

Minutes
 Island County 2% Committee
 February 4, 2021
 Zoom, due to COVID-19

Quorum: x=members present

Tim Callison x	Com. Melanie Bacon x	Jackie Henderson
Debra Bell x	Gregg Lanza x	OH Lodging- Vacant
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
Lynda Eccles x	Robyn Myers x	Jim Woessner

In addition to the above members also in attendance this meeting were: Louanne Isaacson, Vice President, Deception Pass Park Foundation; Jason Armstrong, Area Manager Deception Pass State Park Area; Selene Muldowney- Stratton, Marketing & Communications Officer, Island Transit; Pamela Estes, Manager, Candlewood Suites & Best Western; 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 Vicki Graham seconded to approve the agenda as presented. Motion approved unanimously.

Minutes from the January 7, 2021 meeting were presented via email. Gregg Lanza motioned, and Deb Bell seconded to approve the minutes from January 7, 2021 as presented. Motion approved unanimously.

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 –
 - a. The following slate of officers was proposed. Commissioner Melanie Bacon, Chair; Chet Ross, Vice Chair; Robyn Myers, Secretary; Joanne Lechner, Alternate Secretary; Dianne Binder, Treasurer; Motion passed unanimously.

2. Spring Campaign
 - i. Discover Your Islands is the theme to encourage supporting the people and places you love. They are looking to mail in early April. Hundreds of Whidbey and Camano Islands are represented. All contracted vendors are working on this project.
2. PR & Media Report see below

SHERRYE WYATT PUBLIC RELATIONS & WRITING

WSDMO Legislative Recap

We've attached the weekly report from the Washington State Destination Marketing Organization.

"Discover Your Islands" to Support Local Businesses and COVID-19 Economic Recovery

With support from the Economic Development Council for Island County, the tourism committee has been assigned by Island County Commissioners to utilize up to \$100,000 to create and launch a Spring Shop Local Campaign. The campaign includes a printed guide divided into sections with lifestyle photos of people using products or being active in locations in the islands. Each topic includes pages of copy and photos of products or businesses that fall under that section's theme.

The primary audience is Island County residents. The goal is to encourage them to support local businesses by really shifting their behavior. We need them in Island County shopping, enjoying experiences, dining and supporting entertainment and lodging to "Discover Your Islands." Struggling businesses are depending on local residents to help them survive the pandemic in 2021.

The guide size has been expanded from 24 pages of body (and 4 pages for cover, inside cover, back and inside back). New total: 28 pages. We'll print the first 40,000 copies to be immediately mailed to zip codes within Island County to every household, to arrive approximately April 5. We'll use tourism funds to print 40,000 additional guides with a new 4 page cover, inside cover, back and inside back section in order to provide updated messaging and an invitation to off-islanders to explore Island County. These additional updated guides will be mailed to strategically selected zip codes later in early summer, depending on the pandemic. They are to both be printed at the same time to save money.

Island Transit is also partnering with us and has committed \$4,000 to help pay for some of the costs and will incorporate a large decal on the back of their buses. These extra funds will help as the expansion of the campaign has increased design, photography, writing, postage and printing costs beyond the original grant.

"Island Discoveries" Teaser Campaign as Part of Support Local Spring Campaign

We've added a social media campaign to connect with the community and generate recommendations to populate the guide with potential products and pull quotes. The campaign begins with a post to Instagram and Facebook on February 15, which will be

boosted to Island County residents throughout the campaign. The hope is to create authentic messaging from island locals and generate early awareness for “Discover Your Islands” launching in April.

Posts begin February 15 and runs until March 1; messaging may continue through March to continue to generate local awareness or web-based content, but content received after March 1 will not be eligible to populate the print guide. Paid posts will run within the timeline with reposts and dialogue continuing, based on community response. This is an invitation for Island County residents to share the makers and small businesses that make the islands a great place to live, work, and play. People will respond to our post on Facebook and Instagram by direct message or comments to our posts with a short explanation about their recommendation and why.

Upcoming E-newsletters and Advertising

We’ve timed several sponsored content e-newsletters to promote the Spring Support Local campaign including the Cascade Loop, AAA Journey and ScenicWA. We’ll also use these newsletters to promote our quarterly Island Getaway contest (featured destinations are Oak Harbor which runs Jan - Mar and Camano Island which runs April – June). Currently we have banner ads running on 425 Magazine and RealFoodTraveler.com. Wherever appropriate we’ll swap out the old branding with the new campaign to tie our messaging together this spring/summer.

