopped within a couple of hours with no website downtime.

Website ROI tops \$10 Million

Based on research by the company Destination Analysts, and Goggle Analytics' estimate of the number of visitors to the site, the return on investment of the website in 2020 was approximately \$10,509,484. This compares with 2019's ROI of \$9,666,907.

There were approximately 286,000 visitors to the website in 2020 (per Google Analytics) versus 263,000 visitors in 2019.

Keep in mind that Goggle is no longer able to track all visitors due to ad blocking software, so both the 2019 and 2020 figures could be higher, potentially by as much as 10% to 40%.

This is based on an amount of \$36.72 for each new visitor to a destination marketing website. Interested in how they came to that figure, the PowerPoint presentation is available at:

https://www.dmawest.org/files/7214/9365/7383/Executive_Summary_2016_DMO_Website_User_Conversion_Study_DMA_West_Foundation.pdf

Bragging Rights – Website tops “major” sites in 2020

For most of the second half of 2020, Alexa.com, the website that ranks the relative traffic of websites, showed the Whidbey and Camano Islands tourism website ahead of such

larger sites as Visit Seattle and ExperienceWA. The graph on the next page charts several Destination Marketing Organization websites, and you can see that the WCI site (in pink) was generally at the top. Only recently has Visit Seattle passed us as we go through our typical December doldrums. Those website doldrums were doubtlessly improved by the holiday shopping section (see next item).



Holiday Shopping Section

The new holiday shopping section continues to do well, and I continue to add new listings to it. Interest peaked shortly after the catalog was mailed around November 23rd. The main shopping page was the 3rd most popular page during that time, and 10% of our traffic was going to the various shopping pages. Most traffic came via our email newsletter, with search via Google coming next. Search traffic was likely caused by people seeing the catalog and then using search to find the website.

Traffic did drop over time. However, during the 6 weeks between the time the catalog was issued and the end of the year, the main shopping page was still the 4th most popular page and all the shopping pages represented 5.7% of web traffic. This percentage would have been higher had it not been for an email sent in Canada linking to our jets schedule (see next item).

The shopping listings will be continued in 2021.

Jets

While the NAS Whidbey carrier landing schedule page is popular anytime of year, the page took off in December, especially with Canadians. This is the result of a December third email from the website <https://www.capitaldaily.ca/>. While the email is no longer available to view online, it had, if memory serves me, the headline “A Return of the Growl” and a link to the jets page.

Attack

Early December found the website under attack. Fortunately, it was short-lived, and the only impact was a temporary slowing of the website. The attack is called a Distributed Denial of Service (DDOS) attack and was carried out in an attempt to see if they could hack into the website. Michael Bourne was able to quickly learn what IP addresses the attack was coming from and quickly blocked them. Just FYI, the tourism website is both backed up and scanned for issues every evening.

OSBORNE NORTHWEST PUBLIC RELATIONS

Annual Summary

What a year it's been! Thank you for partnering with ON PR to navigate the challenge that was 2020. In reviewing our work to date, and media coverage received, the collective intellect and foresight, paired with quick pivots and hard work of our teams, yielded results that can be seen in the media coverage received.

While the year began like any other with winter destination coverage, the big pivot began in March. We received recognition for the spring virtual vacation campaign from *The Washington Post*, along with countless regional outlets (*Seattle Times*, *KOMO Seattle Refined*, *Seattle Magazine*). The regional drive market push for late summer and fall and the hyperlocal retail focus for winter and holiday each offer results speak for themselves. Throughout the year, we continued to work with top national contacts on stories to inspire future travel, with spreads and features in covetable pages of *Food & Wine*, *Travel + Leisure*. To date, we've tracked 215 pieces of earned media totaling 1.3 billion in online readership and 515 million in print circulation. [Find a link to the full coverage report for the year here.](#)

We're honored to maintain our work with you into 2021, and look forward to navigating the challenges of 2021 with renewed resilience and commitment to supporting the island county economy.

Monthly Overview

The month of December continued with holiday guide and retail pitching, resulting in multiple features and inclusion in roundup stories focused on local, female-owned and artisan gift ideas. Our team continued to engage with influencers and media via Instagram and more traditional media relations channels to amplify the story. Coverage appeared in outlets like *Seattle Magazine*, *The (Everett) Herald*

Our team also continued to develop, pitch and secure stories in outlets like AFAR, KING 5 Evening and Seattle Met that keep the islands top of mind and drive future travel and visits. We also began to develop materials and content for a three-day virtual edition of International Media Marketplace, taking place January 27-29, 2021. ON PR will represent Whidbey and Camano Islands to inspire future travel coverage in regional, national and international media.

Project Management – Safe Travel, Destination News

- Pitched stories surrounding bucket list or future travel, outdoor experiences, and ways island businesses are adapting to hospitality during COVID-19.
- Partnered with Sip Magazine for a one-day Camano Island takeover on December 7 featuring 16 images and 4 videos promoting local beverage producers and holiday gifts; the full story [is linked here.](#)

Project Management - COVID Support, Holiday Retail

- Continued media relations and story pitching for the shop local guide; distributed to targeted media; managed interview requests, photo and content needs to

develop stories in outlets like 425 Magazine, Seattle Refined, The Everett Herald and more.

Instagram Engagement

- Implemented influencer engagement strategy, posting fresh content, engaging with key accounts and reposting community updates to increase follower count and drive traffic to the holiday guide (linked in bio).
- Follower count grew from 1,352 on November 25 to 1,425 followers on December 28, an increase of 5.39%.
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Media Visits/Pending Press

- **South Whidbey Record;** features reporter is working on a piece about “The Hour After Westerly,” with quotes from filmmaker as well as Sherrye Wyatt.
- **Whidbey Weekly;** reporter is working on a piece about “The Hour After Westerly,” with quotes from filmmaker as well as Sherrye Wyatt.
- **1889, The Washington Magazine;** Workin’ Dreams Farm to be featured in a story about fennel, highlighting why Whidbey Island is an ideal growing location (agritourism focus).

Press Highlights include 25 pieces of coverage with an estimated 20.7 million impressions. To view the coverage in full [go here](#) or reference the pdf document that accompanies this report.

4. Chamber Roundtable

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 1:00 pm

Next regular meeting is February 4, 2021, via Zoom, from 11am-1pm.

Meeting recorded by Robyn Myers and reviewed for submission by Sherrye Wyatt.