San Juan Islands and WAIInns Invitation to Partner

We’ve been invited by the San Juan Islands and WAIInns to partner to bring a travel production crew here to do a segment on Whidbey Island and the San Juan Islands featuring member lodgings. En Pointe Productions will produce a Jet Set Travel segment both in Spanish and English, as well as other content. Preliminary estimated costs include \$5,000 for a 23-28 minute segment, \$2,300 for transportation from Washington D.C. area for 4, transportation from SEA airport to the Islands and some hosting meals/expenses. Most lodging will be comped by WAIInns members. We’ve committed \$2,500 to the project and the San Juan Islands is spearheading the tourism grant request to the Port of Seattle for the bulk of the necessary funding. JetSet programs are widely distributed, plus the Spanish language component will attract a more diverse group of visitors. Tentative dates: Sept. 12-19, 2021.

Washington Road Trips

We are working with WTA on the soon to “go live” Washington State Road Trip website, which will eventually pair nicely with the new state tourism website (coming soon).

Objectives:

- 1) Inspire future in-state and drive-market travelers to plan WA road trips;
- 2) Create awareness of Washington Byways; and
- 3) Reinforce the identity of WA as a destination/opportunity for boundless exploration.

Draft Site/Structure: <https://itinerary.gmwdtpq5-liquidwebsites.com/>

We’re creating up to 5 new itineraries for WTA as quickly as possible, with emphasis on Whidbey Scenic Isle Way per their Scenic Byway requirement.

- Ideal Length: 2 day to 5 day.

- Things to Do Each Day: 2 to 4 things to see/do/ experience each day - some dining is ok, but prefer to focus on things to do/see. A regional destination lodge is ok if it's part of the destination and qualifies as a "must see" on its own.
- Season: Any/all, or identify best season.
- Region: List of regions [here](#))
- Primary Activities: Scenic drives, wildlife watching, cultural/historical, outdoor recreation, and more.

Wander Washington with Microsoft and the Washington Tourism Alliance (WTA)

WTA asked us to provide local experts for a live presentation about Whidbey Island to Microsoft employees. It's part of a Wander Washington virtual program to introduce the company's employees to WA destinations. Overview/History was Robyn Myers and Michelle Glass; Food, Farms and Libations was Karen and Lindsay Krug; and Outdoor Recreation was Krista Loercher. We'll have an opportunity to do a similar program for Camano Island later in the year. View WTA Slide Deck PDF here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/40qa9eehq016eow/Whidbey%20Island%20Presentation.pdf?dl=0>

DMA West Tech Summit

This year the summit is a series of virtual workshops taking place throughout the month of March (Mar 3-24). We are members and by securing an Early Bird registration slot (\$200) we can "take to the show" our whole creative team of five contractors to divide and conquer the workshops and help elevate the importance of integrating our digital programs into everything else we are doing. [Schedule-At-A-Glance :: DMA West | Tech Summit](#) The program is very relevant this year with emphasis on leveraging locals for regional destination marketing, the future of visitor guides, better storytelling, and more.

Upcoming Meetings and Presentations

Sherrye continues in 2021 to participate in bi-weekly Zoom calls with the **Island County Economic Recovery Task Force** (Mon), weekly with **Island County Tourism Creative Team** (Mon), bi-weekly with **Northwest PR Council** (Thurs), weekly with **Washington State Destination Marketing Organization** (Fri) and bi-monthly with **Washington Filmworks** for executive board and board meetings.

Sherrye is creating a new presentation and will be sharing it with the following: **Langley Chamber of Commerce** (Feb 10), **Coupeville Chamber of Commerce** (Mar 16), **Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce** (Mar 18), **Camano Island Chamber of Commerce** (Apr 15). She is also presenting with other local experts on the topic Economic Development for Leadership Whidbey (Mar 26). Sherrye and Erin will be presenting a virtual tour and program of Whidbey and Camano Islands to the **International Food, Wine and Travel Writers Assn** (date TBD).

COMPUTERPIX

Book Direct

A key feature of the website is the ability for site visitors to book stays through the site. Unlike sites such as Expedia, Book Direct doesn't take a percentage (at times nearly 20%) for themselves. Instead, we pay a fee. Their annual report is attached. They estimated Book Direct generated \$233,221 to county lodging in 2020. They are changing their pricing structure, so we are now exploring adding AirBNB listings to the website. An additional report is attached.

Website Analytics 2020 Wrap-up

According to Google Analytics, the number of visitors to the Whidbey and Camano Islands tourism website in 2020 was 286,838 users. That's up 9% from 2019 and up an amazing 24% from 2018. As noted in previous reports, increased use of privacy software means Google Analytics no longer successfully captures all visitors, so our 2020 figure could easily be 30% higher than what Google measured.

Just glancing quickly at 2021, January visits are 14% ahead of 2020.

58% of the site's visitors used a mobile phone to get to the site, while 38% of the visits were via a desktop/laptop device.

For the year, the top ten search terms for 2020 (and 2019 comparisons) were as follows:

Search Query	2020 Clicks	2019 Clicks	% Change
whidbey island	23137	5423	326.65%
where was practical magic filmed	5026	58	8665.52%
deception pass hikes	2389	133	1696.24%
deception pass	2322	172	1250.00%
greenbank farm	1685	343	391.25%
coupeville wa	1586	0	
camano island	1428	152	839.47%
whidbey island washington	1244	446	178.92%
deception pass bridge	1219	225	441.78%
olf flight schedule	1211	96	1161.46%

As has been noted by travel experts, people were looking to outdoor activities in 2020 and that interest is reflected by these search terms, but these terms were popular even before the pandemic. It will be important to create new outdoor-related content for 2021. Also, I don't have an explanation for the zero in 2019 for "coupeville wa," but keep in mind that these are searches for the *exact* search term.

Finally, Google Search provided 8 million impressions related to the tourism website in 2020.

OSBORNE NORTHWEST PUBLIC RELATIONS

Monthly Overview

Throughout the month, we prepared materials and secured meetings with top travel influencers and media outlets as ON PR represented Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism for a three-day virtual edition of International Media Marketplace, taking place January 27-29, 2021. We participated in planning calls for the Spring Shop Local Guide, sharing ideas for concepts, feedback for PR timing on the launch and maintaining Instagram engagement with the local community, as well as media and influencers.

Erin Osborne will be a featured presenter at the March tourism committee meeting.

Project Management – Safe Travel, Destination News

- Developed a story sheet and news updates to pitch regional media providing a snapshot of spring and possible summer travel story ideas.
- Developed pitch and handled outreach to share news of “The Hour After Westerly,” with quotes from filmmaker on “Why Whidbey” as well as Sherrye Wyatt sharing Tourism’s role in the film. The outreach resulted in stories from The Herald, South Whidbey Record and The Whidbey Weekly and other local news outlets.
- We secured and hosted 23 individual Zoom appointments listed below, pitching the destination for inspirational travel stories and future visits. An emphasis was placed on national outlets, and west coast media for possible visits into summer and fall 2021.

First	Last	Outlet
Caroline	Lupini	Forbes Advisor
Zoe	Baillargeon	Conde Nast Traveler, Wine Enthusiast, Portland Monthly
Andrea	Traynor	Influencer, family travel
Lisa	Niver	Freelance Journalist, Founder We Said Go Travel, Contributor: KTLA TV, USA Today 10best, Wharton Magazine, Ms. Magazine, TODAY.com
Lauren	Gay	Outdoorsy Diva (Podcast, Content Creator and Blog)
Tracy	Kaler	The Telegraph, Barron's Penta, Mansion Global Experience Luxury, RESIDE Magazine, Travelmag, The Epoch Times, and other publications -
Kathleen	Messmer	Rovology, Spotted by Locals, TripSavvy, ArtiSpectrum,
Ashley	Rossi	Togo Group (Togo RV and Roadtrippers)
MeLinda	Schnyder	AAA World, AOPA Travel Pilot (private pilots), Next Avenue, Connect magazines, McClatchy (Wichita Eagle & Kansas City Star),
William	Tang	Going Awesome Places, Blog and Video Producer
Jackie	Sills – Dellegrazie	The Globetrotting Teacher
Joey	Amato	Pride Journeys
Jennifer	Weatherhead	Freelance Broadcast Travel Host/Expert: CTV, Global, CHCH, CBC, ABC, FOX News, CW and CGTN. Founder of Travel & Style Magazine

Jennifer	Mattson	Thrillist and Trivago
Terry	Gardner	L.A. Times, Westways, Ventura Blvd. Magazine, etc.
Jennifer	Ruiz	Jen on a Jet Plane - Travel Blog
Kristi	Dosh	Forbes, POPSUGAR, CraftBeer.com, Entrepreneur, JustLuxe, Travelocity
Juliet	Izon	Architectural Digest, Conde Nast Traveler, Bon Appetit, Domino, CNN Travel, O, PureWow, Good Housekeeping, Trip Savvy, and the Modern Luxury magazines.
Sher		Sher She Goes
Kelly	Stilwell	Food, Fun & Faraway Places
Lisa	Evans	GoNomad.com, History Magazine, Travel Thru History, Gypsy With a Day Job, Short Weeks-Long Weekends, Pink Pangea, The Yums.
Heidi	Gollub	Kidsareatrip.com , Texas Lifestyle Magazine

Instagram Engagement

- Continued media relations and story pitching on Instagram; shared local business news, reposted influencer content and managed the community with likes, comments and interaction on the @GoWhidbeyCamano Instagram page. The goal is 2-3 posts per week, with stories posting on an ongoing basis.
- Follower count grew from 1,425 on December 28 to 1,468 followers on January 28, an increase of 3%.

Media Visits/Pending Press

- **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 13 pieces of coverage with an estimated 71.2 million impressions. To view the coverage in full [go here](#) or reference the pdf document that accompanies this report.

3. Chamber Roundtable- all chambers were represented and reported updates.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 1:00 pm

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

